

# SSW Reports

- Letters from Parents Tell Us If APD is a Big Deal or Not
- Dear Ackie on What Age? • Also see a Photo!!

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## Is APD a Big Deal or Not?

Jack Katz

I was just going over a folder of a teenager that I had seen in the past. There was a note that I had written to myself at that time:

*9-1-10: Dan did not show up today and no call to cancel. Called mom and left message that they should call if they are not coming.*

Later I wrote,

*Mom called back. Dan would not come out of his room and he wants to die.*

## Some Reflections in Letters You Can Share with Others

I don't like being preachy but this topic is an exception. I would like to share letters that I and another audiologist have received from parents, a grandparent and an adult with APD. These writers will explain the effects of APD and the human toll. The names and other identifying information have been changed.

### From a Grandmother

Maryanne was a 1½ pound preemie at 26 weeks. She is now 6-years-old. In addition to her social underdevelopment, she has visual and auditory processing discrepancies. Even when Maryanne was very small I noticed that she sometimes had a vacant look on her face. When I would speak to her I routinely had to repeat myself; sometimes to the point of frustration.

In kindergarten, Maryanne would come home so distressed and confused that she would sit in the corner crying. It was so bad at one point that she began hiding under the table and banging her head on the floor. She also seemed extremely distressed in large crowds and begged and pleaded to go home. She didn't like many activities that most young children thrive on. The truth is, at first, I thought she was not paying attention.

Fortunately, a vision doctor referred us to Dr. Young because she suspected an auditory processing problem. After Maryanne was diagnosed and now receiving therapy, I can see an amazing difference. Since she has been in therapy she rarely has explosive episodes. I see her developing the ability to cope and finding her own selfworth.

Being an adult with dyslexia and having significant processing issues myself, I understand more than some, what it is like to hear but not understand when someone speaks to you. It affects your entire ability to function in life. However, for my granddaughter, I can only imagine for a child like Maryanne just how hard it was to function on a daily basis not always understanding what was said.

### Knowledgeable Mother To a Skeptical Professional Group

I would like to tell you about my beautiful 12 year old daughter. I adopted her from Korea when she was a year old. April's issues have been misdiagnosed numerous times. I even had a speech-language pathologist tell me not to talk to her unless she answered me when I asked a question. April has been bullied and taunted at

school because she does not talk to others. Her teachers seemed frustrated and angry with her and they insisted she *WOULD NOT* pay attention. April has always become very stiff and quiet around others. At home, she was slow to understand when given instructions or asked questions. Conversations were minimal, but she has always been happy at home with her brother and me. When I explained to her teachers that auditory processing disorder should be considered they said “NO”. The situation at school became so bad that I homeschooled her for a period of time. *[Update: Now that April has had 3-rounds of auditory training she is finally back in school and doing well; gradually adding more classes as she and her teachers adjust to meet her needs. April loves it.]*

For the past few months April has been receiving auditory therapy and now I can see why it has taken her longer to answer questions. She needed so much more time to process the auditory information she heard. Now, April has started to initiate conversations with her brother and me. She now listens in to all my phone and personal conversations, “she has become a snoop.” Her incidental learning has been awakened. Now April listens to the way others say things. Her speech has improved as well as her sentence comprehension and inflections.

I now understand the mistakes made in the past. From personal experience, I can tell you that the auditory training seems so simple but it is life changing.

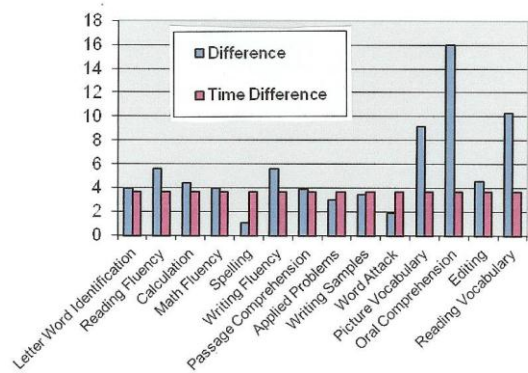
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**A Key For Unlocking Andy’s Academic Potential**

I am Andy Willard’s mother. Andy is now 15 years old and attends Franklin High School and received all A’s and one B this semester! Things were not always this exciting on the academic front for Andy. At the end of first grade we began to have serious concerns about Andy’s ability to progress in reading and writing. Andy was evaluated by Dr. Reed, a psychologist, and was diagnosed with Auditory Processing deficits, Learning Disability (Dyslexia) and ADD.

