

## **Brendan's Story**

### **Correcting the Problem of Braces Causing his Illness**

#### **Brendan's mother begins the story in 1999. . .**

I keep thinking of more things to add as I relive the years of Brendan's illness. One memory is sitting in the hospital during Brendan's MRI and praying and crying, wishing that he didn't have to go through this -- and that this test would show something. And then going week-to-week wondering if he had Lyme, arthritis, or some unknown disease. Also, coming to terms with the fact that he might never be well again.

The thing that encouraged me the most to choose Dr. Gillespie's CFT treatment for Brendan was that it was non-invasive. That it did not involve drugs and that I could see that it would not be harmful to my son gave me the courage to try it even though it sounded and looked strange. It also helped that we have a chiropractic acquaintance and that my best friend's daughter had to seek alternative treatment for a jaw problem. That treatment, caused by wisdom teeth surgery, was successful. It allowed us to be open minded.

#### **Brendan's father continues . . .**

The onset of Brendan's problems coincided with the beginning of orthodontic work. Although his palate had been expanded and he already had braces on the lower teeth, his headaches began four days after the upper braces were installed in April of 1999. The onset seemed like a sinus infection. Brendan can tell you that it began on April 4, Easter Sunday, with a fever. It then progressed to headaches, which kept him from sleeping and making him tired in the morning. He also had muscle pain and joint pain.

After a few weeks he had great difficulty waking up in time to get to school, where he was in the 7th grade. Once or twice we let him go to school an hour late, but after a week even that was not enough. He started missing whole weeks of school because he simply did not feel well enough to go.

Along with this came the anxiety of missing school and falling behind, even though he was an excellent student. The pediatrician treated his sinus infection with several antibiotics but to no avail. We were told that the muscle and joint pain was not due to the sinus infection and that he probably had something else going on.

Thus, he was examined by neurologists, and had extensive blood work,

MRIs and CT Scans done for Lyme disease, Epstein Barr, and many other possible diseases, but without any clear indications. We started a notebook of Brendan's doctors' visits and tests that we would take with us when we were sent to a new doctor.

In June on the last day of school a pediatric otolaryngologist cleaned out his sinuses surgically, finding polyps that could not respond to antibiotics. Brendan felt much better, and his joint and muscle pains subsided. A pediatric diagnostician diagnosed him with Post Infectious Fatigue Syndrome and we looked forward to a full recovery over the summer. At the time we felt relieved that it was not something more serious.

Brendan seemed OK during the summer. We spent a week at the North Carolina shore, where he began to recover. He was even able to climb Mt. Washington in New Hampshire with his sister, dad, uncle, and cousin. This was a major physical achievement.

In the fall during the third week of 8th grade, Brendan said, "I'm too tired to go to school," and his headaches and fatigue began again. Doctors interpreted the coincidence with the pressures of gifted classes, music lessons, etc., as an indication of stress as a factor. The pediatric diagnostician said Type A high-achieving students often get worked up about schoolwork and stop sleeping well, which makes them unable to think.

He was again diagnosed with Post Infectious Fatigue Syndrome or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Sleeping pills and rest were prescribed. Brendan tried going to school for parts of days. The other kids did not understand why he wasn't in school each day or came for a part of a day.

The teachers finally asked us to let them know when Brendan was coming in because his being there would cause such a disruption. It made him anxious to go to school and soon he didn't want to try to go in at all. Neither sleeping pills nor rest solved the problem. Another doctor suggested that the problem may be due to allergies, so we had him tested and he was found to be allergic to grass, trees, and weeds. Allergy shots were recommended. We then considered seeing a nutritionist.

After consulting nine doctors, we were out of ideas, out of treatments, and running short of hope. Brendan's head hurt all the time. He also did not know if he was going to get better. He was down, which would depress anyone. He looked like he was in pain, and rarely smiled. He was so tired he could not get out of bed before 11 am. He would spend the day on the couch, and then go back to bed. It was not uncommon to hear him be still awake at 2 am or 3 am. He often said that he was awake all night.

The school district provided at-home tutoring in English, science, social studies and math. He would save his energy for these visits, trying hard to concentrate during the lessons, but with limited success. His mom would hear his tutor explain something and 20 minutes later Brendan couldn't remember what they talked about. Brendan would then use his remaining energy to attempt to complete his homework. He could not concentrate for more than a few minutes at a time. Thankfully, his tutors had great patience and understanding with him, especially when he could not complete the assigned homework.

He could barely walk around the block without getting tired and having to stop. If he went out with the family to church or to dinner he would have to spend the next day recovering. He looked like he was fine, and I don't think people really understood his pain. He had trouble keeping in touch with the kids at school. We did encourage Brendan to attend his church youth group meetings to keep some friends in his life and to get out of the house, even though he would be very fatigued and have worse headaches the next day.

