



Little Souls taking big steps

What is Autism?

July 2007, volume 1, issue 2



Autism is diagnosed when a child displays a number of deficits and excesses in several behavioural domains as summarized below:

The child with autism may have no useful verbal communication and sometimes even a lack of nonverbal communication is evident. Repetitive or nonsensical speech is often apparent, whilst others may have well developed speech that is not used socially.

The child with autism often seems largely uninterested in and unresponsive to other people.

The child with autism often possesses a narrow range of interests and activities.

Stereotyped patterns of behaviour are often repeated over and over, and play usually lacks spontaneity, variety and social components.



The children with autism who are now at Little Souls all share the characteristics of the text book definition, but as individuals with their own personalities and their own particular strengths and challenges they are all wonderfully different and unique in their own rights. Such is the nature of autism, that children with the same diagnosis can be so varied in how they present. The uniqueness of each child must be respected - their strengths must be celebrated, and we must help them to overcome the particular challenges that they as individuals face. This can not be done with a one size fits all approach to their therapy and education. Individual programs must be developed and continually tweaked to keep pace with the child's development, and troubleshoot any new problem areas that may develop through the course of their education. This is not easy, but if it is done well our children can make wonderful progress.



One of the major challenges I knew was ahead of us when we established Little Souls was going to be to find therapists who would be up to the job of "doing it well". The job of therapist is extremely challenging - it requires skills which can be taught, but it also requires that "X factor" intrinsic to certain people who bring their own unique understanding and qualities to the job. This is not something that can be taught - you either have it or you don't. I am extremely proud of the team of Little Souls staff. They have developed the skills acquired through our in-house training program; they also have the aforementioned "X factor"; and every single one of them also has the most important qualities of all - passion and a belief in the children's capabilities. It has not been an easy road and we have lost people along the way, but the capabilities of our staff have far exceeded my expectations of where we would be at just four months since our opening. Can we improve? Absolutely. We will continue to develop our skills and improve our services - this will be ongoing. However, I wanted to pause just briefly to acknowledge the wonderful efforts of all our staff members. We have seen some great progress in all of our children. Autism is a complex and pervasive syndrome and treatment is very much a marathon rather than a sprint. Now we are well equipped as a team to go the distance and we look forward to celebrating many more successes along the way.

Fundraising Update

Mayor Ron Clarke visited the centre this month to present his cheque for \$73 868.75. This money was raised by our Patron Mayor Ron Clarke during a 9.5 hour, 50 km walk at Pacific Fair. Little Souls would like to thank the Mayor again for his truly inspirational effort and commitment.

Little Souls would like to take this opportunity to thank all the bighearted, supportive members of our Fundraising Steering Committee who work relentlessly to ensure our Little Souls have the best possibility of reaching their full potential. There are not many members but together they have moved mountains. Thank you for all your support and commitment.



Mayor Ron Clarke with some of our little souls



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Volunteer of the Month

Little Souls would like to acknowledge the generous efforts of Cathie Gill, our volunteer bookkeeper. Cathie is a special individual who has given up a lot of her time and wonderful talents to ensure Little Souls can help as many children as possible. Thank you for all your hard work Cathie, it is much appreciated.

It's Tax Time!

Now is a great time to make a tax deductible donation to Little Souls Taking Big Steps. You can send your donation to:

Little Souls Taking
Big Steps Ltd
PO Box 662
Labrador
QLD 4215

Or contact:

Graham Dytor
0410448525

Storm's Story

My husband Kerry and I are blessed with two beautiful children, both conceived as a result of modified IVF, our daughter Skye is 7 and our son Storm is 5. Storm was developing well for his age but when Storm was 19 months old, he suddenly stopped talking, eating and seemed to really enjoy wheels, pram wheels, toy car and truck wheels. Storm would turn them upside down and spin them. After a few days I decided to take him to our local doctor, who had known Storm since he was born. It was rather strange because the day before we saw our doctor I had heard on the radio about this little boy with "Autism". He also had a fascination with wheels. Listening to this boy's mother I thought, not really knowing what Autism was, that maybe Storm had autism. We saw our local doctor and I had asked him if maybe Storm had autism and he told me not to be so silly, Storm was fine. Knowing my own child I knew Storm wasn't OK and asked him for a referral to see a specialist. He didn't think it was necessary but gave me one anyway. We went to the specialist and he also told us Storm didn't have autism. It eventually took the next 12 months of regularly going to see our specialist to have the diagnosis confirmed. Even though I knew there was something not right, I was devastated when the diagnosis was confirmed. I think you just worry what quality of life your child will have. Now was the big challenge to find out how we could help Storm. This was not an easy task. We enrolled him into a SEDU and a C & K and he went to speech therapy each week. These were our only options until now. Fortunately, a friend of my mothers saw a story about this family who also had a son with autism and the boy's mum was going to open an early intervention centre for children with autism. I kept tabs on their website for progress on their opening. To our great delight "Little Souls Taking Big Steps" opened their doors on 12th March and Storm was one of their first enrolments. Little Souls uses ABA therapy which I believe is the best way for a child with autism to learn with one on one training. Robyn and all of the team at Little Souls are fantastic. As soon as you walk into the centre you are welcomed. We are always well informed of Storm's progress. When Storm has achieved something great there is always excitement to let us know, even with the odd tear in Robyn's or one of the super teacher's eyes. Storm has been going to Little Souls now for three months and has been making big improvements. Storm has also made great new friends and loves to go to Little Souls.



Storm

Entertainment Books

Little Souls Taking Big Steps is raising funds by selling the 2007/2008 Entertainment™ Book. The Gold Coast & Surrounds Entertainment™ Book is \$50 and \$10 from every Book sold contributes greatly to our fundraising! **There truly is something for everyone** with hundreds of high value 25-50% off and two-for-one offers from Avis, Dreamworld, WhiteWater World, Movieworld, Wet 'n' Wild, Seaworld, Crown Towers, Vie @ Versace, Hog's Breath Café, Blue Grotto, Amalfi Bistro & Wine Bar, Food Fantasy Buffet, Noodle Box, Montezuma's, Domio's, Hungry Jacks, Baskin Robbins and many more.

To make sure you don't miss out contact:
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