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**Current Conditions:**

Fog, 52 F

**Forecast:**

Tue - Partly Cloudy.

High: 69 Low: 53

Wed - Rain. High: 60

Low: 54

Full Forecast at Yahoo!  
Weather  
(provided by The Weather Channel)



GwinnettAreaMommies

**Welcome to GwinnettAreaMommies!**

As part of The Mommies Network, GwinnettAreaMommies.com is a free community for moms in Gwinnett, Barrow, Walton, Hall and Jackson Counties. We realize that all moms need local support -- and who can't use another friend? GwinnettAreaMommies.com offers a simple way to connect with local moms for friendship, support and fun. Members meet on our private discussion forums to share information on everything from where to get the best haircut to tips on transitioning to a "big kid" bed. Each month, we also offer many face-to-face events for our members, their children and their families. Register today to access our discussion forums, events calendar and more! It's free and we'll keep your info secure and private.

**Changed Perspective  
by Amy Fenton Lee**

I was a teenager when my cousin Jordan was born. As Jordan grew from preschool to preadolescence I would observe her to be an endearing but demanding child. Jordan had a host of small idiosyncrasies that individually were minor but collectively made her a handful. It was not uncommon for Jordan to end up in her parents' bed or function on her own eating and sleeping schedule. I quietly wondered why this cantankerous little girl behaved the way she did. And silently I vowed not let my own child shape our days and nights with such command.

Through the years I continued to quietly build my portfolio of child rearing opinions. I wisely concealed my sometimes ignorant views. Nevertheless, I banked my thoughts. Nearly two decades after my cousin Jordan was born, I was blessed to birth my own child. Ten days after my son Watson's delivery, he began to exhibit colicky behavior. Watson's discontent seemed to increase rather than diminish as he turned 10 weeks and then ten months old. Watson never acclimated to a schedule. Feeding regimens were abandoned in pursuit of relief that only a bottle would provide. Attempts to implement sleeping routines failed as Watson awoke often and unhappy. At eighteen months he began vomiting when he became especially upset, which included bed time. My husband and I resorted to less than ideal sleeping arrangements in desperate search of rest. Most of my parenting choices went against any text book instruction. Coping was my goal.

Through Watson's first two years I experienced all the looks I recognized. Friends, especially those who were already parents, sometimes verbalized their body language by offering advice. It wasn't uncommon to receive a well-meaning but poignant email from a friend who had spent time with us and felt "led" to share their opinion on the problems. Parenting books frequently appeared in our mailbox. My feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment mushroomed.


[Home](#)
[Community](#)
[Forums](#)
[Outreach](#)
[Sponsors](#)
[Partners](#)
[Home](#) [About GwinnettAreaMommies.com](#) [GwinnettAreaMommies Staff](#) [About The Mommies Network](#)

## Changed Perspective (cont'd)

ment mushroomed.

I too had begun my parenting journey with the same goals and ideals as my friends. I read all the books and consulted my pediatrician until he was tired of seeing me. Watson seemed to struggle more than any book or friend could explain. I started avoiding acquaintances and social gatherings and especially if Watson was with me. I tried my best to keep our difficulty under wraps. And when pieces of reality escaped concealment, I would joke "I don't think he'll serve prison time over...and I would fill in the blank with "bottles after age one", "crazy sleeping arrangements", or "his lack of schedule." I smiled through many hard conversations as I listened to unasked for and usually uninformed advice. In the meantime, I felt something must be wrong with my child.

Just as Watson turned two I was nearing an emotional and physical breakdown. During a church small group gathering I candidly shared and cried. I was exhausted. I started my long diatribe with: "Please don't give me advice. There is nothing I haven't already heard or tried." The women listened without judgment and then prayed for me. The next morning one of the ladies from the small group called me to say "you are not crazy." She explained that she was a pediatric occupational therapist and asked if I had ever heard of sensory integration disorder. She recognized Watson's challenges and peculiar habits as possible signs of this neurological disorder.

For the following months we slowly walked a course leading to answers and relief. My occupational therapist friend assisted in obtaining a referral and diagnostic assessment. Watson was soon formally diagnosed with the sensory seeking type of sensory integration disorder. Simultaneously he was diagnosed with sleep apnea as well as being severely lactose intolerant. After a change of diet, intense occupational therapy, a formal sleep study and ensuing tonsillectomy, our lives changed dramatically. Within six months of my occupational therapist friend's phone call, Watson slept in his own bed through the night and lost a whole host of bad habits. His regular daytime behavior changed noticeably. Our life began to feel manageable.

Days after Watson's S.I.D. diagnosis, my aunt, Jordan's mother, called me. She explained Jordan grew up with what today would be recognized as S.I.D. as well as severe allergies. My aunt and I laughed and cried as we compared notes and understood each other in a way we knew few others would. And I felt tremendous hope. Jordan was now an accomplished, college bound freshman who was very possibly one of the most enjoyable people I knew! Indeed, maybe my precious son would

avoid prison, as I had joked for the past year!

Now at age four, Watson is a happy and healthy preschooler. He is a different child. And since overcoming over two years of sleepless chaos, I am a different friend! My patience is longer with most people in my life, and especially other moms. Recently while in a mall I observed a mother gingerly handle her preschooler daughter's temper tantrum. I caught myself forming judgment on this mother's parenting. I quickly reminded myself that I didn't know what battles had been fought earlier in the day or what developmental obstacles the child may possess. Not too long ago I passively handled mad-fits in order to prevent Watson from vomiting. I reflected and offered a silent prayer as I watched this mother from afar. If there was one, key learning in my hardship with my son, it was that judgment is fruitless. I now make a point not just to conceal an opinion but not to form one at all! Most parents in my circles are bright, independent, and informed people. They know conventional wisdom and genuinely care for the well-being of their children. What they need most from me are prayers and compassion, not opinions or advice.

*Amy Fenton Lee lives in suburban Atlanta, Georgia. Amy writes and speaks to equip better parents and more compassionate friends. Her articles have been featured in publications such as Birmingham Parent Magazine, Missions Mosaic Magazine, International Network of Children's Ministry monthly E-mag (www.incm.org), Rev! Magazine and www.neueministry.com. Amy can be reached at amyflee@bellsouth.net.*

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