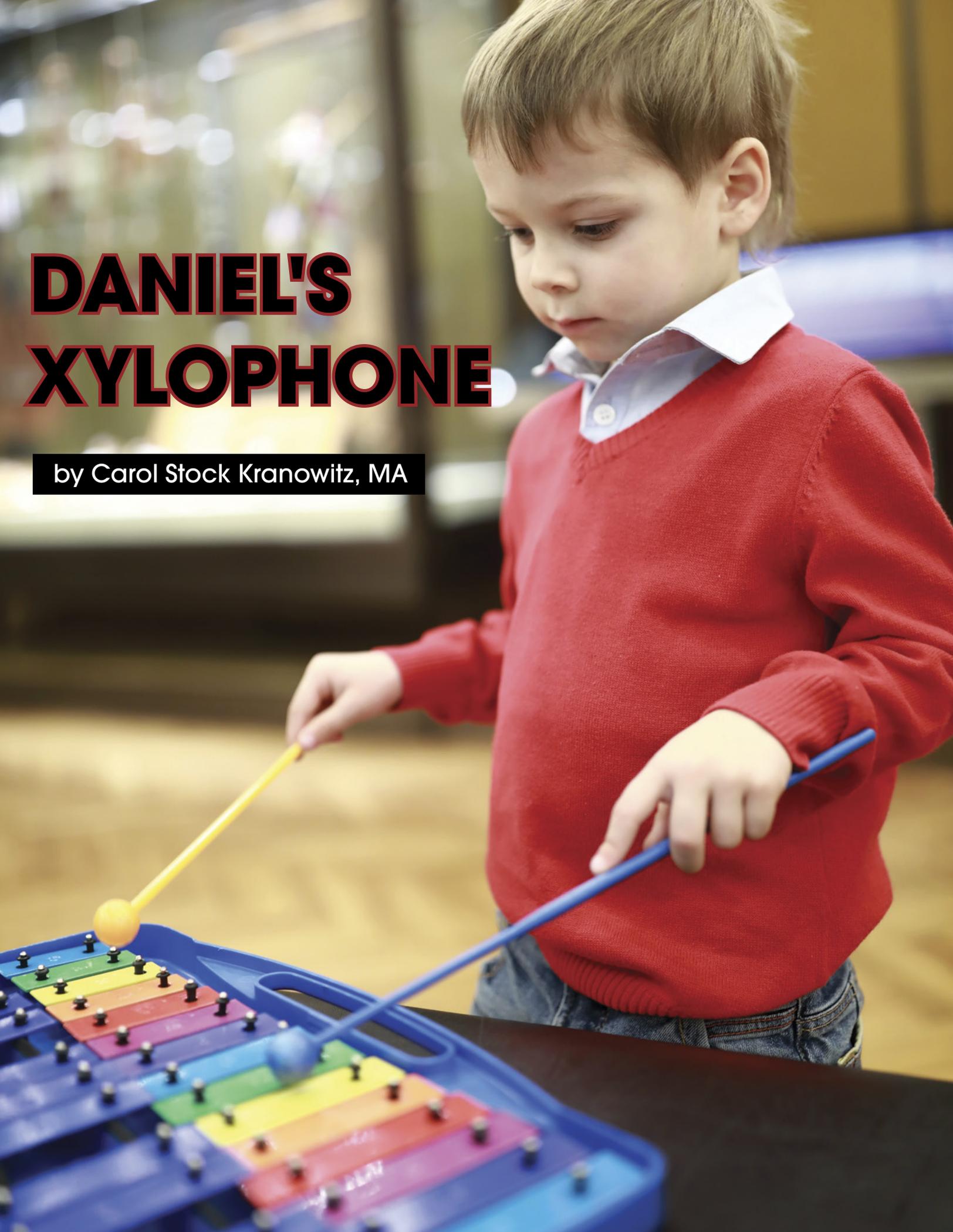


DANIEL'S XYLOPHONE

by Carol Stock Kranowitz, MA



For his first year, Baby Daniel existed in an over-crowded, under-staffed Eastern European orphanage. Swaddled, he lay supine in a crib, lifted out only to be fed or cleaned. Touching and being touched, moving and being moved were not part of his everyday experience. In this environment, Daniel was deprived of regular skin-on-skin contact, cuddling and cooing that every baby requires to develop emotional connections.

