

“I GOT ALL THAT!”

He was so little and so delicate...

By Teresa Parker, Mental Health Coordinator for Kids Ranch

I have been blessed to be not only the mental health coordinator of the Kids Ranch program for the past several years but also to be able to tutor several special needs children. One of the children I have tutored this past year is so special to me. I want you to meet him. We will call him George.

George was seven years old and in second grade when I started working with him. He was the cutest and most petite 2nd grader I have ever seen! His mother, Karen, asked for help from Kids Ranch because she was concerned that he was not learning to read. The reading specialist at his school advised Karen to enroll George in the Kids Ranch Literacy Program. Karen is a single, working mom with two children, George and his older sister. Karen is a loving and caring mother.

Karen reported to Mary Bowers, Kids Ranch Educational Coordinator, that she was concerned that her son was not reading; he did not know the basic letters or sounds. She said that, at home, he had begun to say that he hated reading and would complain that he was dumb. This broke Karen's heart!

When Mary tested George, she discovered his reading level was early kindergarten. Kids Ranch teaches a highly successful, brain-based, multi-sensory phonics technique called “Synthesizing Phonics.” With the assistance of our specially trained tutors, this approach helps many non-readers quickly advance and become much stronger readers.

As we began working with George, we saw he was highly distractable and fidgety. He could not tolerate working on more than two words before he would complain and want to quit. I was asked to observe George in the teaching situation to see if I thought there was a learning barrier. By observing George's lack of attention and high distractibility, his low tolerance for sitting quietly and participating in learning, and by listening to Karen's experiences at home, I felt there were indeed classic signs of AD/HD; he had a specific type, AD/HD *without hyperactivity*. I asked Karen if I could do a full evaluation. Without hesitation, she agreed.

This type of AD/HD is the second most common type of ADD. It is most often overlooked by people who work with these children. It can even be overlooked by professionals such as teachers or doctors involved with the child. These children are much less likely to have disruptive behaviors; they are often passive and less assertive than the other children with AD/HD who have the accompanying hyperactivity-impulsivity. Research has shown that they may be socially withdrawn, awkward, or uninvolved. These children suffer from inattention and lack of organization; they also have a slower cognitive tempo. In a learning environment, these children typically have a slower processing ability for new information. As you can see, it can be challenging to discern Inattentive Type ADD.

Although they have a different set of symptom behaviors, these children have the same neurological deficit as the other children who are diagnosed with classic AD/HD. As such, they typically respond to the same stimulant medication. The traditional medication used to treat AD/HD stimulates the brain's executive functions, the part of the brain called the Pre-Frontal Cortex (forehead area). The medication specifically stimulates the production of neurotransmitters like dopamine and norepinephrine; these brain chemicals help the nerves in your brain to talk to one another; they help form a sort of chemical bridge between the nerves in your brain.

Once the nerves are connected via this chemical bridge, the child (or adult) can concentrate, decipher the information, understand, organize, remember, and retrieve what has been learned. It also increases the presence of hindsight and foresight, helps to understand and organize emotional information and experiences, and increases the person's sense of well-being.

Using Karen's input, his teacher's comments, and my observation, I completed George's evaluation. The evaluation clearly showed that George suffered from very significant symptoms of inattention and distractibility, along with low motivation and a lack of organizational abilities.

Karen took the report with her to George's appointment with his pediatrician. The pediatrician met with George and Karen, confirmed the diagnosis of AD/HD, and prescribed a trial of a low-dose stimulant medication.

However, Karen still struggled with deciding whether she should try the medication for her son. As a single mom, she felt the heavy responsibility in making the decision about what would be the best treatment for her son. During my next meeting with Karen, I tried to answer all of her questions and gave her information from Dr. Amen's excellent book on ADD, **Healing ADD, The Breakthrough Program that Allows Us to See and Heal Different Types of ADD**. After we talked, she said she felt ready to try the medicine.

On the first Monday, I met with George (now on his new medication) for his after-school tutoring; I saw such a big difference in his attitude and ability to learn! George was alert and bright. He said he had a great day at school and thought his medicine helped him learn. In the following days and weeks, I saw a whole different boy than the quiet, impatient boy I had been working with. Now

George always came to his lesson with his homework completed. He remembered the letters and the combinations of sounds. He pushed himself to do new words and was so proud of his work that he asked to show his mom what he had learned. He started to enjoy reading too! He chose books to take home and read with his mom. He was so proud of his new ability to read!

After one of these sessions with George, I texted Karen this note:
"Karen! I can't believe the difference in your son! He is absolutely chewing up the new words. He is so motivated to learn, and it is so much fun to watch him discover how smart he is and how much he can remember from his past lessons!"

Karen replied, ***"Yes! I can see all that too. I am so glad that you helped me know how to help George. We can all see how much happier and more confident he is now. This is really something!"***

The following week, Karen asked me if I thought George could handle going to Bible School on Wednesday evenings. With his new ability to listen and understand new information, Karen thought George would benefit from this new experience. We both agreed that it was a worthy goal and that he was ready.

George joyfully exclaimed at the beginning of our tutoring session after his first Bible class, ***"Teresa, you know what? I'm going to Bible***

school, and I'm going to learn about God! And I even got my own Bible now!" Of course, I found this endearing and told him I was so proud of him.

Two days later, we met again, and this time, George started our session by exclaiming, ***"Teresa, you know what? I'm learning more about God at Bible School. And now I have my Mom who loves me and God who loves me, and I can read! I got all that!"***

You cannot imagine the joy on this little boy's face!

If you would like more information, please see our website.

Kids Ranch- Building Caring, Capable, Confident Kids- One child at a Time!