Andy’s success in the classroom today is the result of many interventions including: intensive tutoring, intensive therapy provided by Dr. Foster, the audiologist, loving and understanding teachers, and being surrounded by people who believe in him. Dr. Foster was a light for us during very difficult times. Andy began seeing Dr. Foster in 2005 and then demonstrated great improvement in phonemic decoding and speech in noise. Andy’s speech in noise testing improved from 3 SDs below normal before therapy to the normal range. It also meant that before therapy Andy would sit in a schoolroom and miss what the teacher was saying despite being on ADD medication. It meant that prior to therapy; Andy would only follow parts of group conversations. It meant prior to therapy; Andy could not watch KU basketball live without headphones to suppress the noise. All of this changed with Dr. Foster’s help. Andy began to grow academically and by the 7<sup>th</sup> grade was reading at a 22 year old level – which is shocking for someone who had so many obstacles.

Please see the figure of Andy’s Woodcock-Johnson test prior to therapy and 3.7 years later. We were very happy when Andy progressed 3.7 years as that meant he was progressing normally and not regressing. Anything above that meant that he was closing the academic gap.



Andy did well on the retest but Oral Comprehension far exceeded the improvement he made in all the other skills. He made 16 years of improvement in 3.7 years.

As you know Andy’s problem is complicated and no one strategy is a cure all, but as parents responsible for raising responsible children, our

job is to move the needle forward. That is what auditory training did by improving Andy's ability to learn effectively. We ask you to do your part and support auditory processing and auditory processing therapy as one strategy in the community's toolbox.

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### **An Academic Language Therapist Homeschools Her Own Children**

I was homeschooling so I felt that I knew my boys well and knew when they were, or were not, "getting" what I was teaching. They were diagnosed with severe dyslexia, dysgraphia and we suspected some ADD. I felt I was addressing these issues as best I could by homeschooling them as an Academic Language Therapist. However, I felt that something was missing as the boys were not progressing. I contacted my mentors where I had been trained and they suggested that I have the boys evaluated for CAPD. Their explanation of CAPD was 'the way in which the brain processes information can be hindered by a computer humming; so if you move the computer to the other side of the room they will be okay.' This was my meager, humble understanding of CAPD. I did a little internet research on it and realized some of the ways the boys could be affected by it.

An SLP at the children's medical center recommended that I take the boys to Dr. Turner for APD testing. Dr. Turner let me sit in the back of the room so I was out of my son's sight but I could observe. He gave me a copy of the materials that John would be hearing under the earphones. There was one particular section in which John heard 4 words like *flash light* and *cow boy*. As my son began to repeat the words I began to cry. He almost never repeated the third word. He was given a break right after that test, so I asked him how things were going. He looked at me and said, "Mom, it's easy. I just said all the words." I was such a mix of emotions. I felt sadness and guilt for not "knowing" my own son who I taught everyday was often missing words that I was saying to him. And at the same time I gained hope as I knew from a remediation perspective we had found a huge piece of the puzzle.

My story has turned into a lot of CAPD referrals. I'm glad that I got the chance to share my story with you. I am also pleased to be in a position to help others when Dr. Turner was so willing to help us when we needed it.

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### **APD Therapy So Important for Gayle**

I can't say enough about how Auditory Processing has changed our daughter's world. We sought Auditory Processing therapy when our daughter was in third grade and still having difficulty learning to read. Within one 14-week program, our daughter's spelling test grades went from failing to As. Over the last four years, we have completed three more rounds and our daughter's grades have improved in all subjects. While she still struggles to read fluently, she now listens to all of her textbooks on audio and her comprehension is on grade level. More importantly, our daughter has become much more social and interactive with her peers. We feel very fortunate to have found out about Auditory Processing as it has been such an important element for our daughter's education and socialization.

