Reader reports from the Food Intolerance Network

www.fedup.com.au

("anger","angry", "anger management" keywords only)

[1321] 160b: "I had to lie on him to get him to lie still to fall asleep" (March 2015)

I have listed the effects on my boys 2 and 4 years plus other results if you are interested. We started the elimination diet 6 months ago and I can safely say that the challenges were one of the hardest things we have ever done - if I was in paid employment I would have been on stress leave!

Fortunately we have all survived (including the marriage) and have come out the other end in a much better place. Why did we start - my eldest was having major problems at kindy - his behavior at home has always been challenging but escalated in a group environment. A few labels were mentioned ADHD, PDD, SPD - but he didn't really seem to fit fully into any of those categories. My other concern was we were going to have the same problems with our youngest when he went to kindy - as he is a " mini me" to his big brother. I took my eldest to a place called Learning Connections (in Brisbane) and they suggested diet. We worked with a dietician at Mooloolaba and these are the boys' reactions below.

Interestingly we were doing daily homework that the OT had set - handwriting and jumping jacks while we were doing the challenges (same exercises everyday), some days he couldn't even hold a pencil and others he was too clumsy to complete a jumping jack successfully. My youngest no longer has asthma like symptoms and only one case of tonsillitis this year, both only 1 cold this year that lasted 1 day - last year a cold would last minimum 2 weeks, and both had 3 cases of tonsillitis. Both have allergic reactions to a number of antibiotics - penicillin, erythromycin and cephalexin so maybe they are extra sensitive or maybe their reactions have escalated the problem?

160b annatto: 2 yo - sore legs; 4 yo - sleep disturbances (I had to lie on him to get him to lie still to fall asleep, then he was up 4 times during the night with nightmares) Both - hyperactive, restless, wet pants, screaming, angry, arguing. This was within 2 hours of eating yoghurt, fortunately my husband was home when they reacted as we had to separate them for their own safety and we just exercised them for two hours straight then gave them a bicarb bath. Lasted 24 hours. Wednesdays for some reason were always 4yr olds worse day at kindy - it was litterless day - he couldn't have any packaging in his lunchbox so I used to scoop out some of his dad's yoghurt into a container :). Both boys used to be really "restless" at bedtime even when I knew they were tired. They used to have custard for dessert.

Salicylates: 2 yo - dirty pants, whingy, hurt the dogs; 4 yo - long time to complete tasks, no eye contact. Both - touching, poking, prodding, breaking, arguing, impulsive, noises, loud.

Amines: 2 yo - wet and dirty pants emotional, defiant, hypo, screaming loud. 4 yo - space cadet/not listening and not responding.

282 propionates: crazy, consistently getting in trouble, emotional (2 yo more than 4 yo).

Soy milk: 2 yo diarrhea

Wheat: minor in 2 yo; major reaction in 4 yo, said he felt tingly, had the worse day at kindy ever - hurting other children, couldn't sit still very busy but very tired also, poor coordination, soiled pants, stomach pains.

Life has definitely changed for the better for us - we still aren't there yet but we have come a long way. I recorded one of my youngest outbursts on my phone and play it back when I forget why we are now so strict with their food - believe me a scary recording. My eldest no longer needs the special education teacher aide to follow him around at kindy making sure he can survive the day but is now making friends and loving his kindy day. He still has some neurological delays but is catching up really quickly. Thank you so much - if I hadn't been pushed to evaluate their diet (which I thought was healthy) I would not have read your book and my son would have a label :(. - Lisa (report received August 2011)

[1315] 160b: ”she no longer hits herself on the head or scratches her face when she has a major meltdown” (March 2015)

I have used one of your recommendations with my 20 month old. I took annatto out of her diet and I don't know if it's a coincidence but I definitely saw an improvement in her tantrums and she no longer hits herself on the head or scratches her face when she has a major meltdown. She is much more manageable when she has a tantrum and she doesn't get as upset or angry and not for as long as she used to a couple of months ago.

The items she was eating almost every single day for nearly 2 months were : Lay's Quavers cheese flavoured potato chips Pepperidge Farm baked cheddar cheese goldfish -only a little handful or so as a treat or in the car/shopping trolley, but still even a little amount adds up! The tantrums and head hitting also started around the same time I started giving her those treats - 19 months. Now she is just a couple of days off 21 months and she still has screaming tantrums, but nowhere near as severe and not with headhitting, scratching her face or full on flailing limbs. Also the amount of tantrums had definitely decreased. Thanks again and keep up the good work! :) - Vicki from UAE (report received September 2011)

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

Hubby brought home some white chocolate ice-creams (he tries to do the right thing!) for us last night and all that crossed my mind was "it's okay, I'm not sensitive to amines and I'm good with dairy". After eating two (I know) I checked the ingredients. 160(b). So today I'm dealing with my irrational anger and massive impatience with my kids. The best way I can describe it physically is I feel it building in my head behind my eyes, it's like I haven't slept in days and am really tired - Keira

[1304] More reports of self harm from food intolerance (February 2015)

It was bad enough in this house with my third child that I kept a diary for about 6 weeks. I knew the meltdowns, anger, tantrums weren't normal ie over nothing kind of stuff, were scarily angry for such a small child (including self harm) and lasted far too long and nothing was helping at all. The same things that worked with my first two ie discipline or talking to work out problems, was not working with this child. At the time, I had no idea that food could have such a big impact on behaviour/mood, BUT I SOON LEARNED! After changing her diet, we saw a different child in 2 weeks! A calm, happy, normal child. That was nearly 2 years ago. Sure, she has the normal kid melt down occasionally but that's all. Changed our lives - Jan

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

Very ... I can be crying at the drop of a hat or get very angry and snappy it's awful - Lena

Totally! Emotional, depressed, irritable, easy to anger – Kar

[1296] 282: "the meltdowns and self harming stopped the next day" (December 2014)

My daughter has always been a little bit of a 'wired' child. She had eczema until she was 3 and many strange rashes after eating that came and went. However, all of this was quite manageable and she was otherwise a healthy, happy kid. Then, when she was 4 years old she overnight became utterly unmanageable. Her slight anxiety blew out of control, she was melting down 4-10 times a day over tiny things, she was disagreeable, angry and miserable (this was a child that never did the terrible twos or was a tantrum thrower). Nothing in our home life had changed, nothing seemed different except her. She was repeatedly saying terrible negative things that I never expected to hear from a small child. Worst of all, she started hurting herself during these melt downs. She would tear and her skin all up her arms until it bled, she would bite her arms until she bruised them and rip her hair out. I was completely lost.

I went to the GP who referred me to a paediatrician. He took it fairly seriously given its sudden onset and ordered a ream of tests. Waiting for the results seemed to take forever and in my desperation I was reading everything I could find. Somewhere, somehow I came across information about child behaviour and food intolerances and was directed to the FedUp website. I searched my brain. Was anything different in our diet in the 8 weeks she had been like this? We didn't eat much packaged food anyway - but YES. Since the beginning of that year I had been buying a different 'healthy looking' gluten free commercial sliced bread for my daughters lunch (we never had much bread as I'm coeliac). She had been having this bread almost every day and her consumption of it coincided perfectly with the onset of this behaviour. I ran to the kitchen - I just knew it must have this 282 preservative I'd been reading about. It did and I threw it in the bin. The meltdowns and self harming stopped the next day, three days before we re-visited the paediatrician to be told there was nothing wrong with her and that it was a parenting issue.

