

Opening the Door to Potential

Danielle Mixon, MNRI® Parent and Core Specialist-in-Training, Prairieville, LA, USA



MNRI® has changed my son's life. Will was born full term, and met all of his developmental milestones on time as an infant and young toddler. I remember taking him to his doctor for his 2 year check-up and for his vaccinations at 26 months of age. He was happy, healthy, and age-appropriate for all of his milestones.

Within weeks, I started to notice that he wasn't talking as much and seemed to be drifting into his own world. He became extremely anxious and started having frequent severe meltdowns for seemingly no reason. He stopped following commands and responding to his name when we called him. He stopped playing with his toys, started banging objects on windowsills, opening and closing doors and drawers repeatedly, and would run his fingers up and down our wooden blinds repeatedly, to the point where he has broken many of them. He would walk around the house, much like the Energizer bunny, and go from one nonfunctional activity to another. He lost physical skills as well in that he could no longer push the pedals of his tricycle to make it go. He would sit on the tricycle and just look confused as to how to work it. He stopped pointing at things and became completely nonverbal.



Danielle Mixon



Will during sad times.

By 31 months, we went through the process of having him evaluated by Early Steps, an early intervention program for children under 3. Results of the testing showed that his receptive language abilities were greater than 3 standards below the norm, or an age equivalency of 13 months. His overall communication scores were less than the 1st percentile for his age. His overall cognitive scores were in the 6th percentile for his age. As a pediatric occupational therapist, I knew that these scores indicated a poor prognosis for his future. At the time, I worked with children in schools and knew that kids with test scores this low are put in self-contained classes.

Will qualified for a speech therapist and a special instructor to come to our home to help him. I called his sessions "scream therapy" because that's basically what they consisted of. The therapist and teacher tried to work with him and pull him out of his 'world', and he protested by screaming and having tantrums. I also tried to do therapy with him with no luck. He would end up crying and having a fit if I put any demands on him.

As he approached age 3, he was evaluated by the public school sys-



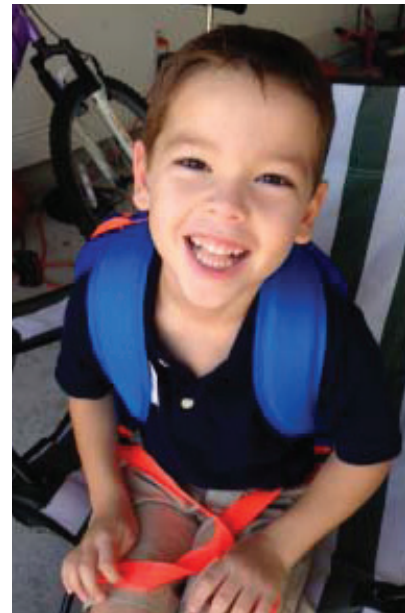
Will enjoying a pony ride.

tem. I remember vividly during the 45 minute evaluation with the speech therapist, Will did not say one intelligible word, but seemed to speak to his hand in a high pitched jibberish. He also opened and closed a drawer repeatedly, did not respond to his name, and didn't seem to notice that other people were in the room. When given a toy horse, he banged it on the table repeatedly. When the educational diagnostician evaluated him, she took him into another room, and came running out within 10 minutes because she couldn't get him to stop screaming. He qualified for speech therapy and special instruction for the school system. When they would work with him, it was more of the same scream therapy. Some of his goals were to respond to his name and to follow a 1 step command.

Soon after he turned 3, a friend suggested that I look into Dynamic Therapy Specialists, a therapy group in Baton Rouge. I made an appointment and Will started MNRI® therapy once a week with Core Specialist, Vicky Roy. She showed me some exercises to do with him on a daily basis and, very soon, things started to change. The first signs of improvement were that his tantrums started to decline, and he stopped talking jibberish in his high pitched voice. After his therapy sessions, he seemed relaxed and would come home and lie on the couch for a while. Within a month, he started to look at me again, and his repetitive behaviors started to decline. I continued his weekly therapy sessions with Vicky and I did MNRI® with him at home for about 20 minutes per day, 5 days each week.

