CONGRATULATIONS! YOU’RE A NEW PARENT. You relish every little smile, sound, movement and milestone your little munchkin makes. From rolling over and smiling, to babbling, forming first words and walking, most children follow a similar path. But what if your child doesn’t?
Many children who might thrive from early intervention fall through the cracks of the current educational system simply because their advanced cognitive skills prevent them from qualifying for the special services they need. Without the right support, they often go on to “fail” in typical schools since they are unable to play and socialize with their peers or regulate their behavior. Thankfully, this was not the case for Spencer – and his parents, Jessica and Eric, credit the Therapeutic Nursery at the JCC.

“Our son Spencer is a bright, high-functioning boy who taught himself to read at the age of two. But as a mom, I began to notice that he was struggling. He had epic meltdowns and experienced epic sensory overload. When we had him assessed, we were told it was nothing, that he just needed more socialization. On his first day of Pre-K, he had a meltdown that was so intense that when we left, I had to stand with him in the parking lot for nearly an hour because he was flailing around so frantically, I couldn’t even walk him safely to the car. I felt completely distraught and alone,” shares Jessica.

As chance would have it, a woman who witnessed the meltdown, recognized Spencer’s behavior as similar to her own son’s. She stopped to empathize with Jessica and ultimately shared information about her son’s incredible pre-school, the Therapeutic Nursery at the JCC, which changed her family’s life. Encouraged, Jessica brought Spencer for a visit, “It changed our entire family’s life as well. The staff and other parents understood what we were dealing with in ways no one else could. The teachers had the expertise to help us improve our own communication with our son, and we became a part of a community of other parents, who became our closest network of support.”

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“I will never forget the first time I saw Spencer play successfully with other children, or the first time we dropped him off at a friend’s house for a playdate. And it is all a credit to the amazing staff at the Therapeutic Nursery who know how to unlock the potential in children like him.”

“It is highly unusual to find a program that can meet the needs of children like our son,” adds Spencer’s father Eric, a songwriter and musician, who recently recorded a CD, Hidden Gold, and donated all the proceeds to the Therapeutic Nursery. “The Therapeutic Nursery is the answer for any child with this kind of struggle. Parents and children get a wealth of attention and learn how to cope and adapt. The staff’s ability to provide early intervention is key. Even though it’s never too late, the earlier issues are recognized and addressed, the better the long-term prospects and the more likely for a child to mainstream without the need for ongoing intervention.”
Today Spencer, who is 10 and in the fifth grade, is a joyful, loving and mature child. He has a gift for math, is thrivin...