

Traumatic Brain Injury

When it comes to speech-language pathologists, unequivocally Cathy Salciccia is my hero.

Ten years ago (2005) my 33 year old son suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) in New Zealand, damaging his frontal lobe, severely compromising his executive function capabilities, and losing the sight of one eye, due to the effect of the contrecoup injury caused by the impact. After 2 months of healing from various surgeries in a New Zealand hospital and 6 1/2 months in a Boston rehab hospital, he was discharged to home care services. At this time he was barely verbal with no communication initiative.

For the next 5 months he underwent physical and occupational therapies and speech-language pathology twice a week. Although the results were minimally encouraging, the therapists indicated that they had basically done all they could for him. It should be noted that this decision was obviously dictated by the insurance protocol governing reimbursements.

At this time, through references, Cathy burst onto the scene with irresistible enthusiasm and a wonderful "I can do" attitude. When my son first came to her he had little or no expressive communication skills and his unsighted eye made it almost impossible to bounce or throw a ball or scan objects. Aware that my son was well-read with a high intellect, a film artist and an athlete (sailing), she quickly found common ground. She taught him to scan and recognize objects. In a short period of time he was able to verbally identify what he could see. Thereafter, she began to build his sentence structure and verbal sequencing.

From this beginning and with Cathy's ability to use every tool and means available, a consequence of her imagination, understanding and intelligence, my son is now able to converse using moderately sophisticated sentences, tap into his remarkable vocabulary, carry-on conversations and occasionally initiate communication which was virtually non-existent.

To those who have experienced even the good speech-language pathologists, who tend to "go by the book" using traditional approaches, Cathy's approach initially appears to be somewhat unorthodox but it works. It is because she knows through her experience that there is no perfect program for any individual, no matter how research based. The key is a uniquely designed program that fits the needs of the patient capitalizing on untapped potential. Where others have failed, been thwarted in their efforts by insurance limitations or merely lost interest, Cathy's intellect, dedication and resolve results in her ability to persevere beyond most expectations. She's exceptional.

Peter W. Robbins
10 March 2015