

## Book Reviews

Title: ***We Band of Mothers: Autism, My Son & the Specific Carbohydrate Diet***

Author: **Judith Chinitz, MS**

With commentary by Dr. Sidney M. Baker, MD

From the first reference to Shakespeare's Henry V, "We band of brothers...", to the gut-wrenching description of Alex's life, to the intelligent and user-friendly commentary by Dr. Sidney Baker, this book takes you through the pain of autism and the hope of The Specific Carbohydrate Diet. Judy Chinitz beautifully and painstakingly relates the story of her son's autism, the story of Elaine Gottschall, author of "Breaking the Vicious Cycle" and developer of The Specific Carbohydrate Diet (SCD), and the storied details of how SCD may help your child. This is a book about love – the agonizing love for your child that leads you to look for answers again and again, against all odds.

First, you have to know that children with autism are sick - sick with bowel disease, immunodeficiencies and detoxification problems. They are often in pain and cannot tell us. Judy leads us first through the pain of diarrhea (15 per day), vomiting, head banging, self-abusive and destructive behaviors; the days, weeks, months and years of screaming and sleep deprivation; and then the hope of SCD. For her son, Alex, this meant bowel movements only once or twice each day, no vomiting, no debilitating medicines like Prednisone and intravenous gamma globulins, and a 30 pound weight gain. This was the first chance for Alex to live without pain in 10 years, her first chance to breathe.

She tells us the story of Elaine Gottschall, a young mother, who against all odds in 1960 found a doctor (Dr. Sidney Valentine Haas) and a diet ("what are you feeding this child?") to cure her daughter of very severe inflammatory bowel disease and its neurologic sequelae. She relates how mothers found and brought SCD and Elaine to the world of autism, to treat the inflamed guts, the "autistic enterocolitis" of these children. And Judy and her band of mothers relate their own personal stories of improved bowel function, sleep and attention, and of decreased self-stimulatory, self-abusive and aggressive behaviors.

The Specific Carbohydrate Diet is a fundamental treatment for bowel disease. As Elaine has taught us, it "breaks the vicious cycle" of inflammation, excess mucous production and malabsorption. It does this by allowing in the diet only monosaccharides, simple foods (like fruits, vegetables and animal or plant proteins) that do not need to be broken down. Disaccharides (double sugars) and polysaccharides (complex carbohydrates, starches and grains) are strongly bound and hard to digest. As Dr. Baker relates, a vicious cycle begins when these undigested sugars feed the germs that inhabit our guts. When germs digest sugars, fermentation results and produces mischievous gases and poisons (hence the malodorous gas and bowel movements our children possess). SCD addresses the problem that some children and adults have digesting double sugars and starches, breaks the cycle of malabsorption and allows the gut to begin to heal.

Judy gives us books, websites and internet groups to help us get started with SCD. She gives us specific references on how to implement SCD and she shows us how to tailor SCD to our individual child. She talks about temporary regressions at different stages of SCD as our children heal and how to treat and get through them. Judy, Elaine and Dr. Baker show us how we can heal our children's bowel disease through SCD and use it as a temporary (or more prolonged) measure to break the cycle of inflammation and disease.

Judy also showed me, a physician, that the original Hippocratic oath states that "I will apply dietetic measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment; I will keep them from harm and injustice." This book will show you, physician or parent, how to use "dietetic measures" to heal the gut. Through Judy's book, through the band of mothers who teach us every day, and through our children we may learn to break the vicious cycle and to achieve harmony for our children and for ourselves. For anyone dealing with a child with autism or with bowel disease, please change your child's diet, make no excuses and read this book. It may just change your life.

*The inspiring and true story of a mother  
who gives her son a new life by changing his diet*



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WITH COMMENTARY BY **Sidney M. Baker, MD**