

## **“Everything seems to affect him so deeply and intensely”**

*A family describes the beginning of their PowerWood journey*

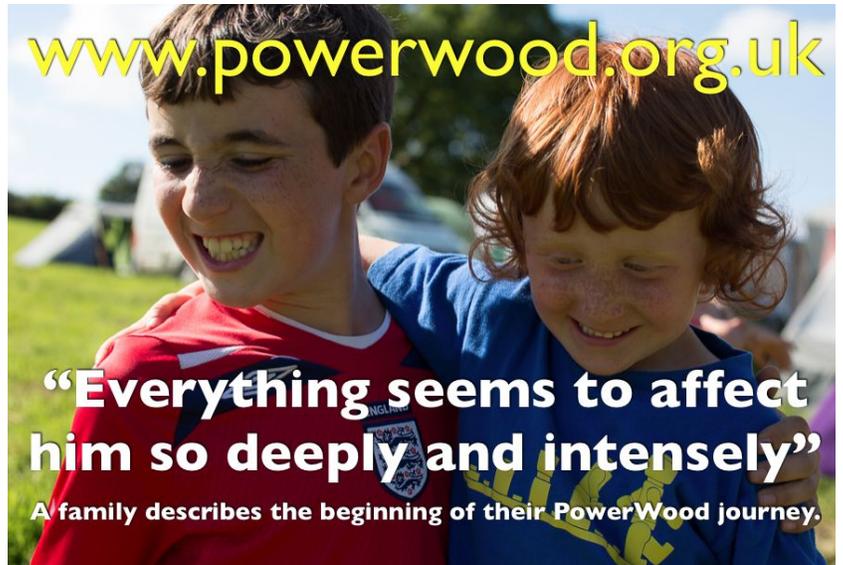
I heard about PowerWood from a local mum. She sent out an email, summarising the concept of OverExcitabilities, and when I read it I thought, ‘that just really describes my son’. So I then went to one of Simone’s coffee mornings that she was doing in a local Café, to have a little chat. There were about 10 mothers there.

My daughter hasn’t had any sort of social problems, but my 10 year old son has had lots of social difficulties at school, which is incredibly hard to handle. We were living abroad for three years, and we only moved back here last summer, so he has had quite a lot of adjustments going on with moving schools. He finds it very hard to control his emotions and often ends up crying and shouting about things. Everything seems to affect him so deeply and intensely.

Another thing is that he is always having creative ideas about businesses he wants to develop, and writing business plans. He is totally phobic about certain foods, he is very sensitive to textures and tastes and only likes certain things. He has been like that all his life, the child who freaks out because there is a label in his trousers digging in. He also hates loud noises; he is really musical, but he really hates any kind of shouting, and background noise will always agitate him generally. What particularly agitates him is lots of people talking at once, or if he feels he is being asked to do more than one thing at a time. I mean, nobody likes that, but it completely fries his brain! If he is trying to multi-task too much he really struggles.

And so it was that when I read the five different areas in which you can be OE, I thought that he is probably a bit OE in every area.

So first of all Simone was getting me to understand the areas in which I can help him. She has given me strategies at this point, some suggestions for things we can do to try and get him to calm down when I pick him



up from school, if he is really agitated and telling me about stuff that’s going on.

Another thing Simone has helped me to understand is the fight, flight, fawn or freeze stress reactions. What he was doing was freezing. He wasn’t wanting to get in a fight with people, nor wanting to run away, but he was letting it wash over him, and pretending he was fine with letting people make nasty comments or whatever it was. I was saying, ‘he is not reacting, not standing up for himself’ and she helped me to understand that this is a coping mechanism.

After our first three sessions, I asked Simone to talk to him directly. I feel like I can talk to him, but I’m not sure how much it goes in, as I’m just his mum and he’ll say, ‘but Mum, you don’t understand!’

What I want to happen next is for him to learn some specific strategies for recognising and knowing himself better, and how to deal with the kids at school, and generally how to interact with people. He really struggles with peer relationships, not understanding

how different he is to other people. He seems to notice every tiny detail and take it all to heart, so one comment from another child will be so huge, and he won't be able to move on from it.

So far, the big difference PowerWood has made is that I know I am not alone in having a particularly intense child. I recognise that me and my husband also have these sort of OE tendencies and my daughter as well, though it manifests in different ways. That has been incredibly helpful, simply to know that it's not just us.

It has definitely made me more accepting of the fact that it is really hard for him. I used to have a slight frustration that he couldn't just be like everybody else. That sounds awful, but now I recognise that there are real reasons why. It's not a quick fix or an easy thing, it's that actually he experiences life at a more intense level, and that's something we need to accept and work with and allow him to feel.

At the moment we are at the recognising-where-it's-going-wrong stage, not yet quite able to harness the knowledge and make practical good use of it all the time. It's not an overnight fix. For us, it has been good to recognise. Over the years I have thought, "Why are we this family who seems to react more to everything than everyone else?" Sometimes it feels like we are just more intense in our family, and it has been incredibly reassuring to know there are reasons for that, and that we are not the only people.

That for me has been the biggest help so far, then knuckling down to how we can practically help my son beyond our recognition and acceptance of that, that is where I am.