

SOUMOJIT, the Winner over Autism Spectrum Disorder

Soumojit walked extra mile to overcome Autism Spectrum Disorder



1) Soumojit, the boy with ASD

Inclusive Outlook

Government of India along with the governments of the states and union territories (UTS) intends to implement the **Right to Education Act** in letter and spirit. In order to fulfil that mission, the authorities have taken several initiatives like **School Education Shagun (SE Shagun)** under the overarching **Sarba Shiksha Abhiyan** scheme to induct each and every child, belonging to the economically vulnerable sections of the society and living in the remote parts of the country, in national education system at elementary levels. Especially, **SE Shagun** initiative sets its goal to provide all children of age bracket eligible to be admitted in schools with equal educational opportunities and equitable learning outcome. Children with some disabilities, needing special cares, are also included in that scheme of things. Accordingly, Soumojit, a boy suffering from **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** has been inducted in schooling system with much effort taken by his parents and his teachers and a group of dedicated special educators.

Plight and struggle of Soumojit

Soumojit was then a 5-year-old impulsive boy who had been diagnosed with **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** with 75% per cent disability. He was detected with delayed communication skills, lack of ability to converse properly with others and poor eye contact. He was found with a slew of repetitive and stereotyped behaviours commonly found in children with ASD like hand flapping, thrashing, and arching his back, moaning and toe walking. The boy suffered from severe lung infection when he was only six months old and the attending doctor treated him with antibiotics, steroids and an inhaler. At that juncture the doctor noticed some behavioral problems in the child.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a condition related to brain development that impacts how an individual perceives and socializes with others, triggering problems in social interaction and communication. The disorder is also associated with limited and repetitive behavioural patterns. **Children with ASD and other behavioural disorders** are found to be behaving impulsively. Impulsivity is related to acting on a whim or without thought. Such behaviours exhibited by special children are mostly involuntary by nature.

Soumojit was in a tight spot

When asked to elaborate, his mother said that over the past three years since birth, Soumojit didn't sleep soundly at a stretch. The boy had some congenital sleep issues. He used to bite his classmates and teachers, spit on them. He used to make some growling noises. He couldn't speak even at the age of five. His mother informed that Soumojit had difficulty in staying in his seat steadily. He couldn't participate in classroom activities. He had a tendency of loitering and running in the corridors and rooms of the school. His doctor recommended enrolling him at **Birth to Three Services** – a learning program for special children. There his performance was remarkably improved gradually. He started to utter one or two words. Later on he was enrolled in services for children with special needs for his early childhood education. There he started receiving state-of-the-art physical, occupational, and speech therapy. He was also provided with group therapy for social skills and behavioural therapy.

Resource Room remedies

When Soumojit joined the Resource Room at the age of five, he could not sit still. He constantly kept running around the room, grabbing things off shelves. His parents were busy trying to control him, but in vain. He would respond to the questions asked by his parents but would not interact with an unknown person.



2) Soumojit in a stooping position with his mother, friends and their guardians in front of school building

After Special Education Remedies were provided for about a few weeks in 2017, Soumojit started showing some progress like trying to communicate in longer sentences and answering questions. However, he was still having problems with his academics. As it was a case of Autism, so trial and error methods were adapted by the Special Educators to improve his basic literacy and numerical skills, identification, recognition and naming of different objects.



3) Soumojit (extreme left) leaning on his mother with his teacher and peers in classroom

Soumojit’s mother mentioned that Special Educators had made him acquainted with the use of toilet.

Slowly he started paying attention when his parents were reading to him. Gradually he preferred playing with toys. His speech was improving. His ability to interact with other kids became more structured. Soumojit was visibly calmer than before. He had just started his preschool year. His parents noted that he stood out for “good behavior” among his preschool peers. His peers were reciprocating the kind of behavior he used to exhibit.

After two years of Special Education remedial teaching, by May 2019, Soumojit was almost 10 years old. “He could then speak well and behaved in more calm and composed manner. He had recovered from his “developmental delays,” as his parents remembered.

Game changing role of mentors

Mentors with their wisdom and care generally help significantly any normal individual to grow and develop. However, in this case the role they performed in the life of a child like Soumojit – who is often not accepted by others as he is different, who has to struggle a lot to fit in the socially acceptable norms and has had a difficult home and school life due to that struggle – is incomparably huge and game changing in dimension. It is also

revealed in this case that if a child afflicted with ASD has managed to build up a meaningful and unquestioning relationship with a mentor, that child can develop a stable identity and make progress in getting integrated in the socially acceptable age wise developmental norms.

Soumojit Das: Parent – Ashim Das (Father), Susmita Das (Mother)

Age: 10 years, Class: Special Education Remedial Teaching

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