

Reader reports from the Food Intolerance Network

www.fedup.com.au

("ADHD", "attention deficit", "ADD", "hyperactiv**" keywords only)

[1616] ADHD diet approach – facebook thread (August 2021)

Q: My 12yo son was diagnosed adhd & specific learning disorder 3 yrs ago & medicated. His teachers feel as though he is not progressing at all & he seems to be getting worse. They question his diagnosis, hence they are reassessing. I was hoping to try the elimination diet to see if this would help - am I best to do the 4 weeks elimination or just the ditch foods with additives, being that the main issue is that he is particularly vague, switches off, loses focus? - Bella

Answers from facebook group:

My son was diagnosed with ADHD when he was 6, he's now 36. He was put on medication that didn't help. Find something he's really interested in, my son loved lego, to boost his concentration span, also reading, something that he loves, you will be rewarded, it takes time and a lot of effort from you but worthwhile – Della

Couldn't agree more avoiding additives (incl synthetic perfumes etc), eating 100% organic is very effective for me as an autistic adult with ADHD. Medication still helps—it's just not enough if the body is assaulted by inflammatory chemicals - Miff

I was asked to take my son for testing for autism but when he went onto strict elimination he completely changed overnight. His teacher told me she could see no sign of autism (although I know he's still got more subtle sensory needs, fixates on some things like science, how things work, screens, minecraft)...If he has something like broccoli he will run around crazily, sugar gives him a high but then a low where he'd lie down and cry, carrot for example he'd be aggressive or argue, some things he'll be very sensory and touch all the walls etc. Anyways, not a 'cure' as I think it is how he's wired and he's a really beautiful smart child... but it makes his life a lot easier - Micky

Autistic and ADHD person here. An elimination diet can help an environmentally Sensitive Autistic person but that's not the only thing that can help. Autistic people are sometimes capable of something called "Masking" which means suppressing Autistic traits. It's exhausting to do and causes fatigue and burnout. Getting him to stop doing the things that make him ADHD will lead to burnout. I would suggest you test him for Autism anyway and make sure his accommodations are met. There's lots of tools to help with sensory issues; headphones, weighted blankets, chewelry, fidget toys, etc. These will help him regulate his emotions and sift through uncomfortable stimuli - Sam

Any diet will not "cure" your child. Diets will only help your child if they are environmentally sensitive to those chemicals. Even if diet does do something, your child still has Autism or ADHD and finding ways to accommodate their needs instead of suppressing them will lead to an infinitely happier child. Put it this way, if loud noises bother your child you can teach them not to react to the noise, but the noise will be as loud or bothersome as ever. They just won't feel safe enough to show that they're hurting - Sam again

I get so upset when people try to "cure" neurodivergence. I can confirm that whilst I get grievous mood swings from artificial flavours, no amount of bloody vanilla ice cream will get me through Kmart exposure for longer than 30 minutes. The sensory overload is hell. The language used around the discussion of diet and asd/adhd needs to change otherwise people will continue to feel

unacceptable members of society – Kate

The thing is, the ND people who don't have these food and chemical sensitivities see the whole thing as a myth. They don't understand the relationship that things making us sick, tired, or in pain can impact our focus or our tolerance for sensory overload – Kate again

My son had behavioural issues at home and in classroom around age 8 and the elimination diet resolved most, it was amazing the difference within 3 weeks. He was found not to have ADHD as there was never an issue of concentration on things he was engaged with. He reacts to salicylate, amines, antioxidant, benzoate and glutamate all with different reactions. Although he has less adverse reaction to salicylate which make him more sensitive, emotional etc. I have always wondered if they contribute to his lack of concentration in class. My son now 14, eats relatively well at home but whatever he chooses away from home has fewer behavioural issues as he has grown but has zero interest in reading/writing school subjects and is behind for his age – Nicky

Everyone is different, so react to different things. So I'd definitely try full elimination. My 5yr old has ADHD, after 4wks we definitely saw improvements in focus and sitting still. Eg. from getting up from dining table 20+ times while having dinner to only getting up 2-5 times; finally sitting at group time and not running around the classroom and touching the child next to him; sat and focused on colouring in a picture for the first time. So hopefully he will be able to sit long enough to actually learn something now. Sals made him return to previous non-focus behaviours – Lena

It is very hard at first, I may have had a bit of a meltdown in the first week of planning menus. And being out and about or birthday parties is hard. My son has delays also, but has noticed himself that his speech has improved (his oppositional behaviour has reduced considerably so that he actually partakes in his speech sessions). He is so proud of himself, so I use that to remind him at parties etc, so he understands why he's on the diet. Plus I give him marshmallows and chips so he doesn't completely miss out – Lena again

It's easier with the assistance of an RPAH trained Dietitian – Samantha

[1558] Anyone been successful in using failsafe for adult adhd? (January 2020)

I don't have a formal diagnosis, but my son is ADHD & autistic, I believe he has my genetics. I react to amines with emotional outbursts quite strongly, plus flavour & colours - Amy

I am very interested in answers to this as my partner has ADHD and after using the diet for my son I am now noticing some definite reactions (exacerbated stress, emotional outbursts) to numbers, colours etc. He is yet to believe me though - Ida

Using failsafe has had a massive impact on my depression, my mood swings, and my focus capabilities. I was never diagnosed with ADHD but seem to have many of the symptoms that I can manage with Failsafe diet. Amines are the main culprit - Anna

I have ADHD and while FS doesn't completely 'cure it', my symptoms are much better and more manageable. I'm very similar to those above - amines make my ADHD, emotions, etc. much worse - Jenny

I've had a patient I was seeing for gut issues who also had ADHD. She had an improvement & was able to reduce medication – Jo (a dietitian)

Amines are disasters for me - I'm 45 and was diagnosed when I was 8. Diet has saved my life and I have two sons with adhd and it worked for them and also gave info to a friend whose son and

husband had it too and they found it helped. I have been cutting amines from my diet for thirty years now and find when I stray from a proper diet all the old symptoms come back and mood swings and the ability to focus are really altered. Thanks to failsafe I can manage - Lee

I'm 52, love my ADHD superpower, better since I'm low Sals though not so much irritation and headaches. Sounds funny to most but since I changed my words and the way I look being ADHD, I've overcome so much. Enjoy have fun, run be free – Sue

I did the elimination diet before being diagnosed with ADHD. I am sensitive to salicylates, amines, artificial colours, preservatives and antioxidants, mostly with behavioral reactions. Colours I react violently. The diet helped a lot, but the ADHD diagnosis and medication filled in the gaps and cleared the rest of the brain fog - Jay

Yes. I am a big responder to salicylates, I can tolerate a very little bit, but if I have too many my brain goes whack, and jumps everywhere, my blood sugars turn into reactive hypoglycemia and I can't think straight. I take venlafaxine as well because it helps both my depression and adhd. However it's staying away from gluten and salicylates that help me stay sane and keep my sugars and thought processes stable – Tiah

[1529] “Explosive ADHD symptoms” (May 2019)

We did diet for explosive ADHD symptoms. It made a massive difference. The thing that helped us the most during elimination was focusing on what we COULD eat. I wrote the list on my fridge so it was visible. And I found adapting recipes wasn't that difficult once you got into the swing of it. I highly recommend going the whole hog and doing full elimination. We tried just doing low and moderate and it didn't give us a clear enough picture of what the trigger/s were. I promise it's not as hard as it looks. Just be prepared for lots of white food. But it doesn't have to be boring! – Kat

[1528] ADHD: “I was looking for one trigger” BUT... (May 2019)

Pre-failsafe, my daughter was annoyingly hyperactive and inattentive. I was looking for one trigger. What I learned was...

- Salicylates make her vague
- Amines make her antagonistic
- Glutamates make her highs extra high and her lows extra low
- Colours make her silly but only last a few hours
- Antioxidants make her completely ridiculous, an absolute pain in the neck, you can't reason with her, you can't discipline her, there's no comprehension of consequences and it lasts for a week
- Nitrites stop her sleeping

Combine that and you've got a stupidly hyperactive kid who runs around like a total fruit loop with not one single care about discipline, boundaries or consequences, who loves to annoy the living crap out of her parents but who melts down when corrected and whose ears don't work - ever.

But because the worst one - the antioxidants - lasted a week, I never connected the small Maccas fries she had on Sunday to the crappy behaviour on Thursday, and because amines took WEEKS to build up and was always there, there was no way I could have linked it to aged meat and bananas.

But if I keep antioxidants out, and keep glutamates to a minimum I have a kid who gets vague when she eats too much fruit or spices and whose eyes light up with pleasure at annoying the crap out of me after eating too many bananas. She lives with her reactions. She understands what does what. She doesn't live on strict diet (or at baseline) she just keeps it "ok".

I know rpah (failsafe) elimination diet is huge and daunting and really inconvenient but it really is the best (the only?!) way of clearly connecting trigger foods with symptoms – Rhonda

[1526] ASD and ADHD “significant improvements” (May 2019)

We are towards the end of Elimination Diet for Master 4 with ASD & ADHD. We have had significant improvements in behaviour - defiance, hyperactivity, stimming, concentration. He failed Dairy, Wheat. He can tolerate Moderate Salicylates and Amines. I make up big batches of allowed foods and freeze . I make G/F cupcakes from Ethan's failsafe Recipes and we are under guidance of a dietician – Sharon

[ADHD and diet factsheet](#)

[Blog on ADHD label](#)

[1503] Did diet work for ADHD? – facebook thread (September 2018)

Has anyone done the elimination diet for a child with ADHD, if so, did it work? Would love some advice/tips/help! - Tash

We are not ADHD but anxiety that presents as explosive rage. We have just finished week 2 of elimination and have 2 weeks to go but he definitely seems calmer and a little more controlled. He is himself sticking to it rigidly as he has noticed it is helping him feel like "his brain is racing less" - Kat

We have. We have found amines to be a huge trigger for poor emotional control. Food colouring exacerbates his hyperactivity. My 8 yr old also has autism - Renee

Yes, had huge results after first 2 weeks of going baseline. Concentration, focus, calmness. The boys dad thought I had sedated him. Strict elimination. MSG was huge problem - Tracy

Incredible results. Definitely recommend it - Verity

Same here - school was talking getting my son assessed. All concerns went within about 2 weeks (we hit baseline pretty quickly as I'd done some precursor removal of some foods before going to full elimination) – Kerry

We are a few years in now. After doing the full elimination time we found that MSG it was big problem for our boy. It was definitely only part of the solution with lots of professional help from a dietician and psychologist - Annie

Yes and saved us all. 100% worth it here - Emma

Absolutely! We are now 20 years into this journey, and I thank God for Sue and Howard every day! - Sharon

Same here. I started with my family about 25 years ago. It made a huge difference to all my children but particularly my youngest son. And I found out that I reacted to everything that they did, just not as strongly. I was also told that boys grow out of it, which seems to be the case with my boys. Or maybe they're just too stubborn to recognise the signs now they are adults. ???? - Jane

Yes. It has 50% treated the symptoms but we still need medication to assist. Given the intolerances though we are struggling to find a medication that doesn't make him worse! – Nicky

Yes it was amazing. But the biggest tip I can give you is to make sure you put 100% effort into doing it perfectly with no slipups. Otherwise you might think it doesn't work and I'm so confident that it does work but you have to put your heart and soul into for 2 weeks straight at least – Karli

We did this 13 years ago with our eldest. He is about to turn 17 and has never needed medication, we 100% diet control. That being said it doesn't work for everybody but it certainly can't hurt to try ??? - Tania

Yes, we did. She is now 20 and doing well. Preservatives and colours were her biggest problems – Mara

Yes and yes. It helped immensely. We started 3 years ago. Most of his sensory issues resolved and moodiness, lifted the brain fog a bit. But we also medicate now as well. It was the best choice for him. We did it as a family and it was well worth it for everyone. I discovered my own intolerances that were majorly effecting my own health - Kylie

Two years of strict dieting; master six reacts strongly to glutamates, moderate amines, flavours, colour and flavour enhancers. Diagnosed two and half weeks ago with adhd and now on meds.... after hubby just feeding him 'anything' (thinking meds would solve it all) we found he still reacts to food he shouldn't eat... so for us a combination of good diet (his foods) and meds we are on the right path... - Jo

Sue Dengate saved my life and my children's. Best tip: have a supportive partner. Mine wasn't. Took 9 months to do a 3 months test ?????. I was shocked at the Behaviour and health improvement. Not easy but for me definitely worth it- Cathy

It's not easy but definitely worth a try. Like others have said here - you've got to be organised and committed. You definitely get results & you'll feel so proud of yourself & your children once you start to see those results. It's a big learning curve but so worth it. Good luck. Xxx - Clare

We started FAILSAFE because of concerns around ADHD. It worked really well and we now know all our son's triggers. In the beginning (pre-school to year 3) diet was enough. From year 3 though, it just wasn't. He is grade 7 now and we use a combination of medication and diet as ADHD management – Bron

IMHO ADHD is a problem with neurotransmitters in the front lobe of the brain. Food and environment can reduce the symptoms but not completely remove them. If they are removed then it wasn't ADHD to begin with, it was a food intolerance. In our family food does help so much but other assistance is still required - Elise

My daughter had severe autism as an infant... as a toddler we made her dietary changes based on recommendations from her specialist... her improvement was nothing short of a miracle... she is now considered to be in the high functioning/anxiety range... the diet is 100% worth doing... reducing toxicity is EVERYTHING!!! – Ali

If I didn't eliminate flavourings, colours, and preservatives my child would undoubtedly have an adhd diagnosis - Caroline

I have issues with hyperactivity and attention. Removing my triggers i.e. salicylates and preservatives has helped immensely! I also find magnesium supplementation to be helpful. Besides that, I utilise

time management techniques to focus my attention better – Mara

I have ADHD and when I was following this diet I was so much better I was even allowed to lower my meds dose, it was easy to think and concentrate, I had less sensory overloads, it works definitely do it – Ash

I did with my daughter and myself. I am bipolar and she was diagnosed with ADHD & SPD the elimination diet worked so well 6 years later we still follow it and we are a anti-salicylate family. I had everything done through this amazing pediatrician. My kid was getting suspended twice a year and on behaviour programs, we started and now she's honour roll going on to a scholarship. All it was, gluten and salicylates – Nina

I use to watch my boy eat something and not long after was off at 100 miles per hour. Did allergy tests to rule anything out before going down the food intolerance way - which worked big time! – Tracy

Yes, we did the elimination diet 4 years ago and it fixed my son's ODD symptoms completely. He was always very touchy/feely to the point of annoying with his friends and brother which we were told was just a marker of ADHD. This eased considerably after elimination. We found our main adversary was preservatives, within 2 weeks we noticed a massive difference just changing the bread – Katherine

[1498] "That could have been my son ... food aversions, ADHD symptoms, climbing, SPD..." (August 2018)

That could have been my son you were talking about in [1497]. The food aversions, ADHD symptoms, climbing, Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) etc. I took EVERYTHING out of the house and went super strict and said he could have anything he wanted any time he wanted, and that really helped. To be honest he lived on white rice and crackers for days. After the withdrawals, he blew me away and was willing to eat things like never before. I went DF and GF as well but didn't actually think he would react to them. BOTH were huge issues. Dairy was sleep issues and severe sensory problems. Gluten severe constipation and oppositional defiance. He had negative serology for coeliac disease (CD) but presents with symptoms, and just 2 weeks ago his grandmother was accidentally diagnosed with CD via scope for something totally unrelated so family history is there. Amines were our biggest problem by far. There is light at the end of the rainbow, though. We did this over 18 months ago and he (although diagnosed ASD / SPD) is SO functional and thriving, and tolerating more and more by the week. He pretty much eats as we eat now, although additives and gluten will be a forever no no for us – Ash

[1472] ADHD: "the results that can be achieved with just removing food " (January 2018)

With a diagnosis of ADHD, our paediatrician recommended Ritalin (as a first step). I refused and taught her a bloody good lesson on the results that can be achieved with just removing food. She admitted she never thought it would work (in fact she put me down about it at the time) but because I had worked with a qualified dietician and we had an amazing change in my daughter she accepted it. She then said she could no longer give my daughter a diagnosis for ODD and ADHD and we obviously didn't need the Ritalin. So there's nothing to be nervous about. See a recommended dietitian. The best thing is you leave with a list of what you can eat not an overwhelming feeling of can't have this. In fact the RPAH elimination book and the fedup shopping list are like that. Lists of what you can eat. It's not as hard as you think – Roxanne

[1420] ADHD diagnosis and failsafe - facebook thread (December 2016)

My 6 year old has recently been diagnosed with ADHD. I've been on this group for a couple of years and watched and thought about doing this failsafe approach. Honestly it's looked so daunting. I take little bits here and there and try and keep packets out of the house as often as I can. However this new diagnosis makes me think I need to do this now! I've seen random posts of ADHD parents on here. Do you find it helps to keep your children off medication? This is my absolute aim, as well as improving my daughters behaviour!

Failsafers respond:

Simplistic version, but pretty much four options:

1. It's truly ADHD, and ADHD without any comorbid food intolerance. Elimination diet will make no difference.
2. It's an incomplete diagnosis that is missing other elements such as processing disorders, without food intolerance. Elimination diet will make no difference.
3. It's ADHD, with or without other conditions, but with comorbid food intolerance. Elimination diet won't be a fix, but may improve your child's experience, potentially removing much of the emotional instability.
4. It's food intolerance misdiagnosed as ADHD. Elimination diet will remove the symptoms, removing the diagnosis.

How will you know? Elimination diet. In 3-4 weeks you'll know if diet is involved. – Tracy

Initially I did the moderate approach for a month listed on the fedup.com.au website - and it confirmed that my son had intolerances. I then found a dietician that was listed on website that could assist me. Its definitely worth doing - Joanna

Joanna- Same, and just found a dietician from the website. It's the small things, like having vanilla ice cream without 160b, white potato and no more tomato...changed behaviour dramatically. Never ceases to amaze me. Find a printout of the negligible low mod and high sals / amines etc and go from there. – Samantha

We had some success with master 8 with his ADHD. We now know foods to avoid and which foods to limit ie. Only one apple per day etc. We've done med trails for all the different type of drugs that were recommended to us and for our son we didn't feel the improvement of the meds was worth the mood changes etc. long term. Don't be afraid to try a therapeutic approach with a naturopath and a therapist. We've found both to be very helpful long term for our son. I wish you well. It's a hard road ahead. (No offense meant to the parents out there that find medication to be helpful. I'm just giving my personal experience. We had some success on the Ritalin LA but not enough to warrant staying on it. Our son has terrible anxiety and for him, the meds only made his symptoms worsen but you're absolutely right, every child is different and I have 2 friends that find the medication more than helpful for their children. Life changing even. The stigma that goes around the meds is so varied and as a mum I know how hard it is to make the decision to use the aid of medication and not have family and friends be supportive of your decision. I would never judge or mean to offend anyone :) We would still try the meds again because I'm a believer in doing everything I can help my child, which means trying everything out there that may help him. - Aimee

Yes!! My 9yr dd was diagnosed with ADHD, ODD and also ASD. Since we have started this diet she is a different kid (for the better). She herself loves the diet because she feels normal again. Even the paediatrician saw the difference and was happy for us to not use medication because of the changes her teachers and we had seen. It's very daunting (sorry, probably not what you want to hear) but I would suggest reading the fed up book and seeing a dietician. I wouldn't go into this half armed as then you'd just be setting yourself up for failure and stress. It's totally worth it though – Kylie

My Asperger's, ADHD son responded well behaviourally to failsafe. Preservatives and colours made him very impulsive and physical. It cannot take his disability away but it stopped added behaviour. Update: BTW we started off strict in the beginning but now avoid the things that affect him. Started at around 5 or 6 I think he is now 15 I have no idea how things would have gone if I hadn't have found the failsafe diet – Petrina

We did failsafe (and continue to do so) for my daughter's ADHD issues. We have tried with just FS alone but she's quite a severe case and so she is medicated as well. She's particularly sensitive to preservatives so any consumption at all, no matter how small, and her behaviour is off the charts crazy for three days straight and her medication has no effect on her at all! So we are very careful, as it isn't worth getting lazy or not checking labels carefully.

I realise your ultimate goal is to keep your son off medication but please bear in mind that living with ADHD is a lot harder than having to parent a child with it. I have ADHD and my daughter is as severe as mine. I've gotten a lot better at not being so impulsive and over the top as an adult but as a child I really struggled at school. I'm of above average intelligence but my grades never reflected it because try as hard as I did, it was impossible to concentrate fully or retain all I was being taught when I was at school. I'm 42 and medication wasn't even an option back when I was a child. It was a miserable existence and I can remember very clearly doing the most ridiculous, dangerous, stupid things and how terrible I felt when I naturally got into trouble constantly from my parents, teachers, neighbours, etc. My self-esteem was pretty low because I basically felt like a total screw up who couldn't do anything right, couldn't remember what I was told, couldn't do what I was asked, etc. Now I'm the parent and I try to be more flexible and understanding with her although I will gladly admit there are some days where I have zero patience with her at all because it gets tiring having to watch her constantly, remind her, direct her, etc. Without medication, my daughter would not be able to function. She has an IQ of 140 but she would learn nothing at school. When she graduated preschool (before she was old enough to medicate), the teachers told me she hadn't even learned how to write her own name because no matter what strategies they had tried, she had never been able to sit still long enough to focus on learning to write. She also spent a lot of her playtime on the naughty mat. I felt so bad for her when I heard all of that. Aside from her education, I can pretty much guarantee she would have no friends, as she can be very rude, impulsive and hurtful when she's not medicated. She doesn't mean it and feels terrible later when nobody wants to talk to her or people exclude her because of her behaviour. That's not something I'm willing to let her suffer through. She cannot help that she has ADHD as much as any child can help any other medical condition they have. I'm certainly not going to withhold medication for my own arbitrary beliefs if there is a potential benefit that will improve her life, her education, her relationships etc.

I'm not trying to sound preachy about it because we all have differing views on whether to medicate or not and it's always an individual decision but I just wanted to put forward the idea that sometimes we need to think about how life feels for our children and whether they are happy within themselves when it comes to their behaviour. I know many ADHD kids hate the fact that their brain doesn't work the way they want it to and the way they think it is meant to. They don't like the feeling of not being entirely in control of their own behaviour even when they desperately want to behave and be good and just be "normal" etc.

Anyway, yes FS is daunting but you won't know what kind of success it could bring until you really give it a go. I have another child with ADD and I found that FS didn't really have an effect on him at all and he still needed medication (he's 19 now and no longer takes medication but he is definitely a much milder case than my daughter). There are some kids for whom FS is a real game changer and indeed some improve so dramatically in their behaviour that medication isn't considered necessary but I find from the countless stories here and in an ADHD group I'm a member of on FB, that most kids will fall on the bell curve somewhere, between having no improvement to a fantastic improvement and kids like my daughter who are in the middle, where removing some things from her diet has made a definite improvement but it hasn't resulted in the ability to stop her medication. And that's okay too. We're all just doing the best we can for our kids. If you choose to try FS, there's so much support and so many other parents you can ask for support. It was hard at first but it quickly got easier and there are much better options out there now than when we first did FS 12 years ago, that's for sure. Good luck if you decide to give it a go. – Lucinda

My son has inattentive ADHD no foods can fix that, but foods give him added crankiness, irritability, teary and hyper, all symptoms that don't come with inattentive ADHD and I can only control those with the FS diet. – Karly

Omg yes!!! This diet is a lifesaver!! We were on the school speed dial list before term finished, anger issues, couldn't control emotions, discipline of all degrees made no difference. 3 weeks on the diet and I have a different kid!! The days when I mess up accidentally I can tell and so can the school. – Madonna

Yes x 3. ADHD and loads of other diagnosis! When my boys somehow get food or drink with preservatives, colours, flavours it is 6 days of worse behaviour, reduced concentration, even more hyper and aggression! The older 2 are still medicated but have now weened off Concerta! If I hadn't been introduced to Sue Dengate's book Fed Up 8 years ago I know our family life would have been so much worse and our home would of been wrecked. Also because of aggression would have our own bed reserved at the hospital! – Tru

We did failsafe but ended up heading towards GAPs and then resuming back to failsafe – Tegan

We were told at nearly 5 that we would get an ADHD and ODD diagnosis and to read up about Ritalin -I never did instead we went on the diet -changed after 2 days - when we went back the paediatrician was so amazed and said she could no longer give the diagnosis but as my daughter got older to check that she was still doing ok at school -well she is B +C's on her report card, reading levels well on track, behaviour good (while on the diet) – Roxanne

Yes! The behaviour of my 5 yo ds have changed so much since starting FS, it's been incredible to watch at times. Impulsiveness, self-control, tantrums have improved out of sight. He is a completely different child, though still not perfect. He may still end up on medication of some sort. but I suspect he has various nutritional deficiencies affecting his nervous system, so will be taking him to the behavioural neurotherapy clinic soon, mentioned above by a pp. – Marion

I have a child with ADD (inattention) we found diet change only did so much. She has had problems with salicylates and sulphites in particular. OT assessment and therapy gave us some great tools as well. We are currently testing out a low dose of medication and have noticed some changes with concentration and being more 'switched on'. Our goal has always been to increase her availability for learning (which we are finally having some gains with - hooray!) If your child is better off on some medications as well there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. The best part is that they can be stopped if they are not working. I think if you always remind yourself that you are their parent and know what is best for them you can't go wrong. Best of luck! – Shay

[1414] ADHD, bulimia, chronic fatigue, obesity, IBS, sinus problems, migraines & food intolerance (December 2016)

I want you to know how much your books have helped me. As a young girl, I grew up like your daughter, struggling with the difficulties of ADHD and food intolerances, chronic fatigue and obesity just to name a few. But we didn't know what these things were back then.

My mother tried as much as she could, but it was difficult considering she was dealing with her own inner demons (psychological & physiological), she had suffered mental illness from terrible childhood experiences and many health problems which she had always thought were food related.

Her way of dealing with me was at times very harsh - but then again she was out of control half the time. She didn't know why I behaved the way I did and she didn't know what to do, and I didn't realize I had a problem, I was just VERY energetic.

My mother went through similar searches as you - taking me to countless doctors, specialists, naturopaths etc from a young age up till when I was 16, trying to find an answer, but to no avail. She didn't have the state of mind or social support to help her to help me. My parents just accepted the way I was - our whole family was suffering in similar personal ways.

I passed many years in a complete blur, some days I felt as if my mind couldn't function, my body was so sick I couldn't function as a normal human being. Other days, I felt alive again and able to think again. This lasted through all my high school years.

From the age of 16-22 I suffered from Bulimia & Bipolar (formerly known as manic depression) and this is the period during which the food intolerances affected me the worst. My IBS couldn't be explained or treated by GPs and when I had sinus problems I went through 3 courses of antibiotics before I realised they weren't helping.

One day mum drove me to the library, I was too sick to go to work (sinus, fatigue, migraines). I accidentally picked up one of your books at the library. It was literally one of the worst (healthwise) days of my life, yet one of the best days. Sitting in that library reading your book (even through the haze and numbness that my mind had become), I started crying. It was everything I had ever experienced, what my whole family had experienced and it was right there in front of my eyes, in black and white. I was overwhelmed with joy (through tears) that some greater force had led me to your book, which started a ripple effect of changes that I am still experiencing to this day.

I started the elimination diet the next day. Within 3 days the sinus problem completely disappeared - I had had a runny nose, and headache for 7 weeks prior to that! It was clear proof to myself and my mum that something pretty big was happening when I ate certain foods.

A few months after I did a complete turnaround in my diet I decided I wanted more out of my life and through the strength and clarity that I was starting to experience in my mind and body, I decided to apply for uni. I am now more than half way through my first year of uni and I LOVE IT! And it wouldn't have been possible, without your help.

I have grown so much as a person in the last year, most people wouldn't recognise me. I have found a love of life and enjoy looking after my mind and body. Thank you so much for all the hard work, investigation and love it took for you to put together the food intolerance network, its publications and for sharing that knowledge with the world. - by email

(Sue's comment: see other stories about

Bulimia [\[1116\]](#)

Eating disorders (binges and starving) [\[963\]](#)

Bipolar/manic depression [\[1227\]](#) [\[1291\]](#)

We would be interested to hear more stories from failsafers about the effect of diet on these symptoms - suedengate@ozemail.com.au)

[1397] 160b: Another frightening reaction to 'natural food colour' annatto (June 2016) COURAGE AWARD

On December 4th 2015, my son (12, has Down Syndrome-but highly functioning), my daughter, and I were walking into our family doctor's office to pick up a prescription. We were holding hands as there is a very busy medical center there and drivers often do not pay attention to pedestrians. Anyway, we were walking across the parking lot when suddenly my son stopped, jerked his hands away from us and began to scream "stranger!" But pointing at myself and my daughter. We tried to catch him but he kept pulling away, yelling help, and saying he didn't know us. I knew immediately by the look on his face that he was not playing a joke or kidding in any way. He truly looked afraid. I was terrified, my daughter was crying and yelling "momma, what's happening, what's wrong with him?"

I said we've got to get him inside- we yelled for the nurse and a couple of men who were there as patients, also assisted us in getting him inside. The staff knew immediately something was wrong and took us straight back to an exam room. The doctor came in and began a routine exam, drew blood, took urine, a blood pressure reading and temperature. Everything was within normal limits. He sent blood and urine off for stat testing and sent us to the hospital to a brain scan done (MRI), which was also normal. His urine came back positive for cysts and blood, but no bacteria. His liver test showed no signs of disease but appeared slightly enlarged on ultrasound. For 10 days we went through this hell of not knowing what to do or what could be wrong. Test after test. We were certain he had a stroke of some sort, or possibly a seizure. We could find no proof other than his disturbing behaviour. He could no longer walk on his own, he could no longer read or write. He had distorted vision that made him question everything he saw. He had fits of screaming as if in horrible pain. He was rocking constantly. He would stay awake 2 to 3 days at a time then sleep for only 4 hours. He couldn't hold a fork or spoon. He couldn't dress himself. He was terrified of water, and he was still having times he didn't recognize any of us. I stayed up late with my oldest daughter as she had moved in to help with her little brother until we could find out what was wrong. He had even had to go back to wearing diapers because he would pee and sadly even poop himself and not even realize what he had done.

The doctors said that they thought maybe puberty was coming for him and that some children with Downs were affected by this and regressed to 4 and 5 year old mentality. I just knew in my heart they were wrong. I believed that if it were what they said it would have happened gradually, not all at once. All I got were "I'm sorry" and offers of strong medications to "control" him. I couldn't do that and I didn't accept that. I cried Christmas Eve and prayed with my daughters for a miracle. I put my youngest daughter to bed and my oldest daughter and I started putting things together for Christmas morning. We were wrapping the kids' gifts and talking about Christmases past when my daughter said, "remember how their kid would only eat chicken nuggets and Mac and cheese and it was sick all the time"? She was speaking of an ex family member, but I suddenly interrupted and said "YES! I remember! It was something about food dye that Kraft was using in their mac and cheese!"

It hit me all at once, that was it, I knew in my heart immediately but how could I find out for sure. Suddenly I was looking up every food my son had eaten in the last month that was not completely made by me or put together by God (not being sarcastic). I pulled out boxes, went through food labels and if we had no more of something he had eaten, I looked it up online. He had been on a kick of 3 mini chocolate donuts and a scoop of vanilla ice cream for a snack each afternoon and ate either Cheese Nips or MovieTime buttered microwave popcorn at night for a snack. He had been getting a "smoothie" made with Coffee Mate, ice, water, banana, vanilla, and sugar at breakfast with a poached egg and 2 sausage patties. His lunch was a Kraft single, and deli ham or turkey on whole wheat, with lettuce and tomato and frozen French fries that were oven baked. Supper meal was always a roasted meat and plain steamed vegetables, cottage cheese and sometimes a home-made bread or roll. After reading ALL the labels almost EVERY FOOD ITEM HE WAS EATING contained Annatto. The French fries, the crackers, the ice cream, the coffee mate, the popcorn, the cheese slice, EVERY meal except our evening meal contained Annatto. I knew I had been given the answer I needed. I started searching annatto online and kept getting RECIPES to prepare with it!!! I needed someone who knew it was bad for you too, someone who knew some people could not metabolize this stuff! I finally came across your site and read what you had to say. I had the verification I needed and now was gonna figure out how to flush that out of his body.

I immediately began using food grade diatomaceous earth on him by mixing it in unflavored yogurt. I gave him 15 drops of ConcenTrace Trace minerals in fresh squeezed orange juice that morning. I started giving him purified water and squeezing lemon in it or making him purified water with fruit infusion in it. Black tea with raw sugar or wild honey and the day after Christmas I got on Amazon and ordered bee pollen, green propolis, and more ConcenTrace minerals, plus concentrate vitamin paks.

I threw out every single annatto item I could find and flushed his system with all the good stuff I could get in him. It took about 7 days to hear him laugh again and within ten days he could walk straight. Three weeks before he could get his sense of comedic timing back and tell jokes like his old self and about a month before his vision cleared. I thank God so much for answering that prayer. That is truly all I could ever want. To know my son is gonna be ok. We had a setback lately however which is how I found your site again as I has forgotten to bookmark it. Anyway, he's been getting that look in his eyes again, like he's not sure who he's talking to. He's also has a couple of toilet accidents and not wanting to come out of his room because he's seeing shadows after him? Anyway, yesterday I found that his "all natural" real fruit juice gummy multivitamins contain none other than ANNATTO! These were recommended by our pharmacist. My (our) doctor, has listed Annatto on my sons chart as an allergen under "food and medications" now. He said he had it listed under food only, as he had no idea it was used in medications. The pharmacist said she had NEVER heard of it so she had no way of knowing it was used in vitamins (it was listed under ingredients on the bottle) anyway she wouldn't refund the \$35.00 for a product he should never have had. She swears her "autistic" son has taken them for years. I suggested that she take him off them and any other things with annatto in them, just to be sure he has autism at all. She told me there are always going to be "websites and parents out there looking for an excuse for their child's illness" and that sometimes we just have to accept what we are given. I just looked at her and said how happy I was for such "websites and parents" or I would have never had verification that I was on the right track with my son.

My son has not yet learned to read fully again and still can't write. But, I believe in time he will be completely himself. I am just shocked at how much a simple waxy seeded plant took from him and how hard we've had to fight to get him back from its clutches. I have seen some horrible things as a nurse, but I have to say I think the damage from Annatto is more harmful than any drug addiction I've ever seen and certainly needs much more attention from parents and the medical community. I don't know how it is in AU and European countries or in the Asian countries. I am sure that in the

United States that this "natural," food additive is in far too many food items. Almost everything from cookies to casseroles contain this "poison" and the U.S. seems to have no plans to cut back on it. It is dangerous. Period. Sadly, too many people here are afraid they will have to cut out a food that their family just loves or their kids can't get by without its taste or convenience, so they would rather give them a pill to counteract it. Another sad reality is some parents find they can get a social security disability check for their children who have learning disabilities of things like attention deficit disorder, and they are not gonna give up that check for a cure (this is not ALL parents, but I have met MANY who call it their "fun money" for "having to take care" of such a child).

Thank you for letting me tell our story. I pray that its better every day and I will be far more diligent in my label checking, so I can be sure Annatto is out of our lives FOR GOOD ! I hope someone out there who even suspects that they or their child could be affected by a food additive that they try an elimination diet just to be sure. Just because everyone isn't bothered by it doesn't mean you or a loved one isn't. Doctors don't always have an answer. Trust me, our doctor is a great doctor and a good friend and he never even GUESSED something like this was affecting my son. I've had 5 children and been a nurse for 30 years and neither did I. If I hadn't had my memory jostled into remembering Kraft taking the dye out of their mac and cheese and all the complaints about it, I would never have thought to look it up. I would have never found your site and my son likely would be in a very bad situation right now and we would still be hopping from doctor to doctor in search of an answer. You will never know,....never know, how much stress we were under. How much fear I had that my son had some horrible disease creeping up on him and stealing away his life. That any moment he could possibly just stop eating, or breathing. I didn't know and no doctor could tell me otherwise. Now even though I haven't read of anyone's case as extreme as my son. What if they don't know. I think of children who have died from unknown causes and young people in institutions because their families couldn't care for them anymore because one day they started with an unknown illness they never could overcome. That could have been my son. He just turned 13. If I hadn't found out, how long could I have continued to change diapers and spoon feed him? Would he keep growing bigger? Would he have gotten worse? He was already getting worse by the day. Would it have leveled off or continued? These thoughts are there now but not because I fear a return but because I fear there are others out there who are in the same position we were.

