

Movie?

Written by Gayle Nobel

Saturday, 14 July 2012 15:02 - Last Updated Sunday, 15 July 2012 22:03

BEFORE

Kyle's been out and about in a big way the last few months. Besides the legendary [live theatre experience](#),

Tammy has been taking him to movies. Each time gets easier. He enjoys the music and is paying more and more attention to what's happening on the screen. The process of walking into the theatre and getting himself seated is getting easier too. Yeah Kyle!

Each month Phoenix has what they call "Sensory Friendly" movies which are a special event in the autism community. It is an opportunity for children and adults with autism or any special need to come to the movies. The theatre is not as dark, the sound is not as loud and noise and movement are acceptable. And you are guaranteed that fellow movie goers "get it" and will not be bothered by added sound effects or behavior.

Kyle has gone to regular movies, but recently he had an opportunity to see "Brave" in Sensory Friendly format. Tammy said it was definitely Kyle-friendly and easier to feel more relaxed. During that movie they showed a preview for a special one day showing of Singing in the Rain. Kyle has watched this video on the computer and enjoys the music. Tammy immediately decided it was a "must do" with Kyle.

Though she purchased the tickets in advance, on the day of the movie, a family emergency came up and she was unable to come to work and take Kyle to the theatre. We did not want him to miss the show, especially after they had been talking about it and watching clips online and listening to the music for the last week. I decided to take him myself.

Although I have talked to Tammy extensively about taking Kyle to the movies and given her tips after each time they go, I, myself have only been to the movies with Kyle alone once and that was about twelve years ago. But we have a new Kyle and nothing is the same as it used to be so I was feeling confident about taking him.

MOVIE TIME

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The challenge began when I opened the car door. Being Kyle's mom teaches me on a moment to moment basis to take nothing for granted. On this very hot day, Kyle didn't feel like walking across the parking lot to get to the theatre. It took a really long time and a lot of coaxing. He was tired and not in the mood to walk at all.

Whoo hoo! After what felt like hours, we entered the air conditioned theatre. The gal taking the tickets was kind enough to give me a heads up and inform me that the show was sold out and we might want to get in there as soon as possible. Somehow she knew we needed that information.

Kyle was moving very, very slowly, even for Kyle. He wanted to sit on every bench and not get up. I was beginning to feel nervous about getting into the theatre in time to get the seats we needed.

Getting a drink is part of Kyle's movie routine. Normally, he only drinks water so a Sprite is a huge treat and is also calming and quieting for him in the theatre. It's pretty much a necessity. Option 1- Wait in the long line for the Sprite. Option 2- get into the theatre as soon as possible. Sometimes you just have to follow your intuition. Kyle was moving so slowly I opted to get right into the theatre.

Sure enough, it was already quite full and there was still 40 minutes until showtime. The act of sitting down in the theatre seat was difficult for Kyle. Again, take nothing for granted. I did not follow the advice I gave Tammy about which side to prompt from. I was so flustered I was not thinking clearly. When I finally switched positions, Kyle was able to sit right down. Phew! Now he could rest.

An older woman who was going to take the three seats between us and the aisle was watching and even offered to help. Sometimes people really amaze me. She had her own challenge with her husband who might not be able to step down the one step required to get to his seat. I did her a favor and saved those seats while she went looking for something more accessible for him.

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Kyle needed a drink. Or at least I knew he was going to need one. I could not leave him and it would be too difficult for us to get up and get one. The woman came back to thank me for saving the seats and I stepped out of my comfort zone and asked her if she would go buy Kyle a drink. Her daughter ended up going and handing us the soda from behind. She slipped the money I had given to her back in my hand with the soda. I did not see that it was the full amount until she had walked away. I never got a chance to thank her. That treat was a silent vote of support in my book.