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### **When the Brain Can't Hear**

I came across a book in a bookstore. The title is, *When the Brain Can't Hear*, by Terri Bellis, and instantly I realized that I had to buy it. It is amazing the many connections in this book to my and my son's life. I cried. It seemed meant to be that I should find this book without even looking for it or knowing of its existence. It was so emotional for me and opened my eyes. FINALLY there was something that made sense. I am now obsessed with understanding more about this type of learning disorder and trying to eliminate these problems if we can.

My son is now 15 years old and I am at my wits end trying to figure out how to help him through the same problems that I faced. He faces many difficulties on a daily basis. He was diagnosed with ADHD in second grade. He is now in the ninth grade and he has been climbing a "slippery wall" all this time.

We know that my son has memory and attention problems, but, what if the information he is given doesn't get processed accurately? What if it takes a person two or three times as long to process complex information and that affects how the information is stored? This is and has been my problem; and now it is my son's.

The humiliation and frustration of trying to make people comprehend how words that are said to us are like watching a movie played at fast speed. It is exhausting to listen for any period of time. Teachers are easily frustrated with my son because he does not understand or follow their directions. When he comes home from school he is worn out from trying to concentrate on a rapidly moving target and retain the information. After he does his chores and homework it hurts me to ask any more of him.

His teachers claim he is perfectly capable of understanding and following through on the information presented. They are content with their illusions and have no clue to what he is going through. He tries to cover up his problem, but that's what we all do to hide our limitations.

My boy's self-esteem is dropping and my frustration with this issue is choking me. He is a good kid with a great personality and a big heart, but I see him going through all the same heartache that I had in school.

I found myself pretending to understand and acting as if I was okay most of my life. It makes me feel as though I have missed out on important information that I would have otherwise retained. When friends or family, "*call me out*" for not understanding them; they often make fun of me. This is greatly humiliating for me and my son. As a girl, all I wanted to do is crawl into a hole and never come out. I hate seeing my son moving in the same direction.

On a positive note, we are fully capable of understanding emotions and are highly logical. This actually increases our frustration. I have often wanted to just scream out, "YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND!!!"

I have always lacked a clear understanding of an auditory processing disorder, but I am hoping

that things will now change. I am willing to go to whatever length necessary to make people understand that this problem exists!

There is nothing worse than feeling like you are alone in the world. It has affected my life and my ability to advance in my work. This is a humiliation that I don't want for anyone, but it is especially painful to see this happening to my wonderful son.

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### An Adult With Acquired APD

I'm a 55 year old woman who was diagnosed with a degenerative disorder. Unfortunately, one of the major symptoms is the inability to understand much of what is said around me. I was referred to Dr. Bran who recommended and executed a program of auditory processing therapy.

When I began therapy I suffered from a low self-esteem and frustration of not understanding all that was happening and being said around me. Dr. Bran's patience with me was incredible. His simple reminders, "we're just having fun" were a constant calming source and allowed me to continue even when I did not get immediate results.

I used to be quite interested in all sports. In fact, I used to be quite an athlete myself. I could beat the boys and girls! Now I no longer have that ability – partly due to my condition. But, Dr. Bran and his therapy have returned my confidence to a point that I can once again follow sports and enjoy that which gave me joy for so long.

Before my disease I was on top of my game and thought by many to be very smart and clever. But with the disease; distractions, background noise and simply speaking on the cell phone were met with difficulty, frustration and short-temper. Waiting for a diagnosis for 15 years was a challenge in itself. Knowing something wasn't right when all the tests returned normal just made me feel worse. Following the diagnosis I had a better idea of what was happening and why. This understanding allowed me to be open to Dr. Bran's therapy and get the most out of it.