I pray not, but if there is someone out there, just try and see if it is something they have always liked or something that they started not long before. Flavored pudding, Ensure, yogurts, or any plain old everyday foods that everyone else eats. And remember, just because you've never had an allergy to a food or a reaction to an additive before does not mean you aren't now. Allergies can develop at ANY time.

I'm just thankful that a website like yours is out there to help point someone in the right direction. I appreciate it very much and hope you keep up the good work in letting people know what is out there and what can be done about it - Lynn from USA

(Sue's comment: Thanks to Lynn for sharing this amazing story. A few warnings: If you think you are affected by annatto 160b, you do not need to take any special products to detox. Simply stop consuming annatto - and expect some withdrawal symptoms within two weeks. For behavioural reactions, normally these present as a day or two of increased symptoms e.g. on days 4 and 5. Withdrawal symptoms can include agitation or tearfulness, followed by increasing improvements. Most people who realise they react to one food additive are likely to be affected by some other food additives - and possibly some "healthy" natural foods - as well).

[Reader reports of reactions to annatto in adults and children, from headaches and stomach aches to asthma and children's behaviour](#)

[1347] ADHD improves on diet (August 2015)

One of my twins was so horrible I was going to give him to human services for a few days to give me and mine a break so they could monitor him and see what help I could be given. Then six weeks ago we started failsafe and I have a new kid. He helps me cook and clean, asks if there are any jobs to do, mostly does his chores. Everything works best when no ds around. Chats to us especially hubby who he was prickly around. Beautiful improvements. - Adele, by email

[1344] I passionately believe he never had ADHD just salicylate intolerance (July 2015)

My son's grade one teacher wanted us to get him "labelled" for funding to get him extra class support. After a very well written note from her the paediatrician wanted to test him for ADHD and that night I googled ADHD and diet and found you. The very next day I took the shopping list to Woolworths and spent the day restocking our pantry, cooking and making dietician appointments. We fell in love with our son all over again and the last 18 months have been an amazing journey of learning for all of us. Our son still makes poor choices (as all humans do) but I passionately believe he never had ADHD he was just a normal little boy who was moderately salicylate intolerant! - Lisa, by email

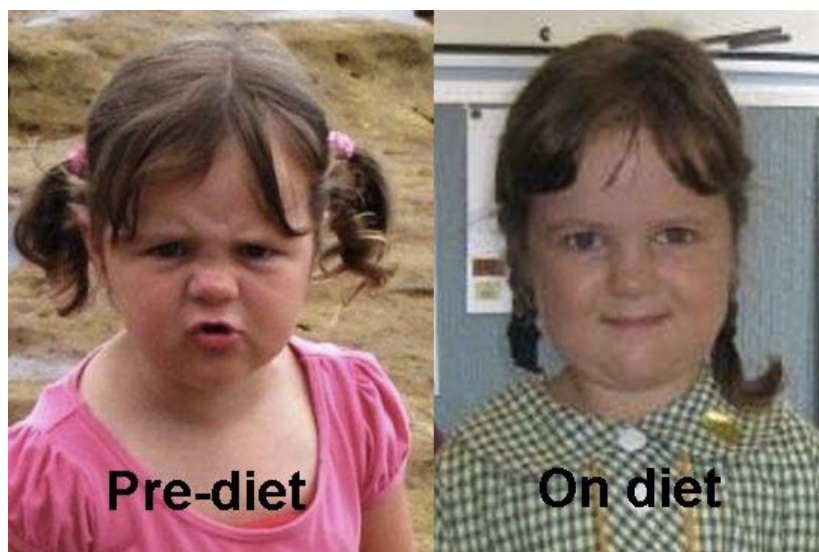
[1332] ADHD and diet: "greatly improved in all areas academically" (May 2015)

I took my son for his first ADHD paediatric psychiatrist visit since being on failsafe. Although the psychiatrist had approved taking him off medication he didn't have it in his notes so we decided to not tell them until after testing that he wasn't medicated. Well, the results were the best he's had in over 7 years. He had greatly improved in all areas academically and his brain function test showed he was much less distracted. These results are better than any he ever had when being medicated so we are very proud of our young man. So glad we decided to take the giant step into the failsafe world. As daunting as it was, the results speak for themselves and it's like second nature these days.

He's very proud of himself too. The absolute biggest thing for us is that he has friends now. No one use to want to play with the naughty kid and I think it's like a domino effect. Each positive thing creates another positive thing - Larissa

(More than 200 people liked this on the facebook group!)

[1327] Salicylates and the changing face (March 2015)



I could not resist sharing these photos of my little girl about 2.5yo pre-diet. On the left is the face we saw most days, all day. On the right is her now, the new girl. She has just started school and her teachers have said how great her behaviour is in class. So, for those just starting this journey of discovery, keep up the good work, be patient and good results will come.

The Pre-diet girl showed signs and symptoms very similar to severe ODD, ADHD, with anger, over emotional, anxiety, inability to concentrate on a task, several tantrums a day with each lasting anywhere up to 45 mins, self harm , irritability, aggression, frustration, laughing when inappropriate, waking screaming and going to bed screaming, very frequent wees (incontinence), aching limbs at night, blocked nose/sinus, itchy skin (no rash) sleep disturbance, lacking energy, sensitivity to touch, sounds, smells (Sensory Processing Disorder). We changed her diet just prior to her 3rd birthday and within two weeks we saw a completely different child. Even her little face changed. She became a calm, normal, loving, happy, intelligent, creative child. Her behaviour changed to what we would call normal 3 yr old. The odd tantrum, but not lasting long. The other issues she was also dealing with, just about disappeared or were greatly reduced ie sensitivity to sound/touch, aching limbs at night, incontinence, making toilet training possible. If they returned, we knew that we had gone over the salicylates threshold. We stick to a diet with her of low/mod sals. Knowing her diet, we can sneak in the odd strawberry or other higher sals foods here and there. No preservatives, additives, msg, artificial colours for her where at all possible. She is my third child, first child from second marriage. My other two children have no issues like this. Oldest has lactose intolerance. Youngest from second marriage has lactose intolerance too. Having ulcerative colitis now at 44, I realise that I had my own food sensitivities as a child and continue as an adult. I admit though, that we have not done strict challenges - Jan on facebook

[1322] 160b: “on the failsafe diet now for 2.5 weeks...MAJOR change” (March 2015)

I have had my 5 year old, diagnosed with ADHD a couple of months ago, on the failsafe diet now for 2.5 weeks and have found that his tantrums that had been occurring between 12.30 and 13.30 at school (not all days but a lot) which had involved kicking the teacher and often spitting and having to be carried to the office have stopped. I believe that 160b in Vaalia yoghurt every day, two or three serves, has largely been the issue. He is now sitting and reading his reader in one go which for us is a MAJOR change. We have eliminated all additives, colours, and only have low salicylate and no amines or nitrates, We still have dairy and wheat. We were having. He gets hot red ears at times which are sensitive to touch - I have read that this is a sign of food intolerance? - Rhonda (report received September 2011)

(Comment from Sue: Red ears: Yes, they are a sign of food intolerance and like any other symptom, can be associated with any of the usual culprits although I have to say in my experience, dairy foods would definitely be a suspect.

Many families are extremely reluctant to give up dairy foods, and would rather do almost anything else. The golden rule of food intolerance is: whatever you most like is most likely to affect you. I often recommend to families who are unable to give up dairy foods that they switch to A2 milk first, as a stepping stone (this means A2 milk, A2 yoghurt, Nuttalex margarine and dairy free ice cream, e.g. So Good Vanilla soy bliss). For some people this is enough. Most (if behaviour is involved) need to go further and find it easier to switch to oatmilk, soymilk or ricemilk from A2 than A1. Note that A2 yoghurt is not failsafe - too many amines - but you can get rid of the amines by turning it into Quark overnight (see Quark in our recipe list)).

[1312] 160b annatto: One-liners (March 2015)

It is the worst additive for my daughter, she has adhd and this one makes her have massive, and I mean massive meltdowns! - Donna

[1303] Just some encouragement for those starting their journey (February 2015)

We found failsafe 12 years ago after an extensive search for alternatives to ADHD drugs that our daughter's pediatrician prescribed. It was a long and hard road through primary school through the bullying and poor grades and lack of friendships, the exclusion from birthday parties because others thought it was 'too hard' to cater (despite our willingness to provide alternative) but our efforts truly paid off... with our daughter graduating with the highest score in her high school with some great friendships and a confidence that surprises us even today. This system saved our family and our marriage - I cannot express enough gratitude. Hang in there. I just remember how hard it was at the beginning, how many mistakes we made but just wanted to let people know that there is great outcomes and to not give up. Once you find the true intolerances life becomes easier – Donna

[1301] One-liners (February 2015)

Hard work at the beginning, but so worth it at the end. I kicked my asthma - off all medications; my eldest was diagnosed with ADHD - fixed by changing his diet; my middle was diagnosed with mild hypotonia (muscle tone) - fixed by changing his diet; my youngest had tantrums - fixed!!! We are still doing it 11 years down the track with some foods brought back in. Schooling excelled for all of them – Tracy

[1299] Do amines make you emotional? - facebook thread (February 2015)

I also get ADHD symptoms and then crash – Anneliese

At an emergency chemist I was given red medicine for my boy. I explained to the pharmacist that my boy has ADHD and was intolerant to red colouring. Thought I would relay the conversation:

Pharmacist: Well it isn't red, its pink so should be ok

Me: Pink is red colouring, he is intolerant to red

Pharmacist: But if you tell him pink isn't red then it'll be ok

Me: No, he can't have anything that is red colouring; red, pink, orange, or purple. If he does he starts spinning around and acting crazy.

Pharmacist: How about you hide it in something

Me: If someone is allergic to nuts, spreading vegemite over peanut butter doesn't make them less allergic. Just like red food colouring.

Pharmacist: Oh, you could mix it with milk to make it paler.

Thankfully at this time a senior stepped in, before I throttled the guy – Julie

[1286] ADHD: "three weeks on failsafe and all his symptoms have stopped" (November 2014)

My son has been on ADHD medication for 5 years (he's now almost 12) - while it served its purpose in the beginning, in the last 12 months he'd been aggressive, had a racing heartbeat and severe verbal and physical tics. Two weeks off his medication and three weeks on failsafe and all his

symptoms have stopped and his teacher says he's more focused in class. I wish I had of been informed of the diet option before being told medication was the only solution. What's safer for our children? Dosing then up in medication (even if it is working) or changing their diet. I almost feel I was a lazy parent for taking the easy medication option without even looking at possible alternatives – Larissa

[1285] ADHD: "really hang in there with failsafe" (November 2014)

Pity this article on ADHD <http://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2011/october/1317868852/gail-bell/prescribing-behaviour> didn't include Sue's work. A major and disappointing omission.

Over 20 years ago our family went through the whole drug treatment, Connor rating...all the things referred to in this article. We changed schools, endlessly we tried to work out why one child hyperactive, the other so very withdrawn. Tested high IQs but little school engagement. Medication was all we got from paediatricians. Things were bad.....ritalin awful, I felt terrible drugging them but both not functioning at school without it: what to do? Eventually we were lucky enough to find failsafe and things turned around big time. No drugs. Life unbelievably better. As adults the ability of our kids to study and manage other aspects of their life has depended on whether they have chosen to be failsafe: this article suggests this is a childhood condition but I am sure that once a person has these intolerances it is highly likely they will carry them into adulthood. Reading this article I couldn't believe how little has changed.....except, all those years ago, ADHD was little recognised in schools.

Now a grandmother, I look back and strongly urge families to really hang in there with failsafe.....read Sue's books for inspiration. The minor inconvenience of going FS is nothing compared to the joy of having a happy family. One shouldn't have regrets, I know, but our family life, loving and close as it was, would have been very very much better if we had come across FS much earlier - Jane

[1284] I NO LONGER HAVE ADHD! (November 2014)

I'm really sad today. I'm in a mums and bubs group and one of the mums posted that there child was diagnosed with ADHD and now she has to medicate her child. I posted about the great results I have had with being failsafe. And I was made out to be the freak using alternate ways and I should be using the medications. . But they didn't want to know that I'm now symptom free..I NO LONGER HAVE ADHD!

Thanks to Sue and her amazing network. I'm just sad that it's the freaky way to go.. Kylie

[1283] Lactose and "off with the fairies" (November 2014)

My son was diagnosed as ADD in 2006 age 5. Instead of Ritalin (as was prescribed and given to us in a brown paper bag after our visit to a paediatrician at Adelaide Children's Hospital), we did the elimination diet and found he is lactose intolerant. If he has lactose it affects his behaviour, concentration and memory for up to 3 days. Even after 8 years of sticking to lactose free, if he has proper dairy he gets quite sick (vomiting and loose bowels). Just to clarify, my son CAN drink and eat lactose free products with no effect at all, but if he has "normal" dairy products, he has the behaviour/memory issues and vomiting and loose bowels.

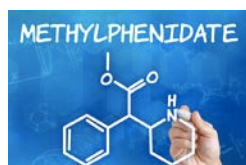
His behaviour has gone from what was classed as "off with the fairies" before we became lactose free, to now after even small amounts of dairy he becomes full on, silly/naughty and asks silly things

and runs about crazy, his pupils dilate, he can't keep his hands still and definitely not concentrating - Kerry-Anne.

[1260] I think I have a new child! (March 2014)

Just thought I'd pop and let u know the great success I've had so far with my daughter - I think we are going into week 3. Recently diagnosed with ADD. Have eliminated all salicylates from her diet and she is only having the permitted vege on the elimination diet and only fruit is Pear. No additives or Preservatives.....I THINK I HAVE A NEW CHILD!!!!!! Difference is unbelievable..... Can't thank u enough Sue and your cookbook is a saviour and I think you've also cut my grocery bill by over half - Megan

[1252] Diet as effective as Ritalin for 6 yo with ADHD (February 2014)



Last year my 6 year old daughter was diagnosed with ADHD and given a trial of Ritalin. I felt sick in the pit of my stomach when I gave her that first tablet and I knew there had to be a better way. So, I began searching and found Fed Up. We went on the elimination diet and in week 4 I did not give the Ritalin to her (on the Thursday and Friday) and the teacher did not notice!!!!!! I cannot tell you how happy and relieved I was. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and experience. - Julia, WA

[1229] 160b: Massive meltdowns (facebook thread, October 2013)

It's the worst additive for my daughter, she has ADHD and this one makes her have massive, and I mean massive meltdowns! – Donna

[1211] To do the diet or not, a facebook thread (July 2013)

A lovely lady directed me here. I am desperate really. To the point of waiting for a paed's appointment in Sept so they can put my lovely 7.5yr old son on Ritalin. I'm not anti-ritalin but I want to know that I have tried EVERYTHING first before we get to that point. His behaviour is really bad at school and he just isn't coping with life. I am really hoping that a change in diet can go some way to help him control his behaviour – Sarah

Please, please try this diet first before meds. My 7yo teacher thought I had put him on meds within 2 weeks of diet. Not easy, but worth it for no meds – Jenni

I don't do failsafe but cut out additives ie preservatives, colours and flavours, as a way of managing my daughter asthma. When I did it I noticed a great change in my son's behaviour, he's in kindergarten this year and doing really well, with the occasional down days (usually my fault for slipping with food). So good luck, I noticed results far quicker for my daughter's asthma, but it did work for sons behaviour, tied in with me trying to be more calm and consistent with managing behaviour. He doesn't have ADD or anything, was just really loud and impulsive, I couldn't manage his behaviour all the time which was frustrating and he's even noticed he feels better. Good luck, well worth a try - Kate

I agree Jenni. Nothing to lose trying, 2 weeks is what it took to rid my daughter of a 6 month long cough, I think it took so long to see results with son because preschool 2 days a week were feeding

him anything. Once he left results were far better. My daughter's preschool are fantastic at modifying my daughters diet to suit her needs, no probs there - Kate

At our house, the diet means the difference between absolute madness, and a lovely, calm, inspiring life! Well worth trying, and although it's hard initially and although the process overall may take a little while, you are likely to see results quickly. Amongst many other benefits, my own fibromyalgia pains disappeared inside a week (wheat and dairy in my case)... I was furious that nobody had mentioned it to me before :0) – Susanne

This is definitely worth a try Sarah Definitely!! - Sonia

Sarah I think it's awesome your trying this first. As a psych student and previous carer I question meds. The impact it has is devastating. I finally have a child carer at school who agrees in the difference in my son's behaviour on diet. I wouldn't consider my son anywhere near ADHD etc but the difference b/w diet and off diet is VERY different that this carer (as teachers are oblivious) now says "what have you added this week?" - Julie

Good luck Sarah, my son has ADHD and was prescribed 2x 10mg Ritalin daily. His teacher last year wanted us to increase the dose. We pulled in our failsafe reins, and although we're not as strict as we could be, he is now on 1x 10mg Ritalin daily and it's JUST enough to help him through school – another Sarah

It's worth a try. My 4 year old was a right little monster, almost ODD. I have taken out colours, preservatives and flavours haven't done the whole fs diet but this has worked wonders. He can concentrate now follow directions his prep teachers have seen a massive improvement. We can also tell when he had had something that he shouldn't. Give it a go it is worth a try - Tracey

Thank you so so much for your encouragement xx - Sarah

Do It!!! I had a terrible prep year did the elimination and turns out she is intolerant to colours and salts. It was literally Jekyll and Hyde with her now we have calm and peace and sometimes she starts to slip and we pull the reins up on the salts, absolutely amazing the difference in food can make - def worth doing! My only regret is that I lost 6 yrs living with her like that and that the behavior specialist never mentioned food I had to think of that myself – Michelle

So true. We loosely follow this diet too. Behaviour was crazytown then we went on the very strict elimination diet and I did notice a big change. As my son has gotten older we have gone down the ritalin path but I'm convinced that diet is related. Do ALL U CAN. I don't believe 1 thing works- it's a combination of love, support, diet, routines, boundaries and sometimes medication. oh and a good paed! - Narrissa

I find it strange that no health professionals ever mention diet as a way of managing issues. You'll need the encouragement Sarah, it's a daunting thing to start, but 12 months down the track you'll wonder what all the fuss is about. My main issue ATM is the canteen at school. For some reason having mum put a fun thing in your lunch box is not as fun as getting it yourself at the canteen. But you'll find what works for you and learn some new negotiating skills along the way - Kate

I know!!! I got my DD was explosive and suggested books to read which we're nothing more than ways to tip toe around her - not one mention from anyone about food until I had the light bulb moment and googled "food child behavior" and my whole life changed... Oh and the canteen why oh why do they make lemonade slushies blue it's so unnecessary it's infuriating - Michelle

Thankfully my son's canteens don't do slushies, I'd never hear the end of it! The canteen guidelines in NSW (red amber and green) are a joke, the kids only buy the amber foods, which in large amounts is ridiculous and almost everything in my sons canteen is classified as green or amber but are loaded with additives - Kate

I'm from the UK but live in Oz. I find the guidelines here for kids food MINDBLOWING! - Sarah

We have red amber green too but only red on Fridays she can't have anything without backlash. I found a microwave travel bowl that I heat last night's tea in and send it with an extra hot heat pack to keep it warm I thought we were far more educated than what's available on the canteen list grrrr - Michelle

We tried fail safe with my 6yr old wasn't working after a week of gluten free wow new child - Bec

Good luck, it's challenging at first but so amazing when you see the results a few weeks later. We've been doing it for nearly 3 years, it becomes a way of life - Nora

Oh lovely, it's saved us, and it sounds like you are where we were. Welcome. You won't regret it xx – Susan

[1196] Happy 21st for failsafe – second story (March 2013)

This week our son turns 21 and starts his 4th year of a BE(Hons) Bachelor of Engineering Degree.

We have come so far from when he was 8years old and I was reading the Fed Up Book and thinking this is us....

The teachers had mentioned ADHD and Learning Issues....in my heart I knew he was not any of these, in fact I believed him to be very smart.

A month after starting the diet without mentioning it to the school. They asked what had changed and we never looked back. He was now able to show the true little lad he was...bright, happy and friendly. Thanks Sue and Howard- you have always been there for us. We are so proud of our son and so pleased we found Failsafe. Yes at times it was a challenge, but wow look where we are now. It was worth everything it took to achieve what we and our son have.

We are very proud. We as a family know for sure that our son would have had quite a different life without FAILSAFE. His oppositional behaviour alone would have changed that. Let alone the learning issues - Linda

[1186] Amines cause cyclic vomiting syndrome (CVS), ADHD symptoms (February 2013)

My daughter has recently been diagnosed intolerant to amines, we have been low amine for about 2 months. We have had great results, days we have cheated she has been lethargic, thrown up, looked pale etc. The difference on the days we have not cheated are amazing, my happy 12 year old is back. The results have been so startling that today we will become a FS family. She is intolerant to amines as she has been diagnosed with cyclic vomiting syndrome, you can add that in if you wish as not many people know about CVS and finding out that low amine diet helps took us 6 months of various doctors and A&E trips. – Sarah on Facebook group

My son has been diagnosed as ADHD however on the elimination diet he proved to be sensitive on the amines challenge, and bad - threatened to kill me, uncontrollable crying yelling, yet when we avoid the amines the ADHD symptoms all but disappear! I have a wonderful dietician, she has done

wonders for us as a family far more than any of the paediatrician we have seen, it's amazing what a change of diet can do. – Katrina on Facebook group

[1183] Headed for a life of labels (February 2013)

My 4 year old daughter was headed for a life of labels due to her inattention and naughtiness especially at kinder, and I am hoping we have found the answer. She was advanced with everything up until the age of 2 and then has slowed down, especially in the last year, becoming more and more immature, naughty, silly and unable to concentrate, with only selective listening, especially in public and at kinder, but she wasn't like that all the time, so I knew it wasn't the real her.

It's been 5 days on the diet and she has been calmer, more co-operative and more focused, but I think we have made some mistakes each day, due to wrong vegetable oil and my ex-husband's insistence that only a "tiny bit" of curry powder would be fine. It wasn't fine, she went hyper. I also suspect dairy could still be causing problems, her bolts to the loo and sloppy poos have almost stopped with lactose-free milk, but she is still doing it occasionally and can't maintain concentration after a while if she's had products that contain milk.

A month later: We are still progressing well. The school holidays were great, as it was easier with less rush. My daughter has been wonderful. There have been some wow moments: I had to drop something off to a friend who works next door to a McDonald's, and she asked if I wanted to grab a quick coffee there. I explained to my daughter that I would not be buying her anything, but would get her something yummy when we got home - she went and played and didn't once ask for anything to eat or drink. Then, at a birthday party I told her to say good-bye to her friends because we were leaving, and after I had said my goodbyes, expecting to have to hunt for her and then have the typical battle to leave I'd always faced, I was shocked to find her inside, waiting for me at the front door.

Milk still seems to be a problem for her, even A2 milk, on the days she has more, I hear a lot of throat clearing and the more old behaviours I see for the next day or so - silliness, lack of concentration, irritable and more oppositional, but still nowhere near the pre-diet days. Her kinder teacher has noticed and commented on the change, and so did her Ready Steady Go Kids instructor (and that was on one of her not so great "after-dairy" days).

As for me I have not been as disciplined at times, especially when we are rushing out somewhere, I have skipped breakfast in favour of a muesli bar on the run, and paid for it later with headaches and irritability. But overall I feel so much better, clearer headed and my sinusitis, hayfever and headaches are, for the most part gone!!! They used to be frequent – Jenny by email.

[1179] Failsafe high school graduation success: one of the highest OPs in her school (February 2013)

Thank you for all your efforts over the years. I am certainly a champion of the cause after the success we have had with our daughter. Anyone that talks of issues with their children I talk about FAILSAFE, even buy the books for them.

In 2003 the teachers, doctors and paediatrician all wanted to medicate our daughter for ADD. She was behind in school, had trouble keeping friends, would have fits of rage then extreme bouts of depression, wanting to self harm or die. It was tragic and heartbreaking. Looking back we now see how we went from a really good baby to a terrible twos and beyond ... after the introduction of main stream solids. I was quite determined not to take the easy way out and spend \$20 a month on subsidised dexamphetamine ... so my research led me to Fed Up. We haven't looked back, yes

admittedly we have slipped over the years but behaviours and moods always bring us back. It's been a long and at times arduous journey but well worth the effort.

Our daughter graduated high school last year with one of the highest OPs in her school which guaranteed her entry into a number of top universities. Everyone (including the teachers) comments on how polite and engaging she is as a teenager.

My advice to those starting the failsafe journey ... hang in there ... the rewards are well worth the effort. Thank you Sue and Howard! - D from Brisbane

[1176] Salicylates, benzoates, additives linked to asthma, ADD, headaches (February 2013)

Our paediatrician advised us to try failsafe eating for our 8 year old boy after years of struggles with asthma and ADD. What a change. For the first winter in 8 years he has gone medication free - his usual line up was prednisolone, antibiotics, 2 x preventative puffers and constant ventolin.

We tried the benzoate challenge. Within 24 hours of trying one glass of lemonade he was coughing again (causing mucous/vomiting as well) and needing ventolin for the next 48 hours. The same happened after a neighbour 'kindly' gave him a blueberry frostee! 48 hours later we are still recovering, but this time from headaches as well! – Meg, NSW

FIN Comment

Most children's medications contain benzoate preservatives (also called hydroxybenzoates or parabens) - even asthma medications - and these too can contribute to asthma, eczema and hives as well as behavioural effects.

Asthma and intolerance to benzoates <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8952792>

Clinico-immunological study of 16 cases of benzoate intolerance in children
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9162174>

[1166] 282: Defiant, hyperactive, impossible to reason with, plain silly, very loud, noisy, annoying to others, demanding, pushy and tantrums (December 2012)

My daughter, who is now 7 years old and who began the failsafe approach at age 3, reacts in the following ways whenever she has 282 in bread. She becomes defiant, hyperactive, impossible to reason with, plain silly, very loud, noisy, annoying to others, demanding, pushy, and if something doesn't go her way...watch out...fully blown tantrum including slamming doors, storming out the house, screaming, yelling, crying that goes on for a long time. Can't and won't follow simple instructions, becomes distracted easily, goes off track and off task, becomes destructive She also finds settling at night really difficult ... can't seem to switch off. The next day she realizes that it was the 282 that made her feel that way ... and she genuinely can't refrain from behaving in this way. We are pleased though that as she grows her reactions seem to be becoming slightly less severe. I think this has to do with more careful diet, increased body weight, and increased maturity on her part.

Prior to going failsafe, life was unbearable. She had night terrors every night for 4 years etc, etc, etc. We made many trips to specialists and psychologists and others, with no explanation as to why we had a totally uncontrollable child. We chose to try Failsafe before we filled the prescription for Ritalin that we had been given, and thankfully it worked!

Thanks to your book, Fed Up, we have seen incredible results and are now on track. - Debbie, Victoria

[1153] Colours and flavours in epilepsy medication (October 2012)

When the doctor recommended ADHD medication for our 4 year old daughter, I was reluctant because she was already on high doses of epilepsy medication. Instead, we decided to try the elimination diet. Her behaviour improved out of sight and her general overall health improved ... changing her epilepsy medication to colour and flavour-free was harder than it seems as most kid size doses come in flavoured syrup. – by email

[1140] 282, 621: Muscle spasms due to bread preservative, MSG, salicylates, amines (October 2012)

My classic symptoms are fatigue and pain as well as massive muscle spasm where I get severely "locked up". My muscles go rigid (praying mantis style), mainly my arms and legs are affected. Sometimes even my facial muscles and tongue when it is severe. I can't walk or feed myself when this happens. It happens in degrees and lasts for different lengths of times. Sometimes just my fingers and toes curl. Always my muscles spasms are preceded by pain and almost always severe fatigue and a fuzzy head. When they are really bad I also get tinnitus. My hands go red and hot and very sensitive.

My muscle spasms have been heavily investigated by numerous neurologists - and I mean, numerous! - 20 at a hospital movement disorder clinic and another 5-6 independent ones. When I didn't fit into their pigeon hole definitions, I was then referred on three occasions to 3 different psychiatrists. They all pronounced me mentally healthy except one of them said, "That since there is no known neurological cause for my spasms, that he must conclude that it is psychological" and that I should just demedicalise and try and get on with my life.

When a friend recommended the RPA allergy clinic, I was adamant that food could not cause such a drastic reaction and I started the elimination diet extremely skeptical and determined to prove them wrong. Now I realize that I've always had some food intolerance (family history) as a young child when I used to get aching legs and be so extremely hyperactive at school that the teachers would send me for a run around the school grounds before they let me sit in their classes even in Year 12! Two bouts of glandular fever (at 18 then again at 21) then lowered my tolerance even further.

Since the elimination diet, I've discovered the main triggers are 282 [preservative calcium propionate used in bread] and MSG [flavour enhancer 621]. In 1.5 hours flat after ingesting bread preservative I am in severe spasm with all my classic symptoms! MSG has about a 3-4 hour time lag. The spasms used to last 30 mins - 1 hour (basically till my muscles fatigue) but now that I've virtually eliminated the diet factor and I am so much better and fitter, when I do accidentally eat 282 or MSG then they can last up to almost 4 hours full spasm. My husband doesn't have a hope of moving my arms or legs, they're so rigid. He said that even if I tried myself I could not be so strong other than when I'm in spasm.

Salicylates cause my hot hands and pain but have a delayed effect causing me to spasm only after a while (2-3 days). Amines also have a delayed effect, first causing hyperactivity/insomnia then pain but rarely spasm.

The elimination diet has improved my quality of life so, so much and has introduced an element of control to my life that I haven't had for 8 years. I feel amazingly lucky to have stumbled upon this as the answer! - Tessa, NSW (story received in 2004)

[1139] One-liners (September 2012)

"We started failsafe eating several years ago after going to the pharmacist with a script for Ritalin for my son. The pharmacist refused to fill it. He said 'for oppositional defiance, you need to read this book and look at food'. It changed our lives". – from Fedup Roadshow 2012

[1117] One-liners after Fedup Roadshow (August 2012)

We attended your talk a few months back and it has changed our lives. We have a six year old son who suffers from Aspergers and ADHD and since going additive-free his behaviour is much improved, his social skills are coming along in leaps and bounds and his fits of rage are completely gone.- Heather by email.

[1115] PDD, ADHD, anxiety disorder, borderline anorexia nervosa (July 2012)

I happened upon your site late last year while searching for help for my eldest son who was diagnosed with PDD, ADHD, anxiety disorder and high level language disorder as well as bordering on anorexia nervosa all at the ripe old age of 10. Doctors were not helping and all the drugs they threw at us weren't helping either. I was at a loss as to how to help him as his behaviour escalated out of control and my husband and I nearly split up because of the stress on both of us. It was a nightmare trying to manage all his problems as well as look after our other three children. His behaviour was so extreme that I didn't think diet could help but remembering that I was a Feingold kid for many years myself I figured it certainly couldn't hurt and I had been only too willing to make him take drugs because it was an "easy" option that didn't require a lot of effort on our part.

We started FS in January before school went back and now only a couple of months later my son looks and acts like a "normal" child. We have had easily an 80% improvement in his behaviour, autism symptoms and mood. I say only 80% because I'm still fumbling to get the diet right for him because he seems to be sensitive to just about everything and he is living on the elimination diet at the moment. It's a sharp learning curve though and we pay dearly for mistakes with a slide back into his worst behaviour and autistic traits within half an hour usually and the effects can last for days.

Thank you so much for the work you and your husband are doing for families like ours. by email, Qld

[1101] Dietary information should be free (February 2012)

I am single mother with 4 kids and am finding it very hard to find free information on an additive free diet for my 3 yr old that I was told was hyperactive by a paediatrician. You would think after paying the doctor more than \$250 dollars he would give you more information than 'eliminate additives', but everyone is after money. What about the kids that are suffering from these problems and the family problems they are creating, why is it no one in today's society can do anything to help without wanting to be paid an arm and a leg for it. Sorry to go on but I am finding it very hard and frustrating to get information that can help. PS Thank you for your Failsafe Booklet. – by email, Melissa

[1088] Severe anxiety from salicylates (January 2012) COURAGE AWARD

My daughter Rose is 7 years old. Since she was about 18 months old, we had problems with her waking every night with nightmares. Although her behaviour was not exceptionally good, it was not an issue at the time. When Rose started 4 year old kinder we started to notice that her eczema was getting quite bad and that it was not responding to any remedies that we tried. We saw doctors who

just said that she might grow out of it. When Rose started school, there was a huge turning point. Her behaviour I would say was ADHD behaviour – tantrums, itching all over her body, stomach pains, still having nightmares, oppositional defiance and the list goes on, and the worst of all, severe anxiety with me leaving her. Rose's anxiety was so bad that she had to be physically removed from me when I left her at school, even punching and kicking at the teachers. Rose would not leave me at all, even on weekends.

With trying to counteract the behaviour part, I stopped all additives and preservatives. Rose's behaviour became so much better. We noticed that her sleep, and feelings of anxiety did not improve.

After reading your book, I made an appointment with a dietician and started on the Elimination Diet. Everything started to improve with Rose, in leaps and bounds, except the anxiety. With many trials, I have now established that Rose is very sensitive to SALICYLATES.

I now have a daughter who is very confident, well mannered, has no problems sleeping, no eczema, nor does she have anxiety.

I can only say that without your help, I had no idea where to turn. The professional field let me down big time.

We have been doing this for about 12 months and I am a true advocate of Failsafe. I want to introduce this to our school. When my daughter was in Prep we had a lot to do with the Principal, as Rose spent a lot of time in her office, as they believed she was being naughty. Last year I was determined to prove them wrong by showing them that food did contribute to children's behaviour. I did often say that it was the food Rose was eating, but I know they did not believe me. I can now truly say that Rose's behaviour was as a result of the food, its additives and preservatives, as she is a different student. Well mannered, high achiever, leader material. Thank you. - Sharon, Vic

[1084] Help for Velocardiofacial Syndrome also known as Deletion 22q11 (December 2011)

I have started your diet with one of my children who has had numerous problems and after one week of just cutting back (not the full elimination diet) I had his teacher approaching me telling me how good he had been and how his attention had improved. Needless to say I have now started doing the same with all my other children and would like to say how great it is all going. I approached a mum at school who pointed me in your direction after the success she has had with her adhd child so yes word of mouth really does work.

I help run a support group for Velocardiofacial Syndrome also known as Deletion 22q11. Our VCFs kids have a very high incidence of behavioral and inattention issues and I believe an introduction to your diet could greatly benefit many of our members. - Melinda, by email

[1083] The 40 foods blood test (December 2011)

Before starting the diet, our 6 yo ADHD son had the 40 foods blood test and it showed wheat to be a 4 which is the highest, so I put him on wheat-free bread. The dietitian I saw about the elimination diet said that the blood test is not a credible way of testing for food intolerances and is reportedly listed on a web list of dodgy allergy tests by the ASCIA (The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy). The blood test only shows up food that is currently in the child's system, which makes sense, and the level of severity as revealed by the blood test is also affected by how much of that food the child has been eating. Intolerance is very strongly related to dose, unlike allergy. So a child could have a major intolerance towards amines for example, but if he has not eaten any recently, it won't show up as a problem on the results. Correspondingly, my son's 4 rating

for wheat could be indicative of the fact that he was eating a lot of it rather than his sensitivity towards it. I'm not a food scientist, but this does make sense to me.

According to our dietitian, the only way to conclude if a child is intolerant or not, is to do the elimination diet for a few weeks and then introduce challenges systematically. In short, she suggested our son do a bread challenge with Bakers Delight or Brumby's bread which does not use any vinegar or whey powder. HE PASSED!!! He is able to tolerate a sandwich or a bread roll for lunch, and is better on this than he was on the wheat free bread. He feels more normal, and it's a lot cheaper too. Our son is still free of additives and low in salicylates, amines and glutamates, and we continue to see astounding improvement, which is confirmed by his teachers, extended family and others who work with him. He is calmer, more thoughtful, and you can actually have a 2-way conversation with him now. - by email, SA

[1081] Our toddler was a little tornado on salicylates (December 2011)

My husband was one of the first children to go on the Feingold diet in Australia in 1973. His parents still talk about the amazing improvements they saw although on that diet he was allowed pineapple, dates, cauliflower and mushrooms. I think some of the improvement was that they had a local butcher, they made their own bread, and they never ate out because there was no eating out then. They had a wonderful local chemist who made them toothpaste.

