

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

So the Psychoeducational Assessment is done...Now what?

By Dr. Linda Reinstein

In the November issue of *The OSCAR*, I explained the process and purpose of getting a Psychoeducational or Psychological Assessment for your child. What next?

Here are some questions that parents frequently ask and the discussions I usually have in response:

With whom should I share the assessment results/report?

The short answer: It depends. The long answer: Think back to why you got the assessment done in the first place. Was your child struggling socially, with learning, with regulating their emotions and behaviour? It is helpful to share the information with those who will be supporting your child. Most often with Psychoeducational Assessments, this will include key school personnel – learning support teacher (LST), principal, and key teachers. It may also include a private therapist/counsellor, speech and language pathologist, school psychologist, or occupational therapists. Most family doctors also like to have this information for a more comprehensive understanding of their

patient.

Do I have to share the report with the school?

The short answer: No.

The long answer: It is important for parents to understand that they are the keepers and givers of this information. There is no obligation to share the information with anyone – even if the assessment was done at school by the School Psychologist. Your child. Your information.

Let's walk through what happens with the report if you do decide to share it with the school. The report is kept in your child's Ontario Student Record (OSR). This is a confidential file kept securely by the principal. Only school staff who have a "need to know" should be granted access to a student's OSR in any given year – think current teachers, support staff providing services. Copies should not be made. The OSR will "move with" your child if they change schools within Ontario. It is not passed on to Universities or Colleges (even within Ontario), or employers (even the Provincial or Federal Government). The OSR will be kept for, and then destroyed, 5 years after your child leaves school.

It is important to know that a parent also can request that a document that

they have provided, be removed from the OSR. Perhaps there is an updated assessment. Perhaps the story told in that report is no longer helpful in understanding their child.

But should I share the report with the school?

The short answer: Yes, most of the time.

The long answer: Again, think back to why you got the assessment done in the first place. Most often Psychoeducational Assessment reports contain valuable information that can set the school's thinking in a different direction, support the school to access additional resources, and help the teacher better understand how to support your child on a daily basis. So, in most cases, my recommendation is that parents share this information with their child's school. In addition to providing a copy of the report to the principal, I strongly recommend that parents request a meeting with the principal, LST, teachers, and others who may be part of the "team" supporting your child at school to discuss the results and recommendations from the assessment.

If on the other hand, the focus of the report is on personal or family issues, is unrelated to school

functioning, and if the report does not contain actionable items or strategies for school personnel, you may decide not to share the report. You may still want to have a discussion/meeting with key school personnel to share important information.

I am still hesitant to share the information because there is a diagnosis. Won't sharing a diagnosis just label and pigeon-hole my child?

The short answer: Yes and no.

The long answer: This is one of the main concerns that parents have about sharing diagnostic information with their child's school. Clearly, parents do not want their child to be labelled and written off as a "lost cause." Nobody wants that. I usually start this conversation by bringing parents back to why they got the assessment done in the first place. Their child was standing out for some reason – poor grades, poor behaviour, poor relationships. Honestly, the most likely situation is that school folk have come up with their own explanations, hypotheses, and even labels, for what may or may not be going on. These may

Continued on pg. 25

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TASTY TIDBITS FROM TRILLIUM BAKERY

Trillium's spirit ... past and still present

By Jocelyn LeRoy

There are the good old days, and some you'd want to forget. Like forest trilliums, we keep on keeping on hardy through all kinds of weather.

It's been 43 years at Trillium Bakery, since our determined and serendipitous plunge into a life of baking bread the hard way (and most wonderful). No banks would loan me money because I didn't have enough business in Ottawa ... so I wiggled in. That was when "health food" stores were thriving. They sold real live food.

My mother taught me proper baking. I loved making bread most of all, and found her lessons about food chemistry intriguing. My father was a lifelong example of entrepreneurship and ethical business practice. Both had an abundance of common sense and caution. It's the caution of which I fell short, at the time I was ready to quietly launch into my own business venture. A kind of "hold your nose, keep one eye open – jump." I had begun business courses and continued learning for years.