Today, I can speak more comfortably on a cell phone. I have tools to overcome obstacles that used to stop me in my tracks. A simple, “please repeat that” has reduced my stress and improved my confidence. Having a conversation in a crowded room no longer automatically frustrates me. I can focus and have better comprehension. While I’m not perfect or “cured” I am significantly more able and more comfortable than I was prior to therapy. I know, for me, this program is an on-going process that I will work on forever. If I continue to make the progress that I have to this point; I will continue to thrive and improve. The tools and the competence to use them have given me new hope in maintaining a normal life, relationships and a future.

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**Dear Ackie's Column**

Dear Ackie,

My colleagues and I have had a running dispute. Since we are all faithful readers of the Dear Ackie column, we agreed to ask you and we will abide by your decision. Our question is, “What is the best age to evaluate a person for APD and the best time for therapy?”

**Your Faithful Readers**

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Dear Faithful Readers:

Thank you for your confidence in me and honestly; I think your decision, to do as I say, is well founded. Ackie rarely makes a mistake. Even I have to admit that.

Eh... let’s get started. What...was the question again? Oh, yes I remember. You can quote me, “The best age to evaluate someone is the first time they come to you and the best time for therapy is as soon after that as possible.” So that’s all there is to it! Well... maybe I should add one more thing. When I hear parents (and unfortunately some professionals) tell me that you can’t test for APD before the magic age of 7 or 8 years it makes me very sad. Many of

us, for many years, have worked most successfully with younger children who had APD. I remember Jack saying that when he started doing APD work, 55 years ago, in addition to the regular therapy, he trained a whole class of first graders and then a class of kindergarteners.

You will not believe this, but when Ackie was a student we were told that we should not test a deaf child until they were **10-years-old!!!** Can you imagine that? They would have these children suffer and lose ground for 10 years before we could get habilitation started. Just imagine how much they lost and how far behind they fell? How could those children make up what they lost in plasticity, in information missed, in misinformation remembered? They didn’t.

The reason given for waiting that long was the children would be so much easier to test at 10 years of age. While that might be true, it had tragic consequences for the children that can’t be justified for the audiologist’s convenience. We have moved hearing testing earlier and earlier and now we test newborns with intervention by 6-months. However, I can still remember the uproar when an audiologist recommended that we put hearing aids on children as young as a year. People said that it was unethical! Fortunately, the deaf children of today are so much more advanced than in the dark ages of audiology. We’re not going to do that again.

Having an artificial age-barrier has stifled the development of appropriate procedures for young children with APD. Nevertheless, Donna Geffner and Ronald Goldman have developed the Auditory Skills Assessment (ASA) for evaluating children as young as 3½ years. Surely auditory training can be simplified or specifically developed for young children and there are appropriate apps at this time. There is no chance that the 7 - 8 year age-barrier will exist very long. And with your help the situation will improve even more quickly for so many children with APD.

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**I was shocked!**  
Jack Katz

I was evaluating a 7-year-old boy for APD. It was clear that the tasks were quite difficult for him and although he did not complain I knew he needed more breaks than most kids. This cute youngster had a lot on his plate.

The first break he was given was for jumping-jacks. That was very helpful but then he made some strange errors on a test so I knew that he was overloaded. It was time for another break.

This time I took out the 'spinner' which is a top that never seems to stop once you twirl it. So that entertained him for a while and then we went back to work.

Pretty soon it was clear that he needed yet another break so I took out Lego blocks, my last form of entertainment that I use for just such an occasion. This break gave me a chance to talk with his father.

A few minutes later when I turned around I was shocked. In those few minutes he took each block I gave him (16 small ones and 2 double sized blocks) and this is what he created (below). I could not believe my eyes. How did he ever figure that out and use every one of the blocks and then made such a fantastic and symmetric design??

I believe that we will be hearing more about this youngster when he's a young man. When you hear that a beautiful building was built by 'Frank Lloyd Jones' you will know this is the person with those Lego blocks.

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*This is the first fully internet issue of **SSW Reports**. Please pass this along to any colleagues who might like to know more about the SSW, the Buffalo Model and/or related issues. To subscribe they should contact: Kim Tillery [tillery@fredonia.edu](mailto:tillery@fredonia.edu) Also share this with colleagues or parents who might benefit from the letters re: APD.*

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