Because of that you would have thought we would twig much earlier to our son but we didn't. We avoided tomato and orange a lot because from when he first went on solids he broke out in a rash and did again a few times so we just didn't eat them. But he got worse over time. At 15 months he would run up our very steep street and then do 4 blocks of the neighbourhood, with us trying to keep up. I'm now pretty sure that was the kick he was getting from the salicylates. His absolute favourite was apricot teddies. We used to only let him have 1 or 2 every fortnight but that, along with all the other high foods kept him like a little tornado.

My husband's mum told us about salicylates when we went away on a holiday. His eczema got really bad and we thought it must be from the chlorine when we went swimming. She suggested fish oil tablets so we got some for kids but they also had high salicylates. He just went hyper in no time. He kept asking for more of them and that night he screamed and screamed all night and kept scratching worse than he ever had. He had welts all over him in the morning.

We tried cutting out just salicylates and saw some improvement but it just got bad again. Then I went hunting on the internet, found your book and we talked with our doctor about doing the RPA elimination diet. The change was noticeable, the biggest being less extreme mood swings and going to sleep at night. Bedtime used to be a 2 hour stint every night and then he would collapse in exhaustion.

We have seen head banging on two occasions, well after we started the diet. My sister gave him some yoghurt by mistake with Annatto 160b in it and he was a very loud very angry little boy. He didn't really have tantrums as such but did quite a bit of banging his head, wouldn't let us near him. He didn't want to be touched at all and kept threatening his little brother with all kinds of nasty things. A lot of yelling. He did not sleep at all well that night needless to say. It was the same the second time. – Susan, by email (Please report similar annatto 160b reactions to suedengate@ozemail.com.au)

[1073] Some feedback from the Fedup Roadshow 2011 (September 2011)

Audiences laugh when I tell them ADHD medication makes children better able to focus on being oppositional, but that's what one family was there for: 'Ritalin makes him focus, he annoys the hell out of other people and doesn't give a s..t', they said, requesting a diet for oppositional defiance.

'I thought sultanas were okay as long as they are sulphite free', said the ADHD mother of an ADHD son. Wrong! Sultanas are one of the worst foods for a child with behavioural issues, and diet won't work if you make daily mistakes. I sometimes wonder if the best use of Ritalin could be for parents with ADHD so they are better able to be focus on doing the diet.

[1063] Another soy intolerance story: "Wow, wow, wow – a different boy" (July 2011)

My son is eight and daughter six years old respectively. We have been failsafe for approximately 7 years of that time. I thought I had it pretty much down what they could and couldn't have.

Last week however I stopped buying soy milk as my son was using so much of it, it wasn't funny. I have always tried to steer them to rice milk, which my daughter loves! thank goodness. The soy milk was for others in the home but our son loves it and stopped having the rice milk when soy was around.

I cut this out last week. I seem to have a different boy. We have always just thought that removing what we did know was causing problems was as good as it got. That he would always be a LOUD ACTIVE HYPER BOY. It was much worse if he ate things he shouldn't. He reacts quite badly to amines, salicylates, colours are atrocious for him etc.

Can it really be the soy? Can it really be this simple? My son is now receptive, loving, easy to talk to, to explain things to, has stopped whinging, being aggressive, doing annoying things to his sister and to us. Even stopped all the repetitive things as well.

As I write this he is sitting watching some tv, his room is clean, he is dressed for school, his jobs are done ie take the dog for a walk, feed the chickens etc. He is not 'in my face', he is not running around annoying his sister (she doesn't know what to do with this as she is so used to it, she is even trying to get his attention to be how he always is with her).

Wow, wow, wow. If it is not the soy milk then I am at a loss as to what it could have been. I now have a son that is soooooo easy to love and cuddle AND it has been a quiet house too, not just from him, but I don't feel the urge to yell to get my point across for the 15th time. The lesson here is - never give up trying to find what may be happening with your child. It probably is not normal, and you may be missing something. - Cathryn (see more about soy intolerance in [702], [605] and [314])

[1044] 320: Stomach and behavioural reaction to unlisted antioxidants in ricemilk (from submission to FSANZ 2006)

I have two young boys with autism and severe food intolerances. They become exceedingly ill when consuming any gluten, dairy or soy product, and I have kept these products from their diet successfully for the past 5 years. My children are also severely intolerant of various food additives, including BHA. Two days ago I purchased a carton of Rice Milk, and after one glass both of my children suffered stomach pains and diarrhoea; and the elder son suffered shaking, sweating, and fever. Both boys behaviour became extremely hyperactive and suffered erratic mood swings. (Thanks to this mother and the one below for contacting the manufacturer, the Vitasoy range is now free of nasty antioxidants) – N..., WA

[1035] One-liners (May 2011)

I just want to say a huge thank you to yourself, Sue and your team of volunteers. We have managed to keep both our children off all medication for hyperactivity and ADHD diagnosis through your diet and recommendations. Whilst it is hard and we slip up - it is worth it. - Leonie, Sydney

[1031] "For the first time in my life (I am now 41), I don't have a sore on me" (May 2011)

I would like to mention that I recently purchased all of Sue's books so I could expand on our recipes. When I bought these my husband decided that we (as the parents) should go through the elimination diet. We are both diagnosed adult ADHD. We are on week 2. By the end of week 1, I was overjoyed with a diet response. I have suffered with a "mysterious unexplainable" skin disease since I was about 10. I have seen Chinese doctors, acupuncture, naturopaths, had biopsies taken of the sores, etc. Nobody could give me a diagnosis so we put it down to a stress trigger. I would get a pussy looking pimple that got itchy. I would scratch it and it would blow open into an ulcer. Within 3 days I would have an ulcer the size of the top of my little finger. I had to keep cool bathing and in severe cases wash in Pinetarsol to heal the wound up. Right through primary school, high school - my whole life. First week on the diet and for the first time in my life (I am now 41), I don't have a sore on me. No pimple looking things, nothing. My skin has never been like this. My husband made a joke last night and said he looked forward to having a Christmas party this year where I could wear a sleeveless dress. During teenager years (when I was obviously eating most of the nasty foods) I could have up to 40 ulcers on my legs and arms at a time – Leona, ACT

[1010] One-liners (March 2011)

I just want to say a huge thank you. We have managed to keep both our children off all medication for hyperactivity and ADHD diagnosis through your diet and recommendations. Whilst it is hard and we slip up - it is worth it. - Leona, NSW

[1009] ADHD: Denied enrolment at 2 schools (March 2011) COURAGE AWARD

I just wanted thank you!!! My 9 year old son has ADHD, ODD, OCD, anxiety and a learning disability. He was denied enrolment at 2 schools because they feared his ADHD would disrupt other children. He was constantly in trouble at school and has been suspended. He was frustrated and upset every morning and every night, at times he couldn't sit at the dinner table without crying from the stress he felt, he found it very difficult to cope from day to day. From when he was a very young age, my husband and I worked very hard at managing his problems and saw numerous specialists. Originally we took him off bread with preservatives when he was 2 years old. It wasn't until we were at our wits' end a year ago, with schools and counsellors telling us to 'medicate him' - that I decided to buy your book.

A year on, our son avoids salicylates and additives and I have to say I have had a recent comment from a friend who hasn't seen him for a year and she said 'we were so impressed with your son's politeness, his impeccable table manners, you two have done so well with him!, even my sister commented on what a lovely boy he is!'

We managed to get him into a new school, one that I believed would work with us to 'manage' his issues better. Then his new school teacher rang me to say 'I have had a beautiful week with your son, he is very respectful, very caring towards the other children, has lovely manners and we haven't had one episode of hyperactivity or disruptive behaviour, he has a lot to offer and is doing very well'

I have near cried with pure relief and excitement that the little boy I got glimpses off occasionally over the last 9 years is now that nice little boy all day EVERY DAY! and other people can see it.

As a parent who had tried everything to avoid medication, I finally feel we have found the answer to successfully managing a child with behavioural issues. I now tell people – Failsafe, Structure, Management, and above all: Understanding. Your book is gold to us. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. – Leonie, NSW

[975] Bedwetting and salicylates (July 2006)

I have got a 10 yo who is hyperactive and an 8 yo who wets the bed. I recently browsed your website and was astounded with what I found. I was feeding my children with additives just in their sandwiches every day from the bread to the cheese without even realising. I recently changed their toothpaste to a mint one and couldn't understand why one of my children was off this planet with behavioural problems and the other was wetting the bed a lot more. I would never have linked the problems to the toothpaste. I read about salicylates in the mint toothpaste and stopped immediately. The bed wetter has improved already. We have cut additives out of our diet and it seems that as long as we limit the amount of salicylates in fruit and vegetables that he eats, he doesn't wet the bed. – Tania, by email

[956] Feedback after two years on failsafe (August 2010)

Our family have been following the Fed Up books for over 2 years now for a 5 year old daughter who was reacting severely with rashes on her face & body & a son whose doctor wanted to prescribe ADHD medication.

I can happily report that our daughter is rash-free and in fact after 7 years she doesn't even have eczema anymore. I believe her immune system has improved dramatically since being mostly failsafe. She is a healthy beautiful clear-skinned little girl with a good resistance to illnesses these days. My son is also progressing well with a mostly failsafe diet and fish oils to help with concentration. (our biggest problems - artificial colours & preservatives & in my daughter case - corn as well).

Just as an aside to this story - I put up with dreadful headaches every day for about 15 years, along with the headaches I got muscle cramps in my neck & shoulders. I was on a muscle relaxant for years until visiting a chiropractor. I went off the medication but after some weeks had a return of the problem after eating bacon & ham.....I am now convinced it was nitrates that were giving me the problem, and I have proven it a couple of times since. I have read about headaches & nitrates but can't find anything on it affecting the muscles - for years I thought I was just being uptight!! - Julie by email

[926] Didn't realise my daughter was affected by salicylates (June 2010)

I am a primary teacher with 3 children of my own. I first heard about your book 'Fed Up' when a student in my class was diagnosed with ADHD and his mother decided to try changing his diet rather than medicating him. The change in this boy was amazing.

I wrote down the details of your book to recommend it to other parents in the future, but ironically I now use your book myself as my six year old has just been diagnosed with ADHD. We had been eating a diet low in artificial additives for years after discovering that my children were reacting to the preservative 282 in bread but have just recently begun failsafe eating after my son's diagnosis. In doing so we discovered that all 3 of our children were reacting to salicylates. Even my 7 year old daughter who had been irritable all the time and difficult to get along with has changed into a happy, co-operative child since changing her diet. We hadn't even realised that she was affected by the natural food chemicals.

Our son who was diagnosed with ADHD has changed so much that at a recent doctor's visit the GP looked at him sitting quietly and said, "He doesn't have ADHD!" The doctor prescribed antibiotics to clear his cough and after one dose of antibiotics (with preservative and flavour) all his symptoms returned. We are now more sure than ever that food is the cause of his behavioural problems.- Cara, NSW

[907] 160b: agitated, uncontrollable, full of energy, hyperactive (June 2010)

I have 2 boys, aged 3 and 1 who both react badly to annatto. About half an hour after our 3 year old has had something with annatto in he is uncontrollable, agitated, full of energy, really full on. Hyperactive is how someone has described it.

I had read about annatto by chance and at first didn't think much of it but I mentioned it to my husband who said he reacted to red and yellow colours as a child so I stopped buying anything with 160b in it. I can't say I noticed anything for a while but one day we had dinner at a friend's place and our 3 yo was offered some ice cream. I didn't think to check it. Within half an hour our son was a nightmare. Kicking, screaming, purposefully doing things to annoy/upset us, refusing to sleep and thrashing out etc. My husband and I were shocked - what had happened to our child? Suddenly the penny dropped and I called to ask if the ice cream had 160b in it - it did! Since then we've also seen reactions to cheese, custard and yoghurt (at daycare until I asked not to give annatto to him). – Silvia, NSW

[901] Has his sights on the Olympic games (February 2010) COURAGE AWARD

We began our Failsafe journey 3 years ago. My now 9 year old was 18 months when the doctors first made the suggestion that he should be medicated. I flat out refused to medicate a little baby, and advised the doctors that food was triggering his extreme behaviour. On almost every occasion I was either laughed at or made to feel a fool and told that 'food doesn't alter behaviour' - this was despite the fact that he already been diagnosed with anaphylaxis to eggs and a severe dairy allergy and suffered chronic reflux as a baby, and I myself had suffered food intolerance for many years - this went on for nearly 6 years ...

As I wasn't particularly well versed in the ways of the internet and had no idea where to turn, I took things on myself, taking a common sense approach to removing things from my son's diet - if he went 'crazy', the food was removed and replaced with something else that didn't make him 'crazy'... We discovered that wheat was a major player in triggering offensive, violent and extremely hyperactive behaviour and insomnia ... so that was removed, and my son has been wheat free for nearly 9 years now. Whilst the wheat free diet took the edge off his severe behaviors, he was still an unpleasant, uncontrollable child and we tried many disciplinary techniques, play techniques, putting him in sports, we had his eyes and hearing checked and still had no answers.

His severe reflux started again at 6 years old, and once again doctors wanted to treat the symptoms and not determine the cause ... I went along with what the doctors wanted, but the reflux medication appeared to exacerbate the behavioural symptoms. We dealt with the behaviours as they reared their ugly heads, but in addition to the reflux, my son then continued to get more and more physiological symptoms, such as rashes, vomiting, and severe hayfever - I knew this certainly wasn't normal - and he was beginning to have random and bizarre allergic reactions and I had absolutely no idea what he was reacting to. The culmination of these allergic reactions ended up with an anaphylactic reaction, to what has since been determined as an allergy to red meat.

Unfortunately it took an anaphylactic reaction to have to doctors send me in the right direction. We saw a paed who prescribed adrenalin and promptly sent us on to an immunologist ... who explained

to us that allergies and food intolerance often go hand in hand. Following all the usual tests and discussing at length my son's behavioural issues we were sent to an accredited dietitian for help and to be placed on an elimination diet.

We found the most amazing dietitian, who was very supportive and was very eager to help. Once I knew what the problem might be, I began my research as well ... and that is where I discovered the fed up website. On the elimination diet and the subsequent food challenges, we have since discovered that my son is completely intolerant to wheat, completely intolerant to amines, completely intolerant to glutamates, colours and preservatives and we have discovered that certain brands of shampoos, toothpaste and hair products trigger negative behaviour, he also has a milder intolerance to salicylates, but we are very strict with what he does have. Luckily, he has grown out of his dairy and egg allergies, which makes the preparation of food that little bit easier.

My son went from a child who slept no more than 3-4 hours a night, couldn't sit still, was compulsive, aggressive, insolent, destructive, hyperactive, would make constant noises, had severe reflux, had eczema, has issues at school with book work and reading, etc, to a child who is pleasant, well mannered, focused and actually sleeps. And it was with the advent of the new diet/lifestyle that we also discovered that my son has quite a talent for sport.

Before the diet, my son didn't have the attention span to stay between the white lines on a running track or didn't think he had to wait for the starter's gun in a running or swimming race. Within the first 6 months of the lifestyle change he went on to represent his school in swimming and athletics, in the next year he went onto represent at regional level and last year competed at state level in swimming, cross country and athletics, for both the school and at club level. And this year, as a 9 year old, my son has already broken records on the athletics track and is on his way to breaking more records in the pool ... he has his sights firmly on the Olympic games in 2020, he just isn't sure which sport he wants to compete in!!

I find that his discipline in his chosen sport helps to keep him disciplined in his diet, and I am very honest and blunt in explaining to him what is in the foods that he wants to eat and why he can't eat other stuff. We are about to begin meeting with our dietitian again to ensure that he is receiving adequate nutrition to sustain the endurance that he requires for his sports and to ensure that he is receiving adequate protein for proper muscle development.

People are often perplexed as to how a child who 'misses out' on so much food can be quite so athletic ... I explain to them that the food he doesn't eat actually enables his sporting and academic ability, but sadly, most people can't understand that concept. They can't understand why my son simply drinks water and eats an apple and some rice cakes or a chicken sandwich after a race when every other kid at a swim meet is eating a chocolate bar or drinking a powerade or the newest fad - pouring honey all over a banana to 'restore their energy'.

We still have bad days, and find peer pressure a constant issue, but as a family we are positive towards all facets of my son's limited diet and I am constantly inventing new and interesting things to eat! - Belinda, NSW

[897] 9 year update: From typical 'naughty' 4yo boy to different kid (February 2010)

When my son was in 4yo kinder, 9 years ago (he is now 13) we thought he was a typical "naughty" 4yo boy - hyperactive, restless, all the common symptoms of additive overload. I did my homework and came across "Fed Up". It was like you wrote the book about him. We followed the detox diet and within a week he was a different kid. To this day we still eat following your guidelines. I wish other parents and schools would see the light. - Kirstin, Vic

[892] Wild and extremely violent behaviour due to undiagnosed coeliac disease (February 2010)

Three years ago I stood in the bookshop with 'Fed Up' in my hand debating whether to part with \$20. Your book has repaid itself a thousandfold. I send my heartfelt thanks.

My youngest son's problems are a long saga, suffice to say that eliminating additives and low amines as suggested by your book provided the answer for some time. Then at nearly nine, out of the blue, he had some sort of breakdown. The teacher suggested Asperger's but he soon became worse - quite autistic, wild and extremely violent. He was off school for three months. The doctors I approached turned their backs on me. I couldn't believe it. I can only think they thought that as he already had a disability (Central Auditory Processing Disorder) it was part and parcel of the condition and didn't realise how extreme his behaviour was. I insisted that he be screened for a variety of degenerative diseases, but they came back negative.

Finally realising that no one else "gave a stuff", I turned back to your book. If it was diet before, then maybe, it's diet again, I thought. I tried eliminating salicylates, he got worse; I tried wheat, no change; I tried dairy no change. Eventually I tried eliminating both dairy and wheat and he improved.

He spent two years on a wheat free, dairy free, no additive, careful about amine diet and he could manage if he had a small dose of Ritalin 5mg breakfast, 5mg at lunch as well. Our lives were back on track, he was progressing at school, having a go at different sports, and excelling in his favourite sport. But it was all because of the ritalin - and diet.

Without the medication it was still like living with a drunk - he could be fun sometimes, but more often silly and tiresome, and aggressive too often. I always felt that the child that he had been was still there deep down, intact and undamaged, although why I believed it, I don't know. In November when he turned 11, I contemplated the thought that maybe he did have irreversible minor brain damage, but I couldn't accept the notion.

Then, by chance ("Mum, I don't want Rye bread this morning, I want Rice cereal") we realised it was the GLUTEN. I never suspected it, because I'd known a baby who nearly died of coeliac disease and the symptoms were quite different from my son's. I followed up your footnote in Fed Up and read Professor Duggan's article in the Aust. Med. Journal. My son was diagnosed with Coeliac disease a month ago and I am absolutely delighted by his response to the gluten free diet.

As you can see I am much indebted to you. It was only fine reading of your book that has helped me tease out my son's difficulties. I shudder to think where he'd be now (at a special school, I'm sure) if it hadn't been for your persistence in acquiring all this knowledge and for passing it on - Anne, Qld

[886] 160b: Totally hyperactive due to annatto in cereal (February 2010)

I'm pretty certain my 9yo son reacts to 160B -after a week spent at my mother's where I'd stupidly, and innocently bought Cheerios when I was in a hurry. I didn't notice the word annatto, looking just for numbers. He had it every day for breakfast and was TOTALLY hyperactive every night - it took me a week to work out the link! - Karen, by email

[880] 160b: Autistic symptoms due to yellow and annatto colorings in the US (November 2009)

We were told by pediatricians and individuals in the child development field that my son was autistic when he was 2 1/2 years old. He was extremely sensitive to certain fabrics and clothing against his skin. He could not speak so that we could understand him (he had his own language) and would display fits of anger when we could not understand him. He would close himself into his own little

world at times and not want to socialize with our family or other children. He could not jump, he could not run or do simple movements that most children his age had already mastered.

We enrolled him in a special program for children who were developmentally delayed - he was in speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy 4 days a week.

He progressed well in the program but continued to have additional setbacks. He developed asthma and eczema and the fits continued. He started kindergarten with an IEP (Individual Education Plan) that continued to include the different therapy sessions and also added intervention for him with regard to the regular classroom activities.

I would find cheese wrappers behind our recliner, his favorite food was ANYTHING with cheese. We continued to work with different therapists and the school system up until he was in second grade.

By the grace of God, I was in my chiropractor's office waiting to be seen and I picked up a book in his waiting room that was about ADD, ADHD, ODD and Autism in children. I randomly opened it to a chapter that described my son in every sentence. Until I read that chapter I had never even paid attention to Annatto or Yellow food colorings. It was worth a shot.

It took me almost 6 weeks to clear my son from any artificial yellow food coloring. It was like living with a child drug addict. He craved anything yellow and would cry uncontrollably, throw temper tantrums, and sleep and sleep. A short while after we cleared his diet (I even packed his school lunches) his teacher asked me in for a conference. His reading score had gone from a kindergarten level to a second grade level in almost 9 weeks!!!!

My son is now 12 years old and will be going into the seventh grade. He no longer has an IEP or any therapeutic intervention. He is an Honor Roll student, plays football and is active in the Boy Scouts. He no longer needs any medication for asthma and his eczema is gone. He knows that he has an addiction/allergy to annatto and yellow food coloring so he also is very aware to read every label and "just say no" when offered something that he can not have.

The yellow food colorings cause him to be hyperactive and then he crashes. The Annatto however, seems to be the additive that causes him to have the addictive symptoms. I read once that the annatto seed was once made into a paste and used as war paint in a particular tribe. Well, after watching my son once he has had the annatto I can see why warriors would be successful in battle under its influence.

In addition to affecting him through his food colors also affect him through medications and hygiene products. We noticed that once when he used shampoo with artificial yellow the skin on his neck broke out every time he showered. Also, chapstick or other products that go on skin make him itch.

This school year my son begged me to let him eat some things that our school cafeteria provides. I reluctantly agreed, after all he is going to have to make his own decisions about what he puts in his body as he gets older and is out without me more. It isn't that he was eating things that contained yellow or annatto but he was eating foods that are processed. He has had the stomach flu twice and has had headaches more frequently, plus his muscles have begun to cramp more and more. Last week we made the decision for me to resume packing his lunch and I think that we both already notice a difference.

There is no doubt in my mind that the rise in autism, ADHD, ADD, etc. is a direct consequence of our trend toward processed "quick" food. I feel so blessed to have read that chapter and found my son. Thank you for making a difference. – Rhonda, USA

[875] Onset of depression, aggression and hyperactivity in a 6 yo linked to school canteen food (November 2009)

My six year old son was diagnosed with asthma/allergy at 2 years old. Several medications were diagnosed for him. Not wanting to go down this path I consulted a naturopath, who managed his condition with vitamins and restricted diet. But this year upon starting school my normally bright, happy child became depressed, aggressive and hyperactive. A pattern of school canteen usage emerged at which point I requested a list of ingredients for some of the things he was buying. To my horror, the slushy he was ordering contained two artificial colours and two preservatives (benzoate preservative 211 and potassium sorbate 202). The lady who runs the canteen said that this product is known as an AMBER school product. Apparently you are allowed to sell it in canteens as long as you do not have too many other AMBER products on the menu. – Leesa, by email

[866] From extreme ADHD & mild autism to 'normal, healthy, well behaved child' (November 2009)

My sister is a devoted fan. Her daughter was in serious trouble with her health and behavioural problems before she came across your work. She has met you at talks and has your books and has her entire family on a low chemical diet.

Her daughter needless to say has gone from being diagnosed as extreme ADHD with mild autism to being a perfectly well adjusted, normal, healthy, incredibly well behaved child, who is doing extremely well in school now.

Depresses me when I mention food as a cause of ADHD to other mothers who won't listen, or say "maybe for your child, but it won't help mine!" People prefer to be ignorant! – Stuart, NSW

[863] ADHD and diet – surprised by lovely behaviour (November 2009)

Our doctor thinks our son may have ADHD and wants us to try an elimination diet. Reading through your website it sounds just what we need. We have swapped the bread to Bakers Delight, swapped the margarine to Nuttalex. Stopped the juice (which only had every 2 days). Stopped chocolate and any other snack like that. Stopped the Vegemite and peanut butter. Plus more changes. Today we went out and I was very surprised at both my boys' behaviour. They were lovely. I know it's still early days but it's nice to see an improvement already. I am really looking forward to the changes for the better. My husband and I are also doing it too. Lead by example. - Shelley, NSW

[861] 6yo saved from ADHD medication (November 2009)

I would just like to thank you for saving us from having to put my nearly 6 year old daughter on ADHD medication!!

I was already known as the food nazi mum, and Lilly wasn't allowed any preservatives, flavour enhancers or artificial colours, but all too often I was seeing behaviour that I knew was a reaction to additives - I just couldn't work out what!!! Life in our house was hell most of the time, and I was days away from taking her to our GP to get it sorted. A friend suggested reading Fed Up, which I've looked at your website many times in the past but didn't know where to start - the idea of cutting more food seriously caused me so much anxiety that I just couldn't do it.

I only had to read a couple of pages to realize that Lilly's diet was REALLY high in foods naturally high in glutamates and bad antioxidants - I knew how badly she reacted to MSG, so I cut those foods right back (her lunchbox used to have a tasty cheese and Ourmate sandwich plus a little tub of cherry tomatoes, then a dinner of Nonna's tomato/mushroom pasta sauce!!) When ever we had takeaways

I was fairly careful but it always consisted of hot chips, which I've now realised just how much that nasty antioxidant affected her ... the poor thing, I thought I was doing the right thing but I was just making it worse.

Over the last 5 weeks we have seen our daughter turn into a wild crazy thing twice, once was exactly 48 hours after eating hot chips twice in one day aaaghhh - we had to lock her in her room, she was OUT OF CONTROL!!!! The second time was after my mother in law took her to the royal show- I'm still waiting on a list of foods she ate, but it was again 48 hours after! I always used to think she reacted immediately, but I guess she had so much crap accumulate in her that it just seemed that way!!!

Oh and the whole family have switched to A2 milk, and I have now just realized how sick and bloated normal milk makes me feel!!!

Anyway thank you again!!! After the last mega tantrum my husband was so amazed at the difference it has made he has decided to cut out lots of the bad foods he eats at work, he was also a child like her and figures it must be affecting him now in much the same way!! (He is quite the stubborn one that if I had suggested it there is no way he would have made the changes, hehehe!!!).

Update...

The difference in Lilly's behaviour is that she has gone from throwing major tantrums over very small issues which used to result in her being locked in her room until she calmed down - mostly for our sanity because she was just wild, it could last anywhere from an hour to half a day sometimes!!!! She would disagree with everything, talk back, never do what we asked- including simple things like going to the toilet, so she used to constantly wet her pants instead, or she wouldn't get dressed for school- even though she absolutely loves going.

Before diet everything was a battle - I used to look at her and think if she was someone else's kid I would avoid spending time with that person because of how hard she made everything, so I of course have been carrying around a huge amount of guilt from having thoughts like that. I also couldn't work out why my 2 kids were so different, so I've spent a few years blaming myself for this thinking it must have been something I did whilst I was pregnant or breastfeeding etc. Its been really hard, I've been on medication for anxiety for the past 6 months - surprising I didn't start taking something years ago considering how badly I felt I was coping with these issues!!!

Now we have an ange l- the transformation is truly amazing!!! If she does misbehave it actually only takes a 1-2-3 and she usually does what needs to be done or said, the few time she has gone to time out, its been for her ten- tens (our timeout rule is she has to calmly breathe and count to ten, ten times- she can count to 100 now so its changed a bit- good counting practice lol) and then she comes out calmly and apologizes etc.

It's going to be harder to get my in-laws on my side - I gave a list of what she shouldn't eat last week, and Nana returned her with a list of what she ate, AAAGHGH was all I could say. Vegemite sandwiches, croissants, take-away chicken rolls, mini magnum icecreams. So we had a bit of a rough time Saturday night/Sunday - but we coped and at least I knew what it was this time instead of just thinking I'm a hopeless mum!!! – Andrea

[853] Additive-free, but favourite foods were tomatoes (August 2009) COURAGE AWARD

We're 3 weeks in to Failsafe, and I feel as if I've won the lottery!!! 3 kids aged 10, 8 and 5, all extremely active and slightly frenetic. The oldest was diagnosed with Aspergers and ADD at about 6 years of age, but concerns were noted since he was about 4 - very fixated on certain activities,

difficulty being aware of his environment, very impulsive etc. He repeated reception as he was really struggling, very highly strung. We cut down on additives with some improvement, but he was still very hooked into his own thoughts and obsessional in thinking and behaviour, talking out in class, struggling academically. He was still incontinent of number ones and twos, as he had such poor awareness of his body, and inability to attend to more than one thing at a time (ie concentrating on schoolwork or a game, and bodily sensations).

He was placed on Concerta (a type of Ritalin) at 8 years of age, which led to a very noticeable improvement in ability to concentrate in school, and less impulsivity. This was the very thing we had not wanted to do with our child, but we couldn't continue with daily sneaky poos, constantly spacing out at school, and that level of impulsivity was taking its toll on the whole family. While I do believe medication is over-prescribed and should only be a last resort, we had done everything we could, and it did help. I strongly believe parents should not automatically be judged for medicating their children, we are all doing our best, with whatever information we have.

He began to really shut down about 18 months ago, becoming very isolated, spending every school break time alone reading, and not even responding to questions at home, instead preferring to read alone. He was very sullen, on bad days yelling at schoolmates who tried to engage him. He had no friends, and swung between a sullen and angry boy, or a highly impulsive, giggly and inappropriate "in your face" kid.

We had been additive free for some time, and he had a blood test which showed he was intolerant to wheat, strawberries, dairy and cocoa so those were out also. We had done the rounds of psychiatrist, psychologist, social skills training, occupational therapy, etc.

He is now in year 4 and just prior to commencing diet, he dirtied his pants at school and then told a classmate about it! I panicked, I could not pinpoint any additives that would have led to the behaviour, and I felt desperate. I went to the Autism SA resource centre where I found "The Failsafe Cookbook", and I haven't put it down since!

Our oldest son's favourite foods were tomatoes, and Nonna's pasta and meatballs - he would scoff a whole punnet of cherry tomatoes in one go if he could. Our second child could have best been described as a fruit addict, regularly eating 5 apples after school (I would find the cores littered around the house). He is an academically capable kid, but could be very oppositional, and was diagnosed as having an auditory processing disorder. He was very hyperactive also. Our youngest daughter had an almost normal diet, I think because I was so exhausted from meeting the needs of the older two that I didn't have the energy to say "No", to be honest!! I did notice that she was much harder to settle to sleep than the other two, especially after eating raisin toast (even with "no preservatives on the pack!"), and flavoured snacks, which were given by friends etc.

Since the diet, the improvements have been extraordinary! I had to have a meeting at home with a colleague, and my children played lego together, without arguing mind you, for about 1.5 hours!!! My oldest has dry pants at the end of the day, responds when asked questions, engages in appropriate conversation, and most heartwarming of all, has had several successful playdates with a boy from school. I was able to leave all three with my mother last week while I worked without her having a breakdown. She was shocked at the difference, and my father reported that my oldest pruned a whole row of grapes for him!

The "fruit addict" is the most changed! He is polite, helpful (someone pinch me, please!). Our daughter is sleeping better, still has made an artform of irritating her brothers, but our home is overall much more harmonious, and I am so grateful.

My husband and I are both southern European, and it seems strange that our children could be intolerant to tomatoes and the like. I'm still a bit puzzled, but I chatted about it to my dad, who migrated from southern Italy in 1960. According to him, my nonna only cooked with tomatoes once a week, for a Sunday lunch of pasta, with the rest of the meals being pasta with beans or lentils, or a vegetable soup. Unfortunately most Italian cuisine now involves a tin of peeled tomatoes and regular flavourings of wine and cheese in almost every recipe, so that's a real challenge for us.

It makes me incredibly angry that even basic foods are laced with additives that are harming our children. I see parents at breaking point and children whose self esteem and learning are compromised, and it is incomprehensible. I for one am TIRED of it.

Thank you so much for your care and compassion in the important work that you do. - by email, Adelaide

(Natural Confectionery Lollies are NOT failsafe due to salts and amines in flavours - they are only suitable for people who are additive-free)

[843] Diet or Testing for ADHD (August 2009)

I have a five year old boy who is currently going through the diagnoses and testing for adhd, but who also displays mild asd symptoms as well. I decided about a month before we saw the specialists to try the failsafe way of eating, but I did not put him on the strict diet, I simply printed out the list of additives that are no-go and completely stopped buying anything with them in it. Within two weeks his behaviour still needed (and still needs) a lot of work but has drastically improved. - Anthea, by email (children who improve on an additive free diet may do even better if they reduce their salicylates and/or amine intake too - S).

[840] 635: Ribo rash and cold urticaria (August 2009)

A few months ago, my son developed a sudden, allergic rash that came and went with seemingly no pattern. The rash starts as unbearable itching and then quickly develops into raised welts, like mosquito bites, over most of his body, or sometimes, only one part of it, such as his hands. When it starts, as you might imagine, he is considerably distressed by it and often the only sure remedy is to put him into a bath of warm water. This takes away the itching within about fifteen minutes.

We thought of all the usual suspects – things that had been applied to his skin, pool water, clothing, plants and more. We talked to our doctor who couldn't explain it either without going through the full allergy testing drama. Then a friend of mine told me how she had been to see Sue Dengate and directed me to the Fed Up website. We read a bit about ribo rash and thought 'Ah-ha!'.

The week prior to the development of the rash was an odd one for us. We normally eat a mostly organic diet, which began out of concern for the environment as well as health. We still ate occasional takeaway and treats like any family. That particular week, the organics were out the window as we helped our friends renovate – it was a busy week and a lot of convenience foods were eaten. We ate, as it turns out, something with ribonucleotides every single day that week. These included Fantastic rice crackers, ready roasted chicken (several meals), hams and other deli meats, sausages, chips (hot and from a packet) and probably more.

Then our son had the rash for three or four weeks, on and off, while we figured it all out (and of course continuing to unknowingly eat some of these foods). We had to keep him away from school, as the itching was unbearable, came on without warning at any time of day and the only solution was a bath.

The rash also appeared on the place on his body where he was cold, e.g. hands and feet at the beach, at a home pool and in a paddle pool filled with rainwater. The weirdest one was the paddling pool - he only got the rash up to his waist - that was the part that had been in the water.

Finally, when we made the connection, we cut out all foods containing 'the dreaded 600s'. It took almost a week and a half for the rash to completely stop appearing. It appeared less and less severely each day.

I thought that it would be good to try cutting all the artificial stuff out for a short time to see if there was any merit in it. Wow. What a discovery! We thought that his hyperactive moods at the end of each day were due to being 'overtired', in fact, they only happen on the days that he has eaten chemical food additives. Many behaviours that we had previously thought to be 'normal' have turned out to be brought on by chemicals in foods:

- Preservatives: tears, moodiness, unable to be happy, as well as hyperactivity and babbling – usually next day reaction.
- Preservative 282 in bread products – hyperactivity and babbling - about 30 minutes later.
- Synthetic Antioxidants: irritability, opposition to small things, unable to be happy, tantrum like behaviour – about 8 hours later.
- Colours: hyperactivity, babbling, bouncing – about four hours later.
- Flavour Enhancers: rash, itching, recurring up to 10 days later.

We would never have found these reactions without cutting all artificial food chemicals from our diet. We would never have connected a white, McDonald's soft serve (2 colours) with bouncing off the walls four hours later. We certainly would never have figured out that terrible tantrum-like moments were due to eating chips (synthetic antioxidants in the oil) the day before. Since cutting all the 600 numbers out, our son has only had one more episode of the rash – following prescribed medication for croup, which turns out to have several nasty additives and which changed his behaviour too. We are very careful now and can even tell if he has been out with his grandparents and had a milkshake!

