Lily Anne Bryan:

Age: 2 1/2, born June 12, 2002.
Diagnosed as being within the Autistic Spectrum in Sept. of 2004.
Began ABA therapy: late October 2004. Has been involved in ABA-VB therapy (16 hours a week) for approximately 4 months.

Testimony of Lily's progress through use of ABA therapy:

Background of Lily:
Lily was verbal, but a lot of her language was nonsensical babble. She would label things, but could not seem to use words to express her needs.

Goals we (parents) had for Lily:
1) Use her language to express her needs
2) Want to engage in play with people other than parents.
3) Respond to requests made by parents other than "no touch".

Cooperation:
Within the first four weeks (we met twice a week 2 hours a session), Kari, our therapist gained instructional control. When she would ask Lily a question, she was able to get Lily to pay attention and respond to the request she had made. She was even able to get Lily to sit still for more than 10 seconds. We were amazed.

Visual Performance:
Prior to therapy, Lily was not able to match items. Even if she could, we couldn't have determined that since we really able to instruct her. After our therapist gained instructional control, Lily was able to match objects and pictures. Now Lily is able to match more than 10 objects to picture, picture to object, and picture to picture. Again, we were more than pleased and proud of Lily and amazed that she was even smarter than we thought.

Receptive Language
This area is where we have been the most blown away with Lily's progress. Prior to therapy, Lily did not follow instructions, with the exception of "no touch". Now, after only four months, she is able to follow instructions to do an enjoyable action in or out of context. For example, we can ask her to "sit in chair," or "go swing" or even "pick up toys" and she will do all the requests. Additionally, when asked, she will "give Mom or Dad a hug", "lay down" to change her diaper, "go to the front door". The list goes on and on. We are currently working on the "give" aspect of receptive language, and she is already making marked progress.

Motor Imitation
Most normally developing children naturally watch and learn to imitate others. They watch people's faces and learn how to express their emotions. Lily had and continues to a difficult with this, but again, she has made wonderful progress in this area. Upon request she will imitate a motor activity with an object, then she moved on to imitate a gross motor activity when provided with verbal prompt. She began with simple requests like "Lily do this", instructor would bang a toy hammer, Lily would imitate. Now she's moved on to clapping hands when asked to, or stomping feet, amongst many others. Soon we'll be moving on to imitating facial expressions. The developments in motor imitation as well as vocal imitation has recently lead to pretend play. Now Lily makes her stuffed animals go "night night", but putting them under the covers and making snorring sounds for them. Soon after, she'll say "wake-up!, wake-up". Observing this appropriate play has provided much joy us as well as our home therapist.

Vocal Imitation
While Lily's strongest area was vocal imitation, we have seen even more progress in this area due to ABA therapy. She imitates sounds, words, and phrases on request.

Request (Mands)
As stated before, one of our biggest frustrations was that Lily had so many words in her vocabulary, but didn't use them to request things. First she had to learn to respond to requests, now she has learned to do the requesting. She asks for juice, book, milk, movie, play dough, chalk, colors, etc....the list goes on and on. Some times she needs a bit of prompting, but again, we are amazed with the progress.

Labeling

Lily has always been a great labeler, so I won't expand too much on this. She can label more than 100 items and has been able to since she was younger than two. ABA has gotten her labeling under more instructional control so that she isn't just labeling to label but doing it when asked "who or what is this?". While she used to have to use our finger to point at things and wouldn't respond when asked "what is that" even though we knew she knew, now she responds correctly and naturally almost every single time and uses her own finger on books when labeling.

Intraverbals

Lily fills in the blanks regarding fun items, animal sounds, and is beginning to answer questions regarding personal information. For example, she will respond correctly to "a cow says....Moo Moo". Lily, how old are you?....she answers "2". While Lily has been able to imitate animal sounds, she wasn't able to predictably answer us when asked. Again, the instructional control of ABA therapy has had a profound effect on Lily's progression of language usage. Her progress in intraverbals has led to recently responding appropriately when a familiar person enthusiastically says "Hi Lily". She will respond "Hi Mommy, or Hi Kari" most every time.

Summary:

While getting a the diagnosis of ASD was a life-changing and disheartening experience, the progress that Lily has made through ABA therapy has provided so much hope for us. It is my most heart-felt belief that Lily will make enough progress in the coming months/years so that she will be able to be in a typical classroom in a public school. The financial strain of providing this therapy is forcing us to borrow more than we would have ever thought imaginable and sinking us into an enormous amount of debt. However, the sacrifice seems little when the therapy is providing our child the hope of inclusion into a classroom—and the desire to interact with her peers. It is my strongest recommendation that the state require ABA therapy in their education process. In doing this every child in the autistic spectrum has a better chance for inclusion into a normal classroom setting, as well as learn life-skills that will enable them to function well in society and relationships.

Written by Susie Bryan. If you have any questions or need further information. Call 458.5845