Since that time we have had only two re-emergences of this awful, awful behaviour, only ever mildly and short lived (it's coming up to two years now since this horror 8 weeks of my life). Further investigation has shown she is sensitive to some degree to natural food chemicals, particularly amines and we limit those. I have never had the guts to retest her with anything with 282 in it and am happy to never have it in my house as long as I live.

When I saw those awful statistics about young kids and self harm I felt sick. This is on the rise just like all allergies and mental health conditions are on the rise. I had to share my story and hope it can help someone else or get action - Kylie by email.

[1288] 220: Sulphites send my 17 yo into a complete ODD asshole (November 2014)

Sulphites send my 17 yo into a complete ODD asshole, more than typical teenager shit and attitude, he has had it all his life and only cottoned onto food intolerances when he was 15. Since cutting out the crap that sends him loopy, from depression, out of control anger, tears and stuttering and almost like Tourette type syndromes, he has gone from a failing student all his life to one getting A's and B's in most subjects and doing uni pathway for year 12 next year. Honestly we are all in amazement this is happening, its hard work, nothing in the supermarket is hardly ever suitable and he's fussy but so worth it because the whole family pays for it when he goes off track, as you can imagine a 17 yo with his friends eating and drinking anything they want, I have no control when he isn’t home.

I love the facebook group, makes you feel not so isolated and alone with issues like this, people think you’re being fussy or just making it up but if they had to live with consequences it would a different story. I have a six year old daughter who is thankfully benefiting early on from what we have learnt from my teenage son - Bec

[1227] Bipolar: NOTE TO SELF! STOP EATING AVOCADOS! (October 2013)

After years of thinking I had a mental illness, being told I had bipolar, filling my body with hideous drugs that made my hair fall out, gave my acne and basically turned me into a zombie and got me to a point where I was totally ready to end my life, I have been totally drug free, symptom free and depression free and manic free since we started FS! I didn’t start FS for me, I was doing it for my boys! 8 months have passed and I haven't bothered to do the challenges myself, I’ve been too busy trying to sort all their issues out. Well this week, I have been testing my boys on the different types of amines. For the last 3 days we have all been eating avocados! OMG THEY ARE SO YUMMY!

I am sitting at my desk today, I feel so horrible. I’m crying at everything, it feels like the world is caving in on me, I feel like nothing is right, I’m anxious, frustrated, angry, sad, ... Oh that’s right, according to Drs I have BIPOLAR! quick take some drugs!

NOTE TO SELF! STOP EATING AVOCADOS! and remember this horrible feeling will pass as soon as this food is out of my system! – facebook group member.

[1225] Our marriage nearly over due to food chemicals (October 2013)

I hope no one has a hideous experience like this! My husband was texting me all day from work about how unhappy our marriage was, that he wants to leave and that we've had a good run and should end it now. After not telling the kids that night he was going to leave (as messaged to me that day) and a big sob alone that evening he woke the next day to say he didn't feel like that at all, thought his messages were 'weird' when he re-read them and didn't know why he said all of that. I pointed out to him that his intake of steak, shop yiros and $25 worth of beef jerky sheets in the 48hrs before Monday probably had something to do with it! He thinks so too (amines and / or nasty numbers) He usually watches what he eats but I think he was unprepared for this one! – facebook member 1.

I know I respond very badly to amines in a similar way to your husband. I get very angry and have also talked about ending our marriage during a reaction. It's like I'm possessed, now I know and understand I'm able to bite my tongue and punch a pillow or two but the fights we've had prior to realising the effects were horrid. Thankfully we've made it through – facebook member 2.

I am ashamed to say this is me on chocolate= amines. I am happy to admit this only so you know you are not alone, that my beautiful gorgeous husband suffers as you do. His way is to hear the words that are usually underneath all the rubbish. Most of what comes out those days is what is true for me, but under the surface and never mentioned except those days, so he listens and deals with those things, which is honouring.. .but I am a chick, so that may not be the case for your husband. The guilt and the pain I feel when after a few days when it is all gone is unbearable so I try to stay away if we have eaten chocolate etc. I am learning to understand the difference between real issues and these amine feelings which seem so real! – facebook member 3.

Thanks all for sharing these effects. I recently had a similar experience, having had a very high salicylate meal and wine, thought I'd got away with it, but three days later hit the withdrawal symptoms and had the bloodiest row which really quite frightened me. These are dangerous chemicals! – facebook member 4 (male)

[1201] This diet is truly life changing (July 2013)

I would like to say a very big thank you for helping change not only my son's life dramatically but in turn the whole family.

Last year I put my eight year old boy onto your elimination diet. Before the diet my son was in trouble at school every day, he was argumentative, angry, hyperactive and overall his behaviour was negative and every day was a huge struggle. After discovering that he reacts severely to preservatives, colours, salicylates and amines, his overall well being has completely changed.

Not only is the household a much more calmer place now, also so is his class room. He would of been considered to be one of the naughtiest children in the class but now he is achieving amazing results at school. He competed in the National Maths Competition and got a distinction (finished in the top 11 % in all of Australia), he also achieved very highly in the Naplan and has amazed his music teacher by performing songs that are way above his year level.

Not only is he a much happier boy, so are his siblings and both my husband and I. Not only has this diet given him a much better chance for a successful future he is living testimony that this diet is truly life changing. - Paula

[1162] 282: And oppositional defiance (from FAILsaf19 June 2000)

I have recently joined the Failsafe Fan Club after watching the Current Affair special. You'll be pleased to know that all of my local bookstores immediately sold out of "Fed Up" and several orders were placed.

I was so frustrated to not be able to get my hands on a copy of the book, the symptoms that the children described were identical to things my daughter has been experiencing for the past year, voices in her head, a motor that never stopped running, hating herself and others, arguing with adults, and a worsening learning delay.

I logged on to your web page, read all the newsletters, made a manual list of all the readily available Failsafe products, printed off the additives to avoid, and immediately eliminated preservatives and colourings from my pantry and my shopping list.

The most obvious reaction has been the elimination of the bread preservative 282. We have had a breadmaker for 12 months now but had recently become lazy and had reverted back to using commercial breads. I could never understand how my daughter could be an angel for one whole day and then spend the next 5 days angry and sullen. The Reader's Stories showed me that preservative 282 could be the culprit. I am now only using Laucke's pre-mix in my breadmaker or commercial bread without 282. My daughter's Oppositional Defiant Disorder has disappeared within a week. My husband and I were so dumbfounded when we issued an instruction last weekend - expecting it to be completely ignored, followed by a stormy argument - to have my daughter jump up, reply "Yes, Mummy, sorry I didn't hear you the first time", carry out the task and then return to her play. We sat and looked at each with stupid grins on our faces for a full five minutes. - reader, by email

[1103] Amines make him angry and violent (February 2012)

I'm a mom to a very amine sensitive teen boy and your books, website and DVD have been a big help to us. I think without the knowledge you imparted through your books, there's a good chance my son would have become a violent young man, because under the effects of amines he gets so angry. But, with the diet, he can enjoy life and we can enjoy him! - Kelly

[1086] 319: tantrums "it was like the devil had taken him over" (December 2011)