The numbers that are a total no-go for us are 620-625 as well as 627, 631, 635. These 'ribonucleotides' are added to most barbecue, chicken or other savoury flavoured things like rice crackers, chips and other snacks, to some hams and processed meats, to sausages, to ready cooked chicken, to hot chips (think chicken salt), even to some brands of 'plain' crackers and more.

A more full examination of failsafe eating has led to the discovery that my son is also intolerant to high salicylates, although moderate consumption is ok. A snack of strawberries or a glass of orange juice is enough to lead to behaviour changes - mainly oppositional. We were all fine with amines and natural glutamates. - Susan, Qld (More about cold urticaria -hives associated with cold - at <http://allergies.about.com/od/urticariahives/a/coldurticaria.htm>)

[817] Nose full of swollen tissue – now sleeping better (July 2009)

My 6 year old son is allergic to dust, cats, and sensitive to some food additives. So far we have had reactions to 621-635 and 160b and are looking at 282 now. Just wanting to thank you for putting us on the right track to start with. Our son's nose was 90% full of swollen tissue. He was working 20% harder to breath giving him terrible headaches etc. He is now starting to feel better, sleeping better, behaving better (prev we were told it was adhd - have my doubts now) and generally feeling better - by email

[782] Morning sickness and other symptoms in mother and children due to diet (June 2009)

We only found out about "Fed Up With Food Additives" when Maternal & Child Health nurse suggested we look at a possible problem with food chemicals for our youngest child's (14 months) eating disorder. However, now that I think about it, I was violently ill during my pregnancies after eating high salicylate foods - particularly broccoli, cucumber and citrus fruits – even the smell of these foods would make me queasy.

My IBS symptoms have cleared up since I have reduced the number of high salicylate foods in my diet (I was doing it for the kids so also have adjusted my husband's diet and my own). I used to think I was doing the right thing by eating a huge fruit salad every day, and wondered why my digestive system was so messed up. I have also suffered from a hives-like rash all over my thighs for the past few years and couldn't work it out - I now have long rash free periods after avoiding dried fruit as much as possible, as well as msg, yeast extract, 627, 635 etc. We avoid additives as much as possible but occasionally I slip up and we really notice the effects now.

My 9 year old daughter seems to become very vague and forgetful with amines - especially cheese - and we have found our 3 year old son to react badly to glutamates - he becomes quite aggressive and uncontrollable. The other thing we have noticed is the effect of colours - my daughter becomes very silly and hyperactive - for example, today she had a 'slushie' at the local shops that a family member bought for her - tonight she is jumping all over the house, falling off chairs, making silly noises and facial expressions etc. But I'm sure you've heard all of this before!

I have found the effects on my kids particularly interesting, as when I was a child, I was unable to have food with MSG (I got severe migraines including vomiting) and red-coloured foods/cordial made me vomit badly. Thank you so much for really making a difference to our lives. – Michelle by email

[716] Ear infections, stuttering, rash, IBS linked to milk (February 2009)

We initially started my three year old son on the diet because of his hyperactivity, defiance and rough, impulsive play with others. Once we started the diet these symptoms slowed down but he developed new symptoms of increased emotional state and abdominal cramps. What we didn't realise at first was that we had increased his milk intake and so although the diet seemed to work it brought with it new problems. In hindsight I now have a list of symptoms such as stuttering, pale stools, abdominal cramping, poor appetite, face rash, ear infections, hyperactivity, defiance, dribbling, thumb sucking, rough play and itching head, that I can now link to cows milk as these have all gone since we eliminated it and its derivatives from his diet. I had been to doctors about these individually but was never taken seriously so never connected them all together.

At this stage we think that too many amines make him nasty and too many salicylates make him hyper and we haven't tested additives. Since we took him off the cows milk as well and got over the withdrawals my son now no longer needs speech therapy, has a great appetite and is putting on weight, is able to enjoy play dates, is calm, doesn't complain of tummy ache etc and our life is much easier. We are a much happier family. I think we have further to go in our adjustment to the new diet but we are definitely leaps and bounds ahead from where we were pre-failsafe days. We saw your Kids First campaign launch interview on TV, thanks for being a voice for all us parents out there wanting to scream the same message! - Kylie, by email [Although rarely mentioned by doctors, milk is strongly linked to ear infections (otitis media) Juntti H and others, Cow's milk allergy is associated with recurrent otitis media during childhood. Acta Otolaryngol. 1999;119(8):867-73.]

[714] Salicylates: this time we are 100% committed and the results are clear (February 2009)

My 7yo son suffered from asthma, and my 5yo daughter was borderline ODD, complete with sneaky poos, bedwetting - the whole rack of symptoms. We removed preservatives and colours from their diet with fantastic results - mainly from the removal of propionates and sulphites. I noticed, though, that my daughter's behaviour seemed to deteriorate when she had certain foods such as vegemite, soy sauce etc.

We did not do the elimination diet correctly the first time. We made the usual mistakes - not enough commitment, cheating, coming off it too quickly – and were misdirected in our conclusions - thought salicylates were fine and amines were the baddies. We decided to put our daughter back on the elimination diet after she failed to improve when we removed amines.

This time we are 100% committed and the results are clear. Our daughter was fine the first day of the salicylate challenge, a bit iffy the second, and by day 3 she was back to pre-diet days, even resorting to deliberately (in front of me) urinating on the lounge room floor. Add to this a constant headache, tummy pains and a small rash on both legs. I promptly cleaned out the fridge, and removed all salicylates from the house. Two days on and we are gradually improving, but what a shock!

An even bigger shock was my son's reaction. He was always 'the good one' and didn't seem to have any behavioural issues apart from asthma, which has improved greatly since we removed additives from their diet. By the end of the second day, he had stolen a can of coke from the fridge (dad's stock - banned for our kids) and drank it outside when he thought I couldn't see. Screaming, shouting, fighting, defiance - completely unexpected from him. Two days on and he is quite remorseful - and determined to stay away from 'those foods'. He has also woken up today with big black rings under his eyes, and a wet bed. No coincidence, I think.

I never imagined that food chemicals could have such a significant effect on health and behaviour. My daughter starts school next year, and we can now look forward to a future with more enthusiasm and positivity than we did 3 months ago. – *by email, NSW*

[708] Chronic asthma and colours, 621, 635, sulphites, amines; inattentive ADHD and salicylates (November 2008)

I just wanted to say huge thank you for your work (a significant understatement). I saw you at a Canberra talk and our family has been failsafe for 12 months now. We now have two family members - my husband and my seven-year-old - asthma free thanks to failsafe. My husband was previously a chronic asthmatic and now he has improved so much that he doesn't even need to use a preventer nor does my seven-year-old year old! My eldest son aged eight is now excelling in school due to failsafe - he previously had all the symptoms of inattentive ADHD - head in the clouds, extremely forgetful, vague and much more. The school teachers have all remarked on his improvement and his school reports reflect the same. The biggest asthma culprits for my husband and seven-year-old year old are 621, 635, sulphites, amines and yellow and red colours. The culprit for my 8 year old is salicylates. When we did the RPAH diet and salicylate challenge he fell asleep in the classroom at school and had to be taken home. - *Lindy, Canberra (very grateful Mum)*

[684] One-liners (September 2008)

- I have a 24-year-old son who had ADHD and could not believe the change in him when we controlled the colourings in his diet - FRUIT LOOPS should be banned. – *Carol, by email*

[673] Two naturopaths write about failsafe eating (2) (September 2008)

Our son has been progressively more moody and ADHD since 3 yrs-old and we couldn't understand why. We know now! We were used to wheat, dairy and numbers sensitivities and have worked with them in our family for years. Plenty of healthy foods. We had no idea about salicylates or amines and have had to shift from a diet abundant previously in fruits and veggies.

We haven't done well with elimination - most weekends since we started we have either been travelling or having birthday parties and have mucked up the diet - and even so we have seen great changes in our son. He has become quite the sleuth in reading labels and monitoring other children's lunches. He has been very compliant. Better than my husband who we've seen great changes in too.

My husband is a naturopath and worked a lot with sensitivities and this has unfolded a whole new awareness and interest for him. He has definitely seen proof in the salicylate/amine/number free pudding!!! My daughter's eczema is much better too than on the previous wheat and dairy free approach. My husband would like to incorporate this awareness into his work with clients and we shall get the DVD to show clients and family and friends. – *by email*

[648] ADHD teen suicide attempts (May 2008) Winner of Courage Award May 2008

I started failsafe eating a week ago in absolute desperation with my 14 year-old son who was diagnosed with ADHD and ODD at the age of 6 years old. He progressed well on medication until we had a car accident last year and he suffered minor brain damage. After the accident his behaviour became worse and he has attempted suicide several times. Last Wednesday I took him to hospital for sedation after he broke windows and several holes in the wall with his head. Thursday morning I searched the net for a solution and came across your website. I started the diet that day. Today I have a son who obeys, talks to you face to face, calmer, quieter, he smiles and has got himself a job part time which he loves. If he is offered food at work he says no and takes his own or waits until he gets home.

One week later ... Today is day 15 and he is still going great. We have just had the best school holidays with our two sons playing instead of fighting physically and verbally. At work, his boss doesn't even know he has ADHD and ODD. He did eat a piece of chicken at work and advised me his brain felt funny and would not eat anything that is not on the list. I'm glad he tried something off the list in moderation and noticed the difference. Your Failsafe Cookbook has been a great help and I do not leave the house without the list of basic foods and list of additives. I call this my bible. Not only has his behaviour changed but also his stomach pains and migraines are a thing of the past. The television has gone from a volume of 60 to 15. Thank you for your website that changed our lives and made my teenager happier. The difference has been unbelievable. - Janelle, Qld.

[643] Diet and ADHD - his teacher asked what I had done (May 2008)

My son had been diagnosed with ADHD last year but I have refused medication. After picking him up from school early again, I thought I may have no option but to consider medication as a serious option. I google searched and your book popped up and from the afternoon I started my kids on the diet. Amazingly the results were seen the next day when my son actually completed a test at school (and received 100%). He never would sit at a desk long enough to even start a test let alone ace one. His teacher asked what had I done to my son because she never had seen him so engaged in the classroom. I purchased the book the next weekend and started to try to learn more about the options available. It is difficult and easy at the same time, and well worth it. Today my children had a treat (slice of non-failsafe shop-purchased cake) and I could see the adverse effects almost

immediately, I know I have to continue with the diet if my children (especially my son) are to succeed and I believe I am lucky I found failsafe - Victoria, ACT.

[639] Easter nightmare (May 2008)

Just wanted to email you to let you know how helpful I found your book, Fed Up. I recommend it to all my friends. My son was diagnosed with ADHD over a year ago now and we have always had major problems with him every single year around Easter time. He is now 11 years old and we have known for a few years now that chocolate and food colouring effect his behaviour dramatically. It doesn't matter how many times you tell people please don't give him, lollies or chocolate, they just don't get it. He went to his friend's house yesterday, was very irritable last night and has totally lost control today. I begged him to tell me what he has eaten and he said he ate 4 medium sized Easter Eggs.

I think it is a real pity that other people and schools don't take these food additives seriously. He is a joy but a handful on the best of days. I constantly refer to your book and he has pulled it out of the bookshelf today to make some homemade butterscotch.

He is a prime example of how food effects children and I can guarantee everytime he has food colouring or chocolate that we will have a raging bull on our hands the next day - Suzanne, email.

[606] One liners (February 2008)

We have managed our daughter's salicylate and amine sensitivity with failsafe eating for almost seven years now and are happy to report that her problems with salicylates are now much reduced, although amines are still a problem for her. (They tend to give her stomach pains and mood swings). She is now able to concentrate at school and has a circle of friends. We would like to thank you for your work and we are pleased that we never had to resort to medication for a girl who could easily have been diagnosed as ADHD. – Gabrielle, Vic

[597] One liners (November 2007)

- We have just spent 3 weeks on the elimination diet. We are amazed at the positive change in all of us, (a hyperactive, asthmatic, eczema-stricken three year old boy; a 40 year old dad who has suffered from chronic asthma all his life; and a 34 year old mum who thought she felt pretty healthy ... until the last three weeks, where I have felt better than ever) - Julie

[596] From 'severe inattentive ADD' to 'normal' due to diet (November 2007)

In 2006 my quiet 7 year old daughter was diagnosed by her paediatrician as having severe inattentive ADD. He offered Ritalin to help the symptoms. I was not comfortable giving her this as a first step because in the 2 weeks since our last appointment I had read 10 books and scanned the net. A common theme kept coming up. If your child has an intolerance to a food group there is a likelihood of more than one intolerance which can lead to behavioural issues. I felt I had to investigate this before trying medication because we already knew she had a dairy intolerance as a baby.

I chose to follow the Fed Up elimination diet by Sue Dengate. Following are the results when food groups or additives were re introduced.

It has been 14 months since adapting to my daughter's dietary needs. She has been reassessed for ADD with a normal outcome. Her school work has progressed. She is able to concentrate. She can tie her shoes, hold a knife and fork, remember her phone number, ride a bike, and skip a rope. She is

able to follow multiple directions and hold attention to the task at hand. She has friends. We have also discovered she is a budding artist.

Through dietary changes we helped many of our daughter's physical and behavioral issues including fatigue, tearfulness, emotional outbursts, inattention, lack of short term memory, lack of application at school, bedwetting, vaginal irritation, rash, insatiable appetite, imbalance and clumsiness (she could not ride a bike, skip, hop), nausea and stomach cramps.

My daughter did not need medication. She has food intolerances. As grandma said 'Whatever you are doing keep doing it. She is a different child' - Trudi, NSW

[594] Amazing changes in difficult two-year-old (November 2007)

I was recently on a forum, having a whinge about my 2.5 year old son, and how terribly difficult he is. I was asking advice on ADD and ADHD. A lady on the forum offered to lend me your books 'Fed up' 'Fed up with ADHD' and the cookbook. I took her up on this offer so as not to appear rude, but have to admit to thinking 'It's not going to help me'. I started reading 'Fed up with ADHD' first. Well, you could have substituted your daughter's name for my son, your name for mine and so on. I nearly cried.

After that, I was determined to start Failsafe. It was pretty daunting, and I have made many mistakes. I have been doing it for about 3 - 4 weeks now. I still haven't gotten it right, but even so the difference is amazing. My defiant son is starting to listen and follow instructions! I was able to take him grocery shopping and he walked next to me putting items in the trolley. He never screamed, ran off, threw a tantrum or pulled anything off the shelves! This has never happened before!

My husband gave him vegemite on toast yesterday (I was outside feeding the >animals) and within 3 hours he was right off. Last night he woke frequently, screaming and running through the house. He was up super early and has been non-compliant and very annoying all day. He used to eat vegemite daily!

I wanted to thank you for your books and for sharing your story. I'm so glad that I gave it a go. It has made such a difference to our lives in such a short time.

[581] Three responses on behavioural effects of Down Syndrome (September 2007)

"A great improvement in my son who has Down Syndrome"

Your books are fantastic and I have noticed a great improvement in my son who has Down Syndrome and was recently diagnosed with ADD. Apparently Ritalin was our next step! This information should be given to all Maternal Health Centres and it would save families a lot of unnecessary arguing and disharmony! - by email

Diet, sneaky poos and Down Syndrome

I have been reading your website for over a year now, after stumbling across the information on sneaky poos.

About 2 years ago our son who is now 11 and has Down Syndrome, began soiling his pants on a daily basis, rarely at school but often up to six times in the evening. I stumbled across some information about Failsafe on a parenting website and when scanning through the fact sheets, found the information on "sneaky poos" It described our situation perfectly. So after reading lots and lots of information on the Fed Up site, we, or should I say "I", along with one extremely sceptical husband,

set about reducing salicylates in my son's diet to see if it made any difference. His diet was basically a salicylate feast - spaghetti bolognese probably 4 -5 times a week, laden with hidden vegetables (mostly zucchini) and followed by a bowl of either grapes, strawberries or cherry tomatoes (that was lunch), peanut butter on toast for breakfast, dinners included tacos, lasagne with hidden high salicylate vegetables, various stir fries with worcestershire, soy, tomato, oyster sauce etc. He was also hugely into fruit salad. As I'm sure you've heard over and over, I thought we were providing him with a really healthy diet and couldn't understand why he would be unwell all the time.

Anyway we took the plunge, and within maybe three days the soiling had ceased and there were no more stomach aches. I was pleased with the results, however my husband still believed it was another of my harebrained ideas until I tested the salicylates about a month later with a huge fruit salad. My son scoffed a bowl after dinner and another for breakfast the following day. And by lunch time the next day we were back to square one. From that day on my husband has been as vigilant as I am. I must admit, I missed all the summer fruits last season, but only having one pair of undies in the wash each day is worth it.

After going low salicylate and cutting out other nasties, we also noticed a definite behavioural improvement in our son. One thing in particular was his change in motivation, especially getting ready for school. Before the diet, I had a daily struggle with him to get dressed, as if he had the choice, he would stay home every day. After getting strict with his food, he started to just take his clothes from me and say "thanks mum" and next thing he would be dressed.

On the strict diet, he seems to be so much more agreeable and able to be redirected or reasoned with. He used to lose his temper regularly especially with our older son. Now, instead of losing his temper, he will ask calmly for help - like to find a DVD or figure out which remote he needed to change channels. His school teachers have commented on how well he concentrates this year, they were unaware that we had made any changes to his diet. The teachers have also commented that he no longer acts the fool to gain attention, and is much happier to sit and do school work, and be like everyone else.

I have also discovered that he is intolerant of MSG. He used to be addicted to corn chips, we cut those out early on in our failsafe journey. When he later ate other flavoured chips I noticed every time he had them he would cough continually for several minutes. At first I thought he was choking on the chips, as he sometimes has trouble swallowing but then it clicked - it was basically MSG causing an asthma attack.

The low salicylate diet has been a life saver for us with our son. I am a huge fan of failsafe!!! - by email

"Low salicylate diet for DS"

I have a friend who is into failsafe also, she has a 2-year-old with Down Syndrome on a low salicylate diet. Behaviour can be a definite challenge when it comes to DS and I'm sure most families never suspect food intolerance as a contributing factor. - by email

[577] Motor tics related to amines (chocolate) and additives (lollies) (September 2007)

We have been following the diet for several years and we have seen the positive effects a failsafe diet has on our hyperactive 6 year old daughter. She does have trouble with expressive language and has been having therapy for a year. If she eats something eg a chocolate or lollies for several days, she starts to stutter really badly and she also makes "jerking" movements with her body. - by email

[575] Vocal tics, word and phrase repetition due to salicylates and additives (September 2007)

When Chris was born he was a big, boofy boy. For the first six months of his life he was a placid, calm, happy child. At six months, he changed to being very, very active, fidgety and demanding. Looking back at that time, three things changed – he started long daycare, solids and formula. I also remember very clearly that his face changed as big dark circles and creases formed under his eyes. He was labelled ‘naughty, disruptive, hyperactive and violent’ by daycare when he was only 10 months old. He was walking at that stage and continued to escape from the childproof room, or to snatch toys from non-mobile babies.

Since that time he has been variously diagnosed by health professionals as having Tourette’s Syndrome, the hyperactive type of ADHD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder and others. Whatever the term, the symptoms are the same, including unmanageable behaviour, poor impulse control, loud voice, vocal tics, word and phrase repetition and lack of empathy.

Coupled with the behaviour has also been a range of other medical problems including croup, asthma, headaches and stomach aches, unexplained temperatures and eczema. Chris also suffers from glue ear and for the last four years has had grommets inserted every winter to enable him to hear clearly. (As I know now, these are all indicative of food intolerance.)

Last year I took Chris to a paediatrician, looking for a solution to his constant illness rather than his behaviour. The doctor took one look at him – he was making duck noises and running in circles around the waiting room – and diagnosed food intolerances.

We went home with a complex list of foods to avoid. Although his health improved, his behaviour seemed to become worse, as it always has in summer. Just before Christmas, I found the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital’s elimination diet for food intolerance. This diet was stricter but far more logical than the one we were using. It worked by identifying the chemicals that people react to, then the foods that contain them. Interestingly, the research showed that most people with food intolerance react to the salicylates in fruit. I had been loading Chris up with cherries and nectarines in term 4. No wonder his teacher was ready to send him to Alcatraz late last year.

I switched the family to the RPAH elimination diet during the holidays. Gradually, as we removed foods from the diet and found acceptable replacements, Chris’ behaviour improved. Living with him became easier, there were less sibling fights, and when he did misbehave it was easy to use normal parenting techniques to modify behaviour – something that had never worked before.

By the end of the summer holidays, I finally had a calm, reasonable, sensitive child, who was able to play at other children’s places without causing mayhem, would look at people when talking, and would allow other people to talk without interrupting. Amazingly, Chris was keen to stick to the diet, having realised how good he felt.

First day back at school and I had lots of positive comments about how calm or grown-up Christopher seemed. A good start to the year. However, as I write this, I am back to having a child who runs around making chicken noises, uses a loud voice, is prone to crying and is violent and aggressive. What happened? He got to school and started to cheat. He ate chocolate cake, m&m’s, muesli bars and lollies. For him, even the smallest amount results in a reaction. It is like being on a trip – he can’t control his behaviour, and trying to discipline him has no effect.

So what do I need, or more importantly, what does Chris need? He needs the support of the school community to assist him to stay on his diet – he needs recognition for the fact that he does suffer from food intolerances – he desperately wants to feel in control of his life, and he likes feeling calm

and relaxed, so please, please, please don't feed my child, or encourage him to cheat. - by email, Sydney

[574] One-liners (August 2007)

- We have just spent 3 weeks on the elimination diet, using "Fed Up with ADHD" and the "Failsafe Cookbook". We are amazed at the positive change in all of us, (a hyperactive, asthmatic, eczema-stricken three-year-old boy; a 40 year old dad who has suffered from chronic asthma all his life; and a 34-year-old mum who thought she felt pretty healthy...until the last three weeks, where I have felt better than ever - Julie, email.

[573] His asthma disappeared (August 2007)

We put my 6-year-old grandson on the failsafe diet for ADHD and his 4-year-old brother (who has had 2 serious hospital admissions for asthma) has seen his asthma disappear!! Another off spin from the diet my headaches which I blamed on shift work and lack of sleep have disappeared except two times when we didn't have the boys and bought Chinese and went out for Thai both times I woke through the night with a raging headache. And my husband who has been short tempered through our 28 years of marriage, has had a change in temperament/ behaviour, for the better. - Kathy by email.

[570] PDD-NOS and failsafe (August 2007)

Our daughter Beth is five and a half. At four she was diagnosed with Pervasive Development Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified, a bit of a mouthful but it sounds like Asperger's shadowing. She is not ASD but has a lot of symptoms in common: developmental delay in speech, fine motor and gross motor, attention deficit, poor eye contact, argumentative, very poor social skills, being in her own world.

... THEN we went failsafe and what a blessing it has been!!!! ... Ten days after starting failsafe, Beth suddenly began running around with all the other kids talking and interacting with them!! Every week, I hear new things that she is doing at preschool. At home she is constantly surprising us with new things that she says and does. It's great!! It is as if a block has been removed in Beth's brain and suddenly she has the possibility of being a normal little girl. Going failsafe is not easy but I had to give her the chance. Even though it may not fix all of Beth's difficulties, it seems to have removed a lot of them, [see the full story](#).

[561] Nurofen mistake (May 2007)

Thank you for helping us to get back the children we were meant to have. We have been failsafeing for about 2 1/2 months mainly for our 4 year old daughter who was defiant, argumentative, oppositional, angry, sometimes violent, sometimes hyperactive, deliberately annoying, and would be awake for 2 - 4 hours after bedtime before falling asleep. The contradiction being that she could also be charming, loving, insightful, enjoyable, happy, playful, caring, enjoy an activity (craft, colouring, building etc) for extended times, clever, calm and inquisitive.

About two years ago we learned about colours and preservatives (from "The Chemical Maze") and pretty much took them out - apart from occasional treats - with good results and we had no idea there was so much more to the food chemical story. I never would have considered fruit etc, I just thought I somehow had to be doing a bad job at disciplining my child and that must be why she is still the way she is. While reading Fed up with ADHD my hopes were ignited for a better life for all of us as I worked up the courage to go failsafe and give this a try. It was a daunting thought with a new baby as well but we really had no choice as far as I could see so we started! Amongst the

initial flurry of the first few weeks the results were incredible as we saw emerge this delightful child and hardly any of the pre-diet behaviour. I now feel it is our way of life and I am learning to manage the work load of the constant cooking, baking and planning around food. My once skeptical husband is a beautiful support and really helps out with the kids and the washing so I can keep up with the food etc. We have seen some remarkable changes but there are still some things that concern me though.

After 3 weeks on elimination, our first challenge was salicylates and we had a severe day 3 or 4 reaction, stopped on day 5 and I think we were just starting to come good after about 6 days from stopping when we had a friend's birthday party the next day. We had been so strict, everything to the letter and the girls' attitudes toward the diet was so amazing that we thought we'd have a day off and give them a "treat". The party food wasn't as bad as it could've been. A lot of home cooking. But they did have some lollies, fruit and chocolate. The girls couldn't believe it after about 5 weeks on the diet! Anyway, behaviour started that evening and it was pretty foul for about three weeks. We also made the mistake of giving her Nurofen for a sore throat in the week following the party but apart from that we were back to 100% failsafe the day after the party. So after about 3 weeks of reaction type behaviour she started to become progressively better but still with some D.F.Asleep (down to 1-2 hours) and still to many times of defiance and aggression etc. amongst the good behaviour. We are now 4.5 weeks after the party and 5.5 weeks after the end of our salicylate challenge and I feel like we are not yet back to how it was in the first three weeks. – from a country failsafer [this family is now doing well]. Their problems included daily Sakata rice crackers, accidental exposure to lawn fertiliser, and Nurofen. Although Nurofen doesn't contain salicylates, most salicylate sensitive people have cross sensitivity to it and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as naproxen and diclofenac. You can regard one dose of aspirin or Nurofen as the equivalent of a week's salicylate food challenge, ref: Jenkins C and others, Systematic review of prevalence of aspirin induced asthma and its implications for clinical practice, BMJ. 2004;328(7437):434. For more possible reasons for diet not working, see [Checklist of Common Mistakes](#)

[558] Muscle spasms (May 2007)

I am a 55-year-old woman who recently worked out for myself that I have a muscle spasms as a strong reaction to 220 (sulphites) and minor reactions to others which I haven't identified yet. The muscle spasms are usually in the limbs and are worst when I sleep. I am a very fit and active person, so when I finally sit in front of the TV after tea and relax, this is when I feel the spasms. When mild it is usually any one muscle at a time in my legs and usually every 30 seconds. The affected muscle tightens or twitches and can occasionally jolt my leg or finger etc. When I have a worst reaction during the night, again it is like a tightening of, possibly, a muscle in my chest, or hip, or shoulder, head etc. When it is in the chest, some times it actually knocks the breath out of me as I awake with a jolt. Have you ever had the electrical impulses on your body when you are at the physiotherapist and a muscle tightens - that is how I feel. Sometimes of a night I feel as if I have a "motor" running in my chest or sometimes my head (sounds crazy doesn't it!) I can also quite often get a tingling (or motor sensation) feeling down my legs.

I went to four doctors last year and not one knew what was wrong, with one referring me to a neurologist. I become hyperactive in the evening – full of energy when everyone else is wanting to go to sleep - and have constant insomnia. When I am at my worst my muscle spasms (during sleep) wake me every few minutes and I experience hallucinations or bad dreams. Strong sleeping tablets don't eliminate these muscle spasms. It wasn't until I realised the 220 preservatives were in the "healthy" foods: dried apricots, sultanas, most yoghurts - that I was able to get my health back into order. It took me nearly a year to work out what was wrong with me. Since watching my diet I am

sleeping so well it is unbelievable; I haven't slept like this for possibly 7 years and only have mild muscle spasms resulting in bad sleeps occasionally when I'm not aware of the preservative in the food. I guess I am still finding it hard to check everything before eating!!

The last 12 months have been very scary for me when I didn't know what was wrong - I feel so strongly for our children who also must be suffering and unable to communicate how their body feels. - by email, Victoria.

[545] Failsafe Vacation Care program (January 2007)

At present I'm doing Vacation Care for children aged 6-12. I have done this program for the last two holidays and this year I have changed the program so that we provide morning and afternoon tea. From my results so far - a week and a half - it has been fantastic, and the difference in the children is amazing. The parents have been very understanding and have not complained about the extra \$1.00 charge per child per day. We cook things from your Fed Up book and the children love the food. When they bring things they shouldn't, they put it back in their bags. We can have up to five children with ADHD or behavioural concerns but now you wouldn't know they were in the program. – Nicole, NSW

[544] "parlate dell'introduzione in Italia del farmaco Ritalin per i bambini con ADHD" (January 2007)

Ho sentito che oggi parlate dell'introduzione in Italia del farmaco Ritalin per i bambini con ADHD.

Prima o invece di dare Ritalin ai bambini, e' opportuno fare un "elimination diet" per individuare eventuali intolleranze a salicilati, ammine, glutammati (che sono "natural food chemicals"). Inoltre, sarebbe un controsenso dare Ritalin a un bambino che continua a bere bibite colorate! Anche l'annatto, un colorante giallo naturale, ha un forte effetto sul comportamento di molte persone. In Italia siamo piu' tutelati rispetto all'Australia per quanto riguarda gli additivi alimentari, ma poco tutelati riguardo alle sostanze inutili aggiunti nei farmaci. - by email, Italy

Roughly translated:

[544] "You talk about the introduction in Italy of the medicine Ritalin for the children with ADHD" (January 2007)

I heard that today talk about the introduction in Italy of the drug Ritalin for ADHD children.

Before or instead of giving Ritalin to children, we should make an "elimination diet" to locate any intolerance to salicylates, amines, glutamates (which are "natural food chemicals"). In addition, it would be a contradiction to give Ritalin to a child who continues to drink soft drinks colored! Also the annatto, a yellow dye natural, has a strong effect on the behavior of many people. In Italy, we are more protected than Australia as regards food additives, but little protected with regard to ingredients added unnecessary drugs. - By email, Italy

[530] Salicylates are our nemesis (January 2007)

We have been on the elimination diet for 6 weeks using a dietitian from your list and she has been great. Salicylates, well that's our nemesis - I get cranky, stressed and short tempered, my 8-year-old daughter gets teary at the drop of a hat - crying, stressed and the "what ifs".... . My three year old is extremely sensitive to amines - defiant, disruptive and hyperactive. Antioxidants don't affect her behaviour but her cheeks flare so something isn't right. More than 5 plain Sakatas or LCM bars send her off the planet.

It's hard as you would know trying to ensure they have food without the nasties. I am educating Day Care and they are trying to buy failsafe foods as they are sure other children are affected as well, not just my daughter. Next my challenge is going out to Little Athletics where they only sell "crap" icy poles when it is a stinking hot day. – failsafer, NSW

[463] "Tell Sue I'm not a cranky pants anymore" (November 2006)

I am a primary teacher and thought I had done everything 'right' to prepare my daughter for school. I was surprised and shocked when the teacher was less than enthusiastic about her first day. Despite her apparent high intelligence, Amelia has progressed slowly and her teacher describes her as inattentive and unaware of what is going on in the classroom.

After three terms of this I finally relented and took Amelia to see a paediatrician. She was diagnosed with ADHD (it is also suspected that my husband had ADHD as a child and has learnt to channel his energy into work and sport). I was very reluctant to give Amelia the prescribed dose of Ritalin, particularly as her behaviour wasn't unmanageable at home. (After reading your book, perhaps I have been an 'immersion' mother and have fooled myself by thinking 'my child isn't as bad as that'.)

After much discussion my husband and I decided to trial Ritalin. I only lasted two days before maternal guilt, severe anxiety (particularly after looking at www.Ritalindeath.com) and Amelia's racing heartbeat helped us to make the decision to stop the medication. It was after my husband talked about our experiences at work, that one of his colleagues suggested we look at your website.

That was a significant day in our household. The next day, with the help of my children we emptied out the cupboards and started failsafe. The changes that your suggestions have made to my family are impressive. After 11 days on the diet, I received my first unsolicited positive comment from Amelia's teacher about her work and she also got two awards in the same week.

My 2 1/2 year old son has demonstrated even more dramatic improvement. Even though we didn't think there was a specific need for him to be on the diet, we are doing it as a family. Behaviours that I put down to being a boy – climbing on everything, running everywhere, talking loudly - have all stopped and he is now a gentle, quiet little boy. His day care teacher is amazed by the changes in him.

As for me, the headaches that I have experienced every few days have stopped and the psoriasis on my arms is starting to heal. I have read three of your books and it is as if I have woken from a dream. Your description of your daughter in year 1 and husband could be about my family. When I read p38 "She'll grow out of it" Fed up with ADHD I was astounded - that is Amelia!!!! She is also very good at drawing and is a creative, lateral thinker (not that these qualities have been recognised at school).

Sue, I thank you for the years of trial and error that you have gone through to make this so much easier for all the families who are experiencing problems now. Amelia asked me to say thank you from her in this letter. 'Tell Sue I'm not a cranky pants anymore' she said. – email, NSW

[462] Failsafe homeschooling (November 2006)

My daughter is nine years old now and I intend to keep her home schooled for the rest of her school years. Not only is she behaving better because she eats only failsafe food but her concentration has improved, she enjoys learning and is learning more and is a far happier child as a result. I'd strongly recommend home schooling for parents of kids with ADHD. Before we started home schooling, my daughter exhibited strongly ODD behaviour patterns and was becoming a very unhappy and

unsettled little girl. It's so good to see her playing happily with the others and being able to hold a conversation instead of fighting and tormenting.

Socialisation is no problem for us. We are already a large family, however, we organise outside activities as well. Our kids do a horsemanship course (their choice) as well as other activities that bring them into contact with others. Last year we tried our daughter with ballet for a while but would have been better with all-in wrestling. This year she's doing trampolining. It's more her style. Largely, I think that kids in schools get too much of the one kind of socialisation. I personally think they develop better if they learn to socialise with people across all age groups.

To get permission to home school is easy, in NSW you download the application forms from the Board of Studies website, fill them in and send them, but there are a few things that need to be in place.

Firstly, you need to develop a plan of what you are going to teach. To help with this, the website of the Board of Studies has a site that tells what subjects have to be taught and what sort of components in each subject you need to address. It's the normal school curriculum that has to be followed. I found this a bit worrying at first but it ended up being fairly easy. I am a trained primary school teacher which did of course make things much easier, but I found the greatest amount of help from other home schooling parents on the internet. You do not have to be a teacher to home school but you do need to develop a pretty good program. I'm pleased to say that the Board of Studies has approved the programs that I've written for my girls and has asked if I would help other homeschooling parents in my area, which I do and I'd be happy to help 'failsafers' with theirs if they need it.- Chris (vwilder@optusnet.com.au).

[459] Dealing with ex-husbands (November 2006) COURAGE AWARD STORY NOVEMBER 2006

Hi. I can already give you some feedback, as my 3 children and I have been on the elimination diet for 3 days. My eldest child is 14 (depression, asthma, sleeplessness, fatigue, restless legs, easily irritated, unmotivated etc): this morning she got out of bed without being nagged, had a shower without being told, all while smiling! I stopped taking antidepressants 2 weeks ago, and today for the first time since, I am not feeling my normal symptoms of depression. My youngest, 3, is hyperactive and today has been a lot calmer. He also normally wakes about 6am, and today slept in till 9:30!!! My elder son, 6, who has a learning delay, woke up teary and temperamental, as he was before bed last night, but he was at out-of-hours schoolcare yesterday and ate apple, cheese and yoghurt... One thing the book 'Fed up with children's behaviour' doesn't address is what to do when in a situation where I do not live with my ex-husband and he only sees the kids once a week, how do I get him to understand that the kids need to try this? He sees their issues as being 'normal' and although none of my kids are extreme in any way I want to give them the best life they can have, now and in the future. How do you convince people that relatively 'normal' kids still can benefit?

