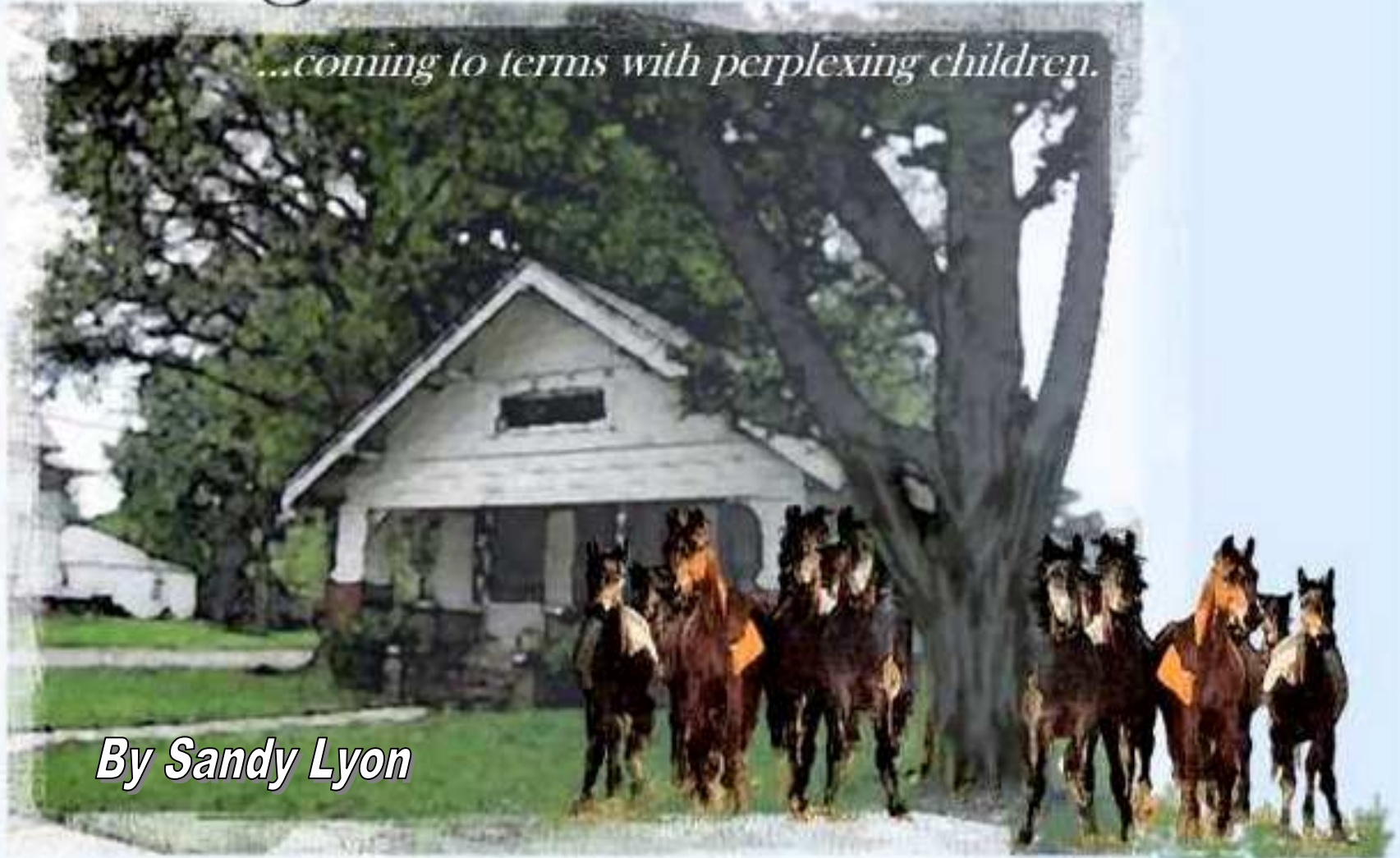


Living With Wild Horses

...coming to terms with perplexing children.



By Sandy Lyon



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One morning as the sun was coming up a beautiful baby girl was born. Her parents were so happy. They held her and looked into her eyes. They counted her toes and fingers. They stroked her soft skin and smelled her sweet breath. They called their friends and family. "Our baby Allison is here," they said. "Come and see her." Allison snuggled with her mom, nursed and fell asleep.



Later that evening as the stars were coming out, a baby boy was born. His parents were very happy. Like the girl's parents they held him and looked into his eyes. They counted his toes and fingers. They stroked his soft skin and said, "He looks like his dad". They called their friends and family. "Our baby Peter is here. Come and see him." Peter yawned, nursed and fell asleep.



The next morning Allison opened her eyes and smiled. Slowly her body tensed and her eyes rolled. The nurse called the doctor and he said she had had a small seizure. Allison wasn't sure what had happened inside, but something was different. She went to a special nursery for babies who needed extra care. Mommy came and saw her. She nursed and snuggled with her mom. The doctors gave her a special medicine and the seizures stopped. Finally, she went home with her family.