The drink seemed to revive Kyle. He was not as tired and he was beginning to get a little noisier. Humming and singing and a little rocking. Ok, now everyone knew Kyle was in the theatre. If only the movie would hurry up and start. In the meantime, the person next to me was very friendly. She did not ask what Kyle "had" but asked if he liked Singing in the Rain and the music, etc. etc. She told me she would probably be singing too. She also offered Kyle her licorice any time he wanted it and was overall a compassionate, but not in a tacky way, friendly person.

Finally the lights went down and after ads and previews, there was..... no, not the movie. A long interview with Debbie Reynolds! This might have been interesting if I had not been waiting, albeit a little nervously, for the movie to start. Kyle's humming had become a little more constant. Though not particularly loud on the Kyle meter, maybe it was a bit much for a movie theater. Sipping his drink was helpful for a few seconds at a time and I began to think we should have gotten a bigger drink.

A tap on my shoulder. Oh no.... not the dreaded tap by a movie usher. A young man told us he had gotten some complaints and could we try to be quieter? "Yes, WE will try but my son doesn't always have control of how quiet he is." "Ok, just try." he said. If only trying was going to be good enough. The woman next to me, my new friend and advocate (MNFAA) told me not to worry and not to listen to him.

Tick tock, tick tock. The interview is still going on. The movie STILL has not started. A tap on my shoulder. The manager, with usher for back up, asked us to step out into the lobby.

AFTER

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MNFAA was outraged and told me she wanted to give me the number of her husband who is a lawyer. She followed us out into the lobby arguing with the young theater manager. The manager told me she had six different people complain and and feels bad that she had to ask us to step out. She rushed off to get us a refund and returned with cash and a bunch of coupons for drinks and popcorn. She asked if we wanted to go into another theatre to see something else. We could try going back in but Kyle was not going to be able to navigate in the dark and definitely not quietly. She looked like she was going to cry. Clearly, she did not want to be in the position of having to do this. I was glad she was feeling it. Just doing her job, but feeling it. Perfect. I think?

In the meantime, MNFAA was arguing with her and telling her the six people who complained should be asked to leave, not Kyle. He should not be discriminated against because of his disability. And it's not like no one hasn't seen this movie before. And on and on she went.

I was focused on trying to keep Kyle from taking off. He was beyond ready to leave. It was tricky, actually almost impossible, to try to talk to MNFAA and the theatre manager and keep Kyle in check all at the same time. I was ready to let it go and leave. MNFAA didn't want to let it go. This stranger was really going to bat for us. Finally, we HAD to leave and I thanked MNFAA and told her to go back in and watch the movie. "I don't think I can." she said, "I don't think I can."

I felt sad for Kyle and for me. But I also realize there is a standard of behavior in a movie theatre which includes being quiet so everyone can enjoy the show. If I had felt Kyle's noise was over the top, I would have walked out on my own accord. But maybe any noise is considered over the top in a theatre. I also thought he might quiet down once the movie actually began. In hindsight, I wish I had told the manager we wanted to wait until the movie started and give him a chance. Was that an option? I have never been asked to walk out of a movie theatre before. I was rattled from all sides. It was too hard to think clearly.

Nobody in that theatre could possibly have an inkling of what it took for both of us to be there. Twenty-eight years of setbacks and triumphs lead up to that event. And no one could be expected to realize this was Kyle at his best. But then again, he was being treated as anyone else would be who was making excessive noise in a quiet movie theatre. Should he get a pass because he has autism and can't be 100% quiet? It had not been an issue when Tammy had taken him to the movies but she has never been in a theatre in the evening which is full to capacity with mostly elderly people.

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And the moral of the story is???? The world is not quite ready for my Kyle. Is Kyle 100% ready for the world? Does he need to be 100%? What percent is acceptable? I suppose it depends on the situation and the random mix of people in each situation. Some people will make the effort to step up. I am grateful to MNFAA and to the stranger who bought Kyle a soda and the older woman who offered to help him get into his seat. On some level, they got it.

I'm glad I tried. I am growing a tough skin. I see all sides. But it still hurts. No Singing in the Rain for Kyle last Thursday. Maybe another time.

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PS... Would love to hear your thoughts. From all angles. What IS the moral of the story?