

Introduction

When my son Raja was diagnosed with autism, I felt that someone had handed me a closed combination lock and failed to provide the code that would open it. Like a combination lock, autism unlocks its grasp once the precise individual combination is discovered. Comprehensive Organic Intervention is the methodology that made the dream of autism recovery come true. I am delighted to share my wondrous discovery that autism is recoverable and to assist others in achieving the dream of recovery, too

What is Autism Recovery?

Autism recovery is the process whereby individuals diagnosed with autism demonstrate linear, measurable indications of rehabilitation. Indicators may include, but are not limited to,

Language development and use

Age-appropriate attention span

Age-appropriate learning skills

Age-appropriate self-care skills

Toilet training mastery

Development of imagination

Interest in people, toys, and peer relationships

Reduction in, or elimination of,

- Tactile defensiveness

- Repetitive behaviors

- Rigid need for routine

- Hypersensitivities

- Hyperactivity

- Sleep disruption

Restoration or development of,

- Happy demeanor (smiling, laughing, dancing)

- Social personality, such as readily joining in group activities

- Gross- and fine- motor skills

What are the Keys to Recovery?

Recovery is founded on the belief that diagnosable autism is the result of a progressive, systemic, allergic response to dietary and environmental substances that trigger reactions. Eliminating reactions, improving digestion, regulating blood sugar, correcting imbalances or deficiencies, and eliminating toxins are the keys to recovery.

What is a Progressive, Systemic, Allergic Response?

A progressive, systemic, allergic response is a response to a dietary or environmental substance that often affects an individual insidiously, without immediate, measurable effect, progressing slightly with each subsequent encounter. Because the individual enjoys and seeks out the dietary or environmental substance that produces a response (imagine any food that your child eats every day), he chooses to ingest this food or contact this substance frequently. As the frequency of ingestion or contact progresses, the individual's immune system is impacted, reducing its ability to stabilize with each encounter. Finally, the foods or substances that an individual demands are believed to elicit an allergic response, such that the body's immune system is constantly triggered, causing a cascade of self-produced chemicals to enter the system in an attempt to stabilize.

When the progressive, systemic, allergic response is triggered again and again, the immune system loses its ability to cope. The immune system is not actually a system but a network of protectors designed to prevent harmful intruders, such as viruses, from causing illness. A progressive, systemic, allergic response requires the immune system to constantly fight invaders. Imagine an army of immune cells constantly doing battle. Just as they are fighting the first round of invaders consumed at breakfast, the second round enters at lunch. Before they can get a handle on lunch, the third wave washes over, and so on. Battling valiantly, the army faces the same onslaught day after day, eventually becoming weary and fatigued. Disorganized, the immune cells become unable to cope with the constant barrage of invaders. The first signs of trouble appear. Perhaps some gross- or fine-motor skills are lacking. Perhaps language fails to develop. Perhaps anti-social behaviors set in or subtle personality changes appear. Autism's developmental characteristics take their early forms.

Thus, as an autistic individual begins self-limiting his diet to the handful of foods that he likes best, his body may be undergoing rapid and pervasive changes in an attempt to fight off the allergens in the food. Unfortunately, the immune system loses the battle as the individual continues to consume foods that trigger the immune system meal after meal. The immune system then loses the ability to cope with progressive, systemic changes triggered by allergens and early signs of diagnosable autism manifest. The self-limited diet may well represent an addiction to foods that trigger this chain of events. Ironically, an individual may actually be addicted not to the foods themselves, but to the feelings generated by the chemicals produced by the body to fight such allergens. From this perspective, recovery is largely the process of breaking an addiction and should be undertaken with the seriousness one would employ in helping a loved one overcome any type of substance abuse.

What is a Reaction?

A reaction is a break from homeostasis, or a stable physiological state. Because autism is a progressive, systemic, allergic response, achieving and maintaining a stable state is a critical factor in recovery. In essence, recovery is the undoing of the events that resulted in diagnosable autism. Thus, as the allergic response guides a susceptible individual toward diagnosable

autism, he progressively loses his ability to maintain a stable state which affects him systemically and results in diagnosable autism. By avoiding reactions, individuals are allowed to enter the healing state whereby recovery can take place. The longer a stable state is achieved and maintained, the greater the opportunity for healing.

What are the Symptoms of a Reaction?

