

Maintaining Skills During Summer Vacation

Summer Programs for Adolescents and Young Adults

By Alissa Daner, MEd,
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and Samantha Feinman, MEd, TSHH
New Frontiers in Learning

Summer vacation is a time ripe with opportunities for growth – a time to catch-up on academic learning, strengthen executive functioning, and improve social and communication competence. Opportunities abound during the summer months to engage in learning outside of the traditional classroom by participating in varied activities that are not available within school settings. The summer months can provide a time for students to participate in structured programs that maintain and reinforce knowledge gained during the school year. Well-structured summer programs offer adolescents and young adults real-life experiences in which they can apply their academic knowledge, make gains in interpersonal skills, and improve executive functioning skills (e.g., organization, time management, decision making). It is especially important for youth



with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) to spend their summer months wisely and productively so that gains achieved during the school year are maintained and enhanced

through experiences in authentic settings.

On the other hand, summer brings with it a break from everyday school routines so that students may fall out of the pattern

of using learned executive functioning and social skills. Skills, such as organization and study habits, time management and *scheduling*, and *participating in the social interaction* required in classroom activities can be forgotten through lack of use. These are essential skills for all persons, not only during one's time as a student, but also as an individual travels through life. It is important to continue to develop and maintain these executive functioning and social skills, and summer affords a more relaxed opportunity to do so through enjoyable learning experiences.

By maintaining crucial social and academic skills during summer vacation, students with ASD may be better able to begin the next school year with increased ability and confidence. Research has shown that youth who participate in some form of educational activity during the summer months are less likely to lose skills than those that do not participate in summer programs (Walker, Barry, & Bader, 2010). School-aged children have access to a wide

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Summer Bridge Programs: Opportunities to Maximize Transition Success

By Ernst O. VanBergeijk, PhD, MSW
Associate Dean and Executive Director
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Summer is right around the corner. Every year parents are faced with the same dilemma regarding what to do with their child on the autism spectrum while school is not in session. There are a variety of activities a child could engage in. The problem is finding the right one that suits your child's interests and needs. For older, higher functioning children on the spectrum there is the added pressure of finding a summer experience that will help them transition to life after high school. Should they try to find a job? Go to summer camp? Travel? Or attend a summer bridge program? Each of these options has its benefits as well as its drawbacks.

Summer bridge programs are designed to help students transition from high school

to a college environment. These may be offered by community colleges, transition programs operated by not for profit social services agencies, for profit experiential travel companies, and four year colleges and universities. The populations they serve vary. Some programs target under represented populations or at risk youth. Others specialize in helping students with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, or other disabilities transition to college. Finally, some summer bridge programs are geared toward the general population, but are organized around a theme (e.g. oceanography, sports, science, engineering, robotics, and even Shakespeare).

When deciding whether or not to send your child to a summer bridge program or some other activity, the first step is to decide what are the goals of this experience? Is it an opportunity for them to gain some independence? Learn some independent living skills? Or are they engaging in the activity to learn job skills? Perhaps, the goal is to remediate academic deficits or

assess whether or not they can handle the stressors of college credit bearing classes and the demands of communal living in a dormitory. Rank order those goals in terms of importance. No single program can fulfill every single goal, but some may be address your higher priority goals.

The next step is to find out what the student's goals are for the summer. Identify common goals. This may result in a clear choice as to which summer activity to select. Where there are differences in goals, it will be important to process with your child/young adult those differences. Find out what fears they may have about trying one or more of the various options. Ask them where they envision themselves after high school. Likewise ask them what they feel they need to learn or what they need help with before they are ready to transition to after high school. Compare options and program offerings to this list of needs. Is there an option that best fits the needs they expressed?

A third step is to explore options to-

gether. Search for preliminary information on the internet. Exchange information with your son or daughter regarding your searches. Discuss what you like and dislike about what you have read thus far. Next, visit the programs and colleges where they are held -if possible. Many programs will have open houses so that families can tour the facilities and ask questions. This a great opportunity to ask questions about supervision, goals of the program, day and evening activities the students participate in, and what are the students expected to bring. How many summer participants go on to matriculate in the college's academic program or Comprehensive Transition and Post-secondary (CTP) program? Does the program accept school district funding through and IEP if the student has extended year services? These are two good questions to ask administrators.

Ask if you can have contact information for parents and students who have attended

see Transition on page 24

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ASN 2013 Editorial Calendar

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 "Supportive Housing for Adults with Autism"
Deadline: June 5, 2013

Fall 2013 Issue:
 "Managing the Financial Needs of Autism"
Deadline: September 5, 2013

Winter 2014 Issue:
 "Using Technology to Enhance the Lives
 of Individuals on the Spectrum"
Deadline: December 5, 2013

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AUTISM SPECTRUM NEWS DESK

Study Demonstrates That Children with Autism Can Learn to Stand Up to Bullies

By The Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD)

The Autism Research Group, along with the Center for Autism and Related Disorders, published a study in the current issue of the journal "Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders" on teaching children with autism to detect and respond to lies told by others attempting to bully them.

A research study by Autism Research Group (ARG) and Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD), "Teaching children with autism to detect and respond to deceptive statements," finds that children with autism can learn to detect when others are lying to them. The study taught individuals with autism to identify when others lied to them, specifically to exclude them from activities or to take away their possessions. The study appeared in the current issue of the journal "Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders."

Previous research indicated that children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) have deficits in understanding deception, both in the ability to lie to others and in the ability to detect when someone is lying to them. Children with ASD are frequently



Jonathan Tarbox, PhD, BCBA-D

the victims of bullying, and difficulties understanding deception make the population more vulnerable to victimization.

"We designed this study in response to concerns from parents who said their children with autism was being bullied because they didn't know how to tell when bullies were lying to them," said Autism Research Group Assistant Director Angela Persicke, MA, BCBA. "It was exciting to see these children learn the necessary skills rapidly – especially because, in most cases, others have declared that children with autism are not capable of learning cognitive skills, such as comprehending deception." The findings reveal that, through procedures based in applied behavior analysis (ABA), children with autism are able to understand the difference between truth and lies, as well as assert themselves when someone lies to them.

"Study findings indicate that the ability to detect and respond effectively to deception may be teachable in some children with autism spectrum disorders," said ARG Research Coordinator Jennifer Rannick, MA. "All of the participants in this study were able to acquire the skill and demonstrated true understanding of the concept by being able to apply it to new lies told by new peers who were not present during training."

Three children, ages 6, 7, and 9, with current diagnoses of autism participated in

the study. Prior to the intervention, all three children were not able to detect when others were lying and believed the lies to be true. For example, if told that the child could not play a game because he did not have blonde hair, the child would say, "Oh, ok," and continue to play alone. After the intervention, all three children not only identified when others were lying to exclude them from activities or take their possessions, but each child was also able to respond appropriately to lies stated by peers who had not been present during any training session.

"The study provides further evidence that behavioral teaching procedures can be used to teach complex social skills to children with autism," said executive director of Autism Research Group and director of research and development at CARD, Jonathan Tarbox, PhD, BCBA-D. "The findings are encouraging and highlight the need for further research and treatment on procedures for teaching skills that involve complex language and cognition."

About Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD)

Since 1990, CARD has been treating

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YAI Spanish-Language Conference Empowers, Inspires and Changes Parents' Perceptions

By The YAI Network

The room grew silent and tears filled many eyes, as New York City Council Member Diana Reyna described her personal experience, "not as an official, but as a parent," to the more than 300 attendees at YAI and Premier HealthCare's free Spanish-language conference for Latino families of children with developmental disabilities and the professionals who support them.

She described how her second son was 18-months-old and not speaking. "This is a taboo topic and difficult to speak about as a parent," she said. After undergoing numerous evaluations, he was diagnosed with apraxia, a motor speech disorder.

Within six months of receiving services, her son began to speak. He received early intervention services and support for eighteen months. "We engaged an interactive group of people who are important to a child's development including, therapists, providers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers, and parents. One person is alone is not enough. Addressing a child's developmental risk requires a social support network" she said. "After 18 months of service, my son was declassified, entered Kindergarten successfully and excelled.



NYC Council Member Diana Reyna with YAI CEO Stephen Freeman

I'm proud to say today he reading above grade level and doing very well."

Council Member Reyna's keynote address set the tone for "Vivir, Amar, Trabajar, Juntos!" (Living, Loving and Working Together), a free conference presented en-

tirely in Spanish by YAI, Premier HealthCare, a YAI network member, and the Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies at The Graduate Center of CUNY on March 5. This marked the 9th year of the conference.