I thought I'd share with you a recent experience I had with my son, when overnight my gorgeous, fun loving, cheeky little man turned into an absolute monster, having tantrums left right and centre. Not his usual 2 year old tantrums but full-on aggressive, angry and really scary tantrums, it was like the devil had taken him over. He was really irritable, he couldn't sit still and wasn't listening to anything I said, he was throwing things all the time and just being grumpy, angry and outright horrible. After a few days of this I started to think that is was something more than the usual 'milestone' / wonderweek stuff, it was really disturbing, not to mention very difficult to deal with. Anyway to cut a long story short I started to think if he was eating anything that he didn't normally eat that might have caused him to behave like this. I remember that I had just changed the brand and type of cracker that he eats for his snack. On closer investigation of the ingredients of this biscuit and a bit of google work (thanks to the Fed Up website) we found it had vegetable oil with antioxidant 319 in it, which can cause irritability, learning difficulties and children's behavioural problems! Bingo! That had to be it; it was the only thing that we could think of that was new in his life that could make him change so dramatically, so quickly. So those biscuits (Ritz sticks for your information) went straight in the bin and my lovely little boy returned, just like that - his nice behaviour returned as quickly as the horrible behaviour arrived. I couldn't quite believe that something so small could have such a big impact. It was amazing and very disturbing.

Anyway after this experience I became intrigued in food additives and frantically began reading and researching and quite frankly I couldn't quite believe what I was reading. I have always been pretty careful with the food I feed my kids and try to have minimal or no processed food in the house but I am disturbed to find that these antioxidant additives (and other nasty additives) are added to things that you would think would be pretty harmless and healthy, like crackers, bread, yoghurt and butter/margarine.

I've never really been keen on being obsessed with reading food labels but this experience was so powerful that for the sake of the health and wellbeing of our family we have now gone additive free and it is hard to describe just how much it has changed our lives. Generally speaking things are better all round, we're less irritable, there's less niggling and nagging, and less frustration and shouting, our household is so much calmer and happier. Also I have noticed that both of my boys skin has improved dramatically, they have always suffered from eczema, not badly but enough for it to noticeable, three weeks into being additive free it has almost cleared up completely, it certainly can't be a coincidence!!!

Even though it was a terrible week to live through in a way I am so happy that we had the 319 experience so that our eyes were opened up to the world of additives and just how powerful they can be. A big thank you to Sue and all her passionate helpers for making this information available and for all your hard work in spreading the word, you really have changed our lives (for the better!) – Anna from SA by email.

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

‘We’ve been on the GFCF diet since October – it has helped a bit but over the last 2 weeks he has been really terrible again – angry and throwing his train set around the room’, said the mother of a 4 yo autistic. We worked out that Soylife vanilla yoghurt was introduced 2 weeks ago. This yoghurt (but not Soygurt brand) contain annatto 160b. (A US study earlier this year showed that the GFCF diet alone does not work for autism and this is just one example why, you have to avoid a lot more than just gluten and casein).

[1064] Salicylates: “they said he couldn't come back to preschool unless I did something about his behaviour” (July 2011)

I just wanted to say thank you so much for the website and books! My son has been on failsafe for 8 weeks now and it's like a cloud has been lifted from our family. We have our little boy back!!

Riley's physical problems started at about 2. His face was constantly covered in a horrible red rash. This rash moved to his bottom and his nappy area was full of blisters and skin so raw it would bleed. Sometimes it got so bad he couldn't walk properly because he was in so much pain.

At 3 the behavior problems started. Riley had little energy. He didn't play with toys much and preferred to be in front of the TV. He had a lot of fears and anxiety and most of all he was angry. Most of his anger was directed at me and he would hit, pick and slap me often. I would spend days in tears not knowing how to help him. At preschool it was pretty much the same, Riley had a very short fuse and the kids were all scared of him because of his outbursts.

Eventually they asked me to get him assessed because they believed something was wrong with him. I was told they couldn't handle him anymore and said he couldn't come back unless I did something about his behaviour. I tried lots of different things but nothing worked until I was told about failsafe.

The change in these short 8 weeks had astounded everyone. His teachers at preschool asked me who was this boy? he now is friends with everyone, hardly had outburst and often says I love you to his teachers followed with lots of cuddles and kisses. He has energy now. He doesn't want to watch tv, he wants to dance and run in the backyard and play games with me. He no longer hits me and our relationships is closer than ever. No more rashes either or anxiety!

He is affected by salicylates and we are soon going to test amines but I suspect he won't pass that challenge as he seems really grumpy the day after I have given him a banana or cheese.

I have been telling everyone about this diet and I will continue to share my story. Thanks so much. I can't even imagine how you have changed so many families. –Jodie, by email

[1010] One-liners (March 2011)

Having followed Failsafe for a week, and being astounded by the loving, fun, happy, laughing 6 year old that came home on Thursday, I am a full convert. (Gone is the angry, aggressive, resentful, contradictory, unhappy, destructive child I have had!). – Karen, by email

[1007] Fragrance: Angry, tantrumy boy punching himself in the head due to airfreshener (March 2011)

A couple of months ago I decided to put an airfreshener in my 6 yo autistic’s room because it smelt like urine due to him wetting the bed a lot. The next day he turned from a calm placid little boy to an angry, tantrumy boy who would constantly punch himself in the head causing big bruises, crying and screaming like there was something in his head and he couldn't get it out. He also didn't sleep much while the air freshener was in his room. It took two days to figure out what I had done to my beautiful boy and once I removed the offender and aired his room out naturally, within a 2-3 hour period he was his calm self again. I hope this can help someone. - Jackie, by email

[1004] Challenges: 3 week reaction to amines (March 2011)

My son's reaction to amine foods is always the same: depression, crying for nothing, being angry, seeking conflicts, ODD like behaviour and many attacks of night terrors (like 5 times in a 2-week-period). He had very strong reactions to pork meat and to chocolate, and the effects to those foods lasted for almost 3 weeks even after stopping the challenge. His reaction to salicylates is the usual hyperactive, silly behaviour, talking too much/too loud and having more little accidents.- by email, Europe

[993] Low salicylate versus low fructose diet (March 2011)

My 4 year old son' behaviour has always been challenging, but has been particularly bad in recent weeks. After complaining of bloating, diarrhoea etc a breath test revealed that he was fructose intolerant (Note: about 50% of people have a positive breath test, so it is not very useful - Fructose malabsorption factsheet). So we started on the strict fructose elimination diet. My GP asked me a couple of weeks later how the diet was going. I responded that it was going well and that my son had not complained of bloating, stomach pains, etc since. However the thing I had noticed the most was his improved behaviour. I'm sure my GP thought I was a little odd, and commented that it wasn't something he'd heard of before but perhaps my son's behaviour is better because he doesn't have tummy pains. I wasn't convinced.

After a few weeks, we started a challenge by reintroducing the high fructose foods. He seemed to tolerate them well as long as he doesn't eat too much fruit each day. However, his behaviour has been foul! He seems more angry than ever, and last week I was wondering if he may be ODD. The Magic 123 which worked well for so long, now has no impact as he is just so defiant.

So, I started FAILSAFE eating 6 days ago. We haven't done it perfectly as his diet is very restricted due to food allergies and the fructose intolerance. But I've removed the high salicylate items, particularly tomatoes, strawberries and cantelope; and we're really just having the good ol meat and 3 veg for tea every night. I've cut his fruit intake to 1 serve every 2-3 days.