(later) thank you thank you! Despite all of my best efforts, my ex-husband is aggressively sabotaging my efforts with my children, constantly telling them that failsafe foods are 'silly' and if they ask for failsafe foods he gets cross at them. They spent one night at his house (Day 11 of the elim.diet) and he gave them everything he could think of that was on the list of 'Don'ts'. Consequently they came home silly. Neither of the boys (6 and 3) could get to sleep that night, the littlest one crying and rolling around in bed sobbing 'I can't stop, I can't stop'. In desperation I gave them both a half teaspoon of bi carb, thinking 'this isn't going to do anything' (I should know better!). As it tasted so awful I let them chase it with a Werther's. Within 10 minutes they were both asleep....- by email.

[454] 'Wanted to warn others' about fish oil capsules (August 2006)

Previous to the diet, on the recommendation of our pediatrician we tried fish oil capsules for 4 weeks with good results for concentration. We stopped using the fish oil supplement when we started the diet as we wanted a clear reading of what it would do. (We were very much non believers at this stage). The difference on the diet was amazing and we did the diet very successfully for over three months. We were into our second challenge when I reintroduced the fish oil thinking nothing of it as it was recommended along with diet by the pediatrician. We never got back to where we started even after four weeks of strict diet. We came off it thinking it was possibly a one off and his body had adjusted to the diet. We have paid heavily for it, forgetting what life was like before the diet. My son is unhappy and we even began Ritalin trials feeling that we had exhausted all avenues. Then a friend who is also a failsafer was told by a doctor at the RPA Allergy Clinic that there is a problem with fish oil and I just wanted to warn others who may fall into the same trap. We have begun the diet again today and my son is happy to go back on it even though he knows it means no McDonald parties and fruit and pizza which are his favourites. Thank you for giving us another option, and this fabulous website which makes the daunting task much easier.

[453] One liners (August 2006)

Our 6 year old son's urticaria and rhinitis have improved dramatically by avoiding cats and dustmites (for allergies) and additives annatto 160b and flavour enhancers 621-635. He is now starting to feel better, sleeping better and behaving better (previously we were told it was ADHD but I have my doubts now).

[447] 'Fear of the dark' really a food reaction (August 2006)

We started the diet nearly a year ago for my son, a sweet 5 year old who would become an aggressive, extremely hyperactive and an emotional monster nearly every day. I saw you on A Current Affair and after taking muesli bars and sultanas (which I had thought were healthy) out of his diet I noticed most of his aggressive behaviour disappear.

After that we started the full diet and not only did our son become an angel, we noticed that our daughter was a very strong amine reactor, becoming uncontrollably emotional, depressed and 'full on', as well as having frequent nightmares and bedwetting. Unfortunately since we have moved 2 months ago our son has gone backwards fast, I now think as a result of amines in meat from new butchers. It is so upsetting to see all the progress disappear, and he has had HUGE problems at school this term. I have traveled back to our old butchers to stock up on meat and am started to see some improvement after one week.

The biggest shock for me however, was when I recently discovered I was a food reactor!! I was a junk food addict and would eat about 5kg of chocolate a week. I can't believe now I had so many symptoms, and I never even put them together as symptoms, let alone found the source of the problem! I was getting migraines, I constantly had a headache behind my eyes, I felt very faint and disoriented, had stomach pains that felt like needles - usually after eating lollies, and I was always bloated - something which really upset me.

The weirdest thing to attribute to food however was my extreme 'fear of the dark' as I called it. I would be terribly scared of the dark, I would think that my mind thought it could see little people and things out of the corner of my eye, even though I knew they weren't there, I would open my eyes every 10 seconds while trying to get to sleep, just to check if there were monsters or robbers there, and every time I closed my eyes all I could picture in my head was horrible things that

would scare me. I was a bit worried I was starting to go crazy, then I stopped eating chocolate and didn't even notice all these symptoms disappeared.

It wasn't until I splurged on a whole chocolate cake over two nights that I discovered what had caused these problems. After eating the cake I was completely on edge. I couldn't sit down for ten seconds without turning around to make sure there were no monsters or robbers behind me. Eventually I had to sit with my back to the wall so I wouldn't think there were things behind me. That was the last time I ate chocolate, and the thought of ever eating it again scares me! – by email.

[440] "my son had an horrific reaction to fish oil " (August 2006)

I complained to the Adverse Medications Events hotline (thru your website) about the fact that the label on a particular brand of fish oil supplements says free of salicylates and amines and they were most sympathetic and helpful. They asked the Queensland Nutrition Council to investigate and discovered that not only does the lemon and lime flavouring contain salicylates and amines, but so does the tuna, and how high depends on whether the tuna is fresh or canned. As I told you, my son had an horrific adverse reaction to it, and was waking up through the night on it - in fact, he asked me if he could stop taking it. I tried lowering the dose to a teaspoon in the morning only (two teaspoons recommended morning and night), and it made no difference, so I stopped it. The AME spokesperson told me she had written to the company involved asking them to justify their claim. She also told me the product has been withdrawn in the United States, but she didn't know why. I'm still investigating, but it would appear from my research that the US Federal Trade Commission ruled that the company made unjustifiable claims that it helped kids with ADD. Later the company was ordered not to make these claims without scientific evidence. (Complaints after January 2006 to the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care mail@safetyandquality.gov.au).- father of a six year old

[414] Gastrosocopy results and the failsafe approach (May 2006)

Some years ago now, I remember reading a message from a failsafer who'd had a gastroscopy before he went failsafe, which showed scarring and evidence of reflux, and he was put on strong antacids and told he might eventually need an operation (presumably to repair the gastric sphincter).

Exactly the same happened to me. I get the neurological symptoms (depression, paranoia, neurosis, ADD, and visual discomfort dyslexia - which improves but hasn't been resolved), but I also had years of gastric symptoms and had had two gastroscopies before I discovered failsafe eating. The first one showed no ulcer but that the lining was inflamed. After the second I had exactly the same diagnosis as in the story above. I remember the gastroenterologist telling me that although the symptoms weren't typical, the problem was definitely reflux, and suggesting the operation.

After I had been on the diet for some years, I had another gastroscopy to investigate the possibility of coeliac sprue. This wasn't found (thank heavens) but it did demonstrate that the scarring and inflammation that had previously been there was now gone. The diet had resolved about 10 years of painful gastric symptoms for me.

I'm just wondering whether there might be other adults or children who have had the same experience. As people are so keen on physical evidence, maybe someone could pool the results and put out a paper? - reader, NSW We would love to hear from any others with similar stories: please write to confoodnet@ozemail.com.au

[408] Hyperactivity, bad mood swings, violent behaviour (March 2006)

My 9 year old nephew 'suffered' from super hyperactivity and very bad mood swings for most of his life which was very stressful for all his 3.5 school years. His violent behaviour, which only ever occurred at school, included pushing over desks, tearing up paper, pulling phone connections out of walls, pulling plants out of the garden and hurting a teacher when being restrained. They would ring his Dad to come and take him home. He visited many medical specialists, was finally diagnosed ADHD and prescribed adult doses of drugs with no improvement.

Over the last six months he has been failsafe while being homeschooled and there was an incredible difference within two weeks. In four months he covered nearly 12 months school work and is improving rapidly. He has always been quick to lose his temper at home with his brother and sister but since he started on the diet we have not seen him angry. He actually had his head slammed in a car door recently by his sister's friend. It must have really hurt and his eyes watered but his response was "It wasn't your fault, Poppy". We were all amazed. He is now a healthy, happy little boy with a great sense of humour. It is frustrating to say the least that so much of the trauma this little boy and his family went through was to do with food additives. by email, Qld

[399] Reflux medication causes ADHD symptoms and the Parkinsons shake (March 2006)

Having four children who have all been milk and soy intolerant from birth, intolerant to artificial additives and sensitive to levels of salicylates and amines I've seen possibly every symptom food intolerance can produce raise its ugly head at some time or another. Unfortunately due to either being uneducated or narrow-minded, many mainstream medical practitioners including specialists just wouldn't go the food intolerance path so it took me several years to really get to the bottom of what was happening with my children.

The first symptoms that we came up against were reflux, eczema and a lot of skin rashes. My third child, Jessica, was extremely miserable and seemed to be in a lot of pain. She'd started refluxing from one week and was started on prescription medications. Luckily the paediatrician was able to identify a rash around her bottom as being associated with lactose intolerance so we went the road of trying various formulas until we got to nutramigen which settled her demeanour but did nothing to alleviate the reflux side of things, so we had unwittingly started down the right path. She also had a constant post nasal drip from very early on so we were shovelling her full of various antihistamine type medicines trying to alleviate that and she had eczema. My fourth child Zac knew that breast milk just wasn't for him so at two weeks he decided to starve himself in preference, refusing the breast. He also was covered in eczema and had silent reflux. Luckily for him he was put straight on to neocate, for during the couple of years leading up to his birth, our family paediatrician who by this point had all four of my children in his care had seen the flurry of symptoms food intolerance can produce.

As my eldest child Levi was still on syrup medication for reflux until just before he started school, his paediatrician felt it would be a good idea to see how he went, off medication. I was able to get him through with the occasional dose of over the counter antacid for a couple of months until he started school when his reflux exacerbated, so the prescription medication was reintroduced. I took him for his paediatric review a few days later and was told to start him on a prescription syrup antacid as well as he'd been complaining of heartburn symptoms. Within 3 days something was going wrong. His teacher asked me what had happened to him, he was bouncing off the walls and displaying ADHD symptoms, being loud and disruptive. I rang his paediatrician and told her that I was taking him off the prescription antacid and told her what was happening. But things were going down hill fast, his ADHD symptoms were becoming worse, his coordination had plummeted and he'd lost all sense of balance (which had never been a problem in the past), he'd fall

over for no apparent reason, there were times that he would behave like he was drunk or high, giggling and slouching, and his eyes would zip from side to side really quickly (I was told the medical term, I think it was nystagmus...)

To top it off, Jessica, had started doing the parkinsons shake (she was still refluxing terribly and was also on both Zantac and Prepulsid syrup medications). Levi's teacher asked me to have him assessed by an Occupational Therapist who diagnosed him as having dyspraxia, a developmental condition that makes them have to have constant repetition as they have to relearn everything over and over because they can't retain it. I knew that it wasn't a developmental problem as he had always been in advance of his age appropriate milestones and I'd spent lots of time with him, he could climb trees, jump, skip, ride a bike without training wheels from 3 years old, and had great hand eye coordination prior to this happening. All of that coupled with the ADHD stuff just wasn't right. So I made an appointment for the paediatrician (his regular paediatrician wasn't available so I asked for the one that was now looking after my other 2 children). He was dumbfounded. He'd remembered seeing Levi from time to time when I'd had to go for appointments with the others and he didn't have a clue what was going on. So he ordered several blood tests, a CAT scan and an EEG. Everything came back clear. I remember saying to him at that stage that it had all started when the syrup antacid was introduced but I couldn't understand why it was still happening. I of course got a Tsk Tsk for pointing my finger at the medication. So I battled onwards for a couple of months, racking my brain, I rang the reflux support group and the lady I talked to said that her son who was on these medications was also ADHD. I was at my wits end, Levi's symptoms were getting worse, I resorted to ringing the drug company who manufactured the antacid and talked to one of the medics who worked in the lab. She told me that she had heard of this sort of thing happening before and that it was probably due to the alcohol, or the preservatives and flavourings used in the medicine as they are really concentrated in ALL syrup medications. BINGO. Now I was facing a dilemma. How could I treat my children's reflux without the medications, I could see what it was doing to my kids - all 3 were on the same medications. I found a naturopath who made a tonic catering for my children's reflux symptoms. In a matter of weeks I was able to control the older 2 with the herbal treatment alone. Within 7 weeks Levi's ADHD had settled down, his balance and coordination had returned and when we saw the neurologist at this point he agreed that Levi's problems were due to the preservatives and flavourings in the medications and felt that he was a normal 5 year old. Funnily enough Jessica was cured of the parkinsons shake and Levi stopped falling over.

I at that stage really started to read labels. With careful monitoring I was able to avoid foods that contained artificial colourings, flavourings and preservatives so the kids reflux and behaviour was settling down. At this time you could buy rice milk and oat milk as an alternative to cow's milk and soy so the reflux for the 3 older ones was controlled purely by diet alone. I was able to see symptoms occurring when they'd eat a particular food or have a drink of juice. Jess was still in a flurry with the post nasal drip which would cause a persistent cough where she could barely catch a breath in between. At our next appointment with the paediatrician (I now had only Jess and Zac going), I told him about what foods would cause what symptom and he suggested going into the RPA clinic. So off we trotted, it was a big day that day, we found out Levi was anaphylaxis to peanut (I'd known he was mildly allergic and avoided it entirely) and I was educated about salicylates and amines. We did the elimination diet and with the reintroduction of certain foods it caused chaos. We lived a couple of years of pretty bland, I've found that they certainly improve with age, but I still have to be pretty strict with what Jess and Zac eat.

When Zac was two he was taken off the neocate. Our paediatrician suggested a follow on formula that was cow's milk based but the protein was broken down into small chains. Within days the poor child was on the tantrum rollercoaster, throwing tantrums which generally lasted around half an

hour at a time, where he'd hurt himself, belt into things, bash anyone who was around, and he'd have 6 to 8 of these a day. I was genuinely concerned that he was going to hurt himself or someone else. I rang the paediatrician (by now I was well and truly on a first name basis) and told him that I wasn't giving him any more formula and that he'd have to get by on rice milk. Now you can get calcium enriched and vitamin enriched rice milk so that's somewhere else to go if you need to.

I've also seen dairy cause speech problems (this happened to Zac when he was on the follow on formula), tantrums, dyslexia (they can't get their tongue around words, mirror write letters and misspell words), very pale skin complexion, behavioural problems, ADHD symptoms, along with the gutty symptoms, reflux, eczema, and postnasal drip and that's just in my children. I understand that dairy and wheat are now being looked at as being causes for mild autism.

If you're at your wits end, if your child displays any of these symptoms or has a learning difficulty especially if there's something happening with each of your kids, even if their symptoms are different, food intolerance is worth looking into. It runs in families. Dietary modification may be the answer you're looking for. My children are now medication free. If your GP doesn't want to go there, find a doctor that will. You need to be strong and assertive because you're going to encounter a lot of doctors and specialists who think it's all a crock, but you have to ask yourself why are there so many kids with ADHD, behavioural problems, learning difficultiesunfortunately a lot of the food you buy from the supermarket has artificial additives, for the sals and amine intolerant remember that a lot of the fruits and veg that years ago were seasonal are now available all year round not to mention what they do to them to ripen them and keep them fresh, and for the dairy intolerant look to your genes for the answers, there are several races that are known can't tolerate dairy. It may just change your life. - Sandra Madden, Heathcote NSW smadden@iprimus.com.au (Sandra now coaches children with dyslexia and learning difficulties and is happy to hear from others, please put food intolerance in the subject line)

[392] Stuttering and behaviour are different reactions to the same foods (March 2006)

My 7 year old son has been failsafe for a couple of years now with great results. My 5 year old daughter has quite a bad stutter and it has just dawned on me that diet may make it worse. I have often noticed that her speech is worse when my son's behaviour is at its worst. Her speech therapist pointed out that it may be due to diet and that his hyperactivity is the symptom but her symptom is stuttering. Given that they both generally eat the same thing this makes sense. I tend to be more lax with her diet though.

[381] One liners (November 2005)

Some days my 16 month old daughter was very hyperactive, followed by a horrendous temper. Your books have saved me - she has been on the elimination diet for 3 weeks now, and I have fallen in love with her all over again, she's the angel I always knew I had. - by email

[376] One liners (July 2005)

I was searching the internet for bad behaviour when your report came up and every single symptom you listed described my daughter - I immediately cut 282 out of her diet and the difference in her was almost instant - I am sure that if I hadn't come across this, the doctors would have labelled her ADHD and I would be none the wiser.

I have taken my son to psychologists, school counsellors, child nurse, hearing and ENT specialists, optometrists, etc, been through the 'why is our son the naughtiest and roughest in school?', 'why is our son so defiant and angry?' then I saw A Current Affair and followed the link to your site - bought

the book the next day, read it, totally gobsmacked that there was a name for my son's behaviour, glad it wasn't ADD, and now am compiling my shopping list to try and start a new eating habit for him. Maybe I won't have to sell him after all!

[372] Fifteen minutes later the paed prescribes Ritalin – I was furious (July 2005)

My seven year old so has been having behaviour problems since he started school. Earlier this year a child psychologist assessed him with a very high performance IQ but a much lower verbal IQ, so obviously there are learning difficulties although because of his high IQ these have not become apparent yet although there are some signs such as very poor spelling yet an excellent reader.

After some very long and exasperating conversations with the teacher and principal, I took Josh and his reports off to his paediatrician for help. The report explained that Josh doesn't have ADHD but does display ADHD behaviour. Fifteen minutes later the paed prescribes Ritalin, a six week trial each school day, then see how we go! I am absolutely, to the core, dead set against this medication. In my heart of hearts I couldn't give it to him. I was furious with the paed and decided to see our GP for further choices.

Next day, I spent one hour in the room with GP. I explained my feelings toward medication for what I truly believe is unnecessary for him and asked about diet. Same answer: six weeks Ritalin then take it from there.

Well, the day before this I came across your book Fed Up with ADHD at our local Big W. At the time I thought "interesting" but let's see what the doctors say. Well, needless to say that evening after two doctors, and two "not happy with that" solutions, I called my husband and asked him to pick it up on the way home and read it in three days. But first thing next day skipped to the diet section and immediately introduced our family to failsafe foods.

We have been all five on the diet for the last twelve days and all five of us are seeing/feeling results. Some I didn't even realise how bad they were pre failsafe. But -Joshua's behaviour has improved so much! He is more compliant at school. He is getting his school work done with far less opposition. The changes in him are definitely due to the diet. The general disposition of everyone in the house is much calmer. It is actually OK for all of us to go out in public and not be constantly at the boys to calm down, behave, and stop fighting. I discovered that Josh can actually sit at the table and eat dinner like the rest of the human race, not with head, feet, knees anything but his bottom, on the chair. I have to agree with one case in "Fed Up" that I am spending an awful lot of time in the kitchen, but the kids are really adapting well to the food even the nightly meal. They are eating stuff they wouldn't have touched before, even though they were on very healthy limited processed foods. I just wanted to tell you that your books have been a light at the end of a very long windy tunnel and that your thoughts in the book give us hope that our square peg may not have to be shoved in the round hole after all. Thanks you again so much. - by email

[368] One liners (March 2005)

My dad sent me Fed up with ADHD from Australia and I have read it again and again. With the exception of the sleeping difficulties it was like reading a biography of my 8 year old son – by email, UK

My 7 year old has gotten two merit awards in two weeks and I have nothing but praise about her from her teachers. She has been following the diet since December and although she still needs the Ritalin I find she is much better than last year. - email

[356] One-liners (Nov 2004)

- First let me tell you how impressed and grateful I am: I work with children with autism, ADD and learning difficulties and the best way to tell people about the effects of what their children eat is to lend them one of your books. – WA

[351] 'I cried the whole way through' (Nov 2004)

I'd like to thank you for sharing your life and family with the rest of us. I sat and read the book Fed Up with ADHD from beginning to end and cried the whole way through it. All I kept thinking was that this was a book about my child (although I didn't have the baby or sleeping problems) and how I was feeling. It was a relief to know that it's all normal - for ADHD sufferers. Thanks to you, I can finally feel free. – SA

[337] Jessie's tantrums (July 2004)

My daughter Jessie is three and a half now and from the moment she was born we have had nothing but problems.

In the first three months she was always crying, not able to sleep, she was given medicine for reflux and colic and her formula was changed on a weekly basis. At 6 months she threw her first tantrum, I remember it well as it was over a set of car keys. She was chewing on them and then decided to ram them into the back of her mouth, so I took the keys from her. She turned around and grabbed at my face, screaming and trying to bite. That was the start.

As she grew older she stopped her daytime sleeps well before she was one and moved into bed with me. I didn't mind because she slept so much better. She was never able to amuse herself and would rather sit and scream than do something for herself. She often had ear infections and colds. Before she was two her sister was born, much to her annoyance.

My second daughter was and still is breastfed so both girls were in my bed. Jessie's night terrors were getting worse, and even though she loved her sister she didn't like her one little bit. Once again, I believed the nurses and doctors putting it down to terrible two's and a new sister. Her behaviour got worse as she got older and it was nothing for her to headbutt the cement from one end of town to the other end till her head was blue, for no reason but a toy put in a plastic bag so that she could carry it. When she was three she hit the peak period.

A typical day would start off with her wanting the light on in the morning, so I would turn it on. "Get it off", she would say, so I would turn it off, trying to stop the tantrum. "No, turn it back on", so I would turn it on, and then she would start, "Get her away from me, I don't want her any more" (that's her sister), then the screaming would start and the kicking and the biting and this was from the moment she opened her eyes! She would scream and yell until she wet herself and then just lie in it and scream some more.

When she was finished in the bedroom she would go and destroy the next room. She was so loud that in the middle of summer with the aircon on and all the doors and windows shut the neighbours three doors up could still hear her. After an hour of morning tantrums then it was time for the next one usually over something stupid. The tantrums could last up to two hours with her hitting, screaming and biting herself and me. When she was so angry there was nothing I could do to help her, timeout didn't work, smacking made it worse and holding her was pointless. She would be screaming out for me "mummy mummy I need you" but if I dared go near her "get away from me, I don't want you" and she would hurt me with whatever was closest. Not a day would go

by that she was not like that all day, in fact out of a whole 12 hour day I would say that she would be calm for about 3 hours.

I turned to the doctors and nurses for help but all they could say was go to parenting classes. I knew that there was something else wrong. When a friend recommended Fed Up with ADHD, I almost cried.

We started the diet in a month ago and within 3 days her behaviour had changed, no more kicking, hitting and biting and the look of pure hatred that she would give you before she started the tantrum had gone. We removed colourings and preservatives first and then went on the elimination diet. She got better and better. Everyone noticed! When we made a mistake, like kindly giving her chocolate, she would wake the next morning complaining of sore eyes, and then the LOOK would start and I knew we were in trouble!

Suddenly I had my little girl back, the one that I spent three years looking for. She is nice to her sister and even nicer to me! I can not thank you enough. You helped when no one else could. -reader, Qld

[335] I thought my child was not a "foodie" (July 2004)

When my 8-year-old daughter was diagnosed with ADHD late last year the doctor suggested I read Dr Green's book, which I did, and she also suggested that I cut out some artificial colours, flavours and salicylates. She told me that salicylates are in cheese. I did this for about a week. Most of the food I had in my home was "no artificial colours" etc and avoiding cheese made no difference. The doctor didn't tell me that salicylates are mainly in fruit, she didn't tell me about 282, and she didn't give me any reference to your work or that of the RPAH diet. Therefore, I thought my child was not a "foodie" (as I call her!) and gave it no further thought. My husband is dead against ADHD medication and basically my daughter got worse over the next six months until I was at breaking point with her behaviour at home, socially, and at school.

About 3 months ago, I went into a bookstore in desperation one day just looking for anything that would help me. I had been in tears for a week not knowing what else to do with her. I bought a copy of "Fed Up With ADHD" and I admit I didn't place much hope in it because of my previous experience. I read your book in a day and a half. The third page got my attention when you mentioned all the things food intolerance can be responsible for - handwriting, co-ordination, bowel control etc which are all things my daughter has been struggling with for years. She has never finished a task at school and she is in year 3. She is currently having occupational therapy for her co-ordination and she has always had bowel problems which are ongoing.

That week I took all my children off commercial bread and bought Bakers Delight which is the only bread I have bought since. I thought about two days later that my home was slightly calmer, but told myself that I was just looking for something. After three days I started my children on the diet, much to their total disgust! Within another three days I could see a difference in my daughter.

Since then, I have been having daily communication with her teachers and frequently the Principal, and although she is still quite slow and disorganised, her attitude is much better and she is not anywhere near as emotional as she was. She has gone from crying hysterically ten times a day to only having hysterics if she has eaten something wrong. I've established, unfortunately, that she is severely sensitive to salicylates, and even pears seem to make her a bit vague. While I am still struggling with this (I mean after all, how can a child not eat any fruit!!), I am learning what I can give her and when.

Basically, it is very hard work (which I realise you of all people know!), and a very big learning curve, but we're getting there. Everywhere I go now and mention it someone says something along the lines of "Oh yes, my friend has a sister who's done that and apparently the kid is like a different person". Sue, the word is spreading! I just wanted to say thank you for all the work and time and effort you have put in to this. Without your advice I would probably be on antidepressants by now. - Tracy, NSW

[329] 282: Two years of underachieving with 282 (calcium propionate) (July 2004)

When our 8-year-old daughter was a toddler she was on a gluten free diet for some months after reacting to antibiotics. She had biopsies to rule out coeliac disease and at that time I bought a bread maker which I used almost exclusively until about 2 years ago.

During the time she was eating almost 100% home made bread, she had a great attention span. Due to other issues, our kindly recommended testing with the WPPSI – R, which we agreed to. I do not wish to go into the results here, only to say that this assessment now gives us a good indication that her later performance while on preserved bread was really poor.

We started using purchased bread over two years ago when I was having a very difficult pregnancy and needed to reduce my workload. Now I wish I had given up totally on the housework instead! The introduction of preservative 282 in purchased bread coincided with a decline in our daughter's abilities. Her bread intake increased until she was eating about 8 or more slices/day and her performance decreased until we were able to get very little work out of her as she was unable to concentrate for more than about one minute at a time.

In desperation I called her teacher who mentioned the television report on 282. I did further investigation on the net, and read your site. The result was that we returned to using our bread maker after not having used it for nearly two years. After about ten days, we had a different child. She started concentrating! She finished in 10 minutes what she previously couldn't finish in 4 hours. Her spelling started to improve as did her handwriting. She also finally learned to ride a two-wheeled bike!

As you can imagine, we were thrilled. After two years of under achieving and barely being grade level, our daughter is finally starting to accelerate and achieve some of that potential. I am grateful we had the assessment as it shows how much she was behind.

We have become very angry that this preservative is allowed. Even if it is just anecdotal evidence, I believe it validates the need for further research and a ban on 282. Our recent experience with [a particular supermarket] bread has shown how little we can trust labels. I also believe this could partly explain the increased rate of ADHD among lower income families. When Bilo bread is 1/3rd the price of Bakers Delight, what are most families going to use?

We are grateful for the work that you have done in researching this. I only wish we had known earlier. It makes us rather angry and frustrated at the lost potential and the damage it has done to our daughter. - reader, SA

[327] One-liners (April 2004)

* Congratulations on your new book! Another wonderful read (full of tears for me!) - reader NSW. *
For the first time since my son was diagnosed with ADHD I was able to relate to someone about what it is like to live with this condition on a daily basis.- email.

[324] Autism and diet at school (2) (April 2004)

About 18 months ago you helped us put our son Ryan (now nearly 5 years old) on the elimination diet, after we had been to RPA for Ryan's hyperactivity, ADHD and autism. Three months later you helped us find a problem with wholegrain wheat and antioxidants that had pulled us undone. Salicylates turned out to be our main problem although antioxidants are a close second, with amines and other additives a problem too.

Our son is now in his second year at special school, where he has made great leaps and bounds. When Ryan started school he was already on the diet. Months later when we'd allowed bananas to become more frequent than one half every second day, his teachers actually came to me and asked was Ryan eating something he shouldn't be. It took us three weeks to figure it out, and cut back on the bananas. Through this incident, they really came to see what we were talking about. Interestingly the school has strongly supported us, always keeping us up to date with what's coming up for 'tasting' in cooking classes, and seeking alternatives for Ryan. I'm very grateful for this! - reader, NSW.

[317] 'Absolutely foul' to 'wonderful' 13 year old in three weeks (April 2004)

We are trying the failsafe diet for my 13-year-old nephew, Lachlan, who has come to live with us. Lachlan has ADHD and I believe a huge dose of oppositional defiance as well as Aspergers and I am finding him unmanageable. We noticed a bit of an improvement on the first 3 days of our failsafe diet but he then reverted to absolutely foul - defiant and oppositional!!

Two weeks later... I think that Lachlan's behaviour is better overall but I still get defiance at times. We have been on the diet for 3 weeks now and he has been off his dex for 1 week. He says he doesn't notice any difference, but I do.

Three days later ... We had a wonderful day with Lachlan yesterday - so different from our daily experience a couple of weeks ago. I have decided to leave Lachlan off his medication indefinitely at this stage as he seems to be a much nicer person when not taking it. He even seems to be understanding some of the basic maths concepts that were just beyond his grasp in the past. - reader, Qld.

[290] At last I have a name for my son's behaviour (September 2003)

After reading your book Fed Up, at last I can put a name to my 10 year old ADHD son's bad behaviour: oppositional defiance. I know that he reacts to preservatives and have tried to avoid obvious food colours but this is not enough to make a difference so I am going to try the failsafe diet.- by email

[270] A 21-year-old looks back on diet (June 2003)

When I was around 4 years old I had quite severe behavioural problems, so my mum went from doctor to doctor looking for a possible solution. Eventually one doctor suggested the Feingold diet. I started the elimination diet in 1986, and my parents found an immediate improvement. One day my grandparents gave me red cordial which pretty much confirmed the effects of food additives. My parents and I found that I reacted to salicylates, and lots of artificial colours and flavours.

I went from a kid who everyone said would grow up to be a juvenile delinquent, to a better behaved kid who is now 21, studying for an Information Technology Bachelors degree. I also finished a 12-month employment contract not long ago and started a new job.

I'm surprised that it's only recently that people have been talking about the link between food and behaviour. - Danny Frencham, student

[267] Borderline ADHD and additive-free diet (June 2003)

My son was diagnosed with borderline ADHD and we have him on a colour and preservative free diet. It has made such a difference. It is nice to have other people comment on his behaviour in a positive way now. Before he couldn't sit still in church for the first part of the service before going out for Sunday School but now he happily sits still. - Jennie, NSW

[240] Handwriting was a huge problem (February 2003)

I have 2 sons one of whom, was diagnosed with borderline ADD in December 2002. After reading your book "Fed Up" we changed a whole lot of things in terms of eating and as a result this family has had a real turnaround. My son is getting into his school work with pleasure and already had a few astonishing results in terms of concentration, memory and especially handwriting which was a huge problem- by email

[237] "better than on full medication with NO side effects" (February 2003)

I'd like to tell you what your diet has done for my son. He used to be on Ritalin. I talked with our doctor about you and how I was going to do the diet (our whole family is doing it). We felt the claims may have been a bit exaggerated but have some benefit possibly. So I thought 'I have tried everything else with Sam, I may as well give this a go. I have nothing to lose'.

WELL, within 2 days !!!!!!! my feral son DID in fact become an angel!!! just like - no, better - than on full medication with NO side effects and it has lasted. It has been two weeks now. I don't know yet what he is intolerant to until we start the challenges.

It's not as though we had an unhealthy diet. We used to check the labels for artificial food colours, preservatives and other additives because we already found out that made him ten times worse.

I'm excited about it. I never dreamed it would work SO well! We did put him on the medication for Sunday morning at church but that was the only bad time on the diet. He cried the whole morning till it wore off, so we won't be giving it to him anymore. He is so much better. I can't wait till his next appointment with our doctor - he wants to know the results. I will sing your praises. I have stuck to the diet like the Bible. None of us have compromised in anything, although I desperately crave pizza, Diet Coke and tomatoes and hope I'll get over that soon. - Lisa Footnote: So far, Sam has reacted to both salicylate and amine challenges.

[230] I felt I had a potential psychopath on my hands (February 2003)

I am 42 and live in Sydney with my husband and 2 children. My story centres around my son, Alex who is now 6 years old. Alex is a little toughy, one of those kids who is highspeed, enthusiastic, in your face, adventuresome etc (and that's with a positive spin on his life).

He was born 2 weeks early, but a big boofy boy at 4kg. For the first 6 months he was a wonderfully placid calm child. Feed well, slept well, grew well, didn't seem to cry - dream baby. (Apart from having chicken pox, bronchiolitis and 2 fits in this period he was healthy and strong - though perhaps these illness should have given me a clue).

At six months he suddenly became incredibly restless - people would comment on him being active and a real 'tiger' - Looking back 3 things changed at this time - he started solids, started formula and

he started daycare. I also remember noticing his face change. He had had a beautiful round baby face with bright blue eyes, and when he started on solids he got dark circles and creases under the eyes, and his eyes turned green - I remember crying at the loss of my beautiful baby boy.

His first year in day care was diabolical. In a class of 15 babies, with 4 carers they could not cope with Alex. He walked at 9 months and spent his time running around the other babies (that were still immobile) snatching toys, jumping on the babies, shrieking, and escaping - he seemed incredibly bright and had the mobility of a child at least 6 months older. Every evening I was met with the litany of what he had done that day to terrorise the class. The carers always looked frazzled and worn out. Their only solution was to give continuous time out as a punishment - he spent hours every day in a cot that he eventually broke - at the time I lived through it thinking it must get better - in hindsight I see their approach as completely inappropriate - he was too young to be punished - it didn't help to modify his behavior, rather it set it in stone.

He continued through daycare being rough and ready, and some days violent - he found their order and routine hard to take. When he wanted to run in the garden, he had to listen to the story, when he wanted to keep painting, he was told painting time was finished - the structure and lack of freedom drove him mad. And this was a university based childcare with great facilities and high staff to student numbers!!

Our life at home was crazy as well. It was like living with Jekyll and Hyde. Sometimes he would be a delight, other days he would be totally uncontrollable - usually incredibly defiant - he could stick to his point hour in hour out - it was impossible to win an argument - normal parenting didn't seem to work. He also had a habit of making loud repetitive noises.

Going out was a nightmare - he would run away, run into traffic, swear at strangers, try to strangle other children, and on a really bad day would threaten to kill people. There were many times when I felt that I had a potential psychopath or serial killer on my hands. Another characteristic was that he couldn't be told anything - he always wanted to learn first hand.

Harm minimisation seemed to be the best policy - I taught him to cook, use knives safely, chop wood with an axe, use power tools etc at a very young age - on the basis that he was going to find and use these items anyway, no matter what I did to try and stop him. Although he had a few accidents (mainly burns from cooking) this strategy has meant that he is still alive.

At 3 we discovered he had asthma, and glue ear - he had his first set of grommets inserted and could finally hear. At that stage I thought the hearing was the answer to all his behavioral problems, and I am sure he must have felt better being able to hear (Since then we have had another 3 sets of grommets inserted). He also changed to a community based, child centred pre-school/school which was far better for him. They worked with what he wanted to do and let him learn and explore at his own pace. The other children were attracted to him in an odd way - they were always excited to see what daring deed or brilliant idea he had - he never lacked for incredible ideas or enthusiasm. Despite this, successful social interaction and aggression was still an issue, and friendships were dicey due to his unpredictability.

Another habit he had was ticcing - eye tics, snorting, touching other children, kicking - At 4 he was diagnosed with Tourettes by a paediatrician. (I followed up later with a neurologist who specialised in Tourettes who said that he was just a naughty boy who needed counselling).

I was also seeing the local health centre psychologist -but this seemed to be no more than a chance for me to talk - never really got to address Alex's needs.

Interestingly I found his behavior was always better in winter, and was diabolical by term 4 (I now think this is fruit related!).

By the end of pre-school several parents had started a petition to get him removed from the school - luckily I had the support of the teachers and many other parents and this was stopped dead in its tracks.

I noticed that there were several different levels to his behavior - what I think of as 'full on' and then 'psycho'. I noticed that he became psycho after certain drinks - being sceptical about colour related behavior I started to read the labels whenever he went truly demented and psychotic - of course you can guess what I found - 102 At the time I had no idea that other people knew it was bad - I just thought I had the only child in the world who reacted to yellow colour - particularly as the popular wisdom of the day all said that red colour was the problem. So for the last 2 years I have avoided 102 - this helped a bit - but not totally.

The local health centre's counsellor visited the school and reported that his behavior was Oppositional Defiant - first time I had ever heard of it. The solution was to maximise his 'good interactions' - so once again no real help, and leaving it up to me to be a better parent.

