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To Breathe Again

By John Upledger, DO, OMM

In September 2002, I received a letter from Marilyn Thomas, a physical therapist from Cincinnati, who asked me if I would consider taking a look at her son, Matthew. Before I even got to the end of the letter, I was irreversibly hooked.

Born November 15, 1991, Matthew Geier has spent his life struggling with the little things most of us take for granted. Delivered by emergency Caesarean section, Mathew was floppy and blue; his Apgar scores - a quick test performed right after birth to determine the newborn's physical condition - were alarmingly low. Within a few short hours he was intubated and placed on a respirator to help him breathe.

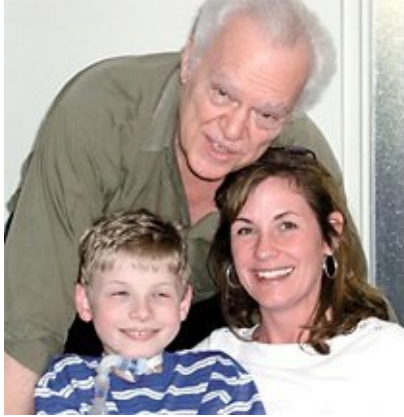
Fifteen days later Matthew was diagnosed with congenital central hypoventilation syndrome (CCHS), a rare breathing disorder characterized by apnea and right-sided heart failure. When he was 18-months old he received a pacemaker, but it didn't help. The doctors told Marilyn her son would be dependent on a ventilator for the rest of his life.

Years later, Matthew's breathing difficulties were compounded by symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which made it extremely hard for him to learn. According to Marilyn, Matthew would constantly snap his fingers; flap his hands; walk on his tiptoes; and experience a great deal of anxiety and "racing" thoughts.

Having taken a Cranio-Sacral Therapy (CST) class some years earlier, Marilyn began using CST on Matthew at bedtime to help him sleep. She soon noticed his symptoms improve, so she began working with another therapist to co-treat Matthew every week. Still, being his mother, she wisely recognized that she was too emotionally involved to treat him the way he really needed; that's when she wrote to me.

I first saw Matthew on February 20, 2003, at The Upledger Institute HealthPlex Clinical Services in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. My evaluation led me to believe that his breathing difficulties were secondary to

dysfunctions of his autonomic nervous system and his thoracic and diaphragmatic peripheral nerves. So we set about applying therapy to normalize these neurological dysfunctions.



Dr. Upledger with Matthew Geier and his mother, Marilyn Thomas, a Cincinnati physical therapist. During his time here, Matthew had a total of about a dozen sessions between me and staff therapists Roy Desjarlais, LMT, CST-D, and Rebecca Flowers Giles, OTR, SCP, CST-D. Together, we "opened up" his fourth ventricle and respiratory diaphragm, giving his body "permission" to do this on its own. Matthew's response was remarkable - even to those of us who are used to seeing the remarkable. For the first time since the day he was born, Matthew began breathing on his own without the ventilator.

Since returning to Cincinnati, Marilyn reports that ongoing CranioSacral Therapy has continued to help. She says Matthew was off the vent for five hours one day and four the next. His attitude has also undergone a dramatic change. I'll let Marilyn tell you about it in her own words:

"Matthew used to be so fearful, but he's really motivated now. He's able to converse for a much longer time; he stays on topic; his anxiety has gone down tremendously; and the symptoms of ADHD have diminished.

Even at school his teachers have noticed the difference. Before, he'd be on his feet; on his chair; shoes off; standing; sitting; jumping, all in a matter of five minutes. But when I observed him in class the other day, he sat for 120 minutes just attending to his work. The school nurse commented that Matthew seems like a different child.

This has been a miracle to us. To have someone look at us from a whole different perspective and say this is possible after being told for so many years what's impossible. Matthew feels like he's been empowered to experience his body and his life in a whole new way. He's more passionate than ever to

pursue his dream of one day being free of any mechanical support. I asked him recently, 'Is this scary for you?' 'No mom,' he said. 'It's not scary at all. I'm getting stronger.'"

Thank you, Matthew, for the inspiration you have provided to all of us to continue pursuing the impossible.

Click [here](#) for more information about John Upledger, DO, OMM.



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