

## Sample Child Letter #2 – “All About Brian”

Brian has a neurological disorder called Tourette’s syndrome. The most meaningful definition that I have found of TS is that it is a disorder of “faulty brakes.” Students with TS have to constantly struggle to stop a behavior, thought, or action. At times, these brakes don’t work at all and other time the brakes freeze and the children get mentally stuck. This makes it difficult for these kids to be flexible. TS is also characterized by involuntary motor and vocal tics. Brian has vocal tics (yelling out) and some facial movements. Tics change often and can intensify during stressful times or when attention is drawn to them. It is best to ignore the tics while teaching.

Most TS kids, including Brian, also have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Most of Brian’s OCD is intrusive thoughts so this is not something you will see, but it does cause him to be off task with his schoolwork. He may have a hard time completing tests. Brian can also get “stuck” on a thought and have a hard time transitioning.

Brian has had anger problems in the past, but he is trying very hard to control them. Every once in a while, he has a difficult time suppressing the anger. Mostly this happens when he feels threatened in some way. If another kid makes fun of him, he may lash out. Also in the past, if he was obsessed with a thought and couldn’t get off of that thought, he would get angry. You will know when he gets angry, because you can see it in his face, and he may say inappropriate words. One way to handle the anger is to distract him. It is easy to distract Brian because he loves animals. He adores our golden retriever named Sammy, and he could talk about her forever. Another distraction that the teachers used last year was to send him to another class with a note. The note doesn’t even have to have anything on it; it is just a way to remove him from the situation. Discipline does not work during anger episodes. Discipline comes later.

Brian can also be impulsive. His 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers said he would act without thinking, especially yelling out answers in class. He may make inappropriate comments when called upon. The best way to handle this is to go to him and let him know he can talk to you after class. These kids have to be taught through practice and more practice the reasoning process that those of us without impulsivity take for granted.

Brian gets tired easily because he is constantly working at holding in the tics. When he does get overwhelmed, he lays his head on the desk and appears to be sleeping, but he hears everything the teachers say. As long as he’s not disturbing anyone, let him be. There is something I read from the TSA National office, and it has stuck with me. It read, “We recognize how vastly important it is for the child growing up with TS to have an understanding and united support system with parents and teachers working together, so that these kids may have the best chance of emerging into adulthood with that all important sense of self-esteem.”

If you have any questions or concerns, please call or email me.