I started taking MNRI® courses, starting with *Lifelong, Children with Challenges*, and *Dynamic and Postural Reflex Integration*, which were extremely helpful in learning new techniques to help Will overcome his challenges. He started to notice his surroundings, started talking a little bit, and developed a close bond with me. He began verbally labeling objects but his functional speech was slow to develop. He had no concept of words that did not have a visual representation such as pronouns, prepositions, adverbs, or adjectives. The MNRI® took his brain and body out of such a severe state of fight or flight that he was eventually able to focus on learning new information. We started a Home Program consisting of MNRI®, fine motor and gross motor skill training, as well as verbal behavior training to teach him language in a way that he could understand. He also attended traditional speech therapy once a week to work on verbal skills. He was finally able to accept other interventions without getting completely overwhelmed. Other professionals that worked with him, such as his preschool teacher and traditional speech therapist, said that they have never seen a child learn so fast. I can thank MNRI® for that. He started to learn new information and, with a lot of teaching, was able to start bridging the gap between where he was and where he needed to be. As a therapist, I was blown away with how well MNRI® worked for Will, especially when so many other strategies had proven unsuccessful.

We continued working at home with Will daily as well as weekly therapy visits with Vicky for 2 years. He would show progress and then would seem to have a decline from time to time, which I later learned was called a transition phase, in preparation for higher levels of growth. During transitional phases, I was told to continue the exercises, and then I soon saw improvements again. For a while, he would stop one nonfunctional behavior and then seem to gravitate to something else equally nonfunctional. We kept working with him and, eventually, he stopped all behaviors such as opening and closing doors, etc. One remarkable memory is how he was fascinated by letters and numbers and would read website addresses on TV, signs in the environment, etc. to the point that this is all he wanted to do. I took the *MNRI® Auditory Visual* course, and did the



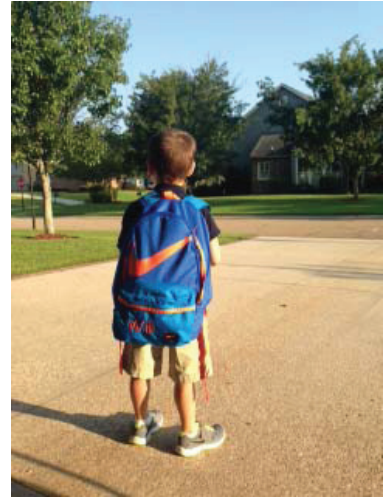
Will engaged and enjoying life.

protocol with him for 2 weeks (4 times total) and he completely stopped this nonfunctional behavior! He started noticing the pictures on TV and in books instead of just the words. As a result, we soon saw a jump in his language and comprehension skills.

He is now 5½ years old and is in a regular education kindergarten class. All of his autistic characteristics have faded and he fits right in with his neurotypical peers. He loves school, has several friends as well as a charming personality, and always gets green lights for good behavior. He is a little chatter box and is excited to tell me all about his day when he gets home from school. He is able to draw pictures, write a paragraph, and he typed 9 sentences with his sight words in a computer lab lesson! His teacher was blown away because she has never seen a 5 year old type so much correctly. His peers even voted him as student of the month! He has mastered most of the kindergarten skills and is performing well above average for his age.

His latest test scores are as follows: Receptive language – 5 years, 9 months; Expressive language – 6 years, 3 months; Literacy – 7 years, 2 months; and Math – 6 years, 0 months. He was 5 years, 5 months at the time of testing. His communication scores, from age 31 months, to current, have improved by 4 standard deviations! This is type of progress is unheard of! The future looks promising for Will and I cannot thank the Masgutova Method® enough for giving my son his life back.

MNRI® has not only changed the life of my son but it has also changed my professional life and the way that I practice therapy. I am in training to be a MNRI® Core Specialist and I have recently opened a therapy clinic to help other children and their families with similar challenges, and to let others know of the many benefits of MNRI® intervention.



Will waiting for the school bus and what the future will bring.



We thank Danielle for her heartfelt story and congratulate Will in his progress out of his 'world' and into ours. Will shows us that he is a Winner and plans to have a bright future of good health and many accomplishments! – MNRI® Team