When his adoptive American parents brought him home, they noticed that he mostly sat and rarely cried. He had learned in the institution that crying was useless; no one heard.

Three years later, Preschooler Daniel was a watcher, and not much of a doer. We screened him for SPD at St. Columba's Nursery School, in Washington, DC, where I taught, and suggested that Daniel get occupational therapy using sensory integration techniques (OT-SI) to help him participate and communicate.

A sensory lifestyle at home and enticing sensory-motor activities at school helped this reticent child begin to move and participate more. However, while his motor coordination showed improvement, Daniel's language skills still lagged.

One way to communicate with a child who doesn't speak the way you do

is to speak the way he does. What was Daniel's "language"?

Daniel spoke in numbers. On the playground, he would crouch at my feet and touch the grommets in my sneakers, one by one. He would point to the swings and sandbox buckets. "One, two, three ...," he'd whisper. He didn't choose to swing or dig, but, if gently enticed, he might briefly allow his feet to leave the ground and his hands to get messy. Mostly, he counted objects, but not his classmates.

Daniel also loved music. In my music and movement room, he sat attentively on his blue felt "sit-upon," slightly outside the circle. Touching and relating to kids was hard, but responding to music was easy. He swayed and clapped to the beat, hummed the tunes, and learned some simple lyrics. His face glowed, his posture "zipped up," and his feedback made me feel like a fantastic teacher.

Number songs were his favorites. An example was the finger game, *Fish Alive*, although Daniel lacked the fine-motor skills to articulate his fingers as nimbly as the other children. He was somewhat better at striking a mallet on the xylophone bars, so he became our accompanist while we sang and held up our thumb, index, middle, ring and pinky fingers.

Next, Daniel mastered the *Down, Down* song. Falling is scary for a child with an immature vestibular system.

He balked at first, so we made a deal: He would hold my hand and practice falling two times, and then he could sit and be the accompanist.

Clinging tightly, once, twice, he tentatively inched his way down to the floor. He was sweating, but he did it! Ta-da!

Feeling good, Daniel picked up the xylophone and sat in the center of the rug. Then the magic began. Imagine his playing the metal bars of the xylophone *with meaning*. His classmates perked up their ears. They heard what he was communicating and moved in response. He played softly; they swirled softly, like snow. He played quickly; they fell quickly, like rain. He played staccato sounds; they plopped down hard, like acorns.

"Again, again!" the children cried. This was a new way of hearing a familiar tune, a new way of having *so much fun*. And so Daniel and his classmates, again and again, repeated the joyous game that they had learned to play together. ■

Find other activities in *The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun*, *The Goodenoughs Get In Sync*, *Growing an In-Sync Child*, and *The In-Sync Activity Cards Book*. Carol is available for workshops on how SPD affects children and on fun and functional sensory-motor activities to get kids in sync.

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FISH ALIVE

| | | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| Play: | C | D | E | F | G |
| Sing: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Play: | G | F | E | D | C |
| Sing: | <i>I caught</i> | <i>a</i> | <i>fish</i> | <i>a-</i> | <i>live.</i> |
| Play: | C | D | E | F | G |
| Sing: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Play: | G | F | E | D | C |
| Sing: | <i>I released</i> | <i>it</i> | <i>back</i> | <i>a-</i> | <i>gain.</i> |

DOWN, DOWN

This all-weather song starts an octave above Middle C on the piano, or "8" on the xylophone. For each verse, play the descending notes.

Verse 1 — Sing: 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1

Verse 2 — As quiet snowflakes, you twirl to the floor and sing: *Down, down, down, down, snowflakes falling to the ground.*

Verse 3 — As louder raindrops, sing: *Down, down, down, down, raindrops dropping to the ground.*

Verse 4 — As noisy acorns, sing: *Down! down! down! down! Acorns plopping to the ground!*