Acknowledging the social stigma many in the Latino community experience when they have a child or family member with a developmental disability, such as autism, Down syndrome or an intellectual disability, the Council Member said, "Many parents isolate themselves because they don't know where to turn for help. By increasing awareness, information, and availability of services, we are ensuring that families don't deny themselves free or at cost services."

Morahina Rodriguez, whose 20-year-old daughter Kimberly Guerrero has autism, provided further inspiration for the attendees.

"If you are persistent and set goals for your child, and have faith in your child, he or she will accomplish them," Morahina said. "Try to make your child as independent as possible," she added. "Sometimes in the Latino families, we love our children so much that we do everything we can for them. If we do that, the outcome will be terrible. We're not going to be around forever, so they have to gain independence."

Kimberly has received services from YAI's Project A.S.S.I.S.T., which provides in-home habilitation for children with autism and other developmental disabilities, since she was 7.

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AUTISM SPECTRUM NEWS DESK

Twin Study Suggests Girls are Protected From Autism Risk

By Virginia Hughes
SFARI.org

A comparison of autism-like behaviors in nearly 10,000 pairs of fraternal twins suggests that girls are somehow protected from the disorder¹. The findings, published 19 February in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, may partly explain why autism is four times more common in boys than girls — one of the oldest and most puzzling statistics in the field.

The study measured autism traits — such as conversational abilities, social preferences and repetitive behaviors — in children in the general population. Among children who have many autism symptoms, girls are more likely than boys to have siblings who also have the traits, the study found.

The findings suggest that girls have a baseline level of protection, and don't display many autism traits unless they're "loaded up to the gills with risk factors," says lead investigator Angelica Ronald, senior lecturer in psychological sciences at Birkbeck, University of London.

Risk factors in these families may include inherited genetic variants, shared



environmental influences or some combination of both, she says.

The study does not address the larger question of how this protective effect might work. It might be rooted in biological differences between the sexes. Or it

might not really be a matter of protection at all, but rather the result of bias in how clinicians diagnose the disorder, the researchers say.

For example, the male-to-female ratio in autism becomes even bigger for children

with high intelligence quotients, suggesting that clinicians and parents may not notice less severe autism symptoms in girls, or may be more primed to look for them in boys.

"I think the approach to this \$64,000 question would be having a better understanding of sex differences in autism more generally," says co-investigator Elise Robinson, instructor in medicine at Harvard Medical School. "It's very hard to understand differences in the causes of autism between boys and girls if we don't really understand differences in what gets them diagnosed."

Family Resemblance

Researchers have long struggled to explain the extreme gender bias in autism. Some have proposed factors, such as high levels of fetal testosterone, that might make boys particularly vulnerable. Others have suggested that girls may be protected through a genetic mechanism related to their second X chromosome².

Genetic evidence of a possible female protective effect came in 2011, when two studies in *Neuron* showed that girls with autism are more likely to carry rare, spontaneous copy number variations (CNVs) —

see Girls on page 30

Five Major Mental Disorders Share Genetic Roots

Includes Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Autism, Major Depression, and ADHD

By The National Institute
of Mental Health (NIMH)

Five major mental disorders share some of the same genetic risk factors, the largest genome-wide study of its kind has found. Evidence for such genetic overlap had previously been limited to pairs of disorders. National Institutes of Health-funded researchers discovered that people with disorders traditionally thought to be distinct — autism, ADHD, bipolar disorder, major depression and schizophrenia — were more likely to have suspect genetic variation at the same four chromosomal sites. These included risk versions of two genes that regulate the flow of calcium into cells.

"These results will help us move toward diagnostic classification informed by disease cause," said Jordan Smoller, M.D., of Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, a coordinator of the study, which was supported by NIH's National Institute of Mental Health. "Although statistically significant, each of these genetic associations individually can account for only a small amount of risk for mental illness, making them insufficient for predictive or diagnostic usefulness by themselves."



Smoller, Kenneth Kendler, M.D., Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond; Nicholas Craddock, PhD., Cardiff University, England; Stephan Ripke, M.D., Massachusetts General, Patrick Sullivan, M.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and colleagues in the Cross-Disorder Group of the Psychiatric Genomics Con-

sortium, report on their findings February 28, 2013 in *The Lancet*.

Prior to the study, researchers had turned up evidence of shared genetic risk factors for pairs of disorders, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, autism and schizophrenia and depression and bipolar disorder. Such evidence of

overlap at the genetic level has blurred the boundaries of traditional diagnostic categories and given rise to research domain criteria, or RDoC, an NIMH initiative to develop new ways of classifying psychopathology for research based on neuroscience and genetics as well as observed behavior.

To learn more, the consortium researchers analyzed the five key disorders as if they were the same illness. They screened for evidence of illness-associated genetic variation across the genomes of 33,332 patients with all five disorders and 27,888 controls, drawing on samples from previous consortium mega-analyses.

For the first time, specific variations significantly associated with all five disorders were among several suspect genomic sites that turned up. These included variation in two genes that code for the cellular machinery for regulating the flow of calcium into neurons. Variation in one of these, called CACNA1C, which had previously been implicated in susceptibility to bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and major depression, is known to impact brain circuitry involved in emotion, thinking, attention and memory — functions disrupted in mental illnesses. Variation in

see Genetic on page 27

Using Summer Vacation to Build College Readiness Skills

By **Ronni Aronow MA, MS**
College Transition Consultant
Spectrum Services

Heading to college in the fall? Summer vacation is the perfect opportunity to work on the skills you'll need to succeed in college. Whether it's understanding the way your disability affects you, navigating new environments, using an ATM machine, making your own doctor's appointments, or figuring out what type of organization system works best for you, summer break can provide you with the free time to practice these necessary skills.

Research has shown that having the ability to understand your disability and self-advocate for accommodations can significantly contribute to successful outcomes in both school and in employment (Adelman & Vogel, 1990). Researching the types of accommodations available at your college and contacting the disabilities office can also help students with disabilities get an early start on learning strategies that can aid in their transition to college.

Parents and students are often overwhelmed with all that's involved in the transition from high school to college, especially for families who are used to advocating for their children, and who may be unsure about how their children will fare on their own. Scheduling time while



Ronni Aronow MA, MS

they are still living at home to help build skills can help this transition become much smoother and can also serve to ease anxiety for both parents and students.

Some of the specific types of skills you can practice during summer vacation are:

Visit unknown places and use maps to practice navigation skills - Whether students will be attending a local college and

living at home, or leaving home to attend a college in another state, they will need to learn their way around a campus. For a student who has never experienced navigating a new environment, this can be extremely stressful. Visiting the campus over the summer break when it's less crowded can provide the perfect opportunity for students to figure out where their classes will be, which dining hall is closest to their dorm, where the gym, disabilities center, and bookstore are located.

Ride public transportation and use bus/train schedules - Students will need to either learn how to drive or take public transportation between home and school on a daily basis or during vacations. Summer is a great time to practice new routes to and from a local school, and to figure out the best ways of getting to and from a distant school so that students know how they'll be able to return home. For students who have never experienced taking a public bus or train, practice using local transportation during the summer just to practice this new skill and become familiar reading bus and train schedules as well.

Join a group activity based on a topic of interest to practice building new relationships - Summer is the perfect opportunity to research local organizations to find programs you're interested in. Most colleges have an abundance of clubs, which stu-

dents can join as a way of pursuing their interests and meeting other like-minded individuals. Why not practice your social skills over the summer while pursuing a passion, and be better able to take advantage when you arrive at college?

Set an alarm clock to wake you every morning to practice independent skills - If waking up on time during high school has been an issue, you can guarantee it won't be any easier in college, when you've gone to sleep much later and don't have parents shaking you to wake up in the morning. Start getting used to it during the summer! And if one alarm clock doesn't do the trick, begin to learn how to set a backup alarm on your phone - which should be charging every night in your room anyway!

