

Triumphs

Written by Gayle Nobel

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Kyle's world has become larger. He now enjoys sitting in different rooms and seats in the house. For most of his life, he was a two chair man. He preferred to sit at the kitchen table or his rocker/recliner in his room. Those were his safety spots. For the last few months he has decided there are other interesting places in the house to sit and feel safe.

Kyle now sits on the couch next to me in the living room and I can actually read. He enjoys relaxing there. The other night, I was reading a book on my Kindle and all of a sudden, he reached over, and began tapping on it. I realized he was thinking (maybe?) it was like the iPad and if he tapped enough, the drum set would appear.

Kyle has had just a few experiences on the iPad. Months ago, I would not have thought it was for him. He has never been a TV or computer kind of guy. We could not convince him to even look at a screen for more than a nano second, if that.

Come to find out, maybe we just weren't showing him the "right" things. Or maybe he wasn't ready. Within the last year that Tammy (our thannie) has been with Kyle, she has introduced him to music videos on the laptop. He loves music so that seemed a logical choice. At first he mostly listened. After she decided to place the computer in the direction he normally looks (off to the right side) he began watching. At first, it was just glances and then it turned in to full blown viewing.

Why not try a movie? A musical was another logical choice and pretty soon, Kyle had a collection of movies in his room. He was even beginning to attend to some of the dialog scenes, especially if they were dramatic. He likes booming men's voices.

Then, Kyle began watching musicals on the TV as well. At first, mostly listening. But after a quick while, he began viewing too. I know I know. Many parents are trying to get their kids with autism to stop watching so much TV. But for Kyle, this has been a breakthrough. We have discovered something else he can enjoy. And sometimes, enjoy WITH us. Recently, he even watched Secretariat with us, a movie without music. AND he had "appropriate" reactions during certain parts of the movie.... a huge breakthrough for Kyle. He has been horseback riding for 15 years so maybe this isn't surprising.

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It follows naturally, that now Kyle might be interested in the iPad. We have a drumming app (full drum set with different sounds) that he enjoys. I do believe he might have been asking for that when he tapped my Kindle. I quickly got Neil's iPad and pretty soon Kyle was drumming away and was happy as can be. And he was visually attending to what he was doing! I am grateful to Angela, his occupational therapist, for first introducing him to the iPad.

What else might he like? The Apple App store is the place for instant gratification. Often, it's free too. I quickly discovered a piano App and downloaded it. He immediately took to it and used one finger to explore the notes the same way he does on the piano. Awesome!

Kyle has a new level of attention and focus. At the age of 28, his world has become a little larger and more interesting and enjoyable.

Triumphs are so sweet especially when they have been so long in coming.