Alex started school at the same child-centred preschool/school last year - he had a reasonably good year but was chronically sick - temperatures, stomach aches, head aches. However as he is so hyperactive, he often didn't realise he was sick, and I had to fight to get doctors to look at him. For example, I took him to hospital with severe asthma/croup - however as he was running around casualty making chicken noises he was not seen to as a priority case - when they finally looked at him, his oxygen levels were dangerously low and he was gasping for breath.

Another time we sat in a waiting room, left till last as he was jumping on chairs (and apparently well) - when he was finally seen the doctor couldn't believe he was racing around - his temperature was 41 and he had acute tonsillitis and a ear infection. He also had a severe salmonella infection last year and was losing considerable quantities of blood, but because of his high energy levels I was told it was just gastro and I was exaggerating his symptoms - it was finally diagnosed as salmonella and he had 2 weeks off recovering - I now know that when Alex is sick I have to force doctors to look for the worst. While I know he is ill, to anyone else he seems too full of beans to be sick - time and time again the doctors have been surprised when some odd illness turns up (ie scarlet fever, pneumonia, bronchiolitis, to name just a few)

At the end of last year I took Alex to yet another pediatrician - this time about his health - after a year of infections and unexplained temperatures I was thinking that there was something seriously wrong - he took his medical history and noted his pallor, and dark circles under his eyes - and pronounced food intolerance!!!

In December I started him on the diet given to me by this doctor - we removed milk, honey, colours and preservatives - and were told he could eat fruit, vegies and only cold pressed oil.

So - no result - if anything he became worse. While I thank this doctor for pointing me in the direction of food intolerance, his diet did nothing to help. A family friend recommended your cookbook to my mum. Since then I have spent the holidays reading Fed Up, and the cookbook and going failsafe.

We have cut out diary, amines, salicylates, and all the artificial additives, colours, preservatives etc. My mum has been a fantastic support. She is making all the 'extras' ie: jams, mayonaise, biscuits etc. Without her I couldn't have achieved so much. She also rings up food companies and asks them to

clarify what their ingredients are, and what type of oil they are using! We haven't taken out gluten yet - not sure whether it is necessary.

And Alex? It has taken a while, but by the end of the holiday he was so much better. He was able to play consistently with children without it erupting into a major argument. Parents and friends have noticed the difference. I have also noticed that he is now able to be disciplined. He can hear what I am saying and understands when his behavior is wrong and I can now win an argument.

Last week was the first week back at school - first day was fantastic and I received lots of comment about how he changed. Then he started cheating and eating roll ups, muesli bars, chocolate cake and sweets from his friends - by the weekend he was making repetitive noises, chatting constantly, being selfish, crying and was unable to control himself. He visited a friend on the weekend, who had seen him a week before in his good phase, and she couldn't believe the difference - she is now a convert to the idea of food intolerance. In her words it is like he is on a drug trip, and we all just have to wait for him to come 'down'.

So we are back trying to get him adhering to his diet again - he says he wants to - I just have to wait and see. I want to get him back to the point where we can try some controlled challenges!

And the rest of the family? None of us are totally failsafe yet, and are all cheating when we are out, but I believe we all have symptoms that warrant the diet. My 9 yr old daughter is incredibly artistic, but unable to read, and has temper tantrums, I suffer migraines, mood swings, arthritis and occasional depression. Interestingly, my daughter did some market research for a new hyper flavoured snack food a few weeks ago. She came home in an uncontrollable rage to the point that she was throwing herself around the house kicking furniture etc. I have never seen her like that before - and just think, those snacks are about to do that to all our kids - it's criminal. - reader, Sydney

[224] "After four weeks, he was able to go without medication altogether" (October 2002)

It's been 7 weeks now since we switched to Brumby's bread. Within days, my 10 year old ADHD son started improving and we halved his dose of dexamphetamine medication. After four weeks on preservative free bread, he was able to go without medication altogether.

You've no idea how much this child has changed. It's huge. I no longer get calls from school, he's bringing home merit awards, he entered himself in a maths competition, studied for it and won the first round . He does his homework without being asked. Half the time he goes to bed and is sound asleep before we say anything. Before, we used to get excited if he got to sleep by 11 pm. One day we were late for school and he said "that's OK, if we're late, we're late". Before, he would scream at me and kick the door. The change is unbelievable.

My older son has changed too. He is a very calm and loving child but he used to be so forgetful - like he was in another world. He would get very frustrated at forgetting things and sometimes he would snap. Now he remembers everything the first time.

We've seen improvements in the whole family - all five of us - except for the last two weeks, when we on holidays and we couldn't get Brumby's bread. We bought a bread labelled "no preservatives" but we all got worse. Then someone told me about whey powder. When I checked the label, it had whey powder in it.

My husband and I have noticed we have so much more energy and are less moody on preservative-free bread. With 282, I'm so tired all the time, I can't hold a conversation without losing people, my

handwriting is terrible, I write some of my letters backwards, and I've even reversed phone numbers (02 instead of 20). This is really important in my job.

Three of us (me and two of the kids) are asthmatics. On the Brumbys bread we've all been asthma free and medication free for 3 weeks. That's a long time for us.

I'm angry. They think because they put a number on the label, they can put anything they like in our food. But we don't know what it is or what it can do to us. I don't want my child medicated if there's another way. - Anne-Marie, Hunter Valley, NSW

[223] 282: Taken off medication for ADHD (October 2002)

A few weeks ago, I saw Today Tonight's program regarding preservative 282. Since taking that preservative out of my children's diet, I have seen remarkable changes especially to one of my boys diagnosed with ADHD.

We have already taken him off dexamphetamine.

I have written to Today Tonight to hopefully get a follow up program as the greatest problem is McDonalds having 282 in their buns and muffins, which are provided by Buttercup. Let hope we can get somewhere as thousands of children in Australia are obviously affected and it's mind boggling to think of the millions of kids affected all over the world.

By all means use my e-mail and name on your website. If it helps one child, it would be worth it. - Peter, by email

[215] Autism and diet (October 2002)

My son is 3 ½ and was diagnosed with Autism at 2½. He also presented with almost all of the criteria for the hyperactivity side of ADHD. The diagnosing doctor gave us very little information to go ahead with. By good fortune my husband picked up Sue Dengate's Failsafe Cookbook the weekend after our son was diagnosed, when I was still reeling and had no idea which direction to head in. We went looking for triggers for our sons hyperactive bouts, he was always active, preferring to permanently run rather than walk, and he had no attention span, but sometimes he would just go off, usually for about two days, where he would literally climb the furniture, sitting on top of the bookshelf, watching TV upside down, while lying on top of it, and he was causing his older sister, not to mention his parents, huge amounts of grief.

Early intervention has proved a godsend, but even so, we couldn't get him to sit still, or even sit down! and ADHD drug trialling was mentioned, if we couldn't improve his behaviour. This made me very nervous because previously any medication, bar panadol, for more than 3 days, sent him berserk. I now understand this to be the flavourings in all children's medication (I thought I was covering my bases buying colour-free!) Before I went to RPAH I had done quite a lot of work on his diet myself, and we had discovered a lot ourselves, but after I'd read Sue's book and been to RPAH I was able to make a real difference for our son. His biggest problem is salicylates and colourings - why didn't anyone know to tell me that bad nappy rash is always a sign of salicylate intolerance? That sign was present from when he was a baby. I always put it down to teething - how wrong I was! What a huge amount of grief we could have been saved if we'd known.

Our son is a typical limited Autistic eater. We were told that he was eating a good nutritious diet and we shouldn't interfere. After RPAH and Sue's book, we learned that almost everything our son was eating was bad for his intolerances. I'd tried Helgas Rye bread thinking I was avoiding bread preservative 282 - with no idea that vinegar was a problem! He drank lots of diluted apple juice - so I

bought the one with no flavourings and thought he would pee out what he didn't need, which he did. I thought it was good that he drank between 2 and 3 litres a day - the chemist told me it wasn't a problem. RPAH told us he was consuming the equivalent of 10 - 12 apples a day and he is salicylate intolerant!!! Since we removed the fruit juice, he doesn't crave it any more and now drinks about 1 litre of water a day - and it was far easier than I could have imagined!

So even with lots of knowledge under my belt and advice from all the so called "experts" before I went to RPAH I still was far off base. Three days on the elimination diet and our son was a changed child. Preschool reports that he now walks instead of runs. As a result he has slowed down enough to take an interest in the activities around him. He has broken the diet a couple of times, so one week in we inadvertently challenged salicylates and colourings, both with obvious results.

The good news is that he is allowed to still eat wheat, pears, and drink diluted pear syrup from tinned pears, and he has adapted beautifully - something I never thought possible.

Our son is still Autistic - it's not a cure - but it has certainly made a difference to his hyperactivity and therefore he is now far more teachable, with a wider interest base, and the ability to pay attention to things better than before. Grandparents who were sceptics of the diet have noticed that he is calmer, and can only attribute it to the diet. He has even started looking at his grandad, for the first time in two years!

We are only in the second month of the elimination diet, with several mishaps already under our belts, but I really wanted to encourage anyone who is thinking about the diet, dealing with Autism or ADHD - give it a go - you'll learn a lot. It has lowered the stress on our family, particularly his five year old sister, considerably, and has made our son far easier to deal with. Also, when he is not affected by a food infringement, his eye contact improves, he is coming out with new words every week, and is approaching other teachers, apart from his regular carer, something he's never done before.

Interestingly, before we went to RPAH, Sue Dengate told us the main problem would be salicylates but I couldn't face it, I thought it was too hard. It really wasn't that hard, and the fast results were well worth it. Sorry about the long email, but I hope I can encourage others out there to give it a go.
- from failsafe2 discussion group

[213] Could relate to everything (October 2002)

I have just finished reading your book Fed Up and I must say reading your stories about your family was an eye opener. When you talk about Rebecca, it sounded like my daughter. Everything you wrote I could relate to. I have tried almost everything - and even partially looking at her diet, but found it hard with nothing to guide me, until I purchased your book. The recipes are a great help.

Our daughter is currently not medicated for her ADHD - we have trialed her on several of the ADHD medications (Catapres, Dex and Ritalin) and the one that did help her caused excessive weight loss and we had to take her off the medication. I also found the Ritalin to have such a speedy effect on her in the afternoons, when she was coming off the medication, she was a million miles an hour and uncontrollable!!!

But she is so far behind at school with her reading and writing and something needs to be done ASAP so she doesn't fall too far behind. Thank you for your time and thank you for writing such a BRILLIANT book. - by email

[211] No reason for ADD test (October 2002)

Last year the counsellor at my 7 year old son's school recommended he be tested for ADD mid this year if there was no improvement in his concentration. During her examination he barely sat still for a minute! I saw your website and decided the diet was worth a try as I knew that I would never have him on medication. It was difficult at first as his behaviour declined (fortunately I was expecting that from reading your books) and we made lots of mistakes but we persevered - and it has been worth it! His thoughts seem to be clearer (he still is slow to get his words out but much improved), he has much more energy, more appetite, sleeps better, is happier and has better concentration. There is certainly no reason at this stage to have him tested for ADD.

Before the diet, he was never happy to do what the rest of the family were doing and it was very frustrating. Now he is completely different and we even completed a 5 hour walk in the Warrumbungle National Park during the last school holidays.

There are a lot of recipes that my three children love - pear crumble, potato wedges, dominion pudding, carob fudge cake, cottage pie to name a few. The three of them have improved appetites and attitudes to food - before they weren't happy to try new foods but are now quite happy to sample a new recipe. I find shopping and cooking easier as I skip most of the aisles and cook with fewer foods. The grocery bills are cheaper and the amount of GST paid is much less!

I'm so pleased that I decided to give the diet a go and have stuck with it. It's been the best thing for my son and for all the family.

One thing that struck me from one of your books was where you mentioned families travelling to Europe often experience an improvement in their child. Last year (pre diet) we spent 5 weeks in France and Italy travelling in a camping car and couldn't believe the difference in our son. His speech improved considerably, he was much happier and had a lot more energy. At the time we put it down to the fun we were having as a family exploring a new country but now realise it was probably the lack of preservatives in the food. Even pre diet we noticed some of the food you have mentioned - Fanta being a paler colour, ice-creams tasting like they used to and in Italy the pizzas and real home-made chips. The food was much tastier and we noticed that the Europeans eat foods that are in season.

Well, that is a very brief update on how changing foods and becoming aware of what we eat has helped my family. It has been a very positive change for us and well worth the hard work. Thank you for your advice, recipes and passing on your experiences. - by email

[193] 282: More trials? (September 2002)

Q. I have a son with ADHD, behavioural problems and a learning disability and another with a learning disability. I would like more information about the brands of bread/bread mixes that are free from the calcium propionate (282). Are you going to run a trial in Victoria ? If yes, I am interested in participating. Any extra additional information that you can give me I would greatly appreciate it. - by email

A. Sorry, there are no future trials planned, although many parents have volunteered. You don't need to take part in a study to trial the elimination diet. The bread preservative is not the only food chemical which can cause problems. Ask the phone contact in your area (see website)s on the website or email me for the name of a failsafe-friendly dietitian who will supervise this diet for you.

[177] Wrong foods at school (September 2002)

I know that my 14 year old ADHD son does better when on a preservative and colour free diet but he obtains all the "wrong foods" from his friends at school which we have not been able to remedy or control since he was in grade 1.- email

[170] "These symptoms disrupt our lives" (September 2002)

I was introduced to your books after my son was diagnosed with inattentive ADHD. I have four sons and feel like they are always complaining of some ailment. Three have all been bedwetters up until the ages of 6 to 8 years old. Two are often complaining about aches in their legs to the point of not being able to play sport which they love. One has headaches which leave him feeling lethargic and sleepy. These symptoms disrupt our lives and leave the kids irritable, but I haven't wanted to take them to our doctor on every occasion, as I have worried that he will think I am imagining their problems.

My son with ADHD is well behaved and I have always felt he had the potential to do better at school than he was. I was disappointed to find out that the only solution to the problem that was offered to me was Ritalin. I am hoping that through a revision of his diet, we may be able to improve his results without medication.

At the moment I am reading "Fed Up" and it has just hit me how like some of the children, my children seem to be. As you mention in your book, I was one of those parents who stayed away from most of the obvious 'junk food' and would consider our family to eat relatively healthy food, however, my children do eat a lot of fruit and pasta sauce meals, which may be the cause of some of their symptoms.

Thank you again for your information and dedication in trying to spread the word. I am planning to try our family on the elimination diet and hopefully we will be able to pinpoint the problem foods for our children. I have renewed hope. - email

[166] "support from the medical fraternity" in Tasmania (September 2002)

We now have a play group operating once a fortnight (only small numbers to date but we will see how it goes) and a cooking class this coming weekend. We are having a whole day at my local school where we will demo a variety of appliances and recipes we use (ice cream machine, bread recipes, sausages, and many others). Our group continues to grow, we find a lot of people come to one meeting and may not come back for three or four months, others just like to get the newsletters and then there are the die-hards like myself who wouldn't miss it.

We have a huge amount of support from the medical fraternity. Our paediatrician is suggesting to parents of ADHD children to try the diet for a designated time (before going to medication) and to contact me for help and support. We then forward them to a dietician or allergy / intolerance doctor for monitoring and getting started. This is working well. It doesn't work for all families (they give up before they have it right) but it is great that they are becoming more aware. - group leader in Tasmania

[165] "My children's behaviour has improved beyond words" (September 2002)

I would like to thank you for your remarkable book. My children (2 and 5) and I have been on the elimination diet (happy food as we call it) for three weeks now and we have never felt better. After many years of being told that I was the cause of my son's behaviour and many inconsiderate doctors telling me that he was ADHD, I saw your book and decided to give a try. After a major pantry clean

out to friends and family, we weren't left with much. This was a shock as I thought I fed my children a good diet. I never realised that we were eating so many chemicals and additives. Then we started trying a few new recipes. I never knew food tasted this good.

My children's behavior has improved beyond what any words can say and I have found that I am a lot calmer myself. The only thing I have found, as was mentioned in your book, is that some friends can't understand how we can eat. I reply that I have gone back to basics and how my great grandmother would have cooked.. Thank you for your help and we will continue to live our new lives with our happy food.- email

[161] Sanity saver (June 2002)

I saw a story on your book Fed Up about 2 years ago in Perth. Since then we have been trying to watch what our eldest son eats. It has made such a difference. Before he was rude, disobedient and hyperactive. Just by cutting out a few things (especially commercial bread) he is now a beautiful little boy and I am able to keep my sanity. - by email

[153] Nicholas: Our Six Year Journey (June 2002)

Our family is what is commonly referred to as a "blended family". When we were married in January 1992, Steve inherited a "package deal" which included my two children, Lauren and Mark, from my first marriage. Nicholas was born in October 1993.

Our six-year journey with Nicholas began early in 1996 when he was almost three. We were living in Wagga Wagga. Steve and I were in our late thirties, and Lauren and Mark were 13 and 10 respectively.

We are a Defence Force family, which means we are required to move around a fair bit. This also means that we endure complications and added stresses that most non-transient families can only begin to imagine.

When Nicholas was born he came into this world in the usual way, a normal pregnancy, and no problems during labour or childbirth. He was a completely normal child in every way until around the age of three. He started to become difficult to manage from a behavioural point of view.

I was 30 weeks pregnant at that time, with Elise, and due to complications I was confined to bed for the last 10 weeks of my pregnancy. Steve was not allowed to take leave so we had to fly my mum down from Brisbane to help out for the first five weeks, and then for the last five weeks we had Steve's parents, also from Brisbane, stay with us to help out until I was back on my feet. We put Nicholas' bad behaviour down to having to cope with different people, different sets of rules, different ways of doing things etc. and told ourselves that everything would return to normal in time.

Elise was born in August and things did not improve. I mentioned Nicholas' behaviour to the clinic sister when I took Elise to be weighed and measured, and she felt that perhaps he was feeling neglected because his new baby sister was taking a lot of the attention away from him. We enrolled him into preschool. We felt that perhaps if he were to become involved in something special just for him, something to improve his self-esteem, his behaviour would improve.

He settled into preschool really well and thoroughly enjoyed it. He was always very well behaved at preschool but the behaviour at home did not improve. This became the pattern of our lives for the next six years. He became obsessive about little things such as his bath. It was either too hot or too

cold. It didn't really matter what temperature it was, it was just never the way he wanted it no matter what we did.

We survived fairly well for the rest of that year and remained in Wagga Wagga until the end of 1997. Nicholas' behaviour did not get any worse, nor did it improve. We told ourselves that since we seemed to skip the terrible two's that perhaps this was just a bad case of the terrible three's instead. I hasten to add that I did not experience any of these behaviours with Lauren or Mark, nor did I go through much in the way of the terrible two's with them. Lauren and Mark were always very well behaved both in the home, and out and about, so this was a whole new experience for me.

At the end of 1997 Steve was posted to Darwin, and we spent an enjoyable Christmas with our families in Brisbane en route. We arrived in Darwin in mid January of 1998 and this is where our journey really started to get rough.

Nicholas started preschool five mornings a week and he became very tired with no energy. We put the tiredness and low energy levels down to the humidity and extreme heat of the tropics and the fact that up until our move to Darwin, he had lived all of his life in a cold climate. Nicholas was born in Canberra, and had spent the past two years living in Wagga Wagga before moving to Darwin. He started to lose weight, which we put down to the fact that Steve is very tall and that Nicholas had inherited the "tall" gene and was starting to grow. We decided he was going to be a tall, skinny child and didn't think too much more about it. The behaviour was getting steadily worse but still only at home and never at preschool.

In March of 1998, I decided it was time to take Nicholas to the doctor because he was now 3½, still a bed wetter at night, and still no improvement in his behaviour. We were referred to one of Darwin's best paediatricians. Nicholas had an ultra sound done on his bladder to rule out any nasties. This indicated that he had a large bladder capacity, which meant that he should be able to store the urine and make it through the night without any problems. Our paediatrician only ever used medication as a last resort after exploring all other options, and we were in total agreement of this. It was decided to put Nicholas back into night nappies, which we did, and given a bit more time and maturity, hopefully things would fall into place.

Initially, the bed-wetting was the bigger concern and the behaviour was secondary. Gradually, the priorities were reversed. Nicholas' energy levels deteriorated and his weight loss continued. The dreadful behaviours worsened. As time went on all these things became serious issues. The volume of urine each night was no longer contained in the night nappy, and the behaviour went from bad to worse, to down right disgusting, with many violent outbursts. He became more obsessive. He had to have the yellow bowls and plates in our multi coloured dinner set, and he had to have his shoelaces the exact same length. If he didn't get his own way, a huge tantrum would ensue.

Nicholas' weight loss continued and he was now looking so thin and unhealthy that he looked like a prisoner of war. His energy levels were so low that he would be playing on the floor of our living room and tell me he was tired. I would tell him to go and have a rest but he didn't want to. By the time I turned around to do something, and looked back at him, he would be asleep on the floor mid play.

Our paediatrician decided to try a medication called Periactin, which was supposed to kick start Nicholas' appetite. Unfortunately it didn't seem to work. Our paediatrician then decided the behaviour might improve with a change in diet. He started to tell us about the chemicals in food, both natural, and added. He had a basic knowledge of this but decided to refer us to a dietician.

The dietician that we saw also only had a basic knowledge of food chemicals. She did her best but really couldn't answer any of my questions and was of no real help except for one very important piece of information. She wrote down the name of a local lady by the name of Sue Dengate, whom she said had a support group for people like us, and knew a lot about diet. She did not have a contact phone number or any other details. She also recommended that I buy the book *Friendly Food* that was recommended by RPAH. The book was about avoiding allergies, additives and problem food chemicals.

I went straight from the dietician's rooms to our local bookshop where I purchased the *Friendly Food Cook Book*. The woman who ran the bookshop asked me if I'd read the book *Fed Up* by Sue Dengate. I hadn't, and the store was out of stock. This prompted me to try to find Sue's phone number in the local phone book. Prior to contacting Sue, I phoned my mum in Brisbane to ask her to try to get hold of the book and send it to me.

I eventually got my copy of *Fed Up* and was shocked at what I read by both the natural and the added food chemicals. Nicholas was much worse in Darwin than he was in Wagga Wagga and our paediatrician said that it could be as simple as changing our bread. He said that in Darwin, because of the humidity, the breads had a lot more preservative in them than the breads down south. In the tropics the bread goes mouldy much quicker. I began reading food labels for the first time in my life and discovered that our bread which we all ate at least once a day, had preservative in it. This was only the beginning. After making contact with Sue I began to realise how fortunate I was to have her, especially living in our local area, because she has saved our lives on numerous occasions over the years.

The biggest hurdle for me in coming to terms with the failsafe diet was that I had to completely change my way of thinking when it came to foods. I had been raised on a diet of fresh fruit and vegetables and this was how we were raising our children. The obvious additives and preservatives were things that I could comprehend very easily as being "nasty" and I was more than happy to eliminate things like red cordial and "junk" food, although we really didn't eat a great deal of junk food.

The most difficult thing for me then, and even now, was coming to terms with the natural food chemicals that seemed to be in just about every fresh fruit and vegetable imaginable. In our early days of the failsafe diet, I went through a very real period of mourning. I mourned the fact that my son could no longer eat many of the fresh fruits and vegetables that most people ate and took for granted in their daily lives. I also mourned the fact that I had to take away many of the things which he truly loved, such as bananas, cheese, burritos, and much more. I was concerned about his nutrition because this new way of eating did not leave him with very much, and his weight from the age of three had always been a concern to us.

I quickly discovered the importance of reading the labels on everything I bought at the supermarket. It is something that you have to be totally diligent about because what is considered "safe" one week could be considered "unsafe" the very next week. A simple thing like a change in the ingredients can make a huge difference between a "safe" product and an "unsafe" product. One mistake could be the difference between whether the diet was successful or not.

In the beginning we made many mistakes but with trial and error, and the guidance of Sue, we managed to make our way through this dietary minefield and come to some semblance of what could be called our new normality. A diet with very limited fresh fruit and vegetables in comparison with our past life of a diet, which consisted of no limits at all, when it came to "healthy" foods and fresh fruits and vegetables.

We implemented the failsafe diet (the elimination diet recommended by RPAH), and with Sue's guidance we managed to avoid a lot of the common mistakes and pitfalls. It is not an easy diet to do as a beginner and so to have her help in this was invaluable. Initially, the whole family went failsafe in order to support Nicholas. We remained failsafe for quite a long time but eventually we all went back to our normal diet, except of course for Nicholas.

We still don't eat chocolate or any of the stuff he really loves in front of him. We try to "escape" if we feel the urge to be a bit naughty as we are very aware of his feelings. Nicholas did show considerable improvement once we got past the dreadful withdrawal symptoms, however, the improvement although noticeable was not enough and so we continued in our search to get our lovely little boy back. The calm, gentle beautiful little boy that we once had and were not prepared to give up without a fight.

We noticed that Nicholas used to get particularly irritable just before meal times, so when Steve mentioned this to our paediatrician he told us to try an over the counter complex sugar called Poly-Joule. We left the surgery shaking our heads in exasperation and thinking "yeah right" that will work. We were extremely surprised to discover that it did in fact work and he was the best he'd been in a long time.

Nicholas had already been tested for diabetes because his paternal grandfather is an insulin dependant diabetic, and so are two of his cousins. The success of Poly-Joule prompted our paediatrician to put Nicholas in hospital for two days and a night for some specialised fasting tests. Bloods and urine were taken at specific intervals over a 24hr period of total fasting except for water. At about ¾ of the way through the testing Nicholas started to have a "hypo" which resulted in an immediate halt to the tests.

The official results of these tests were that Nicholas had a very rare form of Hypoglycaemia called Ketotic Hypoglycaemia. We were then advised by our paediatrician to give Nicholas regular doses of Poly-Joule so that his sugar levels remained stable instead of up and down like a roller coaster. We then decided that the Ketotic Hypoglycaemia was the main cause of these dramatic mood swings and behaviours.

We continued with the failsafe diet as well as the Poly-Joule and again we saw some improvement, but once again it was not enough. The disgusting behaviours continued and I again contacted Sue in desperation. She suggested we implement 1,2,3 magic and very generously loaned us the video. We were very impressed with this simple technique so we decided to try it. The implementation of this behavioural technique saved our lives, and to this day, continues to play an important role in our lives. Once again, over time, we saw some improvement, and once again it still wasn't enough.

We again went back to our paediatrician who decided to put Nicholas on a one- week trial of Ritalin. By this stage we were desperate people and willing to try just about anything. At the end of the week we again contacted our Paediatrician and told him that it really didn't seem to have any effect on the behaviours. We now know that medication, like diet, requires fine-tuning, and adjustment to be effective. It was unfortunate that the paediatrician did not mention this to us at the time. We were, at this stage of our journey, very much in a period of trial and error.

He referred us to a visiting psychologist who said he'd like to hypnotise Nicholas and put Steve and I on medication. I decided this was somewhat extreme to say the least and informed our paediatrician that I would not be going back.

We resigned ourselves to the fact that this was pretty much as good as we could get, although things were still not good, and that is putting it mildly. The bed-wetting continued and so we were referred to a visiting neurologist who asked us to measure the capacity of Nicholas' urine output. We did this and were told that he definitely should have the capacity to be able to store his urine overnight. He also recommended the bell, pad and alarm system to try and rectify the problem.

Our paediatrician decided that Nicholas was too young for the bell, pad and alarm system, so he prescribed Minirin, a nasal spray medication that is designed to stop bedwetting. We were told to give him half the minimal dose for his age and weight and after only three doses Nicholas was rushed from school to hospital in an ambulance because he was having a seizure. Blood tests taken at the time showed low sodium but nothing more. Seizures were one of the known side effects of this drug but it was extremely rare. Nicholas was one of the rare ones.

During these years Nicholas' behaviour remained disgusting and it continued to be that way, but only at home. He never showed any of the violence at school, and never at the paediatrician, or our local GP. I would tell the doctors and teachers about his behaviour at home, and they would look at me as if I was some kind of neurotic woman. I began to feel as though I was from another planet. I also began to doubt my skills as a parent.

Relationships in our house were strained to say the least. There were times when Steve felt like leaving, and there were times when I felt the same way. Fortunately, we never both felt this way at the same time. I had many desperate teary phone calls to Sue during this time and several similar desperate calls to our paediatrician. I enquired about respite care because I felt I desperately needed a break. As a Defence Force family we were completely on our own with no extended family for support.

Relationships between Nicholas and our two teenagers were also strained. My eldest daughter wanted to leave home because things were so bad and so desperate, and she'd had about as much as she could handle. My eldest son just couldn't stand Nicholas and every time he was near him he would pinch, prod, poke, or annoy him in some way. I would never catch him doing it but I would always catch Nicholas retaliating and that would result in immediate time out for Nicholas.

In those days Nicholas had such dreadful behaviour that I made the mistake of blaming him whether it was his fault or not. It took me a number of years to catch on to what big brother was doing. I remember one occasion where things got so desperate that I went back to our GP and asked him what we should do. We had been going to our paediatrician for over two years and still did not have the result we desperately needed.

Our GP gave me this piece of very important advice. He said, "love this child, he is not doing this on purpose, no child ever wants to be like this". I have remembered this piece of advice and over the years it has helped to keep me going. I kept telling myself when things got rough that it was not deliberate, but that these behaviours were uncontrollable.

Time out and behaviour management strategies were effective up to a point, but Nicholas would never go to his room voluntarily. He always had to be carried there, kicking and screaming. I lost count of how many times he broke my watchband in the ensuing struggle to get him up two flights of stairs to his room. The older he got, the bigger and stronger he became, which made him much more difficult for me to deal with. He was super strong when he was in full tantrum mode and I started to have real concerns about how I would manage him, as he got older.

The years of difficulty and stress really took a toll on us as a family. My enquiries into respite care led to a dead end because there was none available to us in Darwin at that time. I had reached

desperation and was seriously considering fostering Nicholas out because I was reaching the point where I was afraid that I might lose control one day and hurt him. At that stage the only thing that stopped me was my love for my son, and the determination I had to keep going, and to keep trying, and my unwillingness to give up. I felt that if his own mother couldn't deal with him, then who could?

I used to suffer badly from hormonal, monthly mood swings with every menstrual cycle so I made the decision to have a hysterectomy. I felt that if I was in one of my "moods" at the same time Nicholas was having one of his violent tantrums, that this was a combination, which was destined to end in disaster.

My GP was supportive of my decision because I'd had four children, two girls and two boys, I had just turned forty, and I definitely did not want any more children. My hysterectomy was never considered to be a drastic measure on my part; it was simply necessary for me to survive. It was, for me, the best thing I could have done, and I have no regrets about that what so ever.

Nicholas in the preschool year was never disruptive or badly behaved in that environment. He did not join in very much with the other children, particularly in singing or dancing, or anything where he had to really let himself go and have fun. He was always very stiff and controlled. I remember seeing his teacher once grab both his hands and physically move his arms to do the actions for a song they were singing up on stage. He hated it. He showed very little in the way of emotions, he very rarely smiled, and was very rarely spontaneous with anything, both in conversation, and in the form of gestures. He had a marked delay in his speech and I was forever explaining to people that if he did not answer a question straight away, he was not being rude; it simply took a while for him to process his thoughts.

In his first year at school he was fortunate to have a teacher who was very supportive and who also had a son with ADD. She asked me if Nicholas had ADD and I said no, our paediatrician had never even mentioned this as a possibility. Nicholas has always been an excellent reader, and very good at maths. His writing however, was very poor. It was very difficult to read and I was worried at one stage that he might have been dyslexic. He wrote a lot of his letters and numerals backwards or like the mirror image. He never completed any of his written work. In the first year of school this was not too much of a concern, and on his report it was written that he is a good, well-behaved little boy who daydreams. His teacher suspected processing problems of some sort and so it was recommended that we take him for hearing and eye tests, both of which came back saying that everything was fine.

In his second year of school his teacher had trouble getting him to stay on task. She tried keeping him in at lunchtime; but he didn't seem to care, and still did not complete his work. I mentioned his inability to stay on task and complete his work to our paediatrician. He was not overly concerned because Nicholas was so good at reading and maths. Nicholas became very clever at covering up his weaknesses.

At the end of his second year of school, our third year in Darwin, we were offered a posting to Sydney. We thought long and hard about accepting this posting because our eldest daughter had just completed year eleven, which would make this move a particularly difficult one for her. In the end we decided to accept the posting because we felt that in Sydney we would have access to a greater number of experienced professionals. We pretty much thought that if we had no luck in Sydney with Nicholas then this was perhaps as good as it was ever going to be.

We were referred to a very experienced paediatrician in Sydney who listened to what we had to say and gave us two questionnaires to be filled out and returned. One was a parent questionnaire, and

the other was a teacher questionnaire. The result of these questionnaires was that Nicholas had, in her opinion, ADHD. Our paediatrician felt that Nicholas was not bad enough to require medication even although the disgusting behaviours continued.

Once again, I had to explain to yet another paediatrician that these behaviours were only ever exclusive to us at home. I began to get the feeling that we were being perceived as having some sort of bad home life that was causing these behaviours. My gut feeling was and still is, that two things caused these behaviours. One was diet related, and the other was frustration from learning difficulties at school. I learned very early that if I allowed Nicholas to digress from the failsafe diet that we were in for a very rough ride, always with violent behaviour. School was something that I was unsure about until we started to have huge battles over homework.

A month after arriving in Sydney, Nicholas' behaviour became worse. We put this down to the fact that we had just moved, he was missing his friends from Darwin, and all the stresses and strains associated with changing schools etc. We felt sure that with the passage of time things would improve. They did not. He started punching, head butting, kicking and screaming. When he was sent to time out he kicked a hole in the wall. This became a common occurrence.

After one such session I phoned our paediatrician in tears and said that I couldn't do this for much longer. I tried increasing the Poly-Joule and this seemed to have no effect. Our paediatrician decided to admit Nicholas to hospital and re do the testing for hypoglycaemia. The result of this was that Nicholas had now outgrown the hypoglycaemia, which we were originally told he would outgrow at around the age of nine. The decision was made to stop giving him the Poly-Joule.

We were then referred to the enuresis clinic at Westmead Children's Hospital to try and address the bedwetting. Nicholas was 7½ by this stage. The specialist that we saw recommended the bell, pad and alarm system. We had great success with this method and within three nights Nicholas was dry for the first time in his life. He has never wet the bed since.

Prior to leaving Darwin, Nicholas' eyes became very sensitive to all kinds of light from different sources including, sunlight, and computer screens. He had a CT scan to rule out any nasties. In Sydney he was referred to the eye clinic at Westmead Children's Hospital where we were prescribed two different types of eye drops for viral conjunctivitis. The eye specialist was very good and when I explained Nicholas' sensitivity to foods he prescribed preservative free eye drops. The viral conjunctivitis was cured, however the light sensitivity remains.

Our paediatrician told me that she believed only 4% of children were affected by food intolerances and so I began to educate her on this matter. At every visit I would tell her "we had pizza the other night, I let Nicholas off his diet and he went totally off the planet". Another time we had Chinese take away as a treat for Elise's birthday, (something we hadn't had for years), I let Nicholas off his diet and within minutes of eating it he had thrown a major tantrum and broke one of our kitchen chairs. After two weeks of swimming at school, on a Saturday at home, he was told "no" to something and he broke a solid wooden door on our entertainment unit.

Our paediatrician always listened to me but I always felt that I was still being perceived as some kind of neurotic woman who was speaking a strange language that no one else could understand. I phoned her one day in tears after one of these episodes and said that I was afraid that I might hurt him if things didn't improve. She told me she could arrange for respite care if I needed it. After that phone call, at every visit, Nicholas was asked to take off all his clothes with the exception of his underpants. He was checked thoroughly from top to toe. I know that these children are considered "at risk of abuse" and I realise how close I have come to hurting this child on a number of occasions, but I have to say that this was one of the most humiliating experiences I've ever had to deal with.

At this point, I started asking questions like "who protects the parents?" It seemed that it was okay for Nicholas to kick, punch and head butt me, but it was not okay if I lost my temper one day and hurt him.

I remember sending him to time out on one occasion and I was bending down holding one leg to remove his shoes. He swung around with the other leg and kicked my nose. On another occasion he threatened to break my glasses. Another time, he told me he was going to break my arm and he kicked me so hard in the forearm that I actually thought he did. I went to our local GP who said that it wasn't broken but that the deep muscle tissue was badly bruised.