Start a checking account with ATM access to practice budgeting skills - This is especially recommended for families where parents have been acting as bank tellers and doling out money as needed. It's time to think about how this works in the real world, whether the student will be continuing to live at home or going away to school. Family discussions about finances, how much will be in the student's checking account each semester, and the student's responsibility to check the balance periodically, should be done during the summer. If

see *College* on page 30



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The Asperger Syndrome Training & Employment Partnership (ASTEP) focuses on employer education and training, and advises employers on how to recruit and manage employees with Asperger Syndrome. www.asperger-employment.org

Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning Autism Association (AHA) provides support programs, conferences, activities, a hotline and reliable, up-to-date information for individuals and families. www.ahany.org

Career and Employment Options, Inc. (CEO) provides transition supports for students in special education and job placement services for students and adults with Asperger Syndrome and other disabilities. www.ceoincworks.com

The Elija Foundation provides advocacy support, educational outreach and comprehensive workshops in Applied Behavior Analysis for educators and family members. www.theelijahfoundation.org

www.spectrumservicesnyc.com for clinical services and contact information

www.aspergercenter.com for articles of interest for families and adults with Asperger Syndrome

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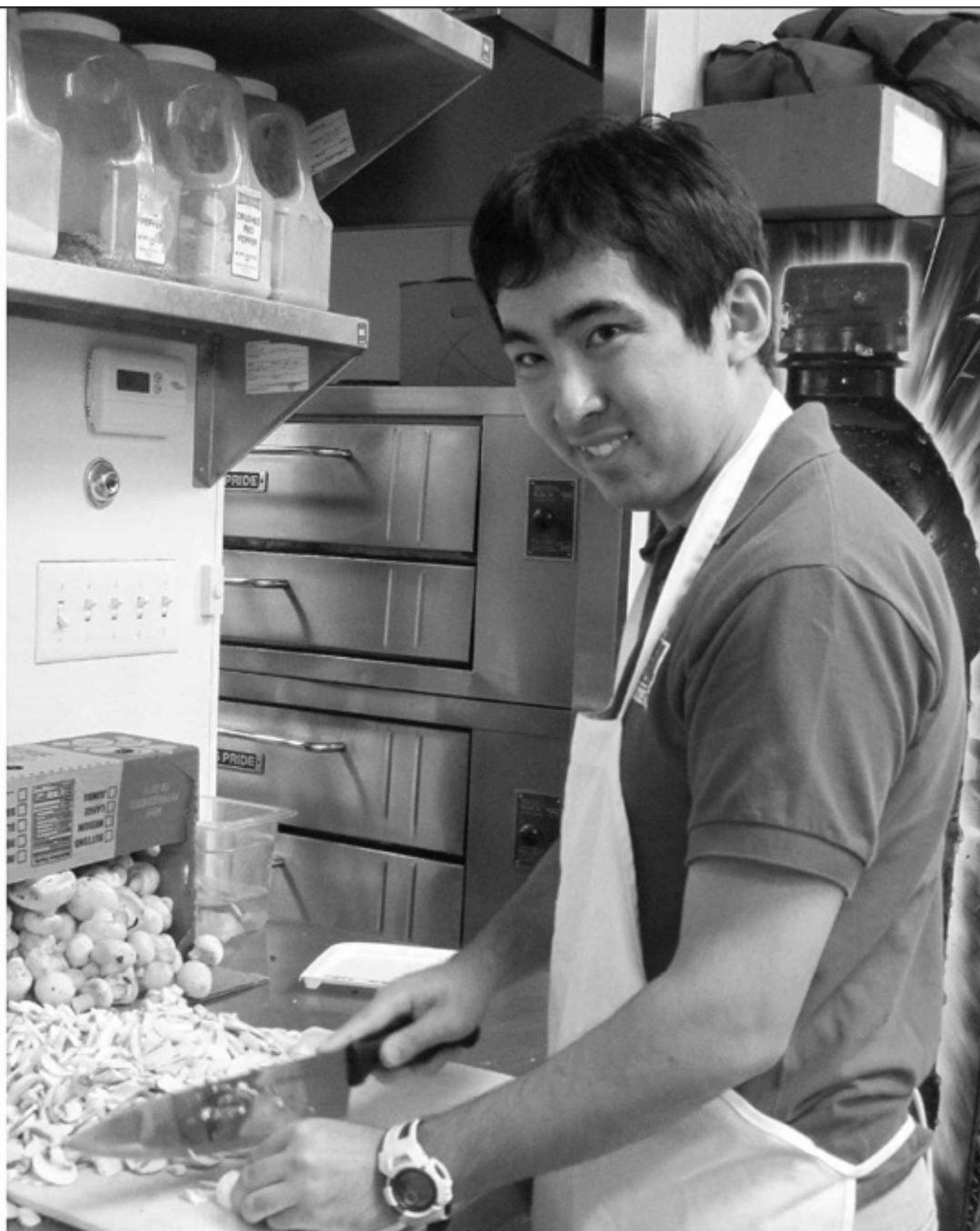
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Promoting Summer Safety: Understanding Unintentional Injury for Children with ASD

By Rachel N. S. Cavalari, PhD, BCBA
Postdoctoral Fellow, Institute for Child
Development - Research Associate,
Psychology Department at
Binghamton University – SUNY

Summer is typically a pleasurable time of year, with more opportunities for families to spend time together engaging in outdoor activities and going on day trips or vacations. While these occasions may provide positive experiences for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), increased access to outdoor and new environments also elevates exposure to injury hazards. The most common types of childhood injury are falls, burns, drowning, poisoning, suffocation, and motor vehicle accidents. Children are also frequently injured by being struck by objects (e.g., baseballs at sporting events, bumping into walls) and bitten by insects or animals (Borse, et al., 2008).

Children with ASD sustain severe, medically-attended injuries at two to three times the rate of peers and are more than five times as likely to suffer fatality from drowning, poisoning, and suffocation compared to other children (Gillberg, Billstedt, Sundh, & Gillberg, 2010; Lee, Harrington, Chang, & Connors, 2008; McDermott, Zhou, & Mann, 2008; Shavelle, Strauss, &



Rachel N. S. Cavalari, PhD, BCBA

Pickett, 2001). Research conducted at the Institute for Child Development (Cavalari & Romanczyk, 2012a) found that children with ASD engage in high rates of injury-related risk-taking behavior compared to peers and that the amount of injuries

increased with more severe autism symptoms. Anderson and colleagues (2012) reported similar findings for elopement (i.e., wandering), with more severe autism symptoms related to higher risk for elopement. Further, many children in the study were at risk for drowning or traffic injury when elopement occurred.

During the summer months, children with ASD will likely spend more time outside, which increases the chances of encountering outdoor hazards (i.e., insect/animal bites, bodies of water, and sidewalks/roadways). Also, injuries that occur throughout the year might be worsened by additional hazards. For example, a child who frequently falls while walking would be more severely injured if he or she fell when climbing on playground equipment. Again, while injury can occur at any time of year, the number of environmental hazards increases during warmer months as the child's living environment expands.

Supervision and Injury Prevention

Given the high injury risk in children with ASD, parents and other caregivers are tasked with adjusting supervision and injury prevention strategies to better meet the needs of their children. Unfortunately, formal assessments of supervision and prevention strategies for children with ASD

are limited in the published literature. Recent research conducted at the Institute for Child Development has begun to address this lack of information. Using infrared eye tracking and objective behavioral measurement methods, Cavalari & Romanczyk (2012b) evaluated caregiver decision-making for injury prevention in children with ASD. Participants viewed injury risk video vignettes and made decisions about intervening with the child. Longer periods of uninterrupted supervision, rapid intervention with risk-taking behavior, and knowledge of age-appropriate supervision strategies were identified as important components of effective supervision. Knowledge of age-appropriate supervision strategies is particularly important for families of children with ASD, since caregivers need to use a broad range of prevention strategies related to both the child's developmental level and chronological age.

Promoting Summer Safety

As part of the Institute for Child Development's family service programs, parent education seminars are regularly provided on topics like safety and injury prevention for children with ASD. Recommendations described below reflect common themes of

see *Safety* page 26

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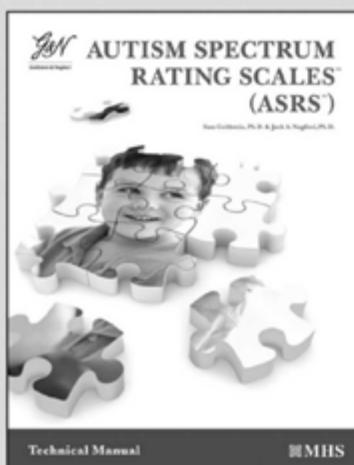
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Helping Children with Social Skills Difficulties: The Benefits of Extended School Year Instruction

By Michael C. Selbst, PhD, BCBA-D
Director, Behavior Therapy Associates
Executive Director, HI-STEP

While it may feel like we are still trying to dig out from recent winter storms and stay warm, spring time is fast approaching. Over the next several months, parents and special education teams once again will begin to consider children's needs for the summer and next school year. Many children with social skills difficulties and pragmatic/social language needs require support and instruction throughout the summer months in areas such as friendship-making, manners, expression of feelings, self-control, social problem-solving, anger management, organization, conversation skills, play skills, and the "hidden curriculum" to name a few.