People gave us all kinds of suggestions as to what could be wrong with Brendan when they found that we didn't know. Some suggested that perhaps he had a psychological problem in need of counseling. Brendan resisted going to counseling and strongly denied that there was a hidden problem. We even wondered if his problems were due to adolescence and perhaps just not wanting to go school.

Only he could really know what kind of pain he was in. It was heartbreaking for us to watch. We were all beginning to wonder if this would be the pattern of his life from now on. That was very sad, because he had been quite a capable person, both physically and mentally. He couldn't go to school. He couldn't continue playing the trombone and the cello. He couldn't go to his sister's field hockey games. We often stayed home. From total lack of activity, he was slowly looking weaker and weaker. Our doctors did not have any answers.

Brendan was not getting better and we didn't know what was wrong with him. My wife considered quitting her job to be able to stay home with him full time and arranged to work at her job from home. Our days were spent at doctors or with tutors, trying to find some encouragement and trying to have a somewhat normal life for our daughter. We are a family who has great faith in God, but this put a great stress on us. We pleaded for wisdom, direction and healing. Finally, after one doctor suggested Prozac and counseling, we got very worried and decided that we had to try other treatments.

We took Brendan to a doctor who was successful in treating Lyme disease patients and asked his opinion on treating Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. He suggested massage therapy. This meant considering alternative treatments that were not covered by our insurance, so things could get a lot more expensive. We called the Cortiva School and connected with a massage therapist, who practiced

Pfrimmer Deep Muscle Therapy. She gave Brendan once a week treatments to attempt to loosen his extremely tight muscles. She was able to make progress, but only to a point.

After four months she recommended another alternative practice, craniosacral fascial therapy, as a possible solution to this sticking point. She gave us the book *Healing Your Child* to read. Anxious to try anything that was noninvasive and might work, we called the author, Dr. Barry Gillespie. Everybody knows the cranial bones don't move at this age, but Dr. Gillespie said they did. I had never heard of the bones moving before, and I was a biology major in college. When Dr. Gillespie held Brendan's head, I expected to see at least some stress put on the tissues to trigger tension, but saw none.

Otherwise, the ideas made sense: restriction of a natural motion could have unnatural consequences; tissue damage, like scar tissue, can cause problems; all biological systems are interconnected; and tight soft tissues can cause pain and dysfunction.

Dr. Gillespie said Brendan had one of the tightest heads he had ever seen. He felt that *Brendan's braces and sinus surgery had strongly contributed to his problems*. Brendan and his mom kept mentioning to every doctor they saw the fact that his symptoms began after his braces were put on, but no other doctor claimed that there was a connection.

Brendan felt a little better after his very first treatment; his headache was less. He was relieved to find a doctor that didn't blame his pain on being an active, achieving kid but rather recognized that he was really in distress. After another treatment he felt he could think more clearly. Each week he looked forward to moving up the scale of wellness. After about three or four weeks Brendan started to smile again, a sight we hadn't seen for over a year.

After 3 months of weekly visits, he felt perfect, although a little weak. Dr. Gillespie said the treatment was complete, and he expected no relapse. Brendan's mom remembers the day when he offered to go for a walk with her and didn't complain of fatigue. Brendan's vision improved and he needed new glasses with a weaker prescription. We decided not to begin the allergy shots and he coped with the mild symptoms that he was experiencing without drugs. Our orthodontist graciously agreed to follow Dr. Gillespie's recommendation of not tightening the top braces until Brendan's treatment was complete.

Brendan was able to begin 9th grade in September of 2000. His teachers were glad to see him back in school. The anniversary of his illness and a slight cold brought us some anxiety because we feared a relapse. After checking in with Dr. Gillespie, he confirmed that Brendan was still healthy and his confidence grew and fears of relapse lessened. Going back to school after being home a year was not easy, but as the year proceeded, Brendan felt comfortable with his

workload and took on more musical and fun activities.

He is the happiest he has ever been. He has resumed his music lessons and taught himself the electric bass and plays in one of the best junior high jazz bands in the area. He is an A student and won 3rd place in the science fair. He has an active social life and is quite a normal 15-year-old with a great sense of humor and a newly discovered patience and understanding. We praise and thank God for leading us to the answer to Brendan's problem.

### **His mother writes to Dr. Gillespie in 2001. . .**

Brendan is doing great! He listens to his body now and rests when he feels he needs to. He eats well, and we had to say no to his trying out for track this year just because he was already in plenty of activities. He is going to run the mile in gym this week. He has not done that in 2 years.

### **Dr Gillespie's update in 2011**

Brendan has had no relapse of his condition. After high school he graduated from a well-known University. But after three years of work, he left his music-teaching job. He told me that he saw hundreds of children who had health problems and needed CFT. He decided to switch professions and is now attending chiropractic school. He recently took my CFT training and will use it to help many children in the future. Sometimes in life what seems like the worst possible event becomes a life-altering blessing. Brendan, my greatest wish for you is to help thousands of children in your lifetime.