The symptoms of a reaction become clear once homeostasis, or a stable state, is achieved. In Raja's case, a stable state was achieved using an elimination diet (please refer to my book *Climbing Out of Autism One Bite at a Time* for a complete description of the elimination diet). Once Raja was physiologically stable, a dietary or environmental substance that triggered a reaction manifested the following symptoms:

- Pupils dilate
- Demonstrates unusual thirst
- Enters a mental stupor
- Becomes unusually giddy or happy (early stages)
- Becomes hyperactive
- Becomes hypersensitive to sounds, smells, and touch
- Exhibits a temporary language deficit
- Markedly diminished eye contact
- Demonstrates tic-like behavior
- Walks on tip-toes
- Demonstrates overt anti-social behavior
- Markedly diminished attention span
- Becomes demanding
- Fixates on objects
- Becomes aggressive
- Becomes clumsy
- Becomes manic about certain foods

After a few reactions, I recognized that Raja's symptoms always appeared in succession and discovered that I could time the duration of each stage. This was an important discovery because it indicated that autism was not truly chaotic and unpredictable (the way that it felt), just highly complex with a lengthy duration per reaction. Understanding a reaction's predictability, both in terms of duration and succession of symptoms, I was able to formulate a coping strategy that would best support Raja's limitations during a reaction. Additionally, I was comforted by the knowledge that Raja would soon stabilize and continue progressing with his recovery.

What is a Reaction's Duration?

My research indicates that a reaction initially lasts three days. In other words, for every molecule of allergenic food an autistic individual eats, his body enters a reaction that lasts three

days, losing three days of developmental gain over one tiny bite of allergenic food. Thus, recovery is dependent on honoring the immune system's need for zero-tolerance: zero contact with foods or environmental substances that cause a reaction.

As an individual recovers, a reaction's duration and intensity diminish. Whereas Raja's reactions used to last three days and clear on the fourth day, his reactions now last two days and clear on the third day. Additionally, the intensity of his reactions has ameliorated considerably. Symptoms of a reaction at this stage of recovery include:

- Awakens earlier than normal
- Thirsty upon waking or at bedtime
- Less social upon waking (normally cuddly, talkative, smiling and happy upon waking)
- Pupils dilate or constrict
- Demonstrates fear of dogs
- Markedly diminished ability to attend verbal instructions (does not stop when instructed)
- Markedly diminished amount of smiling/joy
- Lacks manners
- Behaves strangely in front of others
- Constantly moves – may have two or more activities going at once
- Unable to modulate behavior
- Touches strangers without asking (may hug an unknown child from behind)
- Demands to be first when playing with other children
- Loses concentration quickly
- Climbs on things, even inappropriate things like furniture
- Slurs speech (less comprehensible)
- Demands an object over and over again, even when instructed otherwise
- Turns right when I say left

Just as the three-day reactions followed a predictable pattern, Raja's two-day reactions are predictable also. Moreover, the reduction in a reaction's duration and intensity are signs of healing and an indication that rehabilitation, up to and including full recovery, may be possible if recovery efforts are sustained.

What is Zero-tolerance?

Zero-tolerance is the term used to describe the immune system's need to be free of interference from reactions so it can heal. As the immune system heals by practicing zero-tolerance, developmental milestones return. Learning capabilities result from expanded attention span. Language and social interaction develops. Eye-contact improves. Hyperactivity disappears. Tactile defensiveness vanishes. Language, social, behavior, and developmental gains are accomplished through zero-tolerance.

Consider zero-tolerance from a different viewpoint. If a loved one were recovering from an alcohol addiction, you would not offer him a drink. You would encourage him not to imbibe spirits and commend him on his ongoing progress. This is practicing zero-tolerance. The

practice of zero-tolerance is an integral part of a systematic approach to autism recovery called Comprehensive Organic Intervention.

What is Comprehensive Organic Intervention?

Comprehensive Organic Intervention is an individualized biological approach that seeks to identify and eliminate dietary and environmental obstacles and imbalances that prevent or impede healing. Comprehensive Organic Intervention is so named because of what each word means. “Comprehensive” means that the approach addresses both dietary and environmental factors. “Organic” means that the approach is biological, addressing autism from a physiological versus a traditional (psychological) perspective. “Intervention” means to intervene or come between two things – in this case, to separate an autistic individual from the mechanisms that result in, or exacerbate, autism. Thus, Comprehensive Organic Intervention is a term describing a process that seeks to separate, or heal, an individual from his autism by addressing the negative dietary and environmental influences that impact him physiologically.

How does Comprehensive Organic Intervention Work?

Comprehensive Organic Intervention provides a systematic approach for autism recovery. by establishing baselines, or starting points, for rehabilitation. Baselines are established through testing or an elimination diet. Testing can often be accomplished either invasively or non-invasively, giving parents freedom to choose the methodology that is right for their child. Invasive testing usually involves a blood sample. Non-invasive testing involves either muscle testing or electro-dermal screening (EDS). For additional testing information, please refer to Helping My Child in this web site.

What Makes Comprehensive Organic Intervention a Superior Approach to Autism Recovery?

Comprehensive Organic Intervention is a superior approach for several reasons.