While some children lack these skills, others have acquired them but struggle to use the skills when and where they are needed. Often, these children avoid social situations or may try and often fail.

Children who struggle with social skills, especially those with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, are at-risk for continued problems: internalizing (e.g., depressed mood, anxiety) and externalizing problems (e.g., oppositional and defiant behavior, aggres-



Michael C. Selbst, PhD, BCBA-D

sion); school-related problems (e.g., failure, quitting school); and family issues (e.g., discord, stress). When a child is not making progress in developing and using social skills, the team should collaborate and discuss additional supports and services to help the child.

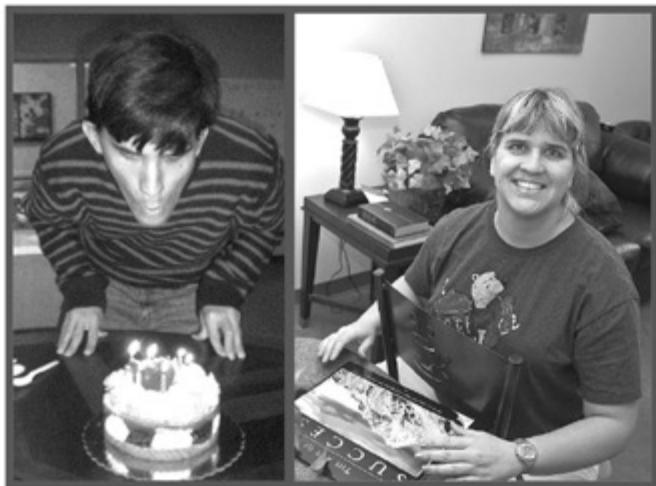
For some children, Extended School Year (E.S.Y.) services are needed. E.S.Y. refers to special education and related services that are provided to a student with a disability beyond the normal school year. E.S.Y. services are provided consistent with the child's Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.). The I.E.P. team determines whether the child requires programming. E.S.Y. services are based upon the child's needs, the child's progress throughout the year, the likelihood of regression of skills, and many other factors.

When a child demonstrates social skills difficulties, the team should carefully consider the following questions to determine the need for E.S.Y. programming:

- Does the child have a history of or is the child likely to regress after an extended break during the summer?
 - Does the child have difficulty recouping any deterioration or loss of skill within a reasonable amount of time (e.g., 1-2 months upon returning to school)?
- If the team can answer "Yes" to any of these questions, then serious consideration should be given regarding the appropriateness of E.S.Y. programming. If and when the team considers E.S.Y. programming, there should be careful planning to ensure that the program or intervention is aligned with best practices. This should be a collaborative process based upon information specific to the individual child's needs. Ultimately, the recipe for social skills success requires a careful blending of teamwork, sustaining efforts to help the child, and adhering to evidence-based approaches.
- When considering a summer program to teach social skills, parents and school personnel should learn about the approaches used at the program, the skills that may be targeted, how progress is monitored and what they should expect
- Has the child mastered the social skills, social-language and/or emotional-behavioral goals and objectives in the I.E.P.?
 - Has the child generalized these skills across environments?
 - Does the child require more intensive, systematic and individualized social skills programming than he/she has been receiving throughout the year to demonstrate progress toward the goals and objectives?

see *Extended on page 31*

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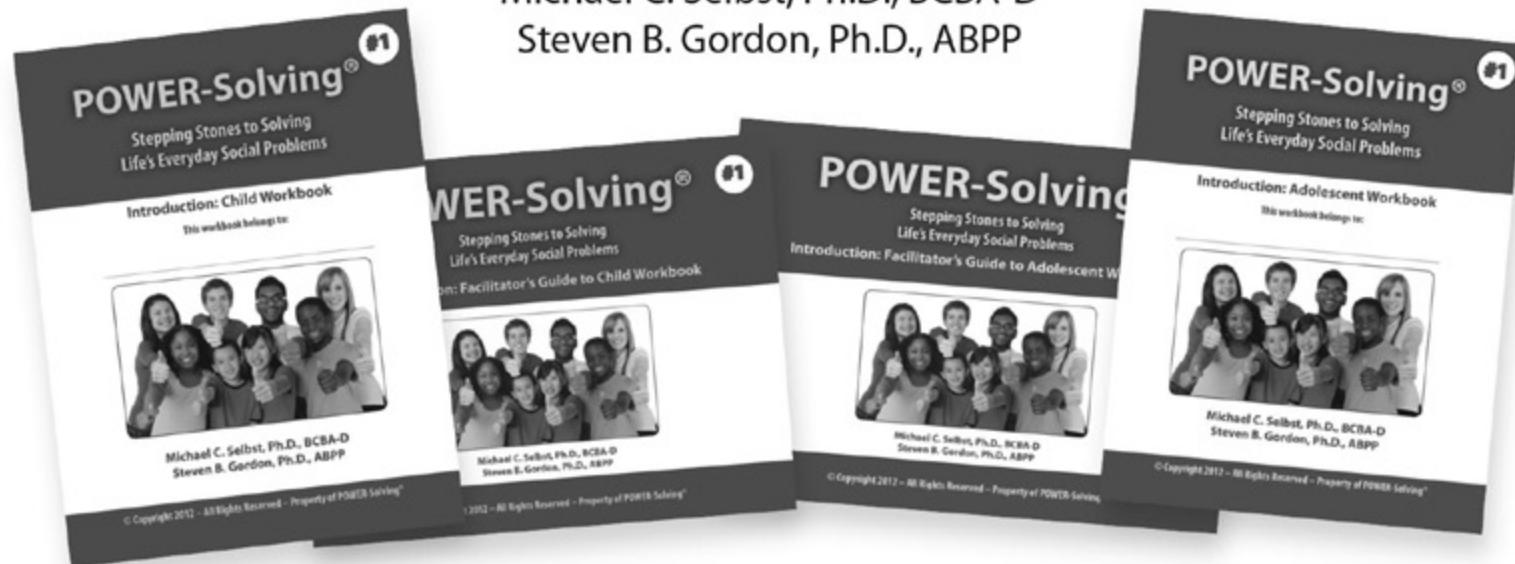
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Michael C. Selbst, Ph.D., BCBA-D
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The Four Kingdoms of Autism

By **Thomas R. Insel, MD**
Director
The National Institute of
Mental Health (NIMH)

In 2007, Caryn James wrote in The New York Times that “autism has become to disorders what Africa is to social issues.” This statement was intended to emphasize the emerging public recognition of autism during the preceding decade. But it was also a prescient comparison, for in the years since 2007, autism and Africa have become highly contentious topics with emerging movements that have polarized those involved and confused the broader public.

Part of the polarization and confusion around autism results from heterogeneity: the diagnosis of autism now applies to a 5-year-old who has no language, a 20-year-old computer science student at MIT who is socially awkward, and a 40-year-old parent who has no interest in social interaction. “Autisms” may be a better descriptor of the broad spectrum of social and behavioral traits now subsumed under a single diagnosis. There is, in fact, no typical autism.

But some of the confusion has less to do with the heterogeneity of the syndrome and more to do with which door you knock on to get help. People with autism are likely to be viewed differently by pediatricians, child neurologists, child psy-



Thomas R. Insel, MD

chiatrists, developmental psychologists, behavior therapists, special education experts, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and any of the other range of providers. Like the blind men and the elephant, different providers can offer completely different perspectives on

the problem and the treatment. And many self-advocates with autism dismiss the concepts of problem and treatment. They seek acceptance for what they call their “neurodiversity,” rejecting the goals of prevention and cure. Is it any wonder families are confused?

In the spirit of mapping the autism landscape and finding some common ground, I suggest four perspectives that currently separate the communities interested in the autism spectrum. The language, assumptions, literature, and societies that have grown up around each of these perspectives are so distinct, they have begun to represent different countries or kingdoms. Each has its own truths. And each too often fails to understand or even recognize that their truths may not apply to all kingdoms.

Illness

Autism was first described as a developmental disorder by Leo Kanner, a child psychiatrist, in 1943. In the 70 years since, research on autism has largely focused on autism as an illness. The illness kingdom is largely populated by clinicians, researchers, parents, and some people with autism. They view autism as a brain disorder in which the language of medicine applies, with a focus on improving diagnosis and interventions, and cure as the ultimate goal. Medical theories about the cause of autism have evolved from “refrigerator mothers”

(a term coined by psychoanalysts to suggest that autism could be due to a lack of maternal warmth) to complex genetics. In this kingdom, just as in cancer and heart disease, the search continues for biomarkers to assist in diagnosis and molecular targets for drug treatments. In contrast to those who view autism as a disability, focusing on improved services and supports, the illness kingdom focuses on biomedical approaches to reduce the need for services and supports.