Day 1 perfect behaviour although it was still like walking on egg shells.

Day 2 bad morning, good afternoon.

Day 3 good behaviour a little less eggshells!

Day 4, 5, 6 great behaviour.

When things are good he is the perfect gentleman, well-mannered a real angel. But when things aren't going his way he still gets grumpy but most of the time he can now control the anger. A week or more ago, he just couldn't.

Update 3 months later after doing the elimination diet with a dietitian: Things went really well for some time. However, my son was desperate for some of the non-failsafe foods, particularly tomato sauce and jam. So I gradually caved in, and allowed him to have some. Initially it was a little bit every few days, then a little each daily. Although I'm still careful with his diet, he mustn't be able to tolerate even these quantities as we've started to notice some of the same old behaviour. The salicylates seem to have a cumulative effect on him. Whilst his behaviour hasn't been as aggressive or defiant, I'm certainly noticing that he is loud and unsettled. He can't concentrate on playing with his toys, but instead races around the house and jumps on the furniture! So this week were back on failsafe - strictly! – Carly, by email.

What the researchers say: (See page 14 of the RPAH Elimination Diet Handbook 2009 available from www.allergy.net.au): 'Having excessive amounts of fruit especially fruit juice and dried fruit can cause symptoms such as bloating, reflux, abdominal discomfort, wind and diarrhoea. Although incomplete fructose absorption can cause stomach and bowel symptoms, it does not cause other symptoms such as headaches, fatigue or skin rashes … improvement of symptoms after going onto a low fructose diet is most likely to be due to the simultaneous reduction of intake of natural chemicals in fruits and vegetables'.

[946] 160b, 635: Poisoning my family with 635 and annatto (October 2010)

When I started to really read food labels, I was horrified by the fact that I was poisoning our whole family - especially with 635 and annatto. You asked me how we are affected by these additives.

635 - Myself (main symptom is migraines): dried, red lips. It looks like I have lipstick on. I feel dehydrated and get migraine style headaches. Photosensitivity in my sight. Lethargy. Unfulfilled feeling of thirst. Frequent urination that seems very diluted. Mmy 4 yo son (main symptom is defiance): dried, red lips also. Dehydration and thirst. Frequent urination. Sooky or whingy type of demeanor. My 2 yo daughter (main symptom is urticaria): After having a piece of bacon the size of a 10 cent piece, it sent her into massive hives. It seemed like she had a headache or faceache and she screamed at a high pitch and then cried for about 20 mins. I nearly called an ambulance. Very out of character for her and she barely cries for more than a minute normally. Our 635 foods were French Onion Soup Powder – I would use in casseroles, potato bake, soups - Smiths brand Crisps, sausages from the butcher, tinned soup such as Spring Lamb with Vegetables, and takeaway BBQ Chicken and chips.

Annatto (160b) - Myself: insomnia, anxiousness, a shaky type of sensation sometimes - a bit hard to articulate it but it's sort of like I have a vibration or fluttering going on in my body. I "snap" easily and it does not take much to make me get angry. My son: Difficulty falling asleep. Disturbed night sleeps. Silly behaviour and noises like a monkey (jumps around, clumsy, unable to sit still and focus for longer than 5 mins). Sometimes aggressive with no apparent trigger. Unpredictable around other children. My daughter: disturbed sleep. She was a good sleeper but started to go away from her past pattern of falling asleep by herself and changed into shorter sleeps and waking often at night. Once we took it out of her diet she started to sleep through the night and sleeps for a solid 2 hour stint during her day nap. Our annatto foods were Kraft singles, yoghurts (with Bob the Builder) and ice cream. – Rose, by email

[947] An open letter to the Health Commissioner in my state about pharmaceutical labelling (October 2010)

I'd like to bring to your attention the outcome of my 3 1/2 year old daughter after taking Cephalexin or commonly known as Keflex. My daughter is intolerant to artificial colours, flavours and preservatives. The reaction should she eat foods with them in is the following:

· Lots of violent anger, frustration, screaming, yelling, temper tantrums off the scale

· Throwing objects, hitting people, hitting herself

· Will not listen to otherwise normal instructions

· Sleeplessness, very unsettled at night

This is exactly what happened after 4 days of taking Cephalexin (chemart brand) of Keflex...... My problem is that because in Australia it isn't legal for pharmaceutical companies to list their ingredients on the bottle/box it is very hard for the consumer to know what they are feeding themselves and their families. I had to ask the pharmacist, who looked it up for me, but lo and behold no numbers just a bunch of foreign chemical names, some of which I was able to decipher and found them to be detrimental to my daughters intolerance.

How come a packet of lollies can manage to fit a list of ingredients on it, but a big bottle of medicine can't .... I find it negligent of the pharmaceutical companies and the Australian Government to not tell the consumers what they are taking.

Why does children's medication have artificial colours and preservatives in that aren't necessary in a bottle that has an expiry of only 30 days anyway - it's really really bad and something needs to be done..... I refer you to this page to see how many people are affected..... Medication factsheet

Why doesn't Western Australia take a stand and enforce much needed changes on these pharmaceutical companies... some of the additives are banned in some countries - doesn't that tell us something? – thanks to Tiffany

[916] AAaaaaaaagh! - Reaction to Colour Free Panadol medication (June 2010)

My 5-year-old son has been kept completely free of preservatives, flavours, flavour enhancers and colours for just over 12 months to control behaviour and it has worked wonderfully!

Recently, he had a temperature so I very hesitantly gave him Colour Free Panadol (and only the minimum dose.) Oh my God what a nightmare! Since giving it to him, he went back to his pre diet ways, crying non-stop, angry, and rages for the stupidest reasons - completely irrational. It took 4½ horrible days to get out of his system. We had periods where he lay there and would hit, kick and throw anything he could get his hands on, till he would wear himself out - not a nice thing to witness - and of course the night terrors that he had in the past returned. I am reminded of how much of a nightmare my life was prior to going additive-free. Yet other than being highly food sensitive he is a perfectly healthy, intelligent 5-year-old.

Are there any other options for reducing a child's temperature that will not result in him going crazy for days afterwards? (Katie, by email – and see Q&A)

[905] 160b: Screaming, angry, yelling, defiant and hysterical (June 2010)

Our journey through the numbers maze has recently brought us face to face with 160b. We have discovered through accidental trial and error that our 5 year old daughter who can be the most bright, fun, playful and intelligent little girl can be reduced to a little monster by this "natural" additive. It is so horrible to watch. When I know that she has had something with 160b, we wait for the ticking time bomb. It is usually anywhere from a few hours later it starts and can last for a day or more ... she turns into a screaming, angry, yelling, defiant and hysterical little girl. It breaks my heart. She knows why she gets like that, but there is no reasoning with her when she is in that place. We just wait for her to fall asleep ... only to wake up in the morning like a bear with a sore head.

We first became aware of 160b about a year and a half ago. Custard was the culprit. My mum was staying with us at the time and she was amazed as well when we found out that the custard was the link to her behaviour. She would have the custard at night as dessert and hey presto in the morning the grumpy bum would awake. Cranky, whingey, defiant and tantrums. It would take around about 24 hours for her to come back to us! Ice cream is another one. Every Sunday we would all go down and get icecreams ... same thing (of course this is all in hindsight). Monday morning our alter ego/grumpy daughter would wake up and it would take until about Wednesday to get back to some sort of normalcy only to repeat the cycle again the following Sunday. Now we buy the Peters vanilla icecream and natural icecream cones without colour and have our Sunday icecreams at home. – Sarah B, NSW

[881] 160b: Week-long rages from annatto 160b (November 2009)

Our family has been (mostly) failsafe since our older son was diagnosed with autism and multiple food intolerance in 2003.

