

## **Advice to Professionals Who Must "Conference Cases"**

*by Janice Fialka*

Before the case conference,  
I looked at my almost five-year-old son  
and saw a golden-haired boy  
    who giggled at his baby sister's attempt to clap her hands,  
    who charmed adults by his spontaneous hugs,  
    who played "peace marches"

and who, at the age of four,  
went to the Detroit Public Library  
requesting a book on Martin Luther King.

After the case conference,  
I looked at my almost five-year-old son.  
He seemed to have lost his golden hair.

I saw only words plastered on his face  
Words that drowned me in fear

    primary expressive speech and language disorder,  
    severe visual motor delay  
    sensory integration dysfunction  
    fine and gross motor delay  
    developmental dyspraxia and RITALIN now.

I want my son back. That's all.  
I want him back now. Then I'll get on with my life.

If you could see my worry,  
feel my ache  
then you would return

my almost five-year-old son  
who sparkles in sunlight, despite his faulty neurons.

Please give me back my son  
undamaged

untouched by your labels, test results,  
descriptions and categories.

If you can't, if you truly cannot give me back my son.  
Then just be with us

quietly, gently, softly.

Sit with us and

create a stillness

known only in small, empty chapels at sundown.

Be there with us

as our witness and friend.

Please do not give me advice, suggestions, comparisons or  
another appointment. (That's for later.)

I want only a quiet shoulder upon which to rest my head.

If you cannot give me back my sweet dream  
then comfort me through this evening.

Hold us.

Rock us until morning light creeps in.

Then we will rise and begin the work of a new day.