



The Way Home

By: Bill Kenower

The only therapeutic approach we tried with my son Sawyer besides joining (and we tried many) in which I had any real confidence was The Anat Baniel Method®. I met Anat when I interviewed her after the publication of her book *Kids Beyond Limits*. I liked her immediately. She was passionate and funny and spoke about how all her work with children with challenges far more profound Sawyer's was not about fixing them but about teaching them. When I explained Sawyer's situation, she agreed to see him.

Things definitely began to change for Sawyer after we started visiting Anat. I do believe she helped teach him again what it felt like to be calm, something I am convinced he had forgotten. Her lessons helped awaken that part of his body where calmness is felt, a part that had gone into hibernation when perhaps all it ever felt was panic. Better to go numb. The combination of her lessons and homeschooling helped Sawyer remember who Sawyer actually was.

Yet what might have been even more important was what Anat taught me. Sawyer was very nervous during his first lesson with her. He was in a new city, a new building, meeting new people, and as is the case with everyone, when he was nervous all his behavioral quirks became amplified. One of those quirks was to speak in an unfiltered stream-of-consciousness, his mind leaping from one taboo subject to another.

I had never seen this habit as pronounced as it was that afternoon in Anat's room. He had hardly said hello and he was rambling about homosexuality and murder and wanting to know if she was divorced and how old she was. Normally, this is where I'd intervene, but I was with A Master, and I wanted to see how she would respond. She didn't. Everything he said seemed to pass by her like strangers on the street. That was when it hit me: she wasn't afraid of him.

I did not understand until that moment that I had become afraid of Sawyer. I was afraid not of what he would say or do to me, but of what his behavior meant about me—and not me his father, but me a person. What if there was some threshold, we could cross from which there was no return? What if it was possible to wander so far from home that the way back not only couldn't be found, but simply didn't exist anymore, as if we could be left on the moon by the last rocket ever launched?

That was the life I feared most. Sometimes the world seemed filled with people stranded on the moon, but it was easy to avoid them. They were strangers, living their stranded lives in faraway places, feeling more like characters in a play to me than actual people. But no one could be closer to me than my own son, I could not avoid him, and on that day, he could not have sounded more lost. Yet there was Anat, fearless and indifferent, unafraid because she perceived nothing from which she needed protection. In that moment, her fearlessness became mine as well.

My job is not to be afraid, I thought to myself. It was the perfect job for me because it is all I have ever wanted. Fearlessness is the space where love waits for us. Every question I have ever asked was answered there and nowhere else, for there actually is nowhere else. There is only love and my dreams of desolate moons. Strangely, I traveled to the moon because it was where I thought I'd find everyone else, only to discover I was alone and looking for a way home.