Peter had been home for several days. Life settled into a routine. Peter ate and slept. Daddy went to work. Mommy took care of Peter and his older sister.



Allison and Peter grew quickly. Peter always smiled when his sister played with him. Allison giggled when her dog licked her toes. Peter loved bananas and Allison loved pears. They each enjoyed their first birthday cake.



Peter played all morning, ate his lunch and took a long nap. He woke up when his sister came home from school. They played together until dinner. After dinner, he had his bath. "Time for bed" said Daddy. "Night, night," said Peter.



Allison played all morning, ate her lunch, and played all afternoon. After dinner she had her bath and played some more. "Time for a story" said Mommy. Allison listened to three stories. "Good night," her mother said. "Not tired," said Allison. She snuggled with Daddy, played with her dolls, and watched TV. She finally fell asleep close to midnight. Daddy carried her to her crib and kissed her good night.



Mommy woke up as the sun was coming up. What was that sound? Allison was out of her crib and was in the kitchen. There was cereal and milk all over the floor. "Time eat," said Allison. Mommy and Daddy talked. "She doesn't sleep much. We have to do something to keep Allison safe so we can sleep at night." Daddy put a hook on her bedroom door. That night Allison kicked and hit the door. The hook broke. Allison was angry and frightened. They asked grandma for help. Grandma said, "We need to keep Allison safe while we figure out what to do. All the grownups can take turns staying up late and getting up early with Allison."



One day Alice came home from school and Peter didn't want to play. Peter had lots of toys, but he played only with his red truck. He drove it in circles all afternoon. That night Daddy said, "Time for your bath." Peter screamed and kicked. Daddy struggled to get Peter clean and in his pajamas. Peter banged his head against the wall. Daddy said "Night, night," and kissed and hugged Peter. Peter said nothing. Peter curled up in bed and rocked back and forth. Mommy said, "Peter is changing. He doesn't look at me anymore. He has stopped talking. He gets very angry and won't let me get him dressed."



Months went by.

At Allison's house, all the grownups were very worried. They put locks on the doors and blocked the windows. "We need help," they said. "It is hard to keep safe."

Everyone was worried at Peter's house. "We need help," they said. Peter is in his own world."



Allison's doctor said, "You need to be firmer with her. Make sure she plays a lot during the day. She must learn to go to bed and to sleep."

Peter's doctor said, "Don't worry, he's just going through a stage. Are you reading and talking to him? Don't let him watch too much TV."

More months went by, more birthdays came. Allison was a lot of fun, but she tried to do dangerous things. She was like a car with no brakes. Allison's family was exhausted. They needed help.



Peter was no longer a cheerful and easy child. His family missed his smile, his words and his hugs. It was hard to get Peter dressed, fed and groomed.

Peter's family was sad and worried. They needed help.



Some people said they were bad parents. They had bad kids who wouldn't behave. The wild horses have taken over. Wild horses can be very dangerous and scary. But, wild horses can be tamed, trained, and cared for.

Meanwhile, Peter loves to watch his gold fish. He likes to look at flowers. But most of the time Peter sits in his room and rocks back and forth. He drives his red truck in a circle. He never talks or smiles.



Allison loves to sing and dance. She is kind and gentle with her dolls and her dog. Then, the next minute she is screaming and kicking. "Stop," she screams, "You are making too much noise! No seat belt! These socks itch! I'm hungry." Her family struggles to keep her safe.



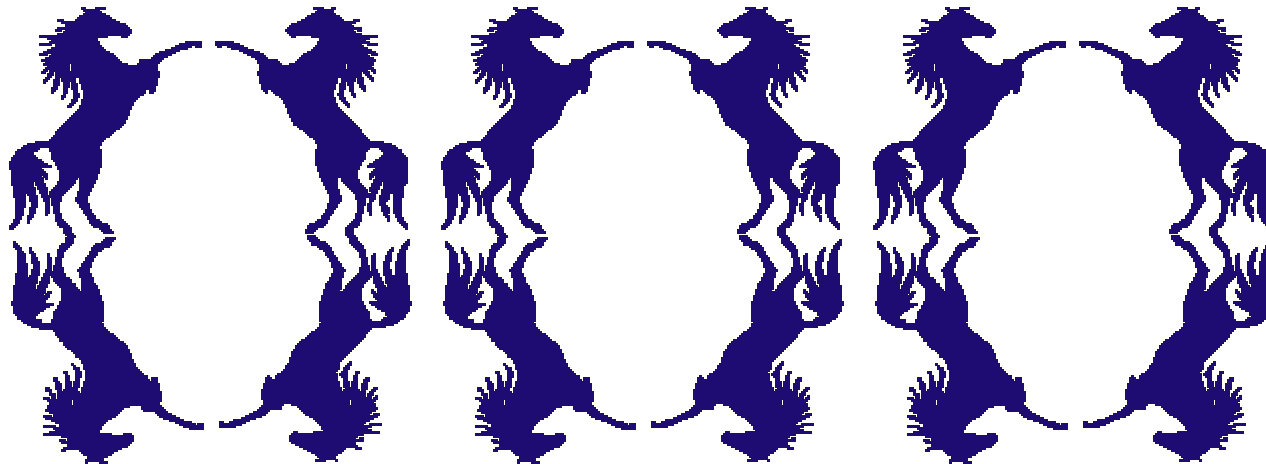
Peter's and Allison's parents are sad and scared. What is happening to their beautiful, loved children? They go back to the doctors, "Please help us. We have tried everything we know how to do. We have tried all the things you asked us to try. We love our child, and want to help them. Sometimes it seems like wild horses are running out of control inside their brains."



