

An Interview with Antoon

Antoon is a 15 yr old gifted inventor and problem solver. He likes reading, writing, building with Lego's, and contemplating philosophical ideas! Antoon is helping his mother, who helps kids with brain disorders. We think that is an excellent use of his talent! Antoon has been treated for bipolar disorder for 4 years but couldn't get more than a few weeks of stability at a time. Finally, last summer, a doctor recommended that Antoon be tested for Celiac Disease. The test was positive! So Antoon has both bipolar disorder and Celiac Disease. There are many kids who have more than one condition to deal with and it can be a real challenge! So how did Antoon handle this? I'm going to let him tell you.

"I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder 4 years ago and no matter what my mom and doctor did, they were never able to find a way to stabilize me for more than a few weeks at a time. Then in June, my mom was told by a doctor friend of hers to have me tested for Celiac Disease. When my mom asked my doctor to test me, he didn't believe that I would have it but did the tests anyways. Once the tests came back, it was so high they did it a second time because they thought that there must have been a mistake.

When I found out I had celiac, at first I was devastated, I was in shock that I would not be able to have pizza, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches or anything that involved wheat. I was really upset for a while until my mom found out about alternative flours and breads so we could make homemade pizza, bread and many other homemade bakery goods. My mom has now invented or found recipes that allow me to have all my favorite foods especially peanut butter and jelly sandwiches on squishy bread that are gluten free. For my birthday this year she even took the special 50 year old Red Velvet Cake recipe and converted it to gluten free counter-part that tasted even better than the original.

Since becoming gluten free, my bp has been able to be stabilized and my doctors have been able to take me off 3 medications. It is hard when I have to go out to eat or when I go to new friends houses cause people don't always understand that gluten is hidden in lots of foods and that being gluten free doesn't just mean you don't eat bread.

When I went to the celiac conference I met lots of other kids with celiac who talked a lot about cheating when they were away from their parents and always having lots of problems because of it. I think it makes it hard to have a food allergy when you have to give up everything you like, which makes you want to cheat. I like that I don't have to cheat because my mom works really hard to make sure that I always am able to have my favorite foods and she educated my teachers at school about my celiac so they only use safe products for prizes and treats in class.

I feel a lot more stable and have less problems with my bipolar and my health since I went onto a gluten free diet and I would never go back to eating gluten even if I was offered a funnel cake!"

Antoon, age 15