

It's All About Actions

Written by Gayle Nobel

Wednesday, 13 January 2010 15:58 - Last Updated Wednesday, 13 January 2010 16:06

Autism with Attitude is not just about our good intentions, it is about our actions. Our attitude is the flavor we give to those actions whether it be words or deeds.

I was reading one of my favorite inspirational books, "Meditations from the Mat". The author, Rolf Gates, suggests "If we want self-esteem, we must do estimable things. The emphasis is on the doing. Hafez, a fourteenth-century Sufi poet suggests that we act great all the time. He doesn't suggest that we wait around until we feel good and then, with the necessary "feeling-good" momentum begin acting great. He urges us to act great whether we feel good or not. And short of that ideal, we ought to fake it until we make it. " "Don't listen to the negative self-talk. Instead, act as if. We can count on the new and the unfamiliar to be awkward. But the awkwardness of that first step is no reason for us to deny ourselves the opportunity to have balance in a given area of our lives."

Hmmm, so our attitude is all about our actions. I think back to our "breakfast out" adventure on Sunday morning. You may remember a recent post about Kyle's birthday dinner out at Cheesecake factory and how amazing it was.... a real celebration of how far he has come and how far we have all come.

Breakfast on Sunday reminded me that we aren't quite "there" yet. And just where is "there", anyway?

Neil (my husband and Kyle's amazing dad) had been wanting to take Kyle to breakfast. Thus far, we've only done it once. It might not seem like a big deal to do breakfast if we can do the other meals. This might be true for the average family, we are anything but average. We discovered breakfast can present itself with a whole new set of challenges.

Some of these challenges were surprises. There were no booths available! Kyle does particularly well in a booth. It provides him with much needed structure. Also, the table is usually bolted to the wall so he can not push it when he gets antsy waiting for the food. So we are flexible and we are trying to teach Kyle to be flexible. We took the half booth.

We tried to have a lazy Sunday morning so we "slept in" a bit. Rather, we slept in and Kyle was up meditating in his room while building up his appetite for a long time before he needed us. Therefore, we arrived at the restaurant about two hours past his usual breakfast time. His stomach was definitely speaking and so was Kyle though not in words, which he doesn't have, but in somewhat loud sounds accompanied by jiggling of the "half booth" table.

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I had the good judgment to stuff some gluten free bread in my purse just before we left and the waitress got us his toast pretty quickly with a very tall glass of OJ. OJ will substitute for the usual "special drink treat" Kyle has at a restaurant which satisfies him until the meal comes. Too bad chips and salsa don't come with breakfast. :-)

The food came fairly quickly. It was a challenge for Kyle to eat with good manners due to the type of plate and utensils. He did well, considering all the obstacles but needed a lot of support from me. That's what mom's do. Help kids first, eat later, if at all. Ah, just kidding, I did get to eat. But as Neil put it, this restaurant adventure was a bit tense. There were so many obstacles—some in our control, and some not.

There have been many other restaurant adventures which were more spectacular (see "Moments" in my upcoming book *Breathe* and also a previous blog post). I am aware that some trips are going to be extreme learning and teaching opportunities. We get an A plus for effort, for trying, for action. And so does Kyle. In many ways, he tried hard (and succeeded) in keeping himself together and exercising some self control. Perhaps "spectacular" needs to be redefined here.

Yes, autism with attitude is about our actions. And sometimes, action means taking on the challenges. If we are to help Kyle live better in the world, each time is not necessarily going to be front page news. In this case, there were many tiny moments to celebrate. Some of them were teaching moments....teaching and learning moments for us, as well as Kyle.

We took action. We acted as a typical family out on a Sunday morning for breakfast. And then, we took on the challenges presented to all of us, with grace and even a bit of humor (compliments of my ever so funny, husband). Certainly, the new and unfamiliar can be awkward and even uncomfortable. But if we are going to ask Kyle to do the awkward and uncomfortable hard stuff, we must be willing to do some of it ourselves. The awkwardness is the first step and each time is bound to get easier and feel less awkward.

Autism with attitude is all about our actions.

Anyone want to join us for breakfast next Sunday?