

Cameron — a little boy with no speech and endless tears

Life was very hard for Cameron...and it was hard for those around him.

From birth, Cameron was "different." He was very moody, angry, hated being touched and would not sit still —EVER. He hated car rides, being in a stroller, being carried, sung to; you name it. Other than video games, he hated everything. He never slept for more than a few hours at a time and averaged about five hours. He woke up at night for no obvious reason 5-15 times a night until the age of 5. He spit up every time he ate until he was 3 years old, and he would break out in hives all over his body.



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At 1 1/2 we took him to an allergist, who said it was food sensitivities and he would outgrow it. He didn't.



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Cameron's behavior was horrible. In stores, he would run away and hide. In the car, he would scream until he vomited and he gave me two black eyes before he was three years old.

He couldn't speak; he would make sounds but no distinguishable words. We took him for a hearing test, which was fine, and they recommended occupational therapy. He was very uncooperative, but we continued with it two times a week for a year.

His behavior was horrible!

When Cameron was four he started speech therapy, but he hated it. He would scream until he began vomiting. He wouldn't participate with his speech therapist but would kick, hit and spit at her. She suggested medication to help subdue his outbursts.

He didn't know the alphabet or colors but was very good at math. We started thinking he was mildly autistic. He still was not sleeping and was getting hives daily. He craved food with dyes like a junky craves heroin.

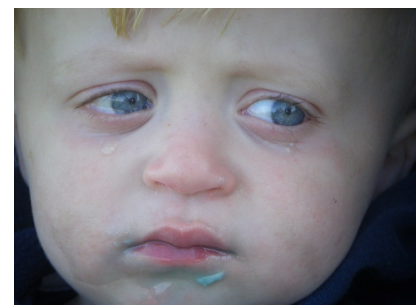
Cameron started 4-year-old kindergarten, and it was horrible. He hated it as much as his teacher hated him. He was the worst-behaved kid in a classroom of thirty-five 4-year-olds. His teacher also suggested looking into medicine, as she didn't think he would be able to function in mainstream school. But I was firmly against medicating him and started considering home-schooling.

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Here is a sequence of pictures I took as Cameron ate a blue lollipop (before I learned about additives). I can now see how he became progressively more miserable. In the last two pictures, there are tears rolling down his cheeks. That final picture gets me every time I look at it!

The following day, I took him for his first allergy appointment. The allergist said he had sensitivities. "Nothing to worry about. It won't kill him. He should outgrow it by age 4."



Cameron, continued

My “Ah-ha moment”

In the spring of 2013, I saw an online petition calling for Kraft to remove dyes from its mac & cheese because the additives could cause ADHD, mood swings and hives. This was my “ah-ha” moment! The previous night, Cameron had eaten Kraft Mac & Cheese and he didn’t sleep and was covered in hives.

I decided to try taking out food dye for a week to see if his hives went away. They did! We were amazed that after only a few days, he didn’t severely itch. After a few weeks, when he had had very limited exposure to food dyes, I noticed his behavior was different. I thought maybe he was getting sick.



Then, Cameron gave me a hug all on his own! This had never happened before. What’s more, he was waking up only a few times a night instead of ten. He wasn't so angry, and he wasn't as itchy. **And, after thirty days of being dye-free, he could SPEAK! Nearly perfect, clear words that everyone could understand. For the first time ever, he said, "I love you."**



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I spent most of that month in tears because of the life-changing miracles that came from removing dyes. He literally learned his colors overnight. I spoke with him about these changes, and he said his body didn't hurt as much as it used to and his head didn't buzz as much. I then realized my son spent the first five years of his life in constant pain and didn't know he was supposed to feel any different. We were dye-free for three months and doing great; then, we went to a 4th of July parade. He was perfectly behaved until I let him have some cotton candy, and all hell broke out! He was yelling, crying, screaming, curled up in the fetal position having a complete breakdown. This reaction to dye took five days to wear off.

I decided it was all or nothing. No food coloring, ever!

Things were much better that winter, and I also noticed a major change in Cameron’s dad. He cut back on his dye consumption. (He was completely addicted to Jolly Ranchers, Sour Patch Kids and Mountain Dew.) But now, he wasn't as angry at the world like he had always been and was just nicer in general. Who knew that dyes could affect adults? (They also affect pets. My dog will rip up toys if he eats anything with dye in it.)



He had felt miserable so it’s no wonder he acted miserable as well.