Identity

Self-advocates with autism, like self-advocates in the deafness community, have replaced the medical model of illness with the language of diversity and identity. They, along with many in the educational and disability communities, view autism as a difference in need of accommodation, not a disorder in need of cure. The identity kingdom was founded by young adults with a past or current autism spectrum diagnosis who can live independently but who face a range of challenges in what they describe as the “neurotypical” world. Rather than seeking to become “neurotypical,” they advocate for acceptance or inclusion (“nothing about us without us”) as well as recognition that autistic thinking may yield innovative solutions. Some self-advocates interpret

see Kingdoms on page 28

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Summer Vacation: A Prime Opportunity to Develop Social Skills for the Workplace

Katherine Cody, PsyD
Senior Staff Psychologist
Fay J. Lindner Center for Autism



Katherine Cody, PsyD

For many students, the end of the school year represents a time to relax, celebrate the change of pace, and enjoy leisure time. However, each year, there are many individuals who approach the end of the school year and find that this is a time of transition; a time for entering the unfamiliar world outside of the educational system. As these students enter young adulthood, they find the supports of the educational system are not present in the “real world,” but their needs remain and new needs emerge in this unfamiliar territory. Although uncharted and scary, summer for these emerging young adults, can be a rich opportunity to access supports that facilitate a successful transition into adulthood and the workforce. One of the most common difficulties among individuals with High Functioning Autism (HFA), Asperger’s Syndrome (AS), and other social learning needs is not necessarily learning specific job or vocational skills; rather, it is learning how to navigate the workplace in a socially successful manner. Summer time offers these individuals a break from their routine, and with that comes a break from

regular social experiences. As such, summer vacation can offer a prime opportunity to maintain and establish workplace related social skills in preparation for the next phase in their lives.

There are several ways that development of work related social skills can be fostered: individual, small group, or self-instruction. While individual and self-instruction are useful methods for gaining an understanding of these skills, developing these skills within a peer group setting is more likely to foster generalization and understanding of the impact of one’s social behaviors upon others. The following core components are essential for developing these skills:

- Interview Skills (and whether or not to disclose a diagnosis)
- Skills for Handling Rejection or Acceptance of a Job
- Social Thinking® (Social Thinking at Work, Michelle Garcia Winner and Pamela Crooke, 2011)
- Communication Skills for the Workplace
- Managing Emotions in the Workplace
- Perspective Taking in the Workplace
- Social Norms in the Workplace
- Relationships in the Workplace
- Technology in the Workplace

Developing the above skills is different from developing pre-vocational or occupational skills in that they do not target job skill development for a particular vocation, but instead target the underlying skills needed to be successful in any workplace. More specifically, these skills target improvement in the way social information is processed and used to guide behavior in the work setting. Learning these skills within a group setting allows for the individuals to learn not only from the facilitators of the group, but from peer feedback and shared experiences. These are powerful tools for facilitating change and helping young adults recognize that they are not alone in their experience of difficulties in these areas.

The first step to improving social skills in the workplace is to develop the social tools necessary to obtain and sustain employment. First and foremost, teaching Social Thinking® strategies is an important component of this process, as they merge an understanding of social skills, or “the ability to effectively adapt our social behavior around others according to the situation, what we know about the people in that situation, and what our needs are” with the concept of thinking in a social way, “how we think about our own and others”

see Workplace on page 26

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Use Social Apps to Keep Skills Sharp Over the Summer

By Laurie Jacobs, MA, CCC-SLP
Co-Founder
Social Skill Builder, Inc.

Summertime can be a welcome break from school for many students, who will cram as much sleeping in and having fun as they can into a few short months before the school year resumes. But the intrinsic break in routine can also spell disaster for some kids on the Autism spectrum or with other social learning issues, when the social parameters and interactions of a school day are suddenly gone. Electronic social apps are a great solution – they are a fun, motivating, economical, and flexible way to incorporate social learning over the summer.

Apps for Structure and Basics

In fact, some apps exist simply to help parents or caregivers manage a child's expectations for their day, which can be incredibly helpful when the structure of school is on a time out. One such app is Behavior Scripts, which helps children visually see what may happen in a variety of typical everyday situations they may encounter. This allows the child to anticipate and understand the expectations of the day and to prepare for what will happen next. This helps to defer meltdowns and allow for visual prompting as transitions are about to occur.



Laurie Jacobs, MA, CCC-SLP

There are also timer apps for rewards or chores, so that the child can see the timer and know when an event will be over or when it will begin. These include Speech-Timer, a simple way to show time passing, and Visual Cue, which provides picture prompts, simple cause and results, a token reward system, a time keeper for transitions, a visual scheduler and a visual timer – all in the free Lite version! Other great

ones to try are Time2Do, Waitstrip and My Video Schedule. Try the free versions to see which App works best for what you are trying to accomplish.

There are also many apps available that cover the most basic concepts of social skills. Some examples are Conover Company Everyday Social Skills and Life Skills Sampler to prepare children on what to expect, to practice what to say, how to say it (voice volume), how to join a group, who and what they will see, what they can touch or not touch and possible issues such as lines at ticket counter, crowds, restricted areas etc. These apps put a strong focus on functional skills and are simple and direct.

Apps for Role Playing and Social Stories

Summer can also be full of new and exciting places to go and see, and the biggest key for social success when trying something new is to learn the rules – the basics of what to expect and how to behave – before you jump in. Apps are a great and economical way to introduce and prepare children to get the most enjoyment out of an outing. Let's say you are going to a museum for the first time. A great way to prepare would be to get pictures from the museum website and incorporate them into a social story as part of the child's preparation.

Many social apps allow for an extremely personalized preparation experience by

incorporating the child's photo and background photos of where the action, literally their own social story, will take place. One example is PuppetPals, where the child can star in their own show of what to expect, what they might see, how to behave, and whom they might speak to. Import an actual picture of the child, have them trace around the image with a fingertip, and a new animated star is born! Now the child can place himself in the starring role of their own animated social story of a trip to the museum with pictures of the actual museum as the back drop and their own voice recording. This app is extremely flexible and can be used independently or in groups, and is perfect for home use. More outgoing kids will enjoy using the app for creating countless stories, while more nervous ones can benefit from planning out their day and managing expectations, and all will profit from practicing their social interactions.

Another option is to create an electronic book before the trip with photos of the child and museum photos with StoryKit, and bring that special story to the trip right on your smart phone. Comic Life is another great app to prepare for an outing like a museum trip. Upload photos to create full comic strips about the upcoming museum outing with your child or student. When the comic is complete, you can flip through

see Apps on page 31

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Maintaining Social Skills Over the Summer

By Maria Slavin, MS, OTR/L
Director
COLLAGE

Summer is a time for relaxation and fun, however certain skills acquired during the school year can be lost if they are not practiced consistently over the course of the entire year. One of the first things parents should identify, are IEP goals targeted by school staff to be maintained over summer. These are the goals that will be addressed during ESY (Extended School Year) and are usually identified mid-school year in preparation for summer learning. Parents should be aware of these goals so they can continue practicing with their son or daughter at home. It is also extremely important to be aware of Specially Designed Instruction/Teaching Strategies that are identified in the IEP to support the targeted goals. These are essentially tips on how to modify tasks and environment, how to prompt, etc. that can be key in helping kids learn and maintain skills. An example may be something like providing a fidget toy to hold while practicing language and communication skills to help facilitate sensory regulation and attention.

In particular, the summer can be a great time to practice social skills at home and provide opportunities for social growth through novel situations like joining the



Maria Slavin, MS, OTR-L

pool, going to camp or meeting new people on vacation. At COLLAGE, a social skills program for kids and adults with varying behavioral health diagnoses, parents are encouraged to use our model at home during the summer. COLLAGE's model consists of conversation practice, gross-motor or movement activity and a collaborative project during every weekly session.

Practice conversation with your kids at the dinner table and in the car. Stay away from open-ended questions such as "How was camp today?" Kids who struggle socially and have language/communication issues do better with specific questions. Instead, you may ask, "Did you play with Joey at camp today?" "Tell me about that, what did you do together?" Also prompt your child to gather information about others. "Now that we've heard about your day, can you ask your brother what he did today?" Keep encouraging follow up questions to show that a conversation bounces back and forth like a ball. When working with younger kids, practice gathering information through "w" questions such as who, what, when, where and why. Older kids should practice ice breakers/conversation starters that can be used to initiate interaction with new peers they meet during summer activities. Help your child develop and memorize a list of go-to topics that he can introduce when he meets new people such as asking about family, music, games/hobbies, sports, etc.

