

The Ups & Down (Syndrome) of the Allred Family

The Holy Grail of Speech Therapy – Gemiini.org Aug 27th

For those of you who know me, or have spent any significant amount of time with Jacob, you know that at nearly 4 years old, he is still pretty much non-verbal. No seriously. Not a word. Barely a syllable. Or a SOUND.



For a child who is at, or above age in nearly every other aspect of his development, his speech has been the bane of my existence.

Now, don't get me wrong. The boy communicates JUST FINE. He just doesn't talk. He nods and shakes his head for yes and no, uses several dozen signs, grunts or screams when he wants my attention - depending on where in the house he is in relation to me, and he will come, grab my hand, and direct me to anything he wants - pointing to the offending object.

But me, being the crazy stickler that I am, insist on wanting him to talk. I understand how important speech is to his development, and his ability to communicate with the general public as he grows. In my book, stubbornness and laziness are not a good enough reason not to talk.

I have worked tirelessly with the speech therapists over Jake's little lifetime to get the boy to say *something*. And on occasion, he will get excited and say a word or two, but never anything consistently. Why go through the hassle of talking if you can communicate just fine in other ways, right? Gah!

In my quest to find a way to get the little boy to talk, I stumbled across a website called Gemiini.org. I think I talked about it on a previous post and said I'd follow up. Well guess what. I'm following up. Because the program is FREAKING AWESOME!

In the 3 weeks since we started **Gemiini**, Jake has progressed more than he has in nearly all of his lifetime. Seriously. No joke. (I am **not** being paid or compensated in any way for this review, by the way).

So, after 2 weeks, I began to notice that Jake had picked up on several of the new signs (animals) shown on the videos. I also noticed that he was starting to *try* to say some of the words. This is HUGE for me. Because up until now, he wouldn't even try to talk.



Now, 3 weeks later, I can actually discern a couple of the words he is learning as he watches the videos. What's even more important than the fact that my little boy is trying to talk, is the amount of noise coming out of his mouth! Jake has gone from a few occasional grunts, to babbling constantly. He's working those mouth, cheek, and tongue muscles, which for those who don't have children with Down syndrome, is a BIG thing.

Children with Trisomy 21 are notorious for having big tongues and low muscle tone in their mouths. So the babbling is a HUGE step. And an important step in the speaking process. Think about it. Non-Trisomy 21 kids start out babbling before anything truly coherent comes out of their mouth. Which means Jacob has taken the next step in speech development and is well into the beginning phases of speaking. Wahoo! Can you tell I'm excited? :)

So, are there any cons about **Gemiini**? I only found two things that gave me moment to pause. First off, it's kind of expensive. At \$50 - \$90 per month, I balked a bit. But it only took me a few minutes to talk myself into the price tag. Specifically because Jacob's speech is so doggoned important to me. Secondly, because **Gemiini** has a sliding pay scale, and third, because this was the expense I decided to use Jake's Developmental Disabilities reimbursements on for the year. To me, Jacob's speech is the single most important factor in his development right now.



Secondly, the videos are a bit hokey. With that being said, Jacob DOESN'T CARE. He's 3 1/2. He doesn't care about the quality of the video. He just likes looking at the pictures of animals, and talking to the older kids on the videos. There are no bells and whistles to the videos, and it did, admittedly, take a week or so for Jake to sit still long enough to get anything from the videos. But I sit him down in front of the computer at breakfast and let him watch the video while he's eating and it seems to work just fine. In fact, now he gets pretty excited when I turn it on. So, does it really matter? No.

Plus, we're only talking 10-15 minutes of video per day. It's not very long. His attention span can't handle much more.

So, in a nutshell: Gemiini.org. Worth the investment? **Absolutely.** I'd recommend it to everyone.