

The Sensational Walker Nikkel



Finally, after months of waiting, we held our son in our arms for the first time. Little did we know that the adoption process was just a training session for what lie ahead. We had our first child home, safe and sound. This was truly one of the best days of our lives.

As the months passed and our lives changed dramatically with the birth of Walker's sister, we didn't even think that something might be "off." Walker did the best he could with all the changes in his life. He was such a joy and loved life. We noticed some things that seemed different but we thought they were because of his adoption. It wasn't until I read the book, *Sensational Kids: Hope and Help for Children with Sensory Processing Disorder* by Dr. Lucy Jane Miller that I realized Walker had some issues. I began to realize that his fear of heights wasn't normal. His over-responsiveness to touch, not liking being tickled, not always wanting a hug were signs of an underlying disorder called Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD).

Walker wanted to do the things that all the other kids were doing but was terrified to do them. When he would try and ride a bike, he constantly felt that he was going to fall over. He would act silly to the point that he was always "faking" falling down. You never had any warning of when he might have a meltdown. I realized that the way he was processing his world around him was not the same as you and me.

My husband and I knew we had to do all we could for him now and not take the "he will grow out of it" response. We took him to the STAR Institute in Denver and noticed immediate changes. After just a few sessions of occupational therapy, we noticed Walker was more confident and calm. He was more willing to try different activities and his writing improved. We noticed he was able to self-regulate more, and his tantrums decreased. He still had meltdowns, but he could tell us when they were coming so we could get out of the situation and do what we could to help him calm down. We learned more about *his* world and



how we could understand and help him. We learned tools and avenues to help avoid problems and thus make our lives better.



I am as proud as ever of my son. I cry at field day when I see him climb in the rock wall at school. Not because he did it the fastest but because *he did it!* Walker is now riding his bike, climbing up trees, swimming with his head under water, and doing flips on the trampoline. These are all things he would have never tried before. Walker has learned how to read, and his schoolwork has improved. Are all our days good ones? Of course not. SPD has changed our life. It has made us aware of the everyday victories that we now celebrate.