There are other instances where he has kicked and bruised my legs, and these have been recorded on my medical documents. These dramatic violent outbursts were always followed by periods of remorse where Nicholas would come to me crying and feeling bad about whatever it was that he had done. I always took full advantage of these times and we would sit down on the couch and have a cuddle and talk about it. These times actually reinforced to him, that we did still love him very much, and they reinforced to us that he truly didn't want to be the way he was. Nicholas behaviour continued its decline. Who would have thought that this was possible? He spent a lot of time in his room in time out. He would throw a tantrum for no apparent reason. He would kick, punch, and head butt. All it would take was for us to look at him in the wrong way, whatever the wrong way was, or to tell him "no". It got to the point where every time he was sent to time out, he had to be physically restrained otherwise there would be another hole kicked in the wall.

Often it would take 20 to 30 minutes for him to calm down. At times I would have to lie on top of him on the floor to restrain his arms and legs. He was always very strong during these episodes and he could easily lift me off the floor with his legs. If I let go to steady myself then he would be free to kick, punch and head butt.

Our paediatrician referred us to the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at Westmead Children's Hospital. We were concerned whether Nicholas' very limited diet was adequate on a long-term basis given that he had now been failsafe for four years.

We had to measure, weigh and record everything he ate and drank over a three-day period. This included his medication and brand names of the food that he was fed. This information was entered into a computer and analysed, the end result being that with a few minor modifications his diet was not ideal, but adequate.

Moving to Sydney brought with it some complications that we weren't expecting. Brumby's bread, which we took for granted in Darwin was no longer easily accessible. Our failsafe sausages were hard to come by. I bought a bread maker but Nicholas did not like the bread we made. I found commercially available failsafe bread but Nicholas did not like that either.

I decided to let him try Helga's bread because he liked it, and remembering that our paediatrician believed only 4% of children were food intolerant, I thought I'd give it a go. Nicholas' behaviour got worse over a period of time so we made the decision to get the bread that we knew was safe and that we knew he liked. We decided to make the effort and do the one hour drive to the closest Brumby's bread shop.

He started to eat his school lunch again. Prior to this he was throwing it in the bin. We knew this because we happened to be at school one day and actually caught him doing it. Sausages were another problem. I had asked my local butcher to make up a special batch to a recipe out of Fed Up. He assured me there were no preservatives or additives in them. I was not totally convinced about

this, so we again made the decision to travel to a butcher that we know we can trust. Unfortunately this was in the opposite direction to Brumby's.

Our paediatrician decided to refer us to a psychologist for a behavioural assessment with a view to using medication. The referral stated that in her opinion the mother was maternally depressed. I was pretty annoyed about that to begin with but after some thought I decided she was right. Who wouldn't be? Given the number of years and the many stresses we endured during this journey. At this stage she still felt that Nicholas wasn't bad enough to need medication.

We had the assessment and the psychologist initially thought that he had Aspergers Syndrome. She did a questionnaire with us and decided that he did not meet the criteria. However she did recommend medication, even if only as a temporary basis, to help restore very fragile family relationships. An anti depressant was also recommended and because of Nicholas' delayed speech she asked that we see a speech pathologist. Our paediatrician decided against an anti depressant for Nicholas but agreed to try him on Dexamphetamine. Nicholas started taking Dexamphetamine in July 2001.

Nicholas did not do well on Dexamphetamine. He became very teary and emotional, more so than usual. He lost weight more rapidly, which was not good as he was under weight to begin with. He also had a lot of trouble getting to sleep at night; often he would get out of bed and play with toys late at night, in the dark, before falling asleep out of sheer exhaustion.

We persevered with Dexamphetamine for a while because we wanted to give it a fair go and also because we noticed that Nicholas' written work had improved dramatically with his homework. Prior to medication homework was like a battleground. He would sit for hours and write three words, some days he would write nothing at all. He would now complete all of his homework and sometimes even illustrate his stories.

In the end, the weight loss, lack of sleep and the emotional ups and downs just weren't worth it so we asked our paediatrician if we could try him on Ritalin. I had heard of some excellent results with Ritalin and I wanted to give it a try. Our paediatrician was somewhat reluctant to make the change because we were finally booked in, at my request, to the Immunology Department at Westmead Children's Hospital, to do the double blind capsule challenges. She did not want to make any unnecessary changes at this stage.

I had seen such an improvement in Nicholas' written work with the Dexamphetamine, and also glimpses of a lovely little boy, in between the nasty tantrums, that I decided to stand my ground on this issue. We started the Ritalin in November 2001 and after a couple of "settling in" weeks Nicholas started to improve out of sight. A month later at our next visit to our paediatrician, Nicholas' weight had remained the same. This was a good sign because it meant he had not lost any more weight. He had started to sleep much better at night and the emotional ups and downs that he experienced with the Dexamphetamine seemed much less once he started taking the Ritalin.

Our paediatrician recommended that Nicholas should only take Ritalin during the school week, never on weekends or during school holidays. This has proven to be very effective.

At the same time we were referred to a speech pathologist that also thought that Nicholas had Aspergers Syndrome. In September 2001 she did a language assessment that showed that Nicholas has high-level receptive and expressive language problems in the areas of semantics, pragmatics, auditory processing and verbal reasoning. He relies on visual information when listening to instructions, and finds listening alone, without pictures, more challenging. He has poor semantic

organisation, including weak word finding skills. Verbal reasoning and critical thinking in the form of problem solving is also a major area of weakness.

The speech pathologist still felt that Aspergers Syndrome was a consideration and recommended that we see another psychologist, one who is very well known, and who specialises in the Autism Spectrum Disorders.

We saw this psychologist who also thought that Aspergers played a part in all of this. He did the Aspergers questionnaire with us and decided that Nicholas did not meet the Aspergers criteria. However, he phoned me a couple of hours later and said he'd had a rethink after reviewing the results. He now felt that Nicholas did have features of Aspergers Disorder. Nicholas has now been diagnosed as having a variety of developmental disorders. These include ADHD, high-level language impairment, and features of Aspergers' Disorder.

We implemented some anger management strategies, and learned other ways of saying "no". We re-trained ourselves to say, "not right now, maybe later" instead of using "no" as an answer; this strategy is simple but very effective. Other strategies included the use of social stories. These are stories that Nicholas wrote with the help of the psychologist about what he can do when he feels angry. We also used many types of small rewards to reinforce good behaviour.

Our psychologist report stated that Nicholas required Integration Support in the classroom to assist attention, on task behaviour, to adapt tasks, and to specifically implement social, communication, and empathy programs. This report assisted the school in obtaining Government funding to provide some extra assistance for Nicholas in the classroom.

We have been very fortunate to have a school that is supportive of special needs children. They have placed Nicholas in a class with a girl in a wheelchair who has an aide on a full time basis. When the aide is not required to assist the girl, she is free to give Nicholas whatever assistance he needs. He has an integration teacher who assists him for one hour each week, one on one, and he also has access to other integration teachers on an as needs basis. He has visits at least once a term at school, from both his psychologist and speech pathologist, who will jointly monitor his progress over the coming years.

The double blind dietary capsule challenges were only ever done on weekends and during the Christmas school holidays. Remembering that Nicholas only takes Ritalin on school days to enable him to stay on task and complete his schoolwork. This enabled us to get a very clear result and record only the food related behaviours. It also enabled us to record the behaviours accurately without any other outside influences.

We began the double blind dietary capsule challenges at the beginning of December and they were completed at the end of February. The results were as I'd suspected. No great surprises. He is highly sensitive to MSG, calcium propionate, sodium benzoate, sodium metabisulphite, salicylates, antioxidants and food colourings tartrazine, sunset yellow, erythrosine and azorubine. It was a huge relief for us to finally have an official, clinical diagnosis from the immunologist. These results confirmed my suspicions in relation to food related behaviours.

Most challenges that he reacted to were with violent reactions such as kicking, punching, head butting, throwing things or ripping posters off the wall in his room. There were a couple of challenges where he reacted with babbling and increased hyperactivity.

It took me five years to find the courage to do these challenges and when we were almost finished them, Nicholas came to me, and said that he didn't want to do any more because he didn't want to

be naughty. He realises that some foods exacerbate his oppositional behaviour. He also realises that some foods make him unwell.

We occasionally have burritos for dinner, which is one of his favourite foods. On these rare occasions I let him off the diet. He always has at least three or four, plain, with no filling, except for maybe a small amount of grated cheese. At bedtime when we are tucking him in and saying "goodnight" he often tells us that he "doesn't feel well". In addition to this, and because of the additives and preservatives in the burritos, he becomes noticeably hyperactive.

Since Christmas 2001, Nicholas has undergone a complete transformation. Time outs are no longer a big part of his life. The delay in his speech is all but gone. He smiles, laughs and does things spontaneously, something he seldom did before. He comes home from school, takes his afternoon medication and sits straight down to do his homework with no prompting from me and no arguing from him. Homework is no longer the battleground that it once was. He completes all his written homework and pretty much all of his written work in class.

He is developing a wonderful sense of humour and is an absolute delight to be with. So far this year, he has earned three merit certificates at school. He was voted as a school representative council member for his class. He received a special smiley pencil award for sitting up straight and behaving beautifully during assembly. He was also Super Kid for the month of April, which earned him a Super Kid badge that entitles him to politely go to the front of the queue at the canteen. Unfortunately this was not very useful for him because he couldn't really buy much that is failsafe, however, it was great for his self-esteem and he was very proud of this achievement. He also got to have morning tea with the Principal. He was let off his diet for that special occasion and when he got home, I asked him what he ate. He said, "I can't remember, but it was fun".

I cannot put my finger on any one thing that we have done differently, for these wonderful changes that have taken place. After five years of the failsafe diet, almost five years of behaviour management in the form of 1,2,3 Magic, the final piece to our puzzle has been medication, in the form of Ritalin. It is my firm belief that no parent ever wants to medicate their child, especially one so young. We had spent the past five years exploring and implementing diet and behaviour management. During these years we saw some improvement but not enough for us to survive. Medication was our last option. In our case, we needed the multi-modal approach, and no one thing would work without the other. The combination of diet, behaviour management and medication was, and still is, the key to our success. Diet for us was not enough, however, I believe that without implementing the failsafe diet all those years ago, Nicholas would have needed a much higher dose of medication. I also believe that his developmental disorders, ADHD, high-level language impairment and features of Asperges Disorder would have been much greater. His behaviour was often so violent that I was convinced he would one day be in a juvenile prison, or worse.

In conclusion, all of Nicholas' violent behaviours and reactions were in my opinion, caused by two things, food intolerances and the frustrations associated with learning difficulties. The food intolerances are controlled with diet. Without diet, the violent behaviours return. Medication helps Nicholas to stay on task, which enables him to complete his schoolwork and homework. This helps to overcome the frustration associated with learning difficulties.

Regardless of whether or not Nicholas is taking medication, we know that if we allow him to break his diet, and we sometimes do on special occasions, we can expect a return of the violent behaviours. On these occasions behaviour management is still required.

We still have a long way to go in terms of monitoring Nicholas' education and assisting him with overcoming these learning difficulties. We are fully aware that there will be some rough patches as

our son navigates his own path in life, but for now, the most important thing for us as a family, is to finally have our loving, gentle, caring, beautiful little boy back with us again. He is a pleasure to be with, and a son to be truly proud of. Relationships during these past four months have started to heal and we have finally found the light at the end of a very long tunnel, something that for many years we thought we were never going to find.

I would like to thank the following people for their support and the individual roles they played in helping us to achieve our happy ending.

Paediatrician: Dr Ross Diplock – for his advice in trying diet before medication.

Author: Sue Dengate – for her continued support with helping us to navigate the dietary minefields, and for keeping us on track with her unfailing belief of foods and the way in which they affect behaviour.

Paediatrician: Dr Patricia McVeagh – for assisting us in the final stages of our journey, and the implementation of controlled medication.

Consultant Psychologist: Lizette Campbell – for her recommendations for speech therapy and medication.

Speech Pathologist: Philippa Greathead – for her continued support, her referral to psychologist Anthony Warren, and for her language assessment, which really brought home to us the many learning difficulties that Nicholas was experiencing.

Psychologist: Anthony Warren - for his continued support and for his report that was integral to obtaining Government funding for extra assistance in the classroom.

The Failsafe Discussion Group: This group of people primarily discuss the failsafe diet, but also discuss many other challenges faced by special needs families. Their wealth of information and support knows no bounds. I would not have survived these "challenging" years without these people. I have learned so much from this group and we are all still learning. Together, we can all make a difference, and we can all find that light at the end of the tunnel.

- Susan, June 2002

[152] The first 19 months - Dani's diary (April 2002)

Birth - Chris is born nearly 2 months early. We stay in hospital until Chris is a month old. Staff regularly comment on the huge amount of crying he does and his restlessness. They put this down to a consequence of being prem and assure me he will be more normal and settled by the time he was due to be born.

2 mths - Chris doesn't settle - he gets worse, screaming and crying all the time all day and night. Regularly passes out from lack of oxygen. We try every colic remedy available - nothing helps. I even try giving him a range of formulas on the doctor's advice - none of these make any difference so after a few day on each I go back to breastfeeding.

2 1/2 mths - we notice Chris has a serious hernia and needs an emergency operation - his stomach is split right across and the muscles are trapping the arteries going to the testes - we hope no permanent damage is done - staff and doctors tell me it was probably caused as a result of the bad colic he has and him pushing in pain all the time. They assure me he will be a lot better when his stomach heals and should settle down - a bit of a contradiction but I go home and hope.

3 1/2 mths - I am totally exhausted and can not cope at all anymore - sick of the lack of support and everybody telling me that babies cry and I should just get over it. They all think I am a hypochondriac. I start colouring behaviour charts showing his screaming/crying/grizzling and sleep. I now know I am not exaggerating or pulling things out of proportion - the charts show he is worse than I thought. He is crying and screaming for about 18 hours out of 24. When he does sleep out of exhaustion it will be for one or two hours only - generally throughout the night. He rarely sleeps during daylight hours.

I ring my doctor in desperation. I am afraid I might hurt Chris if I don't get some sleep soon and get him sorted out. My doctor admits us to hospital. The staff take over Chris and I get to sleep. Staff are amazed at the amount Chris screams - at first they think it is just because he is away from me and home but I assure them he is the same at home. His crying continues non stop even after being in hospital over a week and in my arms a lot of the time. The doctor suggests we try the elimination diet. We see our local dietitian. I start the diet. The dietitian suggests we don't give Chris any solids for a while. I read somewhere that he shouldn't get them until he is about 7 to 8 months old.

4 1/2 mths Chris is getting a lot better. He isn't screaming near as much though is still crying a fair bit. We really notice it when I eat anything on the no go list - we have to cope with his screaming within 24 hours. Chris's diarrhea is nowhere near as constant. He is now sleeping for 4 to 5 hour blocks at night and settling quickly after a feed and change. His body language now shows more tiredness rather than pain symptoms when he is upset. His reflux has disappeared.

5 1/2 mths My behaviour charts show that Chris is improving a lot. He is now crying more than screaming. He is slowly getting over all withdrawal symptoms of the many chemicals in the foods that I was eating that were affecting him. I still can't get him to sleep during the day. (The diet is not as effective as it should be because I am making salicylate mistakes like drinking way too much lemonade and eating lots of carrots and pumpkin - but I don't find that out for another 10 months.)

7 1/2 mths We start using management strategies to try to get Chris to sleep during the day. Our doctor thinks he can't sleep as he doesn't know how and is not in the habit. We succeed after a week and now Chris is sleeping for 2 hours in the morning and afternoon. We also introduce some solid foods. Chris's crying and grizzling improves hugely. He is now actually appearing to be really happy sometimes.

12 mths Chris weans himself and has been on Neocate ever since - other formulas such as soy cause instant unpleasant reactions - back to no sleep and crying a lot.

14 mths Chris goes off all carrots and pumpkin - makes it really hard for me to find foods to get him to eat as he eats a huge amount of each of these. We notice a big change in Chris - he stops grizzling altogether and is suddenly really easy to manage. He is a lot more agreeable!! Have a look through my books and discover that pumpkin and carrot are moderate in salicylates - I thought they were low!! No wonder he wasn't 100%. He was obviously getting too many salicylates!

19 mths Chris is now fantastic. We are really enjoying him. He reacts to all the things avoided on the elimination diet still so it is not much fun when we try challenges. We really pay for it - he reacts differently with different chemicals. Salicylates, preservatives and amines make him scream in pain and he gets diarrhea. Preservative 282 in bread is by far the worst - within 3 hours Chris is screaming in agony and has chronic diarrhea. When I was breastfeeding and ate 282 he would react within 12 hours. Colours make him really hyperactive, uncontrollable and he ends up getting hurt. - Dani, WA

[149] Taking back control through diet (April 2002)

"I came across your book by accident and decided to do the elimination diet before considering drugs for our son, as I have been on drugs for years myself for ADD associated with Tourette's Syndrome. As it turns out, I react VERY strongly to amines. We've only tested salicylates and amines so far. I have been able to reduce my medication by half. It's early days yet, as we've only been on the diet for 32 days and I daren't get my hopes up too much. My son didn't react to salicylates or amines. He is much calmer on the diet; certainly not in need of medication. We already know he can't tolerate gluten, as he has had a lifetime of diarrhea until he went off it. It's exciting to be able to take back some control of one's life through diet." - by email

[147] 160b: A day in the life of 160b (annatto) (February 2002)

"We first started the diet as a family 2 years ago to support our baby when she was found to be allergic to peanuts and eggs. My eldest daughter (10) had been diagnosed with mild ADHD and her wild temper tantrums were controlled with sedative medications. On the diet suddenly she became a human being with so much personality. Gone were the temper tantrums, no more holes in walls, smashed toys and windows. For the first time in all her eight years she was able to sit calmly and talk to us. I cried with the realization of how much my little girl had been suffering since birth just because I was feeding her the wrong food.

During the holidays, she went to the local shop to buy a Peters dixiecup icecream. She found they were all sold out so she bought a Cadburys icecream cup containing the dreaded 160b. I was very upset when she got home and told me what she had eaten. I prepared the family for the coming storm. One hour later it hit with a vengeance. I had to stay in her room with her to protect her from hurting others as well as herself - punching her head, head butting the walls, trying to scratch her skin and flesh off and screaming all sorts of abuse. After an hour and a half of this with patches of having to restrain her, we put her into a soothing bath which usually means the worst of it is over. Not this time. She was worse when she came out and none of us could control her. She tried to run away with only a towel on. She got frustrated when she couldn't undo the gate as well as keep herself covered with the towel. I had locked the back door to stop her from getting inside to me and our three old as I could no longer physically control her. I thought this would give my husband time to come from the lounge room to help me with her. He arrived at my side just as she put her fist through our porch window. We were all showered with glass and my daughter had dozens of little cuts all over her arm. At this moment she lost the crazed look in her eyes and seemed to go into shock. I showered the glass off her, cleaned and dressed her wounds and spent the next hour with her curled up on my lap almost empty of emotion. This episode has affected both my husband and myself in a huge way. We no longer take ANY chances with anything creeping into our diet, especially 160b. If we hadn't known the trigger of her psychotic episode we would have without a doubt had many more days like this that I am sure would have become too much of a strain on our otherwise very happy family. We owe you much gratitude for the knowledge you have shared and continuing efforts to give us up to date information." – reader, by email

Remember that yellow colour annatto 160b is not used in Europe - instead they use the alternative 160a, which is harmless. We are told it is too difficult and expensive to use. European food manufacturers must be cleverer and more compassionate than their Australian counterparts. Not everyone reacts as badly as this child - next day irritability is more common. Headbanging, even in toddlers, seems to be a feature of this additive. This episode demonstrates yet again that here is a harmful additive with the potential to affect many others in more subtle ways. 160b can cause any of the usual reactions. We've even had a report of arthritis associated with this additive.

[139] 282: Bread preservative-induced ADHD (December 2001)

I have felt compelled to write to you for some time now to let you know how successful Failsafe foods have been in our home. Our daughter, Courtney, now aged 7, was diagnosed with ADHD at the age of 5. I was not convinced that the process of this diagnosis was exactly scientific so I decided to do some reading.

I read "Different Kids" and embarked on the elimination diet with the help of a dietician. We had tremendous results. Courtney's teachers were openly amazed at the change in her behaviour. With their support we started the challenges - no noticeable reaction to salicylates or amines, but a very strong reaction to the bread preservative (282) which gradually built up over a 5 day period. Once the challenge was stopped, it took 2 weeks for withdrawal. Courtney's behaviour was extremely aggressive and impulsive and withdrawal resulted in lethargy and stomach aches. We have not been able to do any further challenges as Courtney was jeopardising the very fragile friendships she had begun to make. We will need to wait for the Christmas holidays before proceeding any further.

I have only recently read "Fed Up" and I was amazed to learn just how many children react to 282. Our dietician was surprised at our results. I am now a bit of a campaigner against food additives and recommend your books to anyone willing to listen! Our heartfelt thanks to you for helping us rediscover the lovely little girl we knew as a baby without the need for medication. - Heather - by email

[133] On medication if not on diet (December 2001)

"My husband and I follow the diet with our four children, aged 9 months to 7 years. We started the diet after we saw the difference it made in my sister's three children (two with ADHD). We and our paediatrician believe our two oldest children would, in the long run, be on medication like their cousins if we had not started the diet when we did almost two years ago ... it's both easy and hard, but so very worth it!" - reader, NSW

[129] "I am an early childhood nurse ..." (November 2001)

Our dear Rosie was born August 2000. She is our second child, so we expected that she would be a tad easier than her brother. Alas, our Rosie had many new tricks in store. For the first 4 months or so she was 'OK', I just called her 'highly strung', and 'a hormonal girl'.

By 5 months she was really quite miserable, irritable, constantly grizzling and wanting to be held (except of course when we went out anywhere, where she played the cute, smiley happy babe). Sometimes she seemed to be in pain, and we gave panadol with some relief for only a short time. We tried the reflux, colic, etc avenues, with no improvement. My husband was very understanding and supportive, as he lived with unhappiness, and my Mum saw the other side of her, but most of my friends didn't understand our problem, as she really was a 'street angel and home devil'.

Her sleep was poor by day, but strangely, she rested reasonably overnight, some nights only waking once or twice, and generally able to resetttle quite well. I think she was so exhausted after her strung out days. For the bad nights she mostly slept in our bed, where we could all get some sleep.

I am an early childhood nurse, and had great support from my two wonderful colleagues, one saw her in a really sad state when visiting us at home. We had tried me off all dairy products at 5½ months, as Rosie was fully breastfed. That seemed to improve things a bit, but I still felt that babies should be happy, unless they had good reason not to be. Finding the reason was the trick. We also tried a naturopath, who felt she could help with a range of herbal remedies, which we started on.

Then I read your article called "[Restless Babies](#)", in the Nursing Mothers Magazine. I felt the article was about us!! It was the start of a big change in our lives. We saw our local dietitian who gave us the booklets from RPAH, and discussed it. As I was breastfeeding, and she was on some solids, Rosie and I started the elimination diet when she was 7 long months old.

My very supportive husband was quite sceptical, she was such a beautiful fat healthy looking babe, how could it be diet related?? Anyway after only 3 full days on the diet, he was very apologetic for his scepticism. Our little girl was significantly happier, and so were we.

Each day seemed to get better, she now seemed able to relax her body at times, and was able to play alone for very short periods. I found sticking to the diet quite easy, as the improvement in Rosie was well worth it. Eating was a great source of pleasure for Rosie, so the diet did not worry her at all. The added bonus for me was that those extra 'hard to shed' kgs fell off me. That gave me a needed confidence boost as well.

We had a bad experience early on. Rosie was pretty miserable with a cold, so we gave her some panadol drops and put some Vicks rub on a tissue under the sheet as we put her to bed. An hour later she woke and was 'high'. She tried to get back to sleep, but her body was so restless and I hate to think what her head felt like. I took her to our bed and held her to try to control her body for her. She finally fell off to sleep after about 4 hours.

Rosie is now 14 months old. I weaned her at 10 months, as I began to crave some tasty food. I was too scared to do any challenges, so we were on the very basics. Rosie continues the elimination diet, and still loves her food. We finally tried some challenges, wheat is OK in very small doses. Salicylates were a disaster, (pumpkin twice a day for 2 days and a granny smith apple core), she became irritable, clingy, whingy etc, then vomited, with no associated illness. We will try them again one day to be sure. We are trying amines at present, just banana to start with, OK so far.

I feel this experience has been wonderful for me professionally, and my colleagues too. I also recently heard that our dietitian who helped me with the diet (who has since moved) has tried the diet to get a feel for what she was prescribing, and has seen changes in her family she was not expecting. I have also had chats and given some of your info to our child psychologist who has quite an interest in ADHD. I will keep pushing the cause, I worry about all these behaviour problems, and see that some could be so easily sorted with food.

So thank you so much Sue, I hate to think where our family would be without your big input. I am converted. My husband is too, but he is a little nervous about how I will go when our children start school and I have some input into the tuckshop! Many, many thanks again from all our family. - Cath, by email

[110] Cut his Ritalin dose in half (August 2001)

"My son is 11 years old, diagnosed with ADHD, and has been on Ritalin for about 6-7 years ... we have had him on a Failsafe diet for almost two months now. By the end of the first month he showed remarkable improvement, being able to finish homework more quickly and having a more thoughtful disposition. We were also able to cut his Ritalin dose by half, giving him the medication mainly for school, but not at home." – USA

[089] I had to laugh - "not affected by foods"! (October 2000)

"You may be pleased to know that I presented your book "Fed Up" to my ADD support group and gave them a complete run down about the diet. ... I had to laugh to myself when one mum stated

categorically that her son (extremely hyperactive) "is not affected by foods". Yes, I once thought that about my son, only to find how very salicylate sensitive he is!!" - reader, email

[086] "ear working now" (October 2000)

I was at my wits end and about to put my almost 6 year old developmentally delayed son on Ritalin. Fortunately I could not get an appointment until the end of October, so whilst looking up ADHD on the 'net, came across your book, bought it and read it the same day! We started the diet 2 days ago, he said "yes" for the first time in his life today (everything is usually "no"). I haven't seen any tantrums, he has lost his obsession with running water from my kitchen taps (he would spend all day at the sink before, if I let him) and he actually sits down and watches TV and plays with his brothers and sister now. More speech is coming out, his toilet training is going well as he is not urinating so frequently and for the first time in years I can say he's a delightful little boy ... As for my other children, I'm half way through the first week of the school holidays, and my household is actually very calm. I'm just so impressed, I can't help telling everyone about the diet. My four year old son, who has had frequent ear infections, grommets, and a severe language delay, actually came up to me this morning and said that his "ear was working now". And we were just on the verge of having to put him through more traumatic surgery plus spend another \$1300 to replace his grommets. My other sons were constantly at each other's throats previously, but now act like best buddies! ...- reader, email

[070] Tantrum was like nothing I've ever seen with swearing and screaming (September 2000)

I saw you on A Current Affair recently and started reading your book and couldn't put it down until I had finished it.

What a difference it has made! We are in the process of eliminating all preservatives and additives from our diet. It has been a hard struggle but we are getting there. We knew we had a problem when my four-year-old was given chocolate and within five minutes he would be jumping up and down on the spot while he was talking to you. Also, he would be so wound up before bed time that he couldn't lie still - his arms, legs and body would be jumping all over the place. The diet has certainly helped.

I have been trying out all of your recipes with great success ... Once again thank you for writing "Fed Up" . It has been truly inspirational and has certainly answered a lot of questions for me. "Fed Up" is my bible and I never go anywhere without it.

Even though I thought we had pretty much eliminated most additives and preservatives from our diet I was appalled to learn that we could do more. I've always made our meals from scratch, baked my own cakes and bikkies, and for the last year have made my own bread. Then to learn that the tomato-based meals such as spaghetti bolognese, lasagne, lamb ragout and even the soups I made could be the cause of our 11-year-old son's incredible temper made me feel completely inadequate. Until recently, his ADHD has been fairly well controlled, but for the last year he has been almost unbearable at school, although his behaviour at home has remained fairly constant. In desperation, after searching the internet, I decided to try him on Efalex, and his behaviour at school really improved. We noticed that he reverted to this old behaviour when I ran out of the capsules and he hadn't had them for a week, so quickly decided to keep up that regimen. Then your book was recommended to me by a fellow parent who had been having great success with it for her daughter. What a revelation. Both my husband and I have family histories with asthma, skin rashes, allergies, rhinitis, sinusitis - you name it. My son embraced the program and being the person he is read the book even more thoroughly than I did and was a great help with the shopping and preparation. Tell me, do they sometimes have some kind of withdrawal? [yes] We started the diet on the holidays, so

we had a good chance to get everything under way with little distraction, and as always he was off his Ritalin. He almost literally was bouncing off the walls, woke every day as grumpy as a bear which was unusual for him, and was easily annoyed by everyone around him all the time ... I also found that my sinuses were really blocked and I had an almost continual headache from day three to day 7. Just as my patience was stretched to the limit, and I'd come to the conclusion that we may have to scrap this or see what we were doing wrong with the diet, my son woke up the next morning his usual cheerful self and was much calmer and less excitable than he had been the previous week. My sinuses also cleared up. My daughter who is 13 has been having a ball making all the lollies as she has a sweet tooth and they have always been a restricted item in this house. Our biggest drawback came the day of our youngest's birthday. I had all FAILSAFE foods except for the cake ... even though I allowed my son the smallest imaginable piece with very little icing on it the effects were catastrophic. He raged and ranted and the tantrum was like nothing I've ever seen with swearing and screaming - well you get the general idea, and this was 5-6 hours after eating the cake!!! I never imagined anything so bad. But the next day he was as sweet as he could be with no other ill effects, other than a father who wanted little to do with him. Luckily all the guests had well and truly gone! ... Thanks again ...Reader, by email

[067]"There are days when Ritalin is ineffective" (September 2000)

I attended your talk in Canberra in June and was considerably impressed. I then purchased "FED UP" and am now proceeding to read through it ... I have a 5 year old girl with numerous problems both behavioural and learning without, as yet, having been given a diagnosis by her paediatrician. However, my reading has defined ADHD with learning disabilities. Her paediatrician tends to agree, though is unwilling to diagnose at such a young age. Like you, I've pursued behaviour training, as well as speech therapy, occupational therapy, attended early intervention preschools, obtained 2nd opinions from paediatricians, had blood tests and seen a geneticist. All with little luck. Her extreme hyperactivity saw me retreat from almost all social activities as she was unwelcome and I was always on edge with her unpredictable and extreme behaviour. She is now in kindergarten in a special learning support unit. Her Ritalin medication is reasonably effective, but there are days when it doesn't work. I'd like to explore fully the effect of additives in food and as such, am now intensely interested in what you have to say both in your books and via the internet/email. When I have completed your book I will try the elimination diet. I thank you ... you have given me a new area to explore.

[066] "I was wondering about coping with school next year" (September 2000)

Although my child had never been diagnosed as ADD or ADHD, he was just a very active little boy who did not sleep much or very well. He wasn't interest in reading, writing or drawing and I was becoming very concerned about how he was going to cope with going to school next year.

After two weeks of eliminating all fruit (except pears) and preservatives from his and our diets he is a changed person. He writes his own name and started to write other letters and is very happy to sit and draw for at least an hour! (he couldn't sit still for at least 5 mins before the diet). His new favourite word is "preservatives".

[062] Drew's story - sleeping, colic, ear infections, then behaviour problems at school (July 2000)

My son, Drew, was always a challenge. He was a difficult baby. I remember a paediatrician smiling at me one day and saying "oh he's advanced". I was quite pleased until I realized this meant "hyperactive"!

He never slept, had colic and frequent ear infections. He also had child hood allergies. At 6 months my milk dried up (probably stress related) so I decided to put him on a bottle and was advised to try Nan formula. He was never a good feeder and it took me hours to get him to take to the bottle. There was no help from the infant nurse unless I wanted to continue breast-feeding. I was basically told I was on my own. Finally, success, he drank from the bottle. I put him down for a snooze (wistful thinking really). About 10 minutes later he was up crying and covered head to toe with hives. He had reacted to the formula!! I could go on but I suspect you can fill in the blanks about his early childhood.

Anyway, trouble really started half way through pre-school. He was constantly in trouble and his teacher held concerns about his ability to cope with school. I decided at this point to go for the head in the sand approach, you know, ignore it and it will go away. Well, that didn't last long. I spent most of his kindergarten year watching my beautiful happy loving boy turn into a resentful angry defensive child. He ran away, hurt the other children, destroyed his work, threw things at the teacher and so forth. Like your daughter (yes I've read your books) he could also be one of the most beautiful charming little people, a real contradiction. The school believed in sending the child home and lecture the mother on her poor parenting whilst making no effort at all to try and help. Every time I tried to enlist their help they hid behind POLICY!! I did many parenting courses, had a hot line to the parent support line (once when I was really upset as he had taken to urinating on his 8-month-old sister they said "hmm sounds like a discipline problem") and also enlisted the help of a paediatrician. It got to the stage that I wouldn't put the bin out for fear that the school would call whilst I was out. In his first two years at school I lost count of how many times I had to front up to collect him. A friend of mine (I wouldn't have survived this time with out her) kept telling me how much Drew reminded her of her son whom at that time had been diagnosed with ADHD. I kept saying "Yes, but he can concentrate when he wants to" and "But he's not always like this".

Year 1 started with promise. He seemed to settle down a bit and for the whole term I didn't get any calls to collect him, that is, until about 2 weeks into term 2 it all started again but this time with a vengeance!! It occurred to me that his worst terms were in autumn and spring. I had thought "Allergy" before but been discouraged by the paediatrician (I didn't understand about allergy and food sensitivity in fact I had never heard of food sensitivity). This time I insisted on allergy testing, Drew lit up like a Christmas tree - all grasses, dust mites, cats, peanuts, in fact just about everything except cockroaches he reacted to! My paediatrician was surprised at the result hence my introduction to the big wide world of food sensitivities. With the aid of a dietician and my paediatrician I embarked on the elimination diet. To sum it up, that term Drew was invited to the principal's lunch - the highest honour - and yes I sent him with his own food. The trials showed that most of his problems were to do with salicylates (he used to eat a lot of salicylate rich foods) also some food colourings and preservatives his tolerance was reduced during spring and autumn due to the added problem of his environmental sensitivities.

Unfortunately for Drew diet alone wasn't enough. I found whilst I could guarantee bad behaviour if he ate the wrong things I couldn't guarantee good behaviour if he didn't. A week into term 4 and still on a controlled diet he got into trouble. I shan't air all my grievances about that school but after one I believe unfair suspension and yet more calls to collect him I withdrew him from the school. When I told the school that he would not be returning, the deputy head said, "Well, I think we will all feel a lot safer". However hurtful her comments (made I might add in front of my son) it did serve to make what was a difficult decision so much easier. I kept Drew out of school until the following year when he started at a new school.

I fell in love at first interview with his new wonderful head mistress. I had made them aware of his problems behavioural and academic (he was well behind). But I was not prepared for the caring and

support that this school offered. Within the first week the counsellor - another gem - had run a WISC test discovering that whilst Drew has no learning difficulties per se he had difficulty with oral instructions (common I now realize among ADHD children).

She also lent me a book soon to become my saviour: "Different Kids". It was through reading this that finally the pieces started to fall into place. I read up on ADHD. It was really quite spooky the number of times I thought, hey, that's just what Drew does. I also attended yet another parenting course, this time however it was "Parenting your ADHD child". It was wonderful to talk to other mothers. The more I learnt the more I realised that Drew did have ADHD.

The new school was not a solution to all Drew's problems by any means. He still had his trouble. The first (and only) time he ran away, he came all the way home. I was speaking to the principal when he turned up she said "well bring him back"... I was stunned but not nearly as gobsmacked as I was when I brought him back and she gave him a pep talk to let him know that she had faith in him and she was going to help him. Within minutes the defiant look was gone and she had him eating out of her hand. I went home with my mouth still hanging open, I was so used to schools telling me to take him away it was bizarre to have one actually tell me to bring him back!

It has taken a long time and a lot of work including sending him to a behavioural center (yes he had food sensitivities and ADHD but he also had years of being the bad kid always in trouble. He used to cry to me that "I try to be a good boy but I don't know how. I'm just not a good boy".) For the first time in years I am starting to see my beautiful happy loving son again.

