

Jerry and Thorpuppy

Too cold to work outside and no barn yet. Jerry looked at me with big brown eyes and said: "Now what are we gonna do?"

Jerry had been coming to see me for a month. Diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder and exhibiting aggressive and violent behavior at home and at school, he was in need of some help from my 20 fur and feathered friends who specialize in helping kids.

The horses were all eating at the hay bale. With heads shoved in as far as they could go; chomping away at the sweet green hay.

We climbed up into the hay bale to be with the animals while we chatted. My black lab played furiously in the snow at our feet. Thorpuppy was injured by his mommy dog when he was three months old and has brain damage on his left frontal lobe. When he plays, he plays for hours. During the summer in the pond and in the winter in the snow; he has quirky little rituals like dragging his stick backwards into the pond or through the snow until everyone goes home, even if it's ten hours later. It's as if he can't stop.

Sitting in the hay bale with the horses munching around us, Jerry told me he was with his youth worker the night before and she kept telling him things over and over again until he got angry and told her to shut up. I asked him why he thought she kept telling him stuff.

Jerry changed the subject and asked "What is Thorpuppy doing?" I reminded Jerry about how Thorpuppy had a brain injury and that sometimes he is obsessive about playing and he just can't stop. Jerry said: "Is that what it's called? Obsessive? He's just like me!" "Just like you? How?" I inquired. Jerry went on to tell me how whenever he is doing something, he has to do it four times or else he can't do something else. He told me that the night before when he was with his youth worker, he had to run through a snow pile four times even though she was trying to get him into the car. Jerry said it happens all the time and he gets in trouble at home and at school for it too. Well, who would have known? Turned out Jerry was just like Thorpuppy and if it hadn't been for Thorpuppy's unusual behaviors, we never would have known!

We informed Jerry's treatment team who did an assessment to see whether or not Jerry had Obsessive Compulsive Disorder as part of his disabilities and turned out he absolutely did.

Jerry no longer gets in trouble for the things he can't help and has learned how to tell people what is happening when he feels he needs to complete a ritual. His team has helped him learn to control these anxiety provoking thoughts and Jerry says he is feeling better. Thanks to Thorpuppy who just thought he was having fun!