[Never Give Up on Your Child](http://gapsaustralia.com.au/give-child-child-reward/" \o "Never Give Up on Your ChildPermanent Link to " \t "_blank)

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My son Jake is 3 years old and has been diagnosed with high functioning Autism. He is an extremely intelligent and affectionate little boy who is incredibly capable in so many areas yet has extreme difficulties in others. More specifically, the boxes he ticks are the usual suspects of tantrums, meltdowns, and inappropriate public behavior and in social situations around children his age, completely uninterested and in a world of his own.

As a parent, to watch this is heartbreaking, not to mention the stress we have felt in coming to terms with his Autism and learning to cope with it. Our savior, so far, has been us stumbling upon the GAPS Diet, completely by accident.

Jake was a brilliant eater. His first 18 months were just amazing to watch. We never gave him bought baby food. Every meal he consumed was home cooked with huge amounts of vegetables, fruits, meat, chicken and fish. He loved it all until he was around 18 months old and it all changed. As his Autism became more apparent, his eating habits went out the window. Suddenly, only bread, toast and bananas would he eat and simply nothing else.

We were worried when starting him on the GAPS Intro Diet and had no idea how we would get him to ingest stock and soup let alone the rest of the foods required to help his digestive condition. The first week was a living nightmare. Jake would not eat anything we gave him and for 4 days he consumed absolutely nothing. Standing in the kitchen watching your 3 year old crying and begging for food was the hardest thing we have ever had to deal with, the tears were endless as we watched him literally waste away. In only days, he became horribly thin, pasty white and with a look in his eyes like we were losing him.

We figured that all it would take was for him to be so hungry he would just start to eat. We were wrong as this continued for another couple of days.  Jake is a very determined boy and when he makes up his mind there is no changing it. Rewards, no matter how desirable to him, made no difference whatsoever. Our research taught us that it is quite common for children to totally stop eating during Stage 1 and to persist with the stock and soup as he will eventually eat.

The key for us was talking to him. For hours, we would cuddle a weak and skinny little boy and talk to him about the importance of eating what we are giving him and trying to explain that we are helping him to get well and to trust his mummy and daddy. This too was overwhelmingly difficult and I cannot explain the amount of tears shed in our home over a week that seemed like it lasted months.

The most important thing for us was persistence. The GAPS Diet was going to be the key for Jake that would give him his life back and to bring back to us the beautiful little boy who had gone away. There was no option for us and it was a matter of getting him to eat whether he liked it or not. Amazingly, after several days of talking to a boy we felt had no comprehension of what was going on, everything changed.

My wife and I were told by people in the know that magically, he will start eating all you give him, even begging for more. That’s when it happened. Suddenly, sitting down at the table with yet another bowl of stock, Jake opened his mouth with no fuss and in it went. He downed the entire bowl along with several others to follow. For the next 10 days, we simply couldn’t make enough. My wife Polly was making such enormous amounts of stock that as quickly as it was made, it was gone.  He is an eating machine!

Once we had progressed through the first couple of stages, Polly would make in some cases, a week’s worth of stew for Jake, only to see him polish it off in one day between breakfast and dinner. From that point on, it didn’t matter what we gave him as he would eat it all and more.

Jake has been on the diet for 2 months now. He is still eating and loving stock. He eats everything we give him now, just like the old days.  Every food that he is allowed to eat within the diet, he eats and the benefits and changes as a result are in a word, significant.

Since the start of the Intro Diet Jake’s tantrums have significantly decreased to a very manageable level and his melt downs which he had several times a day are now perhaps only a couple per week. His complete intolerance for drops of water on his fingers or even on the ground has all but gone. He loves to play in the baby pool and squirting him with the hose is what he loves the most and it’s a pleasure to watch him. He is nowhere near as hyperactive as he was and more often than not, is very calm and more able to express his feelings like never before.

He is now going to 3 year old kinder for a few hours a week. In the initial stages, at kinder he was a nuisance, disrupting every activity and the other children. We felt that enrolling him was just too ambitious and something that he was clearly, not ready for. Now, he is playing with other kids albeit in small doses and even sitting in circle with them, which is wonderful. It’s amazing that something so normal for a 3 year old can have such an impact when your Autistic child does it for the first time.  He even came home from kinder last week saying he had a new friend called Gabriel. Amazing.

Jake is only 8 weeks in and he is a different boy already. We have a very long way to go but if he continues to make such rapid improvement the way he has thus far, then for him the sky’s the limit. We will of course be accompanying the diet with other educational programs to assist him in other areas but this amazing diet has already opened the door to his incredible mind and is allowing him to learn new things he was previously incapable of learning.

What we went though in the initial stages was unbelievably difficult and I’d be lying if I said there weren’t several times I wanted to throw in the towel and give up. However, the health and life of our little boy is simply too important and really, giving up was never an option.  For as long as his recovery takes, we will be with him every step of the way.

I can only encourage all parents who are about to set out on this journey or are struggling with the early stages to just persist and never ever give up. Something that has stuck in my mind ever since Day 1 was something Dr. McBride wrote about our children. Her words echo in my head every day and it’s what keeps me going and Jake on his road to recovery.

*“Never give up on your child, and your child will reward you”*

~ Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride

She’s right.

*~ Andrew Silverman*