

One Mom Explains How Educational Therapy Helped Her Daughter

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It's not the same thing as tutoring.



It's a natural instinct for a parent to want their child to do well in school—perhaps even to be the best. Encountering academic challenges can be frustrating for both kids and parents. Not every school or teacher is equipped to handle every student's learning difficulties, which is when it might be helpful to turn to an educational therapist.

What is educational therapy? Though the work does include academics, it is not tutoring. Educational therapists tailor their teaching to the individual, developing plans to address each student's underlying needs, whether it's an issue stemming from behavior, focus, time management, or something else.

When Jacqui J. first looked in to educational therapy for her daughter, she wasn't sure how it was that different from tutoring. But after two years of working with an educational therapist, Jacqui's daughter has made huge improvements in her schooling and her confidence. Here's her story:

When my daughter was in the first grade, she started struggling in math. She told us the words were jumping around on the page. My husband and I thought she might have dyslexia. We had her vision checked and were told her vision wasn't balanced. She went to vision therapy, but ultimately, there was nothing wrong with her vision. We then thought her issues were due to the fact that her teacher went on maternity leave midway through the school year; maybe the disruption in teaching was part of the problem.

But my daughter's math issues continued into the second grade. She was muddling through. She was kind of paying attention, kind of not. I was stressed out. The school told us that she was at grade level and that she was fine. Her teacher didn't get hired back after that year, so we thought it was a problem with the teacher.

Third grade started, and things hit the fan. My daughter would run out of steam during math tests, put her head down, and write on her tests, "I'm so stupid. Why was I born?" Two weeks into the school year, we got a call from her teacher, who'd been at the school for 20 years. She told us, "There's something wrong here." By that point, we were thrilled that someone was seeing this in our child.

We did a neuropsychological test for my daughter to get a sense of how she learns and found out that she has very high verbal reasoning but she's weak mathematically. The divergence was causing attention difficulties. As expensive as it was, the testing gave us a game plan to create a more supportive learning environment for my daughter.

The neuropsych person recommended that we work with an educational therapist, Rachel Kapp. I didn't know much about educational therapy. I wasn't quite sure what it was and how it differed from general tutoring. When I learned more, what appealed to me was that an educational therapist could help with coursework but also work on the social and emotional aspects of learning.

Rachel has been instrumental in helping my daughter get her math skills up to par. She sits with her one-on-one, goes through skills, and gives her different ways to do problems that might not necessarily be the way they're taught in school. She has helped my daughter see that just because she doesn't know how to do something doesn't mean she's stupid.

After a year of working with Rachel, my daughter decided, "You know what? I don't need

Rachel anymore. I can do this on my own." The truth was, it got hard, so she wanted to quit. She started acting out. These relationships are a two-way street. You can lead a horse to water, you can get an educational therapist, but if your child doesn't employ any of the tricks and solutions the therapist is giving them, then you're just wasting your money.

Well, she did need Rachel's help. I think she didn't realize the only reason she was doing better was that the strategies Rachel taught her were working. We got her a math tutor instead. Her math scores and her confidence plummeted. My daughter got a taste of that, and she was like, "I've made a colossal error." She had somebody wonderful, but she chose not to listen.

One day, my daughter ran into Rachel and told her she missed her. On her own, she wrote an email to Rachel asking her to take her back. This experience was so beneficial because it showed my daughter, *Rachel really helped me. I need help in this area. It's okay to ask for help. I wasn't listening and these were the consequences.*

When we went back to Rachel, my daughter was a different child. She's open to strategies, she listens. It's been magnificent to see my daughter grow. She's now in fifth grade, and we still have issues, but she's now willing to say, "I don't understand that, and that's okay." The biggest thing is not that her math is suddenly transformed, it's that her mindset is transformed. She's not giving up.

She's still doing below average on tests. I had a little crisis about that. But Rachel said, "Let's look at her successes. Two years ago, she was writing on a test, 'I'm so stupid. Why was I born?'" Now, she's confidently going into school and teaching other children how to do problems." When she reframed it for me like that, I was able to see how far we've come in just two years. Rachel has allowed me to see that my daughter is a different kind of learner. She's been good for me, too.

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