



In June 2012 my daughter Lilly became a client of the Inland Regional Center Early Start Program. She was an interesting baby who wasn't like either of my other two girls. When Lilly began services with Early Start she didn't talk (yet), hardly understood what we were saying (yet) and outside of crying had little communication or interaction with the outside world. I loved this awesome little girl. She was my husband's answered prayer, as he had badly wanted another child. Lilly was our gift and we owed it to her to do everything we could to make her life outstanding. We couldn't wait to get started helping her.



We soon discovered there were many angels who would appear at just the right time to give us the guidance and information we needed. The first angel to enter our lives came from Inland Early Steps the ABA provider the Regional Center assigned us. Five days a week, for over a year, our therapist came to help not only Lilly, but me as well. She taught Lilly how to hold a crayon, pop a bubble and use simple tools. She taught me to communicate, understand and comfort my child. What this incredible woman did for our family is beyond words. She opened our daughter to us for the very first time. She taught us to enter her world, not just draw her into ours. She gave us patience, understanding, and the confidence to learn and grow together.



The progress was slow at first, with each new word and skill seeming to take weeks to accomplish. Something was happening within Lilly that we hadn't seen before - she was excited to learn and experience the world. She was no longer caught up in endless stimming but instead reaching out to know and understand the world around her. This was the turning point for my amazing child and when she kissed me for the first time I cried tears of immeasurable joy.

We were lucky Lilly got the Early Start experience for over a year and a half as it prepared her and me for the transition to school. It gave her a solid foundation of skills that have propelled her to excel in preschool. Lilly's Infant Services Coordinator helped us prepare for our first Individualized Education Plan and made the transition to school age services a breeze. She informed us about the IRC evaluation that takes place as a child turns age 3 and was evaluated for further services. Knowledge is power and what she shared was invaluable.

Lilly is currently in her 2nd year of preschool and she is thriving. People are just naturally drawn to Lilly, her infectious smile, and loving heart. She can write her alphabet, sing songs, play with other children, answer questions, and most important tell us she loves us. My beautiful daughter is an amazing example of the importance of early intervention. She is going to conquer the world with hard work, the Grace of God and her beautiful smile. I can't wait to see what she does next!



--Article contributed by Julia, mother and founder of Go Bananas support group