First, Comprehensive Organic Intervention is an individualized approach, customized to meet an individual’s needs for recovery. Because it is not a one-size-fits-all program, Comprehensive Organic Intervention does not dismiss an individual if he fails to adequately or consistently respond. In contrast, Comprehensive Organic Intervention encourages parents to individually assess a child’s needs and to detect recovery deterrents if recovery plateaus.

Second, the goal of Comprehensive Organic Intervention is to stabilize a child’s physiology by avoiding reactions. In a stable state, a child begins to listen, respond, and bond normally. Comprehensive Organic Intervention provides tools for detecting reactions and suggestions for eliminating them.

Third, Comprehensive Organic Intervention is a biological approach addressing autism not a hopeless and incurable brain disorder, but as a complex but treatable condition resulting from imbalances and deficiencies. Comprehensive Organic Intervention asserts that autism recovery is possible and that it can be achieved by addressing a child's biological imbalances and deficiencies.

Fourth, Comprehensive Organic Intervention gives autism structure. In other words, rather than being subject to autism's overwhelming, constant, and burdensome demands, Comprehensive Organic Intervention introduces levels of predictability that reduce chaos and restore peace to the home. For example, when a child who has achieved a stable state inadvertently eats a bite of an allergenic food, a parent will know that his child will be reacting for three days (duration may vary by individual). Additionally, he will know how his child will react each of the three days and will be able to develop a plan of action for each of these days. He will also know that, barring further infraction, his child will return to a stable state on the fourth day and his child's ability to learn and progress will return. Thus, the unpredictability of autism is eradicated and structure takes its place. This may be one of the greatest benefits Comprehensive Organic Intervention provides – the ability to predict how long a child's reaction will last and the knowledge that, barring further infraction, developmental progress will resume on the fourth day.

Fifth, Comprehensive Organic Intervention works. As a parent faithfully adheres to the principles of Comprehensive Organic Intervention, his child enters the recovery process. Rehabilitation commences and progresses so long as the principles are practiced. The miraculous journey of autism recovery begins.

How Do We Measure Autism Recovery?

Autism recovery is measured by determining whether, and at what rate, an autistic individual is achieving and maintaining developmental milestones and reversing or abandoning autistic characteristics such as lack of eye contact or antisocial behaviors. Progress should be linear and sequential, moving from one milestone to the next in a predictable pattern.

Unlike random developmental strides whereby an autistic child may learn a particular skill but lack the ability to associate and apply the skill in similar situations, recovery is achieved and measured in linear developmental progress. For example, to be considered "in recovery," an individual who learns to speak must regularly increase his vocabulary. Then, he must assemble simple sentences and subsequently assemble complex sentences, and so on. Linear skill development typifies the growth pattern for normally developing children. Steady, linear skill development is the measure of autism recovery.

What if Developmental Progress is Inconsistent?

When properly implemented, Comprehensive Organic Intervention results in measurable, sustained developmental progress. If developmental progress is inconsistent, not sustained, or appears to have reached a plateau, take corrective measures to reinstate a stable state. Achieving a stable state, and maintaining it through zero-tolerance, is the key to recovery.

What Types of Substances Can Cause a Reaction?

Any food or environmental substance to which an individual is allergic, even if only slightly, can cause a reaction. Additionally, blood sugar imbalances and/or lack of sleep can result in reactions. Finally, any product containing heavy metals or chemicals, even if it contains a chemical considered safe by FDA standards or in quantities considered safe by the FDA, can cause a reaction. Toothpaste, shampoo, air fresheners, perfumes, deodorants, landscaping products, cleaning supplies, and table salt are but a few of the many examples of products containing chemicals or heavy metals that are considered safe by FDA standards that will likely cause a reaction in an autistic child. These are also products an autistic child will probably encounter one or more times a day.

Why Do Chemicals Cause Reactions?

I believe that chemicals cause reactions in autistic individuals because individuals diagnosed with autism are born at, or above, threshold. "Threshold" is the limit that any chemical is considered safe, such as 1 part per million (ppm). In other words, a chemical that is considered safe at one ppm would be unsafe at higher proportions. Arguments against determining safe threshold limits include the fact that most chemicals are never tested in combination so the result of combining chemicals is unknown. (According to Terry F. Yosie, Vice President of Strategic Communications for the American Chemistry Council, there are 9,000 chemical products on the marketplace today). Moreover, chemical thresholds are not determined by considering tolerances of fetuses or children whose developing minds, bodies, and immune systems are far more delicate than an adult's. Finally, chemicals are never tested cumulatively, such that a safe threshold for a given chemical may reduce over repeated exposure and by accumulating other chemicals in the body. Thus, it seems very likely that autistic children, whose chemical sensitivities are quite extreme, have preexisting threshold levels that are dangerously close to overload at birth. This certainly appears to be the case for children who did not exhibit signs of autism until vaccination.

