

Advice to Professionals Who Must "Conference Cases"

by Janice Fialka

Before the case conference,
I looked at my almost five-year-old son
and saw a golden-haired boy
 who giggled at his baby sister's attempt to clap her hands,
 who charmed adults by his spontaneous hugs,
 who played "peace marches"

and who, at the age of four,
went to the Detroit Public Library
requesting a book on Martin Luther King.

After the case conference,
I looked at my almost five-year-old son.
He seemed to have lost his golden hair.

I saw only words plastered on his face
Words that drowned me in fear

 primary expressive speech and language disorder,
 severe visual motor delay
 sensory integration dysfunction
 fine and gross motor delay
 developmental dyspraxia and RITALIN now.

I want my son back. That's all.
I want him back now. Then I'll get on with my life.

If you could see my worry,
feel my ache
then you would return

my almost five-year-old son
who sparkles in sunlight, despite his faulty neurons.

Please give me back my son
undamaged

untouched by your labels, test results,
descriptions and categories.

If you can't, if you truly cannot give me back my son.
Then just be with us

quietly, gently, softly.

Sit with us and

create a stillness

known only in small, empty chapels at sundown.

Be there with us

as our witness and friend.

Please do not give me advice, suggestions, comparisons or
another appointment. (That's for later.)

I want only a quiet shoulder upon which to rest my head.

If you cannot give me back my sweet dream
then comfort me through this evening.

Hold us.

Rock us until morning light creeps in.

Then we will rise and begin the work of a new day.