

I will never forget December 20, 2013 because it was the day someone told me something was wrong with my child. Jackson was about 18 months old at the time and being our first child, we had no idea what a "typically developing" child looked like. We thought maybe he was just a little off in terms of expressive language (he knew about 6 words) or his behavior (various anxieties & control issues). We visited the pediatrician for his checkup and they suggested we contact EI for an evaluation because he seemed off of the "typical development" path in several different areas.

Tracy and Hester came over a few days later for Jackson's initial evaluation. His Battelle scores were very low in a number of areas. It was painful to hear, but through the shock of hearing how off he was from typical development, Tracy and Hester told us the one thing that we needed to hear in that moment – "Don't worry, we are here to help". As soon as I heard that statement, I was able to turn the corner from parent denial to engaged advocate. I knew we had contacted the right people and that they were going to teach all of us as a family, how to tackle Jackson's developmental delays.

Amy was Jackson's first therapist (DI) to come to our home. Jackson was extremely hesitant to warm up to Amy at first, but by about his 10th session of twice a week therapy, he started to make some real progress. She taught us simple activities to play with him to help him improve his skills. We popped bubbles to help him learn to point, we played with play dough to get used to different textures, we colored with crayons to strengthen motor skills, and we stacked blocks to help with coordination among MANY other activities. In a short amount of time he went from a child who was afraid of anything or anyone new to a little boy who would open the door, greet Amy with a hug, and yell "Let's play!".

About 4 months after working with Amy, we as a team, decided it was time to add OT into the mix, so Tracy began coming once a week. We knew it would be a rough transition for him to adjust to Tracy due to the hands-on nature of OT which was not something Jackson was a fan of. Couple that with him still being in that "stranger danger" phase and you get a long first few weeks for Tracy. Jackson learned all about time out and what was appropriate behavior versus inappropriate. After those first few weeks, Tracy began to breakthrough to him. He started trying new things I could not have imagined him doing; bouncing on giant balls, allowing himself to be tickled, crawling around on a scooter, accepting hand over hand direction. He was becoming comfortable with the idea that it is ok to not be in control all of the time.

A year and a half later, we are here with an about-to-be 3 year old boy who loves playing with kids, trying new activities, high-fiving everyone he meets, and stepping out his comfort zone. The anxiety exists, but he controls it well. The tantrums happen, but far less frequently than in the past and you can see him think about his reaction before just reacting. The delays are there, but they no longer define him. Early intervention got him to this place. I consider Tracy, Amy, Sue, and Romona part of our family. They made us a promise to help our little Jackson, and they did just that. They saw him for his potential, not just for his delays. They treated him like he was the most important child they were seeing that day and there aren't enough thank you's in the world to express my gratitude. I no longer look at December 20, 2013 as the horrible day where I found out something was wrong with Jackson, instead I see it as the day where I had the opportunity to welcome 4 amazing people in our home who changed our son's life for the better.