

My joy and happiness - my child Haider Ali

" From the moment my son Haider was born, I was filled with joy and happiness as those ten little toes and ten little fingers made their way out of my womb. I clung to him tightly as doctors struggled to get me to give him up for his neonatal tests. As separation anxiety crippled me, the doctor entered the room with a solemn mood. He expressed his concern over the fact that Haider could not open his fists as they were clenched from the time of birth. I was confused, I had waited nine months for this miracle and there stood a doctor in front of me telling me about early signs of cerebral palsy.

Leaving that hospital I was filled with anxiety, fear, and sadness over the unknown. Would he open his fists? Will, he able to use his hands? Will he ever walk? I wept late into the night as the prospect of a troubled life for my child was too much for me to handle. The thought of him suffering, treatments, medication, everything frightened me. Those initial few years his condition worsened. Soon he lost all motor functions. My days consisted of bathing, feeding, and exercising Haider. He was on medication for behavioural problems as without it he would lose control.

As a mother, and as parents, my husband and I were desperate for a cure. The doctor had already made it clear that Haider's condition would not be cured, but as a mother, desperation always reasoned over science. A lady came along who encouraged us to be hopeful as she knew of a cure that would treat our child and 'fix' him within a month. We didn't even think twice.

Handing her money equal to three months of rent to make the medicine, we became hopeful. She never showed.

After countless phone calls, home visits, we realized all the information that she had given us were false. It was hard for me to accept that things would never change. I had already begun looking at schools for him. When I learned that it was all for nothing I was heartbroken.

One day Haider found me crying as I lay next to him. He moved his hands towards me and nudged me to come closer to him. As I did, he moved his wrists towards me and wiped the tears off my cheek and gave me a beaming smile. He started patting



my head, just like I would pat his, whenever he would cry in pain. At that moment, I felt guilty. Guilty because I realized my child was still a child. He could still feel sadness and still understand others around him. He could understand his mother was not alright and this one simple gesture turned my entire outlook around.

No longer was I looking for someone to 'fix' him because he did not need fixing. So what if he would never walk on his own, there are wheelchairs, so what if he would never be able to do things on his own, he always had me. I began looking past what he did not have and looked out for the things he could do despite his crippled limbs.

When I heard of Prabhat, I was hopeful. It's been a long time since Haider has been a part of the home-based services at Prabhat. His condition deters him from going to the Centre, so we have regular therapists who come home. They exercise his limbs to make them less stiff, teach him how to grip his hands, straighten his legs and sit upright. Tell him stories, show him colours and teach him textures. Every week, he sits eagerly by the door as Namrata ma'am arrives at 11am, to begin his therapy.

Not just that, they helped me. They helped me accept Haider the way he is, encouraged me to come to the Centre and mingle with mothers whose plight was like mine. I found so much emotional support in these powerful women who each had a story to tell, united by the strong force of motherhood.

The rest is history, and my life is filled with joy now. We are a family of 8 and there is never a dull moment. Although Haider has started becoming increasingly naughty. His favourite time of day is when his sisters come home and he can trouble them. He is just like any other teenager!"

- Reshma Ben (Haider Ali's mother)



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