Last year for some months I was allowing a chocolate coated icecream on a stick containing annatto 160b, once a week I bought a box to share with the kids after shopping.

I had thought it would be ok as our very food sensitive older son didn't react noticeably to the 160b challenge.

Our now 5 year old younger son's behaviour rapidly went downhill until he was a truly horrible little boy, who physically attacked his siblings, flew off the handle at the slightest little thing, roaring and shaking with anger, things were broken in our house including a glass door and a bucket over his brother's head which drew blood! The behaviour followed a pattern each week of a couple of truly horrible days slowly getting less awful over the course of a week. So I had already figured out it was a food eaten once a week, around shopping day, but still hadn't thought of the icecream. Of course as soon as I woke up to it, the icecream was out the door, and our lovely boy and calm home returned. I've since tested annatto 160b a few times both deliberately and accidently and the horrible week long rage returned. Annatto 160b would have to be one of our family's most hated baddies! - Karen, Qld

[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 sals and amines in flavours - they are only suitable for people who are additive-free)

[806] Story [342] Part 2: Helpless, hopeless depression five years on (June 2009)

I wrote story 342 (Helpless, hopeless depression due to salicylates: I have suffered depression since at least age 15 and am 38 now …) five years ago when I was relatively new to Failsafe, about a year and a half in. It has taken me a long time to figure out all the finer points, and I'm probably still learning. But it's a journey back to myself. I am now not the same person I was even five years ago, discovering new parts to me all the time, as I take back control. The secret for me is to keep looking, recording what I eat, and asking questions.

When I have too much of the chemicals that I react to (I can tolerate a bit more of the three natural chemicals now) the following happens: amines make me angry, like ODD. Salicylates (now) make me vague and panicky, uptight with others, because I can't think straight. Glutamates make me cry, uncontrollably sad. Synthetic antioxidants make me very anxious, but it's a build up effect. I didn't realise this for a long time, as I very rarely have too much of things like take away hot chips, until a recent long holiday. I also suspect soy and dairy as having a build up effect on my mood, and must be totally gluten free. I only took out gluten about 1.5 years ago, as I still had some unexplained joint pain. Didn't realise it was connected with my moods, till I came off it and had severe withdrawals -

headaches, depression, diarrhoea. On challenging it, I had severe depression, disconnection with reality, had trouble making my body respond to my brain, like I couldn't make a decision to move, and terrible anxiety. So even though I was doing very well on Failsafe and not gluten free, I'm doing even better off gluten. My body just doesn't want it back now, and I sure don't either! – by email, Vic

[655] 'She screamed most of the time' - behaviour and bedwetting (September 2008)

I can't express how elated my entire family was to discover failsafe eating about five years ago. We have all benefited especially my granddaughter Zoe who was around three (and eating lots of bread with 282) at the time and out of control. She screamed most of the time, threw tantrums, tried to hurt her baby sister, threw anything within her reach, was so so angry with the world and wet the bed most nights. My daughter who was a single mum at the time would ring me up in despair and I would go and help her to give her a break. One day Zoe just sat on the floor and screamed and screamed. I asked her what was the matter, why was she so sad and she said she didn't know she just couldn't stop crying.

I was working as a Teacher's Aide Special and I happened to mention Zoe's behaviour to the teacher I was working with and she told me about your book Fed Up. She brought the book in for me to read and it was like a gift from heaven. Zoe's mum started her on the diet straight away and what a new child we had within days. The screaming stopped, the tantrums stopped, the bed wetting stopped and she started to smile and laugh again. A happy little girl at last. She is almost nine now and a most delightful intelligent child who puts all her energy into dancing and singing. However, on occasions when she does eat 'Cranky food' she goes off the deep end or 'cuckoo' as her sister says. Zoe is now aware of what she can and can't eat. When we went shopping she would carry the list of 'Avoid these Food Additives' but now she just remembers them.

I put myself on the diet as well as I was suffering severe hot flushes (see story [679] Menopausal symptoms, hot flushes and failsafe]. ... My entire family believes in Failsafe and we all avoid the nasties and live a healthier happier life. The funny thing is I am like a tester for Zoe: if I react then so does she.

I will just add that my daughter now has a 5-week-old baby boy - she stuck to failsafe while she was pregnant and she is still on it now while she is breast feeding and her little boy is the best baby, feeds and sleeps. - *by email*

[678] 'Postnatal depression' due to fish oil capsules (September 2008)

I've recently noticed that I get really grumpy when taking a certain brand of super strength fish oil capsules. I started thinking I was suffering from post natal depression as I could feel the anger start inside me and build really fast and grow bigger. A bit hard to describe but I had never had this feeling before. I forgot to take them for a while which is what made me realise it was the capsules. - *Carole, by email*

(see our Supplements factsheet for similar reports)

[645] From utter brat to affectionate, quiet and well behaved in 5 weeks (May 2008)

I have been so inspired by Failsafe, I feel like I have a different child from the utter brat five weeks ago. My seven year-old had got to the point of having no friends, was to be suspended from school, was continually at the principal's office, hitting and biting both parents etc. I had numerous meetings with his teacher, he was seeing the school counsellor, psychologists, psychiatrists, social skills training, but no change was occurring. My husband and I were in constant disagreement with him and each other over his behaviour. This is the 5th week he has been on the diet, and he is becoming the lovely child I always knew he could be. He's affectionate, quietly spoken, well behaved and non-violent. Games and toys which were banned due to his anger have been given back to him, he's keen to converse and work hard at school. He has stated that he doesn't hear the voices telling him to be bad any more, and his eyes are clear and focused. Best of all, he has fully embraced the diet, mainly as it consists of many of his favourite foods - pikelets, french toast, pancakes, white chocolate and vanilla icecream. Knowing that he was allowed to have these on his diet was a great selling point. He will check if he is allowed to have something and is happy if the answer is 'no'. I try to offer alternatives to him, to keep him happy and to show him that it's not a punishment to be on the diet, that there are alternatives. He had an outing with his father last weekend, and said that he had Macdonalds, and enjoyed the look of horror on my face, only to tell me he was joking. He's even helping me to cook his favourites - Merrill, by email.

[638] Getting to the bottom of asthma/rhinitis (May 2008)

We have gone failsafe before but I never managed to get to get to the bottom of the problem for my son's asthma/allergic rhinitis. I knew it was food, and suspected colours and preservatives. The dietitian you recommended was very good and we had good results with the elimination diet. Because of the asthma she wouldn't challenge MSG, preservatives or colours. It turns out our son started to wheeze about day 6 of the salicylate challenge. After two days of the amine challenge we gave up because he was so ANGRY (but not wheezing). Since then we have been to an allergist and discovered he is allergic to dust mites, some grass pollens and horse hair (we knew this one). We know we can minimise his symptoms and reactions to these allergens by keeping his diet failsafe, and are considering the de-sensitization path for at least the dust mites – email, Vic.