Get out and be active as a family. Take the soccer ball or whiffle ball and bat to the park or beach. Play together as a family and work on turn taking and teamwork. The movement is great for stimulating language and regulating sensory deficits, but don't forget the focus is not the physical skills needed for kicking or hitting the ball. When practicing social skills it's about be-

ing able to follow the rules of a game, not getting overly competitive, cheering others on and communicating and collaborating for a common goal.

Do a summer project as a family, or encourage your child to do a project with a friend. It should be something that can be worked on a little bit at a time that will result in a finished outcome created together. Examples might be a 1,000 piece puzzle or a long-term arts and craft project. Doing a long-term collaborative project with others helps to work on communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution and flexibility. Also, at the end of the project there is a feeling of unity and satisfaction at having created something worthwhile along-side other people. These feelings promote bonding which is at the forefront of developing all relationships. This is why kids on sports teams often become great friends with one another.

Finally, don't forget the importance of play dates. Like anything else, maintaining social skills requires opportunities for practice. Make the time and the effort to have your child invite a friend over or ask a friend to meet somewhere. Play dates don't need to go on for hours, and instead should be kept short and successful, especially for kids with low frustration tolerance. End it on a high note and get together again in a few weeks, then build from there over time.

see *Social Skills* on page 27

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Self-Advocacy

By Drew Kinsey
Student

We all have different needs. One of the most important steps to success is the ability to make those needs known. Everyone, no matter their disability, requires supports of one kind or another, and it is because of this that the ability to self-advocate becomes important as one grows older. I first started advocating for myself in tenth grade.

As a sophomore, the subject of college was growing closer and my parents decided that my CSEs would be a good place to begin practicing self-advocacy. However, I was still having social issues and difficulty at the time. So, instead of addressing my support team directly, my parents and I decided that I should make a PowerPoint that took the attention off me and made it easier for me to remember the main priorities of the meeting. The PowerPoint covered basic topics like my interests, goals, strengths, and weaknesses, to help introduce myself to any new teachers. It



Drew Kinsey

also went into greater detail about particular situations that I had trouble with as well as strategies that had helped me in the past. By creating and using this PowerPoint, I was able to receive my first in-

roduction to self-advocacy and the future skills that I would need to speak for myself later on in college. Since then, I have continued to advocate for myself in many different ways.

Each year, to help express my needs to my teachers, I have visited the school a day early to learn the locations of my classes and meet with my teachers to give them a brief overview of the accommodations I would need for the year. A team meeting was also held in the beginning of each year to discuss in detail how I would obtain a copy of notes or receive extra time for tests and quizzes. If there was anything I was having trouble with, whether it be complications in my own schedule or dealing with other students or teachers, I would bring the matter up with my guidance counselor or resource room teacher to have it resolved.

For kids looking to begin to advocate for themselves, I would suggest that they start in a setting that they are familiar with. Try to talk with at least one person with whom you are familiar and who already knows you well. For example, I started by presenting in front of a collection of teachers

whom I had known for a while with a small number of new teachers mixed in, but others may find it easier to talk to a smaller number of people or just speak to someone one to one. Also remember that you're not alone, that your teachers are there to help and support you. It can also help to tie your initial attempts to advocate for yourself into an area that you are already familiar with, like technology or computers, which is another reason why I found the PowerPoint helpful. Finally, for some it can help to look at their future and realize just how independent life in college truly is. For me personally, realizing there would be limited contact and support from my parents was a powerful motivation to improve my ability to self-advocate along with many other skills.

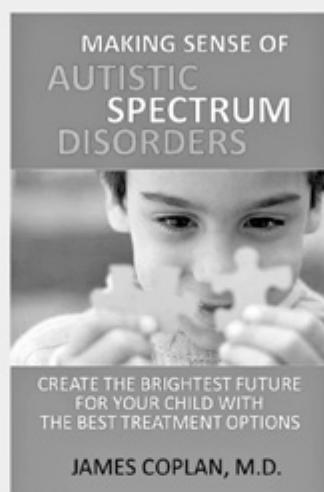
Drew is a 17 year old high school student with Asperger Syndrome. He participated on the Fall 2011 AHA teen panel.

This article was originally printed in the AHA Association's Spring 2012 issue of On The Spectrum and has been reprinted with permission. For more information, please visit www.ahany.org.

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Summertime Games and Simple Strategies to Reinforce Social Skills

By Kari Phillips, LCSW,
Norma Litman, LCSW,
and Patricia L. Grossman, LCSW
WJCS Outpatient Services for People
with Developmental Disabilities

Summertime is fun time for most children. School routines give way to relaxation, perhaps at summer day or sleep away camp – and there’s no studying. While most typically developing children welcome this, it can become problematic for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). That’s why Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS) encourages reinforcing skills learned during the academic year.

A core challenge for children with autism spectrum disorders is the lack of social reciprocity and understanding the nuances of social interactions. This includes making eye contact, emotional regulation, play and conversational skills. To address these challenges, many individuals with ASDs get countless therapies at school, home, and in the community to try to help them develop age-appropriate skills. Without ongoing reinforcement of social skills, many children will quickly lose what they have achieved.

One of the most effective methods of teaching social skills is therapeutic social skills groups. Recognizing the important



Kari Phillips, LCSW

role that family members play in developing and reinforcing social skills, WJCS runs parents groups concurrently with our therapeutic social skills groups during the school year and in summer refresher groups. In addition to providing parents support, each parent group teaches skills children are learning in group with the expectation that they reinforce the skills at home and in the community. Both the children and parents involved in these programs often report that the practice tasks



Norma Litman, LCSW

are helpful in reinforcing skills, and also are fun, enjoyable, and can improve children’s relationships with their parents and siblings.

So what can parents do in the summer? They can continue reinforcing social skills in simple and fun ways that can involve the entire family. Parents can play a vital role as mentors and coaches, promoting good eye contact, listening and sportsmanship—all of which can be done in the context of play.

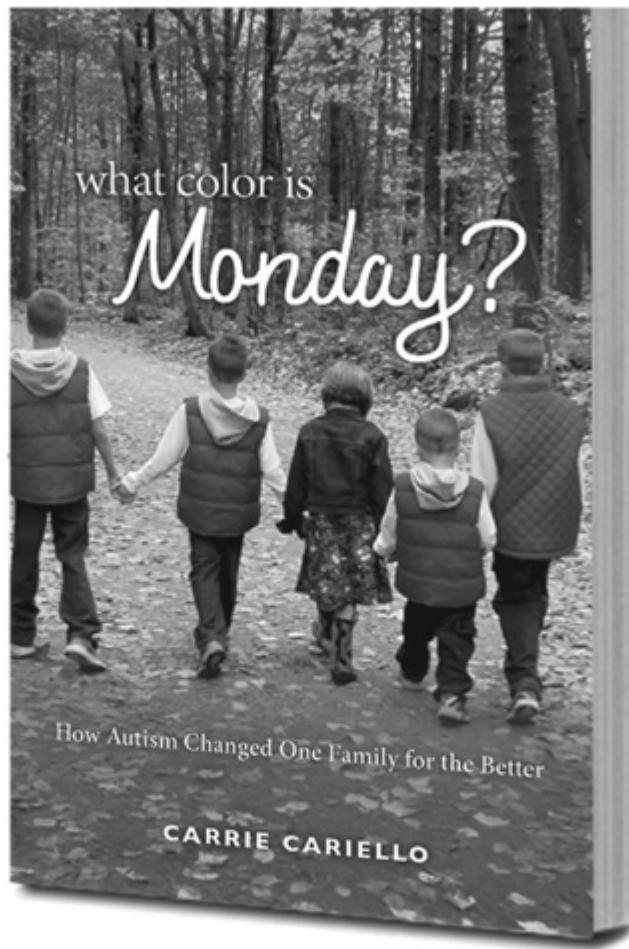


Patricia L. Grossman, LCSW

Use of Role-Plays

In an effort to prevent social skills from deteriorating, parents and other caregivers should try to anticipate what social skills the child will need for a given situation and prepare him/her. Role –playing the situation in advance helps children make difficult transitions. The more realistic the role-play, the more effective the outcome.

see Reinforce on page 28



What Color is Monday? – APRIL 2013

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The Lighter Side of the Spectrum ~ A Mom's View

By Carrie Cariello

What Color is Monday?

"What color do you see for Monday?" my son Jack asked as I heaved a chicken into the oven.

"What?" I said distractedly, turning from the oven to slice some potatoes at the counter. It was late afternoon one day last fall, and I was preparing dinner and managing the demands of homework and tired toddlers. (One was in a tiara.)

