

Hi My Name is Grace Lee.

I am the mother of 3 beautiful girls, 9, 8 and 3 years old.

Mikaela, my eldest is a thoughtful kid. She is what some might call a clotheshorse. Mikaela's been known to forgo candy for the chance to shop ... Old Navy is a particular favourite.

She loves to play dress up with her friends and spends countless hours trying to persuade me to allow her to have yet another sleepover.

She plans on marrying Ben, her friend since kindergarten. Although I am not certain she has shared this information with him?

She also plans on opening an ice cream store in the mall where all the kids her sister treats can get ice cream for FREE. (Francesca, my second daughter plans on becoming a speech therapist.)

She has been nick named the face by some of her teachers. Not because her face is so expressive, as I mistakenly thought, but because they feel she has the perfect face.

Mikaela is also GLOBALLY DYSPRAXIC, lives with dysarthria, has difficulty focusing, has a tremor in the right side of her body, has very poor working and short term memory. All of this obviously makes learning new tasks very difficult. .. **But not impossible**. Oh yeah, and her speech is very difficult to understand.

We started attending Pathways just after Mikaela turned one.

What a confusing time. We had no idea what was up with Mikaela, but we soon realized, with the gentle guidance of our therapist that we were in for one heck of a ride.

I remember every therapist Mikaela has had (as does Mikaela, no issues with her long term memory). I don't always remember the specifics of each session, but I do remember the tremendous support each provided our family.

Probably the most significant time we spent at Pathways has been our recent experience with Fast Forward. We had the distinct honour to pilot the first trial of

Fast Forward here at Pathways. We attended daily sessions with two outstanding therapists.

I asked, near the end of our term why Mikaela was chosen to pilot such a prestigious program. I was told that the staff knew our family and our unwavering commitment to Mikaela would ensure that we would show up on time for all the sessions.

I can say with certainty that this commitment to Mikaela was solidified for our family because the staff at Pathways believed in Mikaela so strongly.

How could we not??

What has been most important for our family, however, has been that in a world where people with varying abilities are not completely understood or accepted, we felt that Mikaela and our family belonged at Pathways.

Mikaela's strengths and accomplishments are celebrated here. Her weakness addressed.

Our needs as a family were also considered.

Pathways is not only a place where kids can start the road to reaching their full potential, it is a place where families can grow together and believe in the future of these very special and valuable kids.

Thank you so much for inviting me to speak here today and to share a little of our family with all of you.