[630] 'Depression - no need for Beyond Blue due to diet' (February 2008)

We did the elimination diet for my 13 month-old son (see story [634] Silent reflux, gastro, extreme nappy rash – months of needless medication). The other amazing thing is that after two weeks, my husband is a completely different man. He is no longer depressed, low, moody, disengaged, angry at everyone, abusive to himself (putting himself down). I had been on the verge of asking him to see a GP who is a specialist in beyond blue stuff but now there is no need. Since the diet, he is helpful as anything, has positive comments, is physically touching the kids so much more, is enthusiastic, has initiative and is just an all round changed man!!!!! He can feel the difference himself as well. My mum has been blown away with his changed attitude to everyone. – Fiona, ACT

[565] One-liners (May 2007)

- Salicylates make me wired, pee a lot and cause dark circles under my eyes; amines make me very angry and I wake up with palpitations and sweats – email, USA.

[411] Within two weeks of altering his diet he has become happy and affectionate (May 2006)

Thanks so much! I'm buying DVDs for all my family members because Sue's book "Fed Up" has turned my family completely around. We have in the past month made every effort to remove additives and preservatives from our diet and the results have been astounding. My 13 year old son has been angry and depressed for most of his life, to the point that we have had him at a psychologist but within two weeks of altering his diet he has become happy and affectionate, constantly telling me he loves me and that he no longer has a foggy head! We are yet to do the elimination diet (I'm waiting for my husband to finish the book) but have already noted that salicylates do seem to be a problem for some of us. The difference has been so enormous that at least three of my friends have gone out and bought Fed Up having seen our improvements. I think I have also singlehandedly cut the sales of Tim Tams in our area quite dramatically since we found out via Sue that the beautiful chocolate colour is not from chocolate! In addition, I've noticed a couple of unexpected benefits: firstly, our taste buds seem to have improved (for example, I have never been able to stomach the richness of lamb before but suddenly can) and secondly, by going back to basics with the cooking we seem to be developing a much closer bond as a family... I'm not sure I can explain it, but it's something to do with putting love and care into everything we cook. A sort of return to old values, I suppose. – reader, Sydney.

[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

[390] “I was angry because I couldn’t fall asleep” (March 2006)

My 6 ½ year old son, Tim (not his real name) is currently undergoing investigation of mixed depressive disorder with anxiety and obsessive ruminations. We have used the failsafe diet in the past with one of our other children, but had not ever thought of foods being linked to Tim’s mood problems. When you mention the “gifted and depressed” child in your recent talk my ears immediately pricked up and took note. Tim has been identified as highly gifted and everyone has been saying that is the cause of his problems but I have always felt there was something else underlying that was contributing. We will be contacting our GP today and hopefully starting the failsafe diet ASAP…

Two months later … Since starting the elimination diet Tim has not self harmed once! He is much calmer and has noticed this in himself. He no longer seems to be as restless and has been falling asleep easily at a reasonable time in the evenings. We started with the salicylates challenge this week and there seemed to be no reaction, until day 5/6 when we started to notice his behaviour was getting worse. We will stop this challenge tonight and wait to try some other groups. His GP and Clinical Psychologist are both thrilled with the change as are well!

One week later ….After I emailed you we finally had the BIG reaction we were looking for. It happened on Day 7 of the salicylate challenge - we had already stopped the challenge that morning. Tim went to bed as normal then began to write swear words all over his bed, his sheets and his body. ("I was angry with you because I couldn't fall asleep") This is the behaviour and obsessive ruminations this poor boy was experiencing on a daily basis before. - WA

[364] Uncontrollable rages – 9 year old would constantly try to hurt himself (March 2005)

My 9 year old son started on the failsafe diet 3 months ago and his is teacher this year said it is like having a totally different child in the class. Before the diet it was impossible to live peacefully. He would have uncontrollable tantrums that would last hours where he would scream, cry, kick, headbang etc and we didn't know what would set him off. When he was going through these rages he would constantly try to hurt himself and kept screaming at me that he was no good, he was a bad boy and I'd be better off with another little boy - it broke my heart every time it happened. I think the longest both of us went without any sleep because of a 'rage' was three days.

The crunch came when he went off at school after lunch one day and it took me hours to calm him down and then time to pacify the school. We were both at our wits end. When I decided that we needed to go failsafe I totally cleaned out my pantry and freezer of everything that wasn't 'safe' and went shopping. My son has adapted really well to the new foods and never complains about it. Because I had no angry foods in the house neither of us looked for them and my son was content to eat what was available. He now sticks strictly to the diet and will not eat anything unless he reads the label first and if he doesn't understand the label he says no because mum hasn't said he could have it and he doesn't know if it's 'safe'.

I am so proud of him today. From a child who was on the verge of being expelled from Year 3 to a happy one in just over 3 months is amazing. It is a joy to get him from school each day as he always comes out skipping/running and grinning like a busted watermelon - no more tears. He has told me more than once he is feeling better now he is not so angry all the time. We are one very grateful household. – by email

[356] One-liners (Nov 2004)

- Our yellow colouring (102) challenge was like going back to the dark ages – my daughter was moody, angry, cried for nothing eg. being told to move, stop screaming etc, she was aggressive, confrontational, "raaahed" at me and her sister, spat and threw things at us, cut off her 2 year old sister's hair and woke next morning still in a bad mood. – WA

[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 so 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 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 what ever 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 kindy 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

[242] Just your average kiddies with no diagnosed problems (February 2003)

Thank you for your insightful and inspiring books! We have 3 children (2, 4, 6 yrs) and I have always been interested in their nutrition, and this is what made me pick up your book in the bookshop. Boy, I was blown away! I had no idea that additives could have the effects you described (I had always known about the obvious ones, like red or green cordials...) and I was very inspired to see what affect the elimination diet would have on our kids.

Well, the effect was instant! We haven't had any problems with ADHD or anything like that, but still, our kids just calmed right down! A few days after being on the diet, I had to take them all to the doctor (you know what that's like, waiting for an hour, three kids...) and they all just sat on the seats - didn't move! So I thought that was a fluke. The next day we all went food shopping ... they all just walked along nicely, the 2 yr old sitting quite patiently in the trolley. No bribes required, no food and drinks and toys (or lollipops) etc needed. Wonderful! Everything seems to be like that now - we recently had a 14hr plane flight where I looked after the kids alone, and they literally just sat on the seats or slept! They were amazing and I was so proud of them.

This whole diet has brought out the wonderful child in our first born (who I've been aiming this at..), all her sibling rivalry and anger has literally disappeared! She comes home from school happy to see me (not the enemy) and talks eagerly about her day and spontaneously hugs and kisses etc (had been quite reserved and standoffish).

Your book has changed our whole family dynamics, and I can honestly say that I really love and enjoy our children so much now, when you take away the constant battles, discipline dramas, rivalry, moodiness, and tiptoeing around the eldest to try and keep the peace.

We have been on this diet for over 3 months and have started the challenges, and gee, when the anger and moodiness comes back, it changes everything to where we used to be! It's just not worth it!!! A peaceful and happy home, with happy children (and parents) is wonderful.

I just wanted to pass this on, that the diet makes a huge difference on just your average kiddies, with no diagnosed problems. Thank you! - by email

[233] He was a very angry child (February 2003)

I discovered your book at the end of November 2002 and when I read the first page about Rebecca as a baby I thought 'OMG, change the name to Rhys and this is MY son'.

