

The Fearful Child



When A. A. Milne wrote children's stories about Christopher Robin and his playmates he wasn't diagnosing behavior/learning problems; but consider the personalities of the animals he created. Pooh is the distracted dreamer (ADD); Eeyore is depressed; Tigger gives meaning to the word "hyperactive." And then there's fearful little Piglet.

Kids have had fears for as long as there have been kids. Anxiety around new people or in new situations, separation from a parent, and monsters under the bed have always been a part of most children's development, but for some youngsters these symptoms are much too severe or last too long. Does diet play a role in helping such children?

Most people associate the Feingold Diet with helping behavior and learning problems, but we have had some reports of children who have lost their fearfulness, and one child in particular comes to mind.

This three-year-old boy was an only child, with two loving parents, and there was no clear reason why he was fearful. If he was far away from an animal and with his parents, he was okay, but if they tried to bring him closer he literally became terrified. Needless to say, their few excursions to the petting zoo were disasters!

One day we received a personal note in our post office box. It was a thank you from his mother, telling how grateful she and her husband were for the change in their little boy. They were successfully using the program and their child no longer had irrational fears. I called the mom to thank her and she asked for information to pass on to others. Since she lived nearby I said I would drop the material off.

One Saturday afternoon I knocked on the family's front door. The door was flung wide open by a vivacious, smiling, bright-eyed little boy, who obviously won the race to get there before his Dad. He had never seen me, but immediately invited me in to see his bug and reptile pets. This was the same child who had been terrified by his own shadow only a few months earlier.