It is unclear whether preexisting biological imbalances predispose one to autism or if reactions to allergenic substances, and the attendant self-limited diet, cause imbalances that result in diagnosable autism, but individuals with compromised immune systems should avoid all exposure to, or contact with, chemicals. Many chemicals that persist in the marketplace are known neurotoxins and carcinogens, two good reasons to steer clear of them.

How Does One Avoid Products Containing Chemicals?

Choose chemical-free substitutions. Chemical-free substitutions for household products are available at natural food stores or on the Internet. Chemical-free substitutions for paint, beds, bedding, clothing, landscape products, pest controls, and similar needs may also be accessed via the Internet. Also, consider purchasing used products since they have already out-gassed. (Out-gassing is the airing-out process new products require to lose their odor. Out-gassing is so named because chemicals are released into the air in the form of gas). Classified ads, garage sales, and thrift stores are good resources for many types of goods that have already out-gassed.

Chemical-free food (organic) may be obtained at natural food stores and some supermarkets. Read labels carefully. In some supermarkets, and also in large natural food chains, conventionally grown (sprayed with pesticides) produce is not always clearly delineated from its organic counterparts. If possible, find a natural food store that carries only organic produce. This makes shopping much easier. Many natural foods stores also carry range-fed meat and poultry free of hormones and antibiotics; eggs from range-fed chickens; organic spices; non-allergenic flours (e.g., tapioca, potato starch, and sweet rice); nutritional oils; supplements; and many types of helpful books, including cookbooks. Thus, for those serious about achieving autism recovery using Comprehensive Organic Intervention, a well-stocked natural foods store is invaluable.

What Explains the Range in Autistic Spectrum Disorders?

Autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) range from high-functioning individuals to individuals whose capabilities are severely compromised. While it is not clear why this range exists, one plausible explanation relates to Histamine Complex, a factor that determines the level of allergic response to a given allergen. Thus, higher-functioning autistic children may have a lower Histamine Complex, such that allergens produce a lesser effect in their bodies than in children who are severely compromised. Severely compromised autistic children may possess a higher or larger Histamine Complex, resulting in a faster onset of autistic manifestations or a more comprehensive disabling effect. Additionally, it is very likely that presence of heavy metals and chemicals represent a significant deterrent to the immune system's ability to cope with allergens. Heavy metals and chemicals may also play a significant role in developing allergic reactions. Although the determinants for autistic spectrum disorders require more research, autism recovery is still possible. Fortunately, it is not necessary to understand what causes autism in order to understand how to heal from it. Perhaps the answers regarding autism's cause(s) will emerge as autistic individuals enter the recovery process.

Summary of Comprehensive Organic Intervention

Comprehensive Organic Intervention is a self-help program based on the belief that diagnosable autism represents a progressive, systemic, allergic response to dietary and environmental substances and that recovery commences when imbalances and deficiencies are corrected and a

stable state is achieved and maintained. Comprehensive Organic Intervention advocates testing to establish baselines for recovery. Comprehensive Organic Intervention also advocates zero-tolerance regarding dietary and environmental substances that trigger a reaction. Avoiding reactions by practicing zero-tolerance allows the immune system to heal. As the immune system heals, an individual's ability to listen, respond, and bond grows, demonstrated by achieving and sustaining measurable, linear developmental progress.

Practicing Comprehensive Organic Intervention reverses autism's unpredictability and eradicates chaos by establishing a stable state and monitoring for reactions. Considered one of the most valuable aspects of recovery, predictability allows parents an opportunity to plan for, and understand, the changes their child will undergo during a reaction and provides peace of mind that a reaction lasts for a specified period of time. Thus, autism becomes manageable, even predictable, using Comprehensive Organic Intervention. However, the greatest benefit of Comprehensive Organic Intervention is recovery – the miracle of speech in a child who could not talk, interaction with the socially removed, and demonstrated learning capabilities in those formerly unable – made possible by achieving and maintaining a stable state. Full recovery may be possible if rehabilitative efforts are sustained.

A Final Thought

Thank you for your interest in Autism Recovery Education. It is a joy to spread the word that autism recovery is possible and that the rewards of recovery are truly inspirational.

No child was created or intended to suffer autism's vast and insidious cruelties. I envision a radiant world where healthy, happy children abound and autism is but a distant memory, endeavoring toward that end. May the healing commence this very moment.

All well wishes to you on this very sacred and precious journey,
Michelle Cheney

The information presented herein, and all information provided by Michelle Cheney and Autism Recovery Education, is intended to be informative and to provide insight regarding the rehabilitative approach for autism recovery called Comprehensive Organic Intervention. This information is not intended to act as a substitution for medical advice and does not contain or imply guarantee of any level of recovery. This information is offered as a self-help program for those wishing to aid autistic individuals in the process of recovery. Every attempt has been made to ensure that this information is accurate as of the time of publishing. Please seek the advice of a licensed physician or naturopathic doctor before implementing the suggestions outlined herein.