I read the book from front to back in 2 days and then we started the elimination diet with our 9 year old son.

He was a very angry child and was getting into trouble at school due to his behaviour and I was at my wit's end.

School has been back for 5 days now and Rhys's teacher from last year said to me yesterday 'Rhys is a different child, the change in him is absolutely amazing and I am seriously thinking about doing this elimination diet myself.'

I was on top of the world!!! I was happy for the rest of the day. When I picked Rhys up from school yesterday afternoon, the assistant principal said to Rhys 'I have been hearing very good reports about your wonderful behaviour, young man. I am very proud of you and very pleased with what I have been hearing.'

Rhys was stoked and so was I. We had seen the improvements at home but it meant so much to me and made me feel so good to know that the teachers at school see it too.

One teacher commented this morning 'If only we could get all parents to TRY this elimination diet then I think we would have a lot less troublesome kids'

THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH SUE. I will forever be grateful to you and your books. And if you feel your ears burning occasionally it is probably because I am singing your praises to people. You really have helped us through a very difficult time when I didn't think I would cope. - reader, NSW

[225] Andrew Driffield's quest for gold (November 2002)

My name is Elizabeth Jenkins and I am Andrew Driffield's Mother. It sometimes feels as if I have always been known as "that’s Andrew’s Mother".

Andrew was a beautiful but exhausting child. He went to sleep at a normal time … then woke about 1am and stayed that way until about 5am, then dozed till about 7am. As he got older he would climb out of his bed, and head straight for my side of the bed. He would lie there quietly in my arms, only needing the security and warmth. Until he was fifteen years old this remained a habit. My memory of these events is a blur as by the time he was five, exhaustion had replaced recall.

Andrew’s only word was "Mum" until he was about four. His language was so obscure that I had to translate even to his father. He was destructive. He destroyed toys, other children, and household furniture. To do any housework that would have taken my eyes of him for a second, I had to lock the doors and windows. I vividly remember the day guests arrived at the front door and Andrew left unnoticed by the back door. The panic started as we realised he was not amongst the visiting children until a phone call from the local supermarket let us know that a little blonde haired boy was riding the rocking horse in the entrance. When asked how they knew whom to ring, they said that he was being guarded by a small black dog called Benjie who was wearing his identification. Horses and dogs remain a big part of Andrew’s life to this day.

When Andrew was five we went to a Specialist Unit. He was tested and we were observed as a family unit. Andrew evidently passed but I failed. I was told I was overprotective, and I needed to allow Andrew to discover consequences for himself. That afternoon he wanted to ride his bike with the other boys - and he was hit by a car. From then on I decided I wanted a live five year old, not a dead one.

Andrew started on an early intervention program at Newcastle University where he attended a unit with one-on-one teaching for the morning and then returning to the public school for the afternoon classes. It was a disaster. It was the beginnings of ‘integration’.

They failed to see how children who are already different do not gain acceptance by being treated differently. In one year he learnt to write his name ‘Andrew’ with difficulty. They were still claiming that he was just a slow learner and would catch up. My observation was, had I had a monkey in the same circumstances, I would have had the same outcome. The public school wanted to expel him. He was disruptive, angry and aggressive - and he was only in first class.

A Steiner School had opened in the region and after five minutes of hearing their philosophies I sent Andrew. It was like rain and sunshine on a small plant. He thrived. He learnt to listen, he learnt to speak and the aggression gradually decreased. Andrew was now nine years old and still a handful. I eventually took him to a pediatrician, left him in the waiting room, and told the doctor I was there under false pretensions, that I’d come as a stressed adult, remembering I was still to blame for all his behaviors. Andrew was brought in, and off he went - over the desk, under the desk, etc. As luck would have it, the pediatrician had just attended a conference run by a leading Sydney professor who had described Andrew’s features and symptoms to a T. We were sent to the professor in Sydney, who ordered blood tests and announced that Andrew had what he called a fractured X chromosome. He said that when enough children registered similar symptoms it would be given a name. That was in 1983, prior to the genetic testing available today, and the recognition of FRAGILE X.

At this stage Simon, Andrew's older brother, started riding horses, and I was instructing at pony club, so I enrolled Andrew as well because he was always wandering off and worrying me. I threw him up on a horse just to know where he was.

He had a natural ability, and somehow the horses seem to know that they had to protect him. It was also the only animal that Andrew could hug and not cause a decapitation.

Andrew tried harder than anyone I know, and still does. Riding put Andrew on a par with his peers, so when he got upset about not being able to read and write like other kids, we were able to point out that if they tried to ride they would probably fall off - everybody had something they were good at and could do well, and his was riding.

Andrew became Pony Club rider of the year in 1986, runner-up in 1987.

Andrew who still couldn’t read or write, managed to learn dressage tests by walking on the lounge room floor from letter to letter and learning it by pattern, followed by replica in size to the real thing he walked, trotted and cantered around on his own two feet, THEN he graduated to four hooves for the real thing. He also learnt to find and remember his way around a cross country courses. For this we photographed Andrew and his horse jumping each jump at the practice day, put them into a small album, and it was his bedtime story for the two weeks prior to the competition. He also learnt to remember show jumping courses. He had the very best of coaches and everyone liked him, because he kept trying and never gave up.

In the late 80s my first marriage broke up and Andrew and I moved to Darwin and it was here that I met my new husband Stephen Jenkins.

One of Andrew’s goals was to attend 'normal' high school and eventually he did. Darwin High School had a wonderful Special Education Unit, headed by an incredible women, Lauren Tinapple. She remains a devoted Andrew fan to this day, and has always been there for me in the disastrous times. There were times when I felt we had pushed Andrew past his capabilities, as he didn’t seem to fit into an acceptable mold. His expectations exceeded his abilities, and my heart ached on many occasions. Even though he was teased and made fun off, he is glad he did it, and developed yet another strength of character. Through various government employment options Andrew tried many jobs, some of which were total failures. He was happiest when he went to the Katherine Rural College and did a six month Jackaroo course which they then extended into a ‘work experience’ for an additional six months as he needed extra time to learn. He eventually got a live-in job with a family in the middle of the territory for six months before the wet season set in.

Andrew is so driven, and one of his goals has always been to ride for Australia in the three day event just like his old pony club friend Matt Ryan does. It was hard to say to him or find a way of saying that it would be very hard for him to be selected, but that did not deter him.

Andrew was accepted as student at the NSW Equestrian Centre with Heath and Rozzie Ryan, who had been his instructors since he was seven. He lived, breathed and rode horses with the best for six months. He finally realised that this goal may be a little too hard to reach. In 1997 it was suggested that Andrew join Riding for the Disabled. As his abilities exceeded all the students, Andrew became an Assistant Coach at RDA and loved helping all the children to ride and benefit from the experience.

In the October of 1997 Andrew rode as a member of the Northern Territory State Team at the RDA National Championships. He was now riding and competing against others of similar disabilities. Andrew started to shine, placing 2nd in his first National competition, coming closer to his goals.

To allow Andrew to reach his full potential, and access regular coaching, we made the major move to South Australia. Since then he has improved each year, and in 1999 was selected on the RDA National Squad. He is now among the top riders in Australia and hopes to be selected to represent Australia at the next World Championships.