But my start-up was not something I recommend. Jump, I did. It wasn't

even a "field of dreams." The bread got baked, and people caught the fragrance and quality, and showed up.

There have been *OSCAR* articles throughout the years describing all kinds of unusual happenings in the realm of Trillium. Also adventures and opportunities brought forth by "The Little Crunchy Granola Bakery That Could." T.V., radio, Log Farm, write-ups, to name a few.

The Little Engine That Could was my favourite childhood story, and first record of my own. Huffing and puffing, the spunky little engine climbed huge hills and mountains, saying "I think I can. I think I can." Its message crept into my subconscious and shaped my thinking in later years. Then came the little engine chugging over the top. "I thought I could. I thought I could," with an astonished smile on the descent.

It never gave up.

Perched behind the counter this Thanksgiving with a bird's eye view of gorgeous flowers across the room, I was aware of the feeling in the air. It's not crazy busy like Valentines, Christmas and Mother's Day. We're stepped up for sure but without the frazzle of over-the-top requests and sheer numbers of everything; products, people in a rush, deliveries, orders, staff, baking projects.

What is this vibe saying?

Today feels extra special, even with all the staff moving at a good clip. Except me, decidedly slow.

Flower and bakery folks are in such good moods. The customers seem relaxed on this beautiful sunny day. I'm folding pie boxes, checking orders, and enjoying "old friend customers" and recollections of bygone days. "Where's the rocking horse?" and, "my kids grew up in this bakery and are now in their 20's and 30's."

One delightful moment occurred when our young lady serving customers, bagging bread, running to the kitchen where Big John (yes, he's still here, part-time) is emptying ovens filled with pumpkin pies and a truckload of bread. Plus, everything else you see out front. John's motto – "strong like bull" ... he only said it once, but we've teased him forever about it. He is impressed with our current crop of students, as are all of us on both sides. This is good.

So, back behind the cash register our industrious student hears a chorus gathering behind her – Alta Vista staff are arriving at our side, singing, chanting her praises!

She's a little flushed as each of us sings something lovely about her. The customers are smiling broadly.

"She's amazing," "she's a work machine," "she's my best friend", "she's so organized." It was a feeling of family. That was pointed out by the growing cluster of shoppers. Their smiles lit up the room like sunbeams.

Some of our people stay for years. Some are on their quest for knowledge. Others, overqualified many would say, just want to work in a bakery. Students come and go. Family, apprentices, seekers, angels, devoted bakers, even the odd recipe thief – all are part of the abundant variety of people who have helped us grow in our business.

Today has been such an engaging spontaneous time. I felt grateful, and even rich.

If this is my prevailing feeling as a result of all these years in Trillium's thrall (it's my other home) I am indeed blessed.

A good day it was.

The best!

Jocelyn LeRoy is the owner of Trillium Bakery in Old Ottawa South since 1980.

Recipe Apricot Holiday Treats

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups dried apricots, coarsely ground
- 2 cups shredded coconut
- ¾ cup sweetened condensed milk

Instructions:

- Mix above ingredients and shape into small balls.
- Roll into ¾ cup icing sugar
- Makes approximately 32 - ½" balls
- Optional – Add 1 Tbsp. finely chopped candied ginger, 1 Tbsp. honey, cherry bits.
- Let stand firm.
- (This recipe is a simpler version of our Christmas Sugarplums. Neither has plums!)
- Very yummy gluten-free treats, anytime you crave a little snack.

Cont' from pg. 24

be helpful or unhelpful, accurate or inaccurate. I would rather the school have an accurate, sympathetic, and hopeful/positive understanding of my child's learning, behaviour, interpersonal challenges that leads to strategies, resources, and supports that help children learn to overcome and compensate adaptively to their challenges.

In the end, everyone should have their eye on the same prize: To help

your child realize their potentials, get along with others, and generally be happy and feel good about themselves.

Dr. Linda Reinstein is a Child Clinical and School Psychologist who lives in OOS with her husband and two teenagers. She has a private practice in Centretown providing assessment, consultation, and coaching to children, parents, and schools.



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