



Advice to Professionals Who Must "Conference Cases"

by Janice Fialka

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Before the case conference,
I looked at my almost five-year-old son
and saw a golden-haired boy
who giggled at his baby sister's attempts to clap her hands,
who charmed adults by his spontaneous hugs and hellos,
who often became a legend in places visited

because of his exquisite ability to befriend a few special souls,
Who often wanted to play "peace marches"
And who, at the age of four,
went to the Detroit Public Library
requesting a book on Martin Luther King.

After the case conference,
I looked at my almost five-year-old son.
He seemed to have lost his golden hair.
I saw only words plastered on his face,
Words that drowned us in fear,
Words like:
Primary Expressive Speech and Language Disorder,
Severe Visual Motor Delay,
Sensory Integration Dysfunction,
Fine and Gross Motor Delay,
Developmental Dyspraxia and RITALIN now.

I want my son back. That's all.
I want him back now. Then I'll get on with my life.

If you could see the depth of this pain
If you feel this sadness
Then you would be moved to return
Our almost five-year-old son
who sparkles in sunlight despite his faulty neurons.

Please give us back my son
undamaged and untouched by your labels, test results,
descriptions and categories.

If you can't, if you truly cannot give us back our son
Then just be with us

quietly, gently, softly.

Sit with us and create a stillness
known only in small, empty chapels at sundown.
Be there with us
as our witness and as our friend.

Please do not give us advice, suggestions, comparisons or
another appointment. (That is for later.)

We want only a quiet shoulder upon which to rest our heads.

If you cannot give us back our sweet dream
then comfort us through this evening.
Hold us. Rock us until morning light creeps in.
Then we will rise and begin the work of a new day.

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