This is quite an achievement especially when his Grade, Grade 3E for intellectual disability, is not recognised at international competitions, so he rides against able minded, but disabled body riders in Grade 3, a grade above his, and riding against the likes of Julie Higgins who won double gold at the Sydney Paralympics.

By far the most significant change in Andrews's life has been our discovery of Sue Dengate’s book FED UP in 1998. Through use of the Fed Up diet and avoiding all intake of natural and artificial chemicals that Andrew reacts to, his mind is clearer, and he is able to control his actions and tempers. As he says, he hates it when he eats the wrong foods because it makes him feel bad and depressed. Before discovering the diet we had some hellish times, including major temper tantrums which in the main were triggered or caused by the wrong foods. Andrew is 6 feet tall and very strong and broke his Step-father's ribs one Xmas, while giving him a Xmas morning hug, so if he is in a food related temper tantrum, beware.

Andrew still aims to reach his goal of representing Australia and is hoping for selection onto the Australian Paralympic Team.

Andrew was recently assessed by a leading psychologist, and has a measured Full IQ of around 65 and an Overall Adaptive Functioning cognitive measurement below the 1st percentile, so it is amazing that Andrew is not doing what a specialist once told us was all that was possible, to expect nothing more than having him working in a sheltered workshop doing repetitive tasks. Although eligible for a full disability pension Andrew has foregone it to work 5 days a week on a recycling truck so he can afford to reach his goals and keep his mind and body active instead of sitting at home watching TV.

If there is one phrase that says it all about Andrew it is these words from Calvin Coolidge: Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. And without the fed up diet, he certainly would not be where he is today, in mind or ability.

[214] No answers from specialists (October 2002)

I read the last two newsletters on your website and was amazed with the information. I am just starting to look at food additives/preservatives as our 6 year old son has difficult behaviours at times. We are vegetarian and eat a healthy diet but we have noticed these behaviours increasing since starting school...he is restless, has difficulty concentrating, can be anti-social and unable to share, aggressive (punching himself) and teary...however, this is not all the time...he can be calm, delightful and co-operative one day and then highly emotional the next. Specialists have no answers for us re the cause but after him having his first Redskin a few weeks ago and some Arnotts Family assorted cream biscuits (another first) he just went crazy and was angry and aggressive for the following 3 hours. – email

[207] 282: " very moody, stressed out and anxious " (September 2002)

I have always eaten a lot of bread, mainly wholemeal bread, muffins and bagels. I would often eat 6 English muffins a day. I used to get very moody, stressed out and anxious, in fact the people who I work with have asked me numerous times if everything is ok. I used to get very angry quickly and then in a split second I would feel like crying my eyes out. I also had an ongoing rash on my body, a feeling of ants crawling over my skin, was very tired and couldn't get up in the morning.

I really didn't want to be like this any more, so when I saw the previews on the telly about the bread preservative I watched with much interest, and decided to stop eating bread. Within a day I was feeling better, not irritable or anxious, and actually feeling happy, a change to how I normally feel. After three days I felt really different, better than I have for 6 or 7 years. Even my boss has said he's seen a huge change in me. I used to be a school teacher. If the kids in my class were feeling like I was, I can understand why they behaved the way they did. - Tim from Melbourne

[206] 282: A teenager talks about the bread preservative 282 (September 2002)

My eldest son (15) has always been very calm, but even he notices an anger building up following the ingestion of 282. Everyone puts the blame of "out of control children" on to working mothers and their subsequent tiredness but what's in our "healthy" meals? Here is our conversation last night, verbatim:

T: "Mum, can you put down "no 282" in our bread at school camp?"

M: "Do you find 282 affects you that badly?"

T: "HELL YEAH, I find a huge almost uncontrollable anger building up inside me, for no reason, and I feel I just want to punch something or someone. I don't, though, of course."

M: "Is 282 worse than MSG?"

T: "Yes, sort of. MSG gives me a really flat, dead feeling along with the anger, but the effects of MSG are easier to control."

This is from a young man who poo poohed my suggestions a year ago, when I put the whole family on the elimination diet because it was easier for us all to do it than just the younger boys. He is now the mediator when conflicts arise. I, too, am affected badly by 282.- by email

[174] Fed Up "turned my life upside down" (September 2002)

I have just read Fed Up and I must say that it has turned my life upside down. It has been two weeks and I am a believer. My son is seven and scored 92 on your checklist. I have been to doctors, psychologists, etc. He is doing very badly at school, socially and with learning difficulties (diagnosed with dyslexia) and it has all come to a head in the last six months when he started having angry outbursts. These have settled in the last two weeks. This is the first light at the end of the tunnel I have seen since I realised my son was different from the norm at age three. Finally I can do something to help rather than just worry. - email, NT

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

Our family is what is commonly referred to as a "blended family". When we were arried 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 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 way from him. We enrolled him into preschool. We felt that perhaps if he were to ecome 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 aediatrician 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, exceptfor 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

[135] Really happy and delightful child as all food was home cooked (December 2001)

"I have a ten year old daughter who is generally a pleasant, well behaved child. However as she has progressed through school she has become quite rude, disrespectful and at times very angry. We thought it was just the influences of TV and other children ... One weekend she went for a 2 night sleepover with a friend whose family had just discovered they were coeliacs (all food was home cooked). Instead of coming home exhausted and out of control she came home really happy and delightful to be with ... one day in the not too distant future we will do the elimination diet ..."- reader, email

[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

[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

[031] 282: Results of bread preservative (282) challenge (January 2000)

You said you were interested to hear how our challenges went. Well, what can I say - they weren't fun times.

We challenged nitrates and amines and yes, my daughter does become irritable a day or two after eating foods containing these chemicals. Her mood only lasts around 24 - 48 hours and so this isn't too bad. I can tolerate this but as for the 282 bread challenge, I never want to see another slice of bread or crumpet or anything else that contains this preservative.

I felt cruel doing this challenge but as you say, we do need to know if she reacts to this preservative. I could see her mood slowly changing by the fifth day on the challenge and from then on it only got worse.

My food diary reads:

day 5 - cries easily

day 6 - cries easily, slightly cranky

day 7 - cries easily, sour faced (stopped challenge)

day 8 - angry, irritable, fighting with us and sibling

day 9 - foul mood

day 10 - terrible mood, irritable, cranky, easily angered

day 11 - mood still bad but improving

day 12 - bad mood, irritable, angry, stirring siblings

day 13 - irritability improving; still fires up but not as frequently

day 14 - mood much more pleasant

day 15 - pleasant child

The one good thing to come from this challenge was that it opened my husband's eyes up and he has now started reading labels and watches carefully what our children eat. - mother of two

[026] "Change just about unbelievable" (November 1999)

Thank you for writing Fed Up.

A friend of mine showed me your book after I was speaking to her about my daughter and the problems I was having with her.

My daughter was a very short tempered, angry and defiant little 4½ year old. It got to a stage where I was so upset and couldn't understand how my sweet little girl could so easily turn into this nasty little girl.

To cut a long story short, I thought anything was worth a go and so I read your book. We have now been eliminating all the additives and preservatives that you suggest for nearly two weeks and the change in my daughter is just about unbelievable.

We may continue further into the diet as she has a terribly stuffy nose every morning.

Our whole family is now happier and healthier thanks to you.

Thank you so much for being so concerned for other people's health. You have given us our little angel back. - mother, Australia