By March of 2014, we were about one-year dye-free, and Cameron was complaining about body pain again, and he had what doctors kept referring to as eczema. That’s when I stumbled across the Feingold Diet and thought, “This sounds like the symptoms Cameron is having now right down to the ADHD and behavioral issues.” I ordered the membership materials and have never looked back. The Feingold Association provides a long list of brand-name foods that are free of dyes, artificial flavors and the three worst preservatives. They also show how to test for salicylate sensitivity. We removed all preservatives from Cameron’s diet, and things slowly began to improve. (Preservatives are hard to identify because of loopholes in labeling laws. Chemicals like BHA, BHT and TBHQ can be hidden in the ingredients in a product or sprayed on the insides of the packaging and do not need to be listed.)

I kept a daily food & behavior journal for Cameron; if it went in his mouth, it was written down. This was a huge help in identifying a possible culprit.

How the additives affect him

If Cameron ate the petroleum-based dyes, artificial flavors or preservatives eliminated on the Feingold Diet he would experience these reactions: anger, body & joint pains, hives, impaired learning, ringing/buzzing in his ears, stomach pain, anxiety, rapid & loud speech, bi-polar tendencies, and the inability to follow simple directions.

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After thirty days of being dye-free, he could speak!

After being dye-free for just thirty days, Cameron experienced the following:

1. Hives subsided
2. Anger diminished
3. Started speaking
4. Learned his colors
5. Slept better at night
6. Body pain lessened
7. Developed compassion & empathy
8. Began to socialize (He couldn't handle being in public places with any number of people prior to this.)

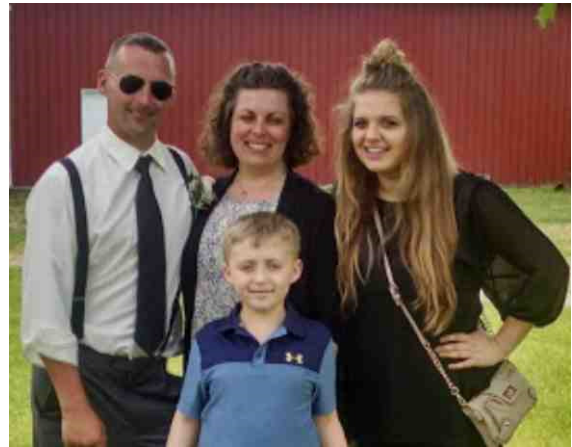
Cameron started kindergarten, free of artificial colors and flavoring at the same school where two previous teachers "suggested" medication. Three months into the school year, he was awarded "Student of the Month." He no longer needed speech therapy or an IEP. The therapist had no explanation as to why he suddenly could talk, but I am 100% certain it is from removing the additives. His occupational therapist contacted me three years after her last meeting with him, saying she couldn't believe the progress he had made. She said she assumed he would always have major issues.

In 2nd grade, Cameron was awarded "Student of the Month" with an emphasis on empathy. In 3rd grade, he received the "Character Trait Leadership" award. He is doing great in school.

His therapist was astonished at the progress he had made!

Food sensitivity avoidance has become our way of life. We follow the Feingold *Foodlist* almost 100%. Cameron still has "eczema" flare-ups occasionally, but they are not as severe. There are zero behavior issues that we deal with now.

Cameron sleeps an average of eight hours a night, seven days a week. He has never been sent to the principal's office, and he actively & willingly participates in school. We still need to tweak his diet on a regular basis and watch for things, but it is much easier now. We also found Cameron can have reactions to dyes in soap, shampoo, temporary tattoos, toothpaste etc., so, all of that must be dye-free also.



The last accidental food coloring exposure was in May 2014. Within twenty minutes of ingesting a microscopic amount of red dye 40, he was curled into the fetal position, lying on the floor, under the table in a restaurant, experiencing severe body pain & itching. An hour after ingestion, his speech became loud and rapid, and he was unable to hear us when we tried to speak to him. For two hours after exposure to the dye, he repeatedly used the word "what." His behavior became manic, but while this subsided quickly, the body pain lasted several days. We have found that soaking in a bath with baking soda can lessen some of the symptoms as it helps draw out toxins. We went dye-free in 2013, to try and clear up the hives issue. I never in a million years would have thought additives in food could be linked to Cameron's behavior, but after seeing the cravings for and withdrawal from food coloring, I can honestly say it should be illegal. It is addictive and mind-altering, just like any other drug.

Success at last!

After consulting many allergists, dermatologists, pediatricians & pediatric rheumatologists for more than five years, and not getting help, we finally figured out my son's issues. It began with an online petition and continued with the help and guidance of the Feingold Association. Happily, Kraft removed the synthetic food coloring from its Mac & Cheese in 2016.

The petition to Kraft was the work of Lisa Leake and Vani Hari, two remarkable women whose initiative has had a huge impact. You can see Lisa's blog, "100 Days of Real Food," and Vani's at "FoodBabe.com."