

OUR STORY

To help my child engage more with people I needed to understand the issue of agenda. When my son was younger he needed to do everything to his own agenda – what he needed and wanted to do – and he didn't seem able to do what we asked or wanted. It was a major struggle on a daily basis.

Even simple tasks made me feel like we were asking him to bend his leg backwards – it just wouldn't go. Was it because he didn't want to? He couldn't do it? He just didn't understand?

First of all this was seen as a behaviour issue and my husband and I were sent on a parenting course to learn to discipline him better. All the people who were working with us – speech therapists, occupational therapists, educational psychologists, Portage, ABA therapists, were all telling me we had to 'get him' to do the things we asked. It was vital he learn to follow our instructions. There was a time pressure on this as he was way behind his peers. But this pressure didn't work.

Then I had my Son-Rise® training when my son was five. They helped me to understand what he was going through – the level of his sensory overload and how it would likely feel for him, his auditory processing issues, his fight/flight state – it would all be putting him under so much internal pressure. This would make complete sense of his meltdowns.

The Son-Rise advised us to take pressure *off* him. How did we do that?

We spent hours with him on a one-to-one in a special playroom, following his agenda, delighting in all he did, giving him space but enjoying his company and when he was ready to engage, we were right there to celebrate who he was with him. This meant that over time he calmed down, started to de-stress, he began to really trust us, to laugh, have fun and to feel good and happy connections with us. He went back and forth, resisting and connecting, but gradually, this led ultimately to something that I felt was the Holy Grail – WILLING ENGAGEMENT. This willing engagement enabled him to start to listen to us, take in what we said, become invested in us and what we wanted and to be open to learn from us – all with no force. It was his decision to do this. We had reduced his stress and built his connections which had led to willing engagement and ultimately to a love of learning. So, when someone tells you that you have to 'get' your child to do certain things and your child struggles, I just wanted you to know there is a very different way to help your child.

TAKE AWAY

It is interesting to consider the effect of having a specific agenda for a child who is primarily struggling to connect to other people in an easy and natural way. It would be a very normal reaction for them to resist as their internal stress is likely to already be very high. Often as parents we can believe that if our child achieves a certain task their development will start to fall into place and for this reason, we understandably push and want our children to achieve more. However, when agenda is removed, and connection and relationship become the focus of our attention, the child can start to de-stress, enjoy the relationship and begin to open up to learning from you.

YOUR CHILD

- What does your child resist doing?
- How does they show this resistance?
- What do you think they might be going through when they are resisting?
- How would you like your child to feel and to respond to you?
- How could you start the journey to making connections with your child and playing with him/her to their own agenda?
- Where do you believe this could lead for your child?