Finally, the doctors listen. The doctors say, "Your child's brain may work differently than other children's brains." The doctors ask a lot of questions. They use special machines to see how Allison's and Peter's brains work. They watch them play and talk with their parents.

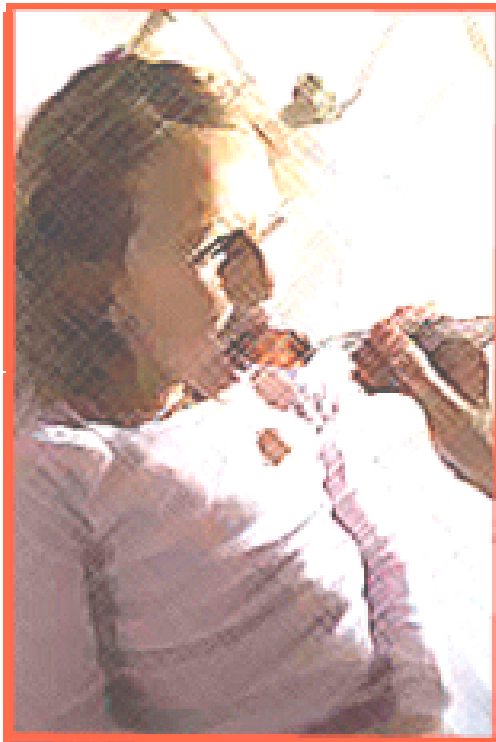
The doctors can see that Allison's and Peter's brains are working differently. The doctors recognize the wild horses and have seen these herds of horses before. Allison's wild horses are probably from the bipolar or mood disorder herds. Peter's may be from the autism spectrum herd. Now the doctors can help. They know some ways to tame these wild horses.

Peter and Allison spend a lot of time going to see the doctors, counselors and therapists to try to tame their wild horses and learn to live with them. It's hard to learn and do the things that other kids are doing. It takes a lot of time and energy to tame wild horses.



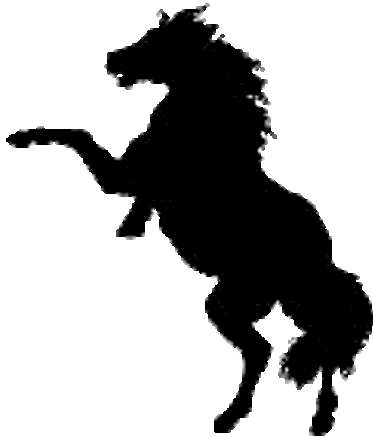
Allison takes medicine to help calm her wild horse. Some of the medicines make her sleepy; some make her feel sick. One works well, but she gains a lot of weight. It's hard to find the right medicine.

Peter has special exercises to tame his wild horse. He spends hours each day on the exercise mats and working with his mom and his therapist. Peter's mom is tired. She loves Peter, but she wishes she had more time to spend with Peter's dad and his sister.



It's long, slow, hard work. It is not fun, but things are getting better. Everyone is learning how to live with the wild horses.

But sometimes the horses break out of their fences and go wild again. One day at a special trip to the fair, Allison spends all her money. Mommy says, "No more." Allison loses control and runs off into the crowd. The security guards help find her and get her back home safely. A few days later Allison goes to the hospital to stay safe until the horses are back in control. A different medicine may help build better fences in her brain to control the horses.



Allison comes back home. Her new medicine helps keep from getting agitated. Her parents can keep her safe and away from noisy, confusing places. She goes to a new, small school. She begins to take clogging and guitar lessons. She plays soccer on her dad's team. She swims with her mom. She plays with her cousins.

Peter is getting bigger and stronger. When he kicks and won't take a bath or get dressed, he can hurt people. Peter goes to a special school to learn to talk instead of kick when he wants something. He is learning to talk again.

The wild horses are becoming calmer and the families are learning different ways to live with them.



More birthdays pass. The horses are under control. Allison and Peter are growing up.

Allison is on the honor roll. Her dance recital is next week. She is an expert on the computer. She sings, dances, or plays guitar to help keep the horses calm.



Peter takes care of his tropical fish. He works with his sister to plant a flower garden in their back yard. He smiles and says "Night, night," to his Dad again after he takes his shower.

Their families love them and are so proud of how hard they have worked to tame their wild horses. Everyone in the family has grown and changed in many ways by learning to live with wild horses.



Wild Horses can be very hard to live with, but children who learn to live with them can do wonderful things.