"What color is Monday?" he asked again, his robotic voice rising ever so slightly in irritation.

"I don't see Monday as a color. Do you?" I asked, finally tuning in to what he was talking about.

"Yes. All days are colors."

All days are colors. On a seemingly ordinary day, Jack once again granted me the privilege to take a tiny peek inside his fascinating mind. Without preamble, he rattled off which color he associates with each day. And then, just as suddenly as the conversation began, he snapped his mind closed and moved on to something else entirely. I tried to probe further; *why* was Saturday red? Was the entire day red, or just the morning? "I told you. No more." he answered in a clipped tone.

Later that winter, Riddle Brook Pub-



The Five Cariello Kids

lishing asked me to write a book based on our life with an autistic child. I happily agreed, and throughout the spring and early summer I wrote, putting together words and sentences, essays and chapters, to describe our days with five children and autism. Some days the words came easily, other days I struggled to make sense of my world with Jack and transport him onto the page. Whenever I approached something

that seemed like writer's block, I reminded myself that my subject—my inspiration—was right in front of me at the dinner table every night. All I needed to do was watch and listen and learn from my son.

And then, like the pieces of a puzzle, the elements of the book came together. It describes our journey to Jack's diagnosis, and all the funny and frustrating and sad times since the day we first heard the words *your*

son has autism nearly seven years ago. It describes how a boy with a literal mind made peace with religion and accepted his first communion, and how our family of seven took our first vacation. It describes his obsessions with things like dates and cars, his fascination with shampoo and license plates.

Every couple of chapters, I included a letter to each of my children on their birthday, describing their likes and dislikes, their temperament, their appetite. Describing the way they've made room for autism and embraced their unusual brother.

Recently someone asked me, "Who is this book for?" And after considering the question for moment, I answered that originally it was for me, a way for me to creatively untangle the web of emotions and bewilderment and frustration autism often left me with at the end of a long day. But, as the project progressed, I realized it wasn't just for me; it was for Jack and our family. And by the final round of edits, I decided it was for an even larger audience than that—it was for anyone and everyone who has ever been touched by autism.

I decided it was a way to put a face to the name of *autism*; the sweet little face of a blue-eyed boy who loves music and

see Monday on page 27

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Planning Ahead to Maintain Skills During Summer Vacation

By Michele LaMarche, MS, BCBA
Executive Director
Step By Step, Inc. and
Co-Founder of Special Learning, Inc.

Summer is coming and it's time to start preparations. We know most children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) benefit from a structured schedule and environment, so much so that they usually know their schedule better than the adults who care for them. But what happens come summer?

Schedules tend to vary from day to day. Things are no longer as predictable. There is increased downtime. Skills kids have worked on all year long get forgotten or aren't practiced enough. Siblings spend more time together often leading to more disagreements.

The truth is that summer interrupts a schedule and structure that both the student and the family have been following for nine or more months.

Most families I work with have mixed feelings about the summer. On one hand they want time off from the day-to-day tasks and schedule to have some fun. On the other hand, they want to make sure their kids are busy, engaged and most importantly - maintaining the skills they learned throughout the year.

The good news is there are a variety of ways to both have fun and keep fresh the



Michele LaMarche, MS, BCBA

skills your child worked hard on during the school year. With a combination of structured activities, natural environment training and community outings, you can learn and have fun this summer. The important first step is planning, and planning starts early.

In an effort to maintain both successful behavior and skills learned throughout the school year, you may want to consider imple-

menting one or more of the following strategies during the months leading up to summer:

February: Sign Up for Community Outings to Create Practice Opportunities

Believe it or not, February is not too early to begin finding opportunities in the community that give you and your child different, prescheduled chances to practice and learn skills. We often refer to these as *community outings*. They can be one time only, such as a visit to the science museum, or several outings to the same place for repeated practice, like daily zoo camp or weekly trips to the zoo.

Use this time to identify the abundant list of summer camps, classes and events available.

The key is to create more and more opportunities for your child to practice the skills they know, as well as to learn new skills in the natural environment. By combining community outings with teaching, you and your family can both have fun and maintain your child's current abilities.

Often, registration for summer events begins as early as February. Check the local paper, library, bookstore or community websites and message boards for announcements on summer activities.

March: Recruit Home Staff

This month is a good time to recruit home

staff and babysitters for the summer months. When recruiting staff for your home, you should first consider familiar resources, which are usually free. These include referrals through neighbors, friends, co-workers or church. Other free referral sources can be high schools, universities or local job boards.

Confirm your summer support and schedule needs. It will be difficult to recruit and interview staff without this.

When completing staff interviews remember to ask about things like reliable transportation to and from work, as well as when transporting your child to and from activities. Document any preplanned summer vacations the individual may have committed to. Find out how the perspective staff interacts with children. Some staff prefer to sit back and let the child engage themselves while others prefer to interact and get down on the floor to play with kids. Which one is best for you?

Don't forget to register for all of the activities you found in February. Summer activity registrations often close by the end of March.

April: Schedule a Summer Planning Meeting at School

There are several important things to mark on your to-do list this month. Let's take a look:

see Planning on page 27

This is what success looks like...



This is what an adult living with autism looks like!

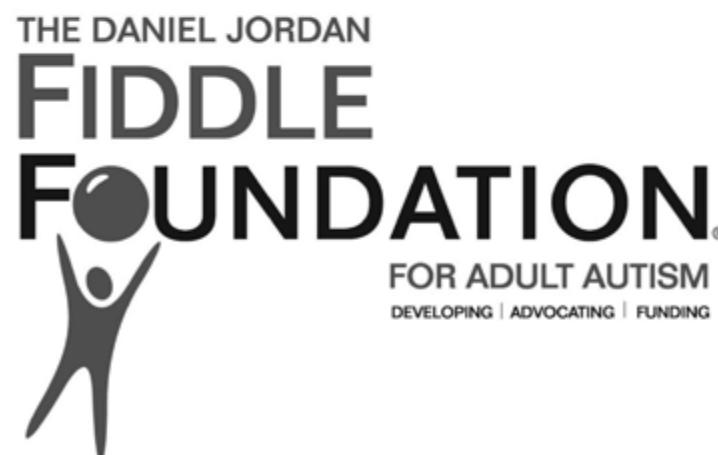
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CNNH Takes a Multidisciplinary Approach to Diagnosing and Treating Neurological, Neurodevelopmental, Neuropsychiatric and Behavioral Disorders.

**By Magen Mintz
Education Outreach Representative
The Center for Neurological and
Neurodevelopmental Health**

Being the fourth boy in a family of six can be a difficult ask in its own right, but when you add developmental problems to the mix, it becomes a different challenge altogether. That was the situation Karen Fredhoff (Runnemede, NJ) found herself in while observing her youngest son, Brady.

“We noticed some substantial differences in his maturing compared to our other boys,” she says. “He wouldn’t respond when we spoke to him. He wouldn’t even turn his head.”

Brady’s parents quickly took him to an audiologist, thinking that something might be wrong with his hearing, but he passed an audiological exam with no issue. Then more “quirks” began to emerge: there was a lack of speech (after 18 months he hadn’t yet uttered a word) and he would often “go into his own world,” spinning around endlessly and flapping his hands in the air for no reason.

At this point, they knew something was seriously wrong. All they could think of to do was to bring him to the nearest major hospital, where the doctors offered them a



CNNH Creative Arts Director and Neurologic Music Therapist, Kathleen Nace, MT-BC, NMT, sings to a young girl

broad diagnosis of Autism. However, their only option was to put Brady on a six-month waiting list to get therapy.

This was not encouraging news. On top of being put on alert about their son’s well

being, they were now left stranded and helpless for six months. They immediately searched for an alternative. Fortunately, Brady’s father, Paul, had a coworker who recommended The Center for Neurological

and Neurodevelopmental Health (CNNH) in Gibbsboro, NJ.

Karen explains, “We called them and got an appointment in two weeks. Not only did they provide prompt treatment, [but] the service we have received is above and beyond what we expected.” Brady was seen by Sarah Woldoff, Ph.D., one of the neuropsychologists at CNNH, who narrowed down his diagnosis to Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS). “He began a weekly ABA [Applied Behavioral Analysis] therapy program and has been involved in numerous social groups to encourage his growth and social interactions with [his] peers.”

CNNH was founded in 2005 by Mark Mintz, M.D., a pediatric neurologist, in response to what he saw as an inefficient and broken neurohealth care system. CNNH diagnoses and treats neurological, neuropsychological, neuropsychiatric, behavioral, developmental and learning concerns for children, adolescents and adults. Their unique “Specialty Care Medical HomeSM” model of care brings together a team of experts that work collaboratively to assess and treat each individual.

