

## **Autism Cured? – Whitney's Story**

### **By Dr. Cheri Florance**

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Autism. I heard the diagnosis but my heart raged against what my mind knew to be true. I was aware of the possibility as the signs were clear, but still I was devastated. But such was the situation that despite being a world renowned brain specialist and an expert in communication problems, I faced a blank wall becoming simply another mother faced with a difficult diagnosis.

I clearly remember the day I was in the hospital about to give birth to my third child. The contraction inducing drugs had been administered and I excitedly looked forward to meeting my new baby. I focused on my breathing, the doctor's instructions and the fetal heart monitor. Suddenly, the room cleared and the doctor spoke. "The umbilical cord is wrapped around the baby's neck four times...listen carefully to my instructions," he paused. "Cheri, this is the hardest thing you will ever be asked to do." A few months later, I was beginning to suspect that wasn't true.

Whitney seemed to have no emotional responses. While the other older children would cuddle with me, their youngest sibling was lost in his own world. It was as if he was a shell for whom his parents or siblings did not exist.

Having worked with thousands of stutterers, apraxics and stroke patients as well as children with delayed language, I was faced with a major question. Did Whitney have a disease that would need a cure or did Whitney have a group of symptoms that could be trained. If I could figure out the symptom clusters as I had done with the other communication disorders, then perhaps, Whitney could learn to become symptom free.

I discerned a pattern—Whitney, had a knack of returning to places he had been to earlier. He was also always ripping apart his toys and examining their working. Most importantly, he was problem solving. This was no mentally retarded boy. He seemed to be accessing his visual memory and his visual mechanical thinking.

My 15 years of research before Whitney's birth had fine tuned my mind to catch the pattern –this would be the way to pierce the walls of silence surrounding my darling son. My other children, Vanessa and

William and I worked together to reach William through his silent visual world.

Soon a new educational system soon evolved. The educational tools were pictures, videos, logos. I discovered that many children with symptoms of autism were also highly visual and have at least one highly visual parent.

Both parent and child think in a color world of images rather than words. The parents are in fields like engineering, architecture, medicine, computers, art, and business. They are extremely capable of intelligent thought and communication but they think in pictures first and then convert to words. The autistic child of the visual parent may have visuals that are over-working to the point that language is under developed or as in Whitney's case non-existent.

This inability to process and produce language can lead to onset of as many as 50 symptoms in behavior, coping and communication. From Whitney's change profile, I isolated symptoms that characterize prognostic predictors of becoming symptom free.

Our goal for Whitney was to help him become symptom-free and to enable him to become his own advocate. Soon my son was telling a committee, and winning his argument, that he no longer needed special education support. Whitney was right. By high school he was one of the bright kids of the school, playing championship football for an outstanding team, winning state honors in science and acting and producing plays.

Now Whitney is studying for his degree in Chemical Engineering in New York City. To hear Whitney tell his own story go to [www.ebrainlabs.com](http://www.ebrainlabs.com)

The mother in me struggled against the doctor in me when considering -whether to share my family's traumatic experience with the world or let it be a closed chapter. This was particularly so as the topic was unpleasant to Whitney. The mother wanted to protect my child and honor his wishes but what of the other mothers who were enduring this challenge?

Whitney, himself, reconciled this dilemma for me as he feels strongly that his story should be used to help others. He and his siblings helped me write a book Maverick Mind. The book's revelations of my path breaking discovery were hailed by the scientific community and harried

parents alike. The visual thinkers or Highly Visual Minds are now called Mavericks.

In the video, Understanding the Maverick Mind ([www.ebrainlabs.com](http://www.ebrainlabs.com)), Whitney's older brother William explains the method, "The visual thinking system is so strong that we harness it by training that it can be completely independent of language. Mavericks improve when we are able to teach the visual and verbal thinking systems to work together in synergy, molding the two systems to function as companion partners. As the harmony between these systems increases, we can teach the verbal system to work alone, which allows the Maverick to become symptom free."

Dr. Cheri Florance is a brain scientist with training and clinical experience in how to teach the brain to replace symptoms of communication and language disorders. In her books, Maverick Mind, ([www.penquinputnam.com](http://www.penquinputnam.com) ) and A Boy Beyond Reach ([www.simonschuster.com](http://www.simonschuster.com) ), she describes how she taught her own autistic son, Whitney to replace disability with ability and become symptom-free. To learn more about her own personal journey and successful methods visit her complimentary Learning Library at [www.ebrainlabs.com](http://www.ebrainlabs.com).