I recently joined the ADHD support group and I was delighted when I found out that you were going to be speaking. You are an amazing woman who has given so much to so many people. I am sure I am not the first and I know I won't be the last to say THANK YOU!! You helped me to see in language that I could understand (without a Ph.D. that is) what was happening to my son and how to help him. I would like to speak to others about food sensitivities if I can prevent even one child needlessly suffering as my son did. Once again, thank you for all that you do. - Deborah, Canberra

[059] "Everyone doing better" (July 2000)

"Everyone in our family is doing much better on the diet. We have been able to get our son off Ritalin, and my little one potty trained at last. She is coming along in leaps and bounds. My husband actually can stay awake and has a personality again. And my blood pressure is the lowest it has been in nearly seven years. Thankyou, thankyou, thankyou!!!

PS. I think we should send a copy of Fed Up to Oprah! Imagine if she got behind FAILSAFE????

- reader, USA

[055] "If you think it's difficult in Australia .." (July 2000)

I am an American living in Australia who, by chance, saw a report about the "Elimination Diet" and its positive effect on children with aggressive behavior and ADD. At the end of the report they gave the name of your book "Fed Up", which I bought and have read from cover to cover.

How I wish I had been able to have this information when my children were growing up, specially my son, who was told by teachers constantly that he was lazy and what a shame that was because he was so smart. He was finally tested and diagnosed to have an ADD when he was 18 years old. This test was done only at our insistence and expense because school officials insisted there was nothing wrong with him. He was offered Ritalin, which he refused to take. Needless to say he failed when he decided to go to College. He is now married and his oldest son (now three years old) is already

showing some of the behavior my son showed at that age. I could give many examples about family members with allergy, either environmental or food related. In other words, I am convinced that many of us would benefit from this diet. If you think it's difficult to get someone to listen about it in Australia, you have no idea how hard it is to get someone to listen about it in the U.S. - reader, email

[054] "Answers disappear in back of head" (June 2000)

Thank you SO much for your amazing eye opening book Fed Up. My husband and I were FED UP with the doctors recommending that we put our wonderful nine year son on Ritalin when a mum from school gave me your book to read. That was a little over a week ago and we are all on the FAILSAFE diet and for the FIRST time this year our son came home with a Mintie (which of course he told his teacher he would have to check with his Mum if he could eat!) and we have had TWO notes from his teacher to tell us how well he is doing at school. All this when since the beginning of the year he has hardly done a bit of school work. He has dreamt his way through the year! I asked him today if he felt the diet was working and he said that he was no different because he always knows the answers except that now they don't disappear into the back of his head!!!!!! - reader, Qld

[052] "My 13 yr old went into the terrible twos and has never come out!" (June 2000)

I am a mother of two diagnosed ADHD boys, ages 13 and 11. Both are on Ritalin and Catapres. They have been on medication for some time, which is a path both my husband and I didn't and still don't feel comfortable with. I bought your book today and read the introduction and part of chapter one, and my mouth just dropped at what I was reading. I read this back to my husband when he came home from work and his reaction was the same as mine. More to the point, it was the very first page when you were talking about Rebecca and her behaviour. My 13 yr old went into the terrible twos and has never come out! Both my husband and I are as the book is titled "FED UP". We have tried many other avenues but to date nothing has worked. I must admit I am only onto chapter two and I am fascinated by what you are saying ... Thank you for "FED UP".

[051] "My success thanks to your books" (June 2000)

I am thrilled to at last found you on 'the net', the reason being my success thanks to your books. I had always suspected that foods and additives were a contributing factor in my son's behaviour and as I have always had a very additive free diet I was at a loss as to what could be reduced from our diet. Unfortunately we were huge fruit eaters. My children were always given a nice peach or whatever was in season, in preference to lollies etc. During the drought year of 1995 we noticed a remarkable improvement in his behaviour, the reason (as we now know) was that all those lovely raspberries, boysenberries, peaches etc, just weren't available to us.

Anyway I could go on for pages about the struggle to be believed by doctors and all the other professionals we came in contact with, until my mother found "Different Kids". We knew we were onto something and when finally I'd relented and tried dexamphetamine (against my better judgement, just to give me a break), it was not a success and I was determined to try the diet in a really serious way. Term 3 was our trial period, by week 5 I was beginning to despair, not a lot was changing, enter Efalex, and there was a big improvement, week 8 into the combined trial and I was still not convinced until his teacher came out one afternoon and said "what have you done, he is a changed child!" Bingo!

We've stuck with the diet ever since. Of course we lapse occasionally and we all pay the consequences, but it is a good reminder of how bad things were. He is by no means an angel now, but I no longer hate him. He went from a child in a remedial reading class to one of the top 5 in his

year over that term. My main struggle now is convincing other parents and medical 'types' that it is worth trying diet before drugs ... - reader, NSW

[044] "I was sceptical" (May 2000)

I have just started my daughter (4) on the FAILSAFE diet. I didn't really expect to see any change in her behaviour, I was a bit sceptical but I thought it was worth a try. She has been on it for three weeks now. She used to drink up to 15 litres of apple juice cordial a week. She does not have ADD, from my observation, but I think she may come into a category of ODD and a bit hyperactive. We have seen much improvement in both areas ... I have also noticed that I am less tired on the diet. I love my daughter but she has always been difficult to stand up to and her behaviour pushes me away. I have found that we are now getting on better and I feel closer to her as she is not yelling at me and opposing me all the time. I kept waiting for the day when she would grow out of her stages of behaviour, but I think I have finally found the answer. ... Thanks for a terrific book . I have bought it for a couple of my friends I was so impressed with the results - Nurse, by email

[040] The preham and postham sandwich pictures (May 2000)

On Day 2 of the elimination diet, which I forgot about in a moment of sheer flustering, I gave my daughter Laura (aged 4) a ham sandwich on normal bread. Before the ill-fated sandwich she had drawn a picture which we have named "preham sandwich". Then later that afternoon she drew another picture (after spending a horrible bad tempered afternoon together) which we named "postham sandwich". Quite a difference wouldn't you say! and I just thought it was my son who needed the help! - Lynda Smith, NSW



[039] "They said we would be wasting our time" using diet for ADHD and ODD (May 2000)

My eight year old son was recently diagnosed ADHD and ODD by three different doctors. All three doctors said we would be wasting our time altering his diet and that the only thing to do was to prescribe drugs.

We didn't want to put him on drugs but my wife and I were at our wits end, our son was becoming more and more of a handful, I must admit I was about to give up and take the doctors' advice.

We bought your book "Fed Up" and started the diet. My God, the improvement was almost instant. He changed from an aggressive and argumentative little creep to a loving and caring little boy almost immediately. My wife, myself, our other two children and most of all our son's teacher are amazed. We have stuck to the diet and there have been no hassles in the home or the classroom for several weeks. Although last weekend we took the kids out for the day and bought them each a bottle of Schweppes lemonade. Within half an hour our son was back to his aggressive old self ... learned a

lesson there. He now realises that some things make him cranky and steers away from them, after all, he says he doesn't like being his angry self.

Sue, we don't know how to thank you. You have changed the lives of not only our family, but the other kids in our son's classroom, who I'm sure are as grateful as we are. - concerned father, ACT

[036] 282: Jack's story: severe speech delay associated with bread preservative (April 2000)

I have been meaning to write to you for years to thank you for your books. We were on the right track with our then four year old son, Jack (now coming up to 10) when I read "Different Kids". I already suspected ADHD and knew very well that he reacted to food as do I. Jack had his first food reaction at 20 weeks gestation! I ate some of those awful red sugar-coated peanut things and he just went berserk, looping the loop and throwing himself all over the place for about an hour or so. So we were prepared.

I breastfed him for nearly three years - breastfeeding was only time I got to lie down and rest. He was a "windy" but fairly normal baby early on and I did avoid any foods in my diet that seemed to cause problems. He never liked to be left alone and would panic if put down while awake. From three months constant movement and novelty was required to keep him happy. When he was happy he was radiant and when he was not he was grizzly and constantly squirming with this giving way to frantic screaming if the boredom lasted for more than a few minutes. Out shopping, strangers loved him as he responded with such joy to any attention and he was a very attractive baby. I had to carry him on my back in a sling, the stroller was too boring, too far away from me and not social enough. I accepted all this as I had been told I was a very, very difficult baby - colic - and my expectations were therefore "realistic".

At four months I began to introduce solids - rice cereal with breast milk to mix. The novelty seemed to appeal to Jack! Then I began to mix a small amount of orange juice in with the cereal to boost iron absorption. From there I introduced apple, ripe banana, pureed vegies (broccoli, pumpkin, etc.). He wasn't so keen on this but I heard about adding cheese to make the vegies more appealing, so I did this, often using parmesan cheese as well as milder cheeses. Jack loved bolognaise sauce mixed in too. Another favourite was avocado. He loved apricot and yogurt. He had a small amount of mashed prune to counteract a tendency to constipation. I was so pleased that he ate well and proud he had such a good appetite and such an ideal diet. When others asked how he slept (pretty awfully) I could at least say, "But he eats really well".

Meanwhile our little boy was getting more and more grumpy and demanding and more and more miserable when he wasn't amused. I looked frantically for the "ideal toy" the thing that would hold his attention. Each new item was met with delight and then discarded within thirty seconds and the grizzling began again.

Jack woke at least twice a night. He was into everything and seemed to always want more - more - more. He wasn't babbling - ba ba ba & da da da at 10 months. (In retrospect, the first sign of his problems with auditory processing that later resulted in speech delay and difficulty in learning to read.) He never sat and played. He never sat! He went straight from crawling to being dissatisfied because he couldn't yet walk.

From the 4 months we put his "difficult" and unhappy behaviour down to "teething". The first tooth didn't appear until eleven months.

When Jack was four months old I ate a small amount of dark chocolate in an ice-cream and about one hour later breastfed Jack. Within half an hour he was screaming inconsolably and instead of

being tense as crying babies are he just lay back in my arms in an almost relaxed way as he screamed (low muscle tone no doubt). I identified the chocolate as the most likely culprit - I'm now sure I was right. After Jack went to sleep I sat up and expressed my other breast out into a nappy!

He was still a delightful, smiling, social child as long as he had the undivided attention of someone and a constant stream of novelty.

I've gone into this first year in detail because it really shows most clearly what was going on even if it was not obvious at the time.

My second child, a daughter called Ellen, was born when Jack was nearly 3 and a half. Jack was delighted and adored his little sister. The pregnancy was complicated by my blood pressure going high from 23 weeks. My mother came to look after us all as I was meant to be resting as well as taking anti-hypertensive medication. My mother just couldn't take Jack's behaviour.

I had been avoiding wheat in Jack's diet as I believed I had a problem with it. (My problem was actually with calcium propionate (282), of course, but cutting out all wheat did solve my problems of fatigue and fuzziness and so for years I thought I needed to avoid wheat). For convenience we changed to normal white bread from the supermarket. Jack loved it after the drier rye bread I had used formerly. I had not a clue about the preservative in the bread. Jack's behaviour went from bad to atrocious.

Jack's behaviour was at its all-time worst between the ages of 3 and 4. It was during this time he was eating the preserved bread. He put his hand through a windowpane during a tantrum. He woke with nightmares and screamed madly about and it was impossible to get through to him.

He went to bed late, reappearing often saying he was hungry and wanting (surprise, surprise) another slice of bread. He would wake at 4.30 in the morning wanting to be entertained. The only toy he persistently liked was his ride-on car. His behaviour and manner were almost autistic but for his insatiable sociability. His speech was very delayed and I don't think he really understood a lot of what was said to him. He was however very imaginative and inventive and liked to play pretend games, but always with someone. He had no liking for being read to but preferred to have me act out stories with both of us taking roles.

Needless to say I was exhausted and miserable. We lived half an hour out of town. My husband, Nick, was at that time managing farms. It was a very similar situation to yours, I think.

Jack was going to preschool in town a few days per week. Although they did not complain about Jack's behaviour (he has never been physically aggressive towards other people, even at his very worst and he's never said "I hate you" either - he is a very gentle character) When pressed they would say he was a bit weird, hiding in the playhouse and refusing to come out when the others were sitting on the mat listening to stories and taking off outside at inside time, etc, but he was only three so a lot of immaturity was allowed for.

My mother and my husband, Nick and I discussed Jack and his behaviour and decided that his things had got much worse around the time of the change in bread type. I took Jack off all wheat. The change was astonishing. He could have his socks put on without going berserk. You could talk to him and he would act on what was said. He didn't scream through everyday tasks such as bathing, dressing etc. When he went to preschool that week I dropped him off and didn't say anything about the changes. When I picked him up the teacher approached me and said "What have you done - he's a different child - he's playing with the others and listening to us."

Just before Jack went off wheat he had been assessed by a speech therapist at the preschool. She diagnosed, as best she could -we couldn't really keep Jack in the room much less anything like on-task - a severe expressive language delay and a moderate receptive language delay. Six weeks, later when off the wheat products, was reassessed by the same speech pathologist, using the part of the test that Jack had not done due to being non-cooperative. This time he seemed to have no significant receptive language delay and was only mildly delayed in his expressive language. She said she had never seen a child change so dramatically within such a short period of time.

Of course avoiding wheat meant avoiding a lot of foods, such as sausages. So Jack's diet also became generally blander and so did Jack. He was still difficult but at least he was "on the planet" now. He was only four but used to ask me "Why am I so happy, Mum?"

After a couple of months I screwed up my courage to do a challenge for wheat. I cooked some pikelets so I knew just what had gone into them. No reaction other than a very happy child - yummy pikelets!

I challenged with bread, planning to do two-week-on -- two-week-off challenges to see if any difference was apparent. That challenge lasted for two slices of bread fed to Jack at 4.30 on a Friday afternoon (timed so as to coincide with the weekend when Nick would be about)!! Within forty-five minutes, Jack was off his brain. Screaming, upset by everything - he finally went to bed and woke at 4.30 and was off again. This reaction lasted as a major thing for three days and Jack was unsettled for at least a week afterwards. Nick strapped Jack into his car seat and spent a lot of time driving around checking the property that weekend! We have never rechallenged this one as Jack himself has no desire to repeat that particular experience and neither have we.!!

The clinic sister I went to for Ellen was very supportive of my efforts to unravel the cause of Jack's problems with diet. When I had identified bread as being a huge problem she pointed out that bread did contain a preservative. She did not know anything particular about this preservative and its effects and she only mentioned it because preservatives were believed to be a cause of behaviour problems in children. Unfortunately I didn't take this too seriously at that time - I still believed that they wouldn't put anything this harmful in our "daily bread" and therefore the preservative couldn't be that harmful.

I spent the next year or so thinking our problem was yeast. I also noticed that a lot of Italian food caused major problems and made Jack pale and bobby looking as well as affecting his behaviour.

It was around this time I found and read "Different Kids" and it all began to make sense. What I had been doing as a mixture of the observation that the blander the diet the blander the children, my little clinical-trials-with-one-(or two, three or four) participant(s) and intuition could now be done with structure. I think you saved us another three to four years of misery, money wasting and mucking about.

These days my husband says he feels better and doesn't get headaches any more. I've found I react to many things and I compete with Jack for the most sensitive-in-the-family status. Ellen reacts to salicylates by becoming easily enraged and blaming everyone for everything. She is, by the way, the most un-ADD person I've ever met - highly organised, very logical, and a real old head on young shoulders -very knowing and mature and reasonable. She is also extremely bright and academically gifted especially with maths.

Jack becomes hyper and idiotic and unable to learn when he has more than moderate salicylates in his diet. His salicylate reaction is a rapid-onset-rapid- resolution-type reaction. Amines used to make him irritable and as close to aggressive as he got but these days the reaction takes the form of a

migraine. Jack still has academic problems related to his ADD and particularly to his auditory processing disorder. He is on Ritalin for school. I liken it to wearing glasses and tell him his sister wears glasses at school to help her eyes focus and he needs Ritalin to help his mind focus. He takes a very small dose (1 tab then 1/2 tab three hours later) and he finds it very effective. He does not take it at weekends usually although he would have a dose if we were going to do something that required good behaviour despite being bored or to help with a task requiring concentration and organisation such as making a model etc. He also asks for a dose if he is anxious to be on his best behaviour.

We also need to apply behaviour modification techniques on a daily basis - I did a Triple P course and this has been immensely helpful in managing Jack.

To put it simply, our approach to Jack's behaviour and other problems three-tiered one: First comes diet and general good health including adequate sleep and food - this is essential as if his diet, in particular, is off then nothing else is really effective.

Second comes the behaviour modification. I believe a lot of poor behaviour in children is caused by not being able to understand their environment. It seems to me that all effective behaviour modification systems provide not only rewards and punishments but more importantly they organise and simplify the social environment for all players. This consistency enables children who have trouble reading those around them to understand what is happening and they are therefore able to comply.

And thirdly, medication is the icing on the cake. It does cause Jack persistent appetite suppression and sleep problems. (The appetite suppression can be a good thing for parties though as he will only pick at plain chips and have a bit of lemonade if on medication!) Once again thank you so much for your books - and for the great website, and please sign us up for your newsletters, discussion group and kids discussion group! - Alison, Queensland

[035] We never thought food intolerances were part of the equation (April 2000)

Our oldest son attends a Montessori preschool and his teacher had been concerned from day one over a few of his little habits. In November 1999 he was assessed because he has always been an over emotional child and his concentration was not developing like his teacher expected. He was also rolling his eyes when doing work at school and he was starting to fall behind. At no time did anyone (teacher or assessor) think ADD / ADHD was a problem. Needless to say our feet hit the ground running since that assessment.

First stop was diet. The lady who did the assessment recommended getting both our children off additives immediately and reducing dairy and wheat. We were lucky to get into Sydney's Royal Prince Alfred Allergy Clinic a few weeks after the assessment. By then we had totally removed additives, dairy and wheat from the children's diet. I'm sure anyone that has gone through this will remember the shock of those early days. Did we really eat that unhealthy? What was left that we could eat?

Within three days after removing additives, wheat and dairy from the children's diet our children transformed into angels. Our son and daughter had always fought. After three days there was no fighting. They were settled and calm within themselves. They slept longer. They ate more. The teachers at school wanted to know who possessed our son. All of a sudden he was focused, able to concentrate and more sociable. Parent's of his friends noticed the change. His 5 year old friends noticed a change. Of course no one believed us it was due to a major diet change. After

all, bread is good for you! The children have done the elimination diet and we have been steadily challenging food chemicals. Judging by the reaction from our dietician our children are not fitting the usual reactions. The children have had no physical reactions. All reactions have been behaviour related. Wheat made both children aggressive, giddy and unfocused. Cow's milk (both with lactose and without lactose) made both children emotional basket cases however they had no reaction to tasty cheese. We think they reacted to cow's milk yogurt but we are going to retest. I know they reacted to ice cream also. Our dietician explained that an emotional reaction to cow's milk has been observed so we weren't imagining things. Currently the children are being tested on additives from unlabeled capsules. Our son's first test was food colouring. Even without a label the additive was obvious when I broke open the capsule. Within minutes he reacted with hyperactive energy. I believe his teacher had one of the worst days in her teaching career that day! She told me never ever give him that again. He was unfocused, talking non-stop and could not concentrate. It took three days to get out of his system.

A few things have amazed me through our food testing experience. Once the chemicals are out of the diet the reactions when the chemical was re-introduced has been over the top. How could the children have ever eaten those chemicals before and we did not see the reactions? Once you start from a clean slate and looking at one chemical at a time the results are amazing. I'm also amazed how many foods contain unsafe chemicals. Has anyone ever tried to buy corn chips with no anti-oxidants? Not many edible choices out there. Lucky we're not corn chip people! I am also astonished how long it takes for the children to regain their angelic natures after a food challenge. RPA gives approximately three days but we found it takes at least one week for the bad stuff to get out of the children's systems.

I am convinced that our children are not the only children with food intolerances. I think all children have food intolerances but parents are living in denial. I speak to friends and they all agree that their child should cut back on this or that food. No one has the commitment to do this unless they have reached crisis point. We knew our son was a high needs / high returns child from day one but we never thought that food intolerances were part of the equation. We now see that unless your child has a good clean diet then they have no chance to reach their potential.

Our son's overall problem is neurological. His birth was very bad. It appears that structural damage prevented parts of his brain integrating hence the result is he has problems getting information out. He has seen a cranial chiropractor, a behavioural optometrist and a kinesiologist plus weekly visits to a neurodevelopment therapist. The bottom line is until his diet intolerances have been confirmed and his metabolism rebuilt by the kinesiologist the neurological side will not be totally fixed.

Our daughter has been dragged along on his journey. At one stage blood tests indicated she had coeliac disease. A visit to the specialist concluded she has a strong disposition towards coeliac disease but she is not a coeliac. I was amazed that a specialist dealing with gut problems was skeptical of results from the food challenges. That specialist was recommended because he was one of the open minded ones!

Meanwhile the children are permanently off gluten, dairy (except a little cheese) and additives. We have gone back to the old fashion make it at home cooking and baking. I don't even bother with the instant gluten-free additive-free box foods. Hey, I can make a pizza base that tastes just as good from scratch. We continue with his other therapies. He's making great progress. Still up and down because the diet is still being sorted out. Our daughter is two years younger. Luckily she is young and she has not been under the scrutiny academic wise that our son has. She has had food reactions but shows no neurological problems. The thing that frightens me most is that we live in a world of children (and adults) who are zombies due to food chemicals. All those beautiful little minds being

drugged by legal chemicals in our foods. Parents who have gone through food challenges and have children with food intolerances need to educate their friends. A parent just needs to change their diet for a short time to see the proof that their child is affected by foods. - Mother, Sydney

[029] For ADHD, "understanding and dignity" (November 1999)

My 6 yr old son is to be assessed at the end of this month for ADHD but after reading "Different Kids" (I'm half-way through - it's a GREAT book) I *know* what the answer is going to be.

He is an exceptionally bright child who started school this year. His reading, math and long term memory are exemplary. His teacher wrote in his mid year report that she had never met a child so young with such a broad knowledge base (I'm VERY particular about TV etc... - no mindless drivel in our house :-). It was she who suggested he be tested as she felt his behaviour could easily impede a great potential. The first time she suggested it I brushed the idea to the back of my mind - defensive about a condition I had no knowledge of. The second time she mentioned it I decided to "look into it". I dug about on the internet first, rang support groups, and got hold of your books. Within 48 hours I was convinced she was acting in my son's best interests and the more I read the clearer it became.

I don't want him to be medicated so I am very interested in the elimination diet (I have "Fed Up" too - I just haven't got that far in my reading yet!).

I've suggested "Different Kids" to numerous people (a lot of them strangers) - some with possible ADHD kids and others with so-called "normal" children - purely for the depth of understanding and dignity you assign to "the problem".

Thanks for giving me an insight into my childhood - now I know why I did (& still do) some of the things that I did (& do) :-). - Kim

[025] Family of seven on FAILSAFE diet (October 1999)

We have your books - wonderful!, changed our lives, took one of our kids off ADHD dexamphetamine because its what he eats that matters!!! We have five children and two parents on various variations of diets including gluten, dairy and additive free. - failsafe father of five

[017] ADHD success from New Zealand (June 1999)

We purchased your book 'Fed Up' and started to use some of your foods mentioned and in a matter of two days we noticed a difference with our two children who are ADHD.

Our six year old was diagnosed ADHD 12 months ago. He was in the top 3% for hyperactivity. Ritalin has never been our answer but seemed to be the better of the two evils. He still finds it hard to fit in with children in his class and is often left standing alone when it comes time for the children to pick a partner. He however interacts very well with older children and all his friends at school are two or three years ahead of him. When you strip away the ADHD he is the most gentle intuitive animal-crazy kid you'd ever meet.

I had felt up until a day or two into your diet we had been robbed of the normal loving caring relationship shared by mother and son and it makes me sick to the stomach that all the so-called top paediatricians and psychiatrists have never mentioned diet, only increasing the amount of Ritalin and disregarding my theory on diet. Our son loves school, even if it comes with a few knocks. He's bright and he wants to learn so I want to do everything in my power to help him succeed and your diet works better and more consistently than Ritalin.

Our younger son is 15 months old and what a handful he is, exactly like his brother but with a temper, again the diet has helped him slow down and become more focused and much calmer to be around.

Thank you so much as it has brought our family closer. - Leesa & Stephen, NZ

[006] Jake's story: "the best he has been" after 6 weeks Failsafe (June 1999)

Part one

"You might be interested in part of an article in a newsletter from my son's high school. It is a fact sheet : "Attention Deficit Disorder - The Facts" written by Dr Mark Gibbeson, Behavioural Paediatrician, Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick.

It states as follows:

"MYTH: Drugs are the only treatment given to help these children

FACT : Medication is without a doubt the most effective management tool to help these children concentrate at home and at school. Dietary manipulation is of little help to most ADHD children [yawn]. Long term improvement is best achieved with the help of behaviour programs, family and teacher counselling and, of course, helping the children themselves come to an understanding of their condition as they grow older."

This article alarmed me because there was a contact number for further information and books on ADHD. You can bet your life that "Different Kids" and "Fed Up" are not on their list. I am also alarmed that these fact sheets are given out freely to parents and professionals alike really offering no other choice than to medicate.

I agree that a lot of parents would need to be helped with behaviour programs but I now think diet needs to be looked at first before resorting to medication. If the diet has been adhered to strictly, I am sure that most parents would see an improvement in their childrens' behaviour as I have seen with my son ...

It makes me angry that there are so many experts out there willing to medicate our children without first offering alternatives."

Part two (after 6 weeks on the elimination diet)

Today Jake was the best he has been, but even though I watch what he eats and drinks, I got caught. He sneaked some Sprite lemonade and I didn't know until I arrived to pick him up from after school care. The carers said his behaviour had been "ratty, obnoxious, argumentative and hyped up" all afternoon. He had told them about the Sprite. They said there really must be something in this diet thing as they had seen a rapid change in his behaviour since I had dropped him off. At this stage I hadn't seen him yet. Then Jake bounced through the door and nearly ran up the wall. It took me half an hour to get him into the car. He wouldn't listen to reason, he was totally off the planet. I will have to be so careful in the future. - Dianne

[004] Daniel's story: severe colic and reflux (June 1999)

From the minute Daniel was born, he was a very unsettled baby. We went home on day three and I expected he would improve when my milk came in. I work as a midwife, so I had some idea of sleepless nights etc, but nothing had prepared me for a baby who screamed constantly when awake

and slept very little. My mum said I had been a very colicky baby and my mother-in-law said my husband David had been an extremely colicky baby - so we presumed Daniel was the same.

After three doses of mastitis, I put Daniel on the bottle at five weeks of age. He was just as unsettled on formula as on breast milk. He continued to have several loose green bowel actions a day. The next day we left for the U.K. - my husband David was transferred over there for what was meant to be five weeks but turned into three months. I think ignorance is bliss, when I look back and see myself taking a screaming six week old baby half way across the world to live in a shoe box hotel room. In the U.K. Daniel continued to be very irritable and unsettled. He posited after every feed and only very occasionally vomited. The only place he was happy was in the bath, so we bathed him four times a day some days to keep him quiet. When I look back on my diary of this time, he began interrupting his feeds at about 8 weeks of age. A normal night out for tea (we had no cooking facilities in our room) would be David that would walk out on the pavement with a screaming Daniel while I ate and then we would swap. I remember feeling physically sick myself some nights, he would scream so much.

We visited a doctor for Daniel's immunisations and I told her of his constant screaming - she told me it was colic and that it would improve by three months of age. I started him on solids early in case he was hungry (rice cereal and tinned pumpkin) and changed to a formula for hungrier babies. He seemed better for a couple of days but then was just as bad.

When we arrived back in Australia I took Daniel to a local GP, the one I had seen as a child myself. Daniel was screaming and it was 11 am. This doctor gave me a lecture about colic (by this stage Daniel was four months old) and said, "how could there be anything wrong with a child that has such good weight gains?" I tried to explain that it was taking 1-2 hours to feed him a bottle, but he just gave me a lecture on midwives not making any better mothers. He threw a referral at me for a paediatrician on the way out the door (I think only to cover himself).

I tried making an appointment with the paediatrician, but, being Christmas, there were none available for another month. So we continued to battle on and tried Daniel on a soy formula which seemed to help for a while, but then he just went back to square one. He got worse with his feeds, arching his back. We would bang toys on his bottle to distract him. At this stage most nights he was sleeping though and I think that was the only way we survived. He continued to scream and whinge all day and I'm sure he was exhausted at night and that is why he slept. Despite all this he continued to gain weight and reach all his milestones. I lost weight rapidly and was lighter than before falling pregnant. We contemplated that he was just an attention-seeking baby because when we played on the floor, or took him somewhere different, with different toys, he was okay.

The feeding continued to get worse so two and a half months after seeing the GP, when Daniel was six months old I took him to a paediatrician. He immediately diagnosed reflux and oesophagitis (inflammation and ulceration of the oesophagus) and started Daniel on Ranitidine (Zantac) which reduced the acid in the stomach, to stop the 'heartburn' type pain. I will never forget what a relief it was to get a diagnosis; little did I know that this was only the start.

Daniel's feeds immediately improved on the Zantac but he continued to be very irritable and whiny between feeds. Three weeks later we started him on Prepulsid (Cisapride) which increases the rate of the stomach emptying, but it didn't seem to make a great deal of difference. We tried him on Nutramigen, in case he was cow's milk intolerant. It seems to help for a couple of weeks, but then he just went back to the old irritable Daniel.

I had become suspicious of a few things in his diet. We went camping over Easter and I gave him a Heinz tomato based baby food - it came out the other end looking nearly same as it went in and

Daniel was extremely unsettled all weekend. A booklet from a support group for reflux babies mentioned avoiding acidic foods for reflux babies so we presumed that was the reason it was upsetting him. Luckily, for this reason, we didn't give him Kiwi fruit, oranges or fruit juice.

At eight months of age he was still whingeing all day and throwing huge temper tantrums (head banging the dishwasher) so our paediatrician organised a barium swallow. He also started him on Mylanta four times a day. The first week on Mylanta he was wonderful and that week he had the barium swallow, which was normal, much to my disgust. The next week he was worse than ever. I stopped the Prepulsid at 12 months and started Daniel on cow's milk, which made no difference. At this time I went back to work two days a week and left my mum to cope with Daniel - there was no way a child care centre would have taken him. I think going back to work was the best thing. I would come home after my two days and feel ready to cope with another week of life with Daniel. My mum says she even dreaded him coming for the two days sometimes.

Around this time I tried a naturopath, masseur and chiropractor, but nothing really helped.

By fifteen months of age he was no better. A normal day was leaving him screaming to get him to have his afternoon sleep and to settle at night. I would put him in his room several times a day on a bad day and sit for ten minutes and try to calm myself down. Normal daily tasks such as cooking meals and washing were all done while he screamed.

I returned to his paediatrician and he referred us to a gastroenterologist at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. He told us that he doubted Daniel's behaviour was due to reflux (Daniel smiled at him and played with the toys in his room!) He advised I stop the Zantac and organised for him to have a pH study (monitors acid in the oesophagus over 24 hours) and gastroscopy (tube to look at the stomach and oesophagus). After stopping the Zantac, Daniel actually seemed a little better and stopped his head banging.

The pH study showed 'mild' episodes of reflux. His gastroscopy showed moderate to severe inflammation and ulceration of his oesophagus and suggested that there may be an allergy involved. They suggested we see the allergy department at the Royal Children's Hospital. They put Daniel on the Neocate diet. He was only allowed Neocate formula, rice, zucchini, apple, pear and potato. The doctor at the allergy department also advised me that these children get into such bad behavioural problems that once they're fed and changed you just have to leave them scream! The diet was a disaster to say the least - to try to get an 18-month-old to drink this formula, that you gag on yourself it's so foul tasting, was impossible. Daniel screamed all week and was so bad by the end of the week I had to take time off work. He was constipated from only drinking small amounts of water.

In desperation we were referred to a surgeon about the possibility of surgical correction. He wasn't convinced - so he sent us for a gastric emptying study, which was very distressing for Daniel - they put a large dome over his face and stomach. This showed he only refluxed once. The surgeon suggested trying Losec (Omeprazole) which stops acid production in the stomach and helps heal the oesophagus. We started Losec - after about a month we noticed a big difference in his behaviour - he was a much happier little boy and he actually sat and played with toys for short periods of time - something he had never done before.

I was suspicious of food colouring and artificial additives at this stage, as some evenings we described Daniel as 'bouncing off the walls' he was so hyperactive. For this reason we only let him drink plain milk and water and filled him full of 'healthy' fruits, vegetables and cheese!

Like everything else the effect of Losec was wearing off. Daniel was starting to complain of his 'tummy burning' and pointing to his oesophagus. He required constant amusement and was general

a very unhappy little boy. I was finding him nearly impossible to live with and constantly comparing myself to the other mums in playgroup and wondering why they all got so much enjoyment out of their children.

When Daniel was around two and a half years old I happened to go to a seminar through work on food intolerance and allergy run the team at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. I couldn't believe what I was hearing at the lecture - it was Daniel all over! I immediately sent away for the elimination diet books and got a copy of Friendly Food.

I started off by leaving him on dairy and wheat products. After 1-2 weeks we noticed a difference in his hyperactivity on the diet but he was still having many days of irritability and complaining of his tummy burning. His loose bowel actions were persisting. We stopped dairy products and put him on soy and we started giving his Losec in pear jam instead of yoghurt. He had watery diarrhoea for two weeks after stopping dairy products as a withdrawal effect. Unfortunately what we didn't know was the Losec is not absorbed properly unless given in something acidic like yoghurt. After one month of giving the Losec in pear jam, Daniel's stomach pain was severe.

After being unwell for three days with a high temperature and complaining of shoulder tip pain, Daniel was finally diagnosed at the Royal Children's Hospital with pneumonia from aspirating on his vomit. (I had seen two other doctors who told me children don't know where their pain is and that he had a viral infection.) The pneumonia was in the back of his lung and was pressing on his diaphragm, which was giving him shoulder tip pain. I have never seen Daniel so sick - we thought he was going to die.

Again in desperation we returned to his gastroenterologist who advised another pH study and returning to the surgeon for fundoplication, which kinks the oesophagus to stop food refluxing back from the stomach. He felt he might have a physical problem as well as an intolerance, which caused hyperactivity. So when he was three, Daniel had fundoplication. We stopped the Losec the night before surgery. The surgery was major - four days in hospital and two days on a morphine infusion. As soon as the morphine stopped Daniel started complaining of his stomach burning but now he pointed to his stomach rather than his oesophagus - the surgery had only moved the pain. We recommenced his Losec on leaving hospital. Daniel's weight had dropped from above to below average, as we struggled to maintain his nutrition on vitamised elimination diet. I hit rock bottom. I was waking at night in a sweat over what I had put him through. I rang the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Allergy Clinic in Sydney, beside myself, and they suggested that we bring Daniel up to Sydney. I only wish we had done it prior to the surgery.

At the clinic, his behaviour chart revealed that Daniel was very high for hyperactivity and learning problems and we were told we were dealing with severe food intolerance and ADD. We were advised to try Daniel off pears as he is very salicylate sensitive.

Daniel is now nearly four and in the last month he has been consistently much better. He only tolerates rice, potato, cabbage, beans, chicken, lamb, Nuttalex and restricted amounts of sugar. He is still on Losec which we have increased in the last month to combat his stomach pain. We have found he is no longer reacting as badly to perfumes since stopping pears and maple syrup. Since stopping rice bubbles his aggressive behaviour has ceased. He will actually sit and play with toys now, although his concentration is poor at times. We have tried him on Ritalin but if he's having a bad day food wise, Ritalin only makes him worse.

The last four years all seem to blur into one big nightmare but I realise I was becoming very bitter about the whole thing. I have resolved to look ahead only. Daniel is really a beautiful little boy

underneath all the problems he has had. I try to make the most of the good days and not dwell on the bad days.

It is in the hope of preventing someone else living our nightmare that I do the telephone counselling for D.I.S.A (Distressed Infants Support Association of Vic) and have agreed to be the Melbourne contact for food intolerance in Sue Dengate's book Fed Up. - Jenny

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