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Look beyond the tantrums and bad behaviour ... you may find junk food

by Janine Quattromani, a committed mother

Danielle is my lovely 5-year-old daughter who was hyperactive, angry, rude, aggressive, emotional and very unreasonable. When Danielle was 2-1/2 years old, an ear infection resulted in her being given at least 6 bouts of antibiotics. Fluid in the ear resulted in hearing loss at which time we took her to an E.N.T. specialist who tried to clear her ears with more antibiotics. These did not work so grommets were inserted in both ears. The result was gradual deterioration in Danielle's behaviour. She has always been a very strong-willed child but her behaviour was more than a child challenging the authority of her parents. She was unreasonable and uncontrollable.

A year after being fitted with grommets, the fluid returned and more antibiotics were given. Then a new set of grommets were inserted in both ears. Seeking a better way of handling Danielle, I attended a parenting course. The information I received was great, the approach being by giving choices and problem solving. This worked for a little while but I was never able to get to the root of the problem. We tried star charts on the fridge and the non-smacking approach but nothing worked. It was made worse by the experts telling me. "Children are naturally loving and sweet."

Visiting doctors with 3 children was horrendous and trying to get Danielle to sit still and co-operate seem impossible. The doctor asked me once... "Are you and your husband having marital problems at home, because children don't normally behave like this for no reason; it's usually the result of problems at home". Another time he said"You aren't giving Danielle enough attention at home. Children's behavioural problems are attention seeking." (Danielle got attention through her behaviour – not always good attention, I might add).

The Preschool offered to take Danielle 3 days a week, and although I felt really guilty as a mother using preschool as a way out, I felt we clashed so often that this wasn't a happy household and I accepted. I kept searching, reading and talking to other parents only to hear "Children are all the same and it's only a stage they're going through. They will grow out of it". Well, Danielle's behaviour got worse.

I felt a sense of guilt and failure as a mother and was convinced I must be doing something wrong. Danielle was sent to her room often and one day the door handle came off her side of the door. This was great ... it wasn't that Danielle was locked in her room, it was just that she couldn't get out !!! Desperate times called for desperate measures. She would kick her door and rip the sheets off her bed. Closing Danielle in the toilet was often used for time out because there was nothing she could destroy in there.

I felt that with the anger Danielle had, it was really hard at times to find love or affection for her. It made me feel really inadequate as a parent.

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My own health deteriorated and after seeing many doctors I eventually turned to a naturopath who helped me realise that Candida was a real health problem for Danielle. Sugar, yeast, dairy products and wheat were contributing to her behavioural problems. I looked back over the previous years and realised that Danielle had a continual craving for sweet things. When sitting in a café she would eat the sugar out of the sachets, she would devour her lollies really quickly and bribe her sisters for their sweets and treats.

Initially I had a lot of opposition from my husband and in-laws. Even the preschool teachers talked about me and how cruel I was to deprive Danielle of the so-called “normal” diet consisting of biscuits, pizza, yoghurt, cows milk, cheese, sugar, fast food, lollies, chocolates and generally foods filled with additives and preservatives.

After much trial and effort I have found many alternatives such as sugar-free lollies and carob, diet lemonade, goats’ milk and goats’ milk cheese and yoghurt, home-made tomato sauce, biscuits and muffins. Although this was initially very daunting, the result of changing her diet was that I had a happy daughter ... a little girl who would wake up and say “Good morning” to her sisters instead of punching them, dress herself and generally be co-operative.

For the benefit of my husband and in-laws, we had a blood test done at the Biological Testing Unit in Sydney. The only drawback was that it meant that Danielle would need to back on to all the food that she had been reacting to. We gave her McDonald’s food, milkshakes, lollies, chocolates, bread, ice-cream, etc. ON the way into Sydney Danielle complained of a sore bottom and thrush (a condition she had endured on and off for years) and in the doctor’s room she was wriggling and squirming, aggressive and very rude. The old uncontrollable Danielle had returned!! It was all I could do to get her home as she was very tired, could barely walk and complained of sore legs. On returning home she slept for 5 hours and woke up very angry and aggressive.

The results of the test were enough to convince my husband that Danielle needed to change her diet. Her body was riddled with parasites and she was very low in vitamin B12 and iron. Far wasn’t being broken down properly and her body was full of toxicity. The Candida organism was also present in the blood and was recorded photographically.

I now realise that diet was responsible for her reactions. Like a drunk person having a reaction to alcohol, Danielle was having a reaction to foods and most of all, SUGAR. Her problems were also due to the onslaught of the antibiotics doctor treated her with, causing Candida to rage out of control in her body.

Danielle now realises the consequence of going off her diet and is learning what is acceptable for her to keep well. Now her future is very exciting and I know that if her diet is adhered to, she will excel in life. She does eisteddfod dancing which is now improving. Her concentration and co-ordination are much better and she is more co-operative for the teacher. She has commenced school this year and I have seen a difference in her colouring-in and tracing. She is getting stickers and merit cards for nice manners and good behaviour. Danielle would probably have been diagnosed with some of ADD or something else with a label. As parents we must not be brainwashed into believing that everything modern medicine does is for the best. Always ask about side effects and, if possible, search out natural remedies.

Looking around with open eyes now, I see the behaviour of other children and even adults, and I look at their diets consisting of fast food, soft drink, sugar, lollies and preservatives and colourings. These things are toxic to our systems. We need to go against this trend and teach the future generation about nutrition and alternative health plans. Our children now live in a ‘sugar-free zone’.