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see Solutions on page 29

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Programs from page 1

range of options for summer programs that may not be suitable for adolescents and young adults. Many of the summer opportunities that are available to younger children are no longer age-appropriate for students as they enter their teen and young adult years. This situation is especially problematic for adolescents and young adults with challenges in academic learning, executive functioning, and social interaction. For these reasons, programs that offer experiences tied to the development of executive functioning competence and social engagement during the summer are particularly beneficial for young adults in order to provide them with the opportunity to reinforce and strengthen both academic and social skills.

One new program, now in its second year, is New Frontiers in Learning's *Summer in the City* program, which provides a stable and supportive environment during the summer months. Because it is designed for high school and college students with ASD and related learning differences, *Summer in the City* helps students to build the skills they need while connecting socially with a group of peers. Participants form friendships that endure through the summer and beyond. Students can participate in one, two, or three 3-week sessions held from June through August in midtown Manhattan. They develop a sense of belonging to a community while working on a variety of skills both academic and social in nature.

Summer in the City participants work on academic skills, including reading and writing at the high school or college level, self-advocacy, self-determination, and independent living skills. High quality strategy instruction builds overall executive functioning competence while students learn to negotiate social relationships. The New Frontiers summer program also provides young adults with the opportunity to participate in exciting summer activities throughout New York City. Activities are student-driven, planned, and led. The staff structures activities to enable youth to safely engage in cultural events throughout the City to help them to become independent young adults.

The *Summer in the City* days begin with a warm welcome and the development and review of a daily plan. Each day, students and staff come together as a team and have meaningful check-ins before the day begins, usually with discussion about interesting news events. Mornings are devoted to instructional sessions, tailored to student needs. Students learn to express and support viewpoints and opinions on current subjects and events through research. They engage respectfully and respect different viewpoints that their peers bring to the table. Lunch is a time where students socialize, relax and express their interests to the group in a comfortable atmosphere. Every afternoon the students and staff embark on planned exploration of the City's limitless resources.

Many students graduate from high school unprepared for the academic and social demands that will be placed on them in the postsecondary environment. In fact, academic and social demands placed on students in college are very different from those required in high school and can create obstacles for those with ASD. The utilization of well-planned summer program-



Alissa Daner, MEd

ming is a critical key to the development and maintenance of students' academic and social skills. *Summer in the City* is a comprehensive summer program that provides a combination of academic skill enrichment with social/cultural activities. Through these activities and ongoing mentoring, students are better armed to return to their high school programs and/or to excel in college.

Colleges assume that first-year undergraduate students are entering their freshman year with proficiency in reading and writing, test-taking, time management, study and organizational skills. Students with ASD may be receiving a high level of quality support in high school. However, it is likely that they will not have the same types or amount of supports in college. This is where summer programming can be helpful by providing activities that teach leadership in life, personal budgeting skills, reading and writing at the college level, and stress management techniques. To this end, New Frontiers' *Summer in the City* days include activities such as a book club that is focused around a book of the students' choosing, current events discussions, creative writing, and test preparation. Morning hours are centered on thought provoking activities designed to enhance executive functioning skills while applying strategies to succeed in real-life spontaneous situations.

Of major importance for high school and college success are independent living skills, as well as social and self-advocacy competence to navigate the everyday world. New Frontiers' programs prepare students to live independently on campus and to become fully participating members of their college community. From residential housing, to campus navigation and participation in clubs and events on campus, summer programming is the perfect time to develop the skills necessary to be successful in such environments. Learning how to research, plan, and organize social events and activities, as well as create and invite a social network of friends to share the experiences is integral to students living independently and happily, and takes priority as a goal for *Summer in the City* participants.

Students must be able to advocate for themselves in a positive and proactive manner, which will allow them to experi-



Marty McGreevy, MEd

ence academic and personal success. Summer is an opportune time for young adults with ASD to gain important skills that are needed to meet the rigors of the postsecondary environment and beyond. Further, summer is an ideal time to develop and maintain students' transition skills. The development of transition skills should be central to preparing students for college and adulthood. The use of real world learning experiences to develop such transition skills is critical. At the heart of the New Frontiers *Summer in the City* program is participation in New York City experiences and adventures. Lasting friendships develop among staff and students alike. *Summer in the City* afternoons are designed to expose students to a wide variety of exciting cultural experiences as they explore the many wonderful sights and sounds of New York City. Some of the exciting places that students have visited include: Coney Island, New York Aquarium, Museum of Natural History, Hayden Planetarium, Central Park, Bronx Zoo, walking tour of The Brooklyn Bridge, and The Intrepid. Money management skills are built into the students' day as they try to balance each week's activities with cost in mind, tapping into what the city has to offer for low or no cost activities as well. The development of independent living skills are naturally infused throughout the day, and include development in the areas of community safety, travel planning, subway navigation, and teamwork.

Involvement in enrichment programs can help to prevent regression in executive functioning, social, and academic skills (Cooper, 2003). While daily structure and routine are critical programming elements for youth with ASD (Lee, Odom, & Loftin, 2007; Sticher, Randolph, Gage, & Schmidt, 2007), there are many ways to provide structure in settings that are fun, stimulating and growth inducing. Active involvement by students in school and enrichment programs provides experience to promote students' self-advocacy ability and build self-determination to help them succeed in school and in life (Hughes, Cosgriff, Agran, & Washington, 2013). Well-structured supervised summer enrichment programs can lead to lifelong positive outcomes (Thiemann & Kamps, 2008). By basing instruction and activities on students' learning



Samantha Feinman, MEd, TSHH

styles, preferences and strengths, *Summer in the City* can turn summer vacation into a time of growth and friendship.

Alissa Daner, MEd, is Academic Coordinator; Marty McGreevy, MEd, is Westchester Coordinator; and Samantha Feinman, MEd, TSHH, is Director for Student Support Services at New Frontiers in Learning. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Samantha Feinman, Director of Student Support Services, New Frontiers in Learning, sfeinman@nfil.net.

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Summer Break and Skills Development: The Heat Is On

By Heather Walker, MS, BCBA
and Michael J. Cameron, PhD, BCBA-D
Pacific Child and Family Associates

You work hard to make sure your child is progressing toward his goals and to effectively manage an interdisciplinary team and your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) during the course of the year. That work requires significant resources (fiscal, emotional, and temporal), the diplomacy skills of an attaché, and the organizational skills of a project engineer. However, as the summer break rapidly approaches, you wonder whether your child will maintain the momentum of progress or lose precious functional skills acquired during the school year; for parents of children on the autism spectrum this is a legitimate and ongoing concern. Certainly, summer breaks are a time for play and easy living, but the sunny season recess can also disrupt predictable routines, decrease the pace of skill attainment, and put your child at risk for regression. Alternatively, with careful planning and creative thinking, your family can enjoy the fun and carefree days of summer without having to worry about setbacks.

Practical Guidelines
For the Summer Break

Use Activity-Based Intervention - Activi-

ty-based intervention refers to instruction that takes place within the natural rhythms and routines of a child's day (e.g., going to the grocery store, walking the dog). Generally, activity-based intervention is a smart instructional model; however, it is especially useful during the summer months due to its emphasis on:

- Teaching within routine, planned, or child-initiated activities;
- Addressing a child's IEP goals and objectives;
- Using real materials in the context of familiar environments;
- Capitalizing on naturally occurring consequences; and
- Maintaining and developing functional skills used across settings (e.g., home and community) and with different people and materials.
- Activity-based instruction is adaptable because it focuses on embedding instruction directly into children's and families' daily activities and routines.

Make a Plan - Activity-Based Intervention during the summer months requires advanced planning and full family participation. First, list all of the people in

your child's life who will be positioned to provide instructional opportunities; immediate family, extended family, friends, and babysitters should be recruited to the greatest extent possible. Next, list every person's unique interests, personal strengths, and activities they naturally perform and enjoy (e.g., grandmother enjoys swimming and cooking; dad enjoys hiking; and the babysitter is a dancer). Third (and most essential), outline all of your child's IEP goals and objectives centered on the development of:

- Language and communication (e.g., touching a person to get attention, pointing to items when requested),
- Fine motor skills (e.g., using scissors, turning dials),
- Gross motor skills (e.g., walking up and down stairs),
- Adaptive skills (e.g., using silverware, dressing and undressing),
- Social communication skills (e.g., following multiple-step directions),
- Cognitive skills (e.g., retelling an event in sequence), and
- Social skills (e.g., working cooperatively in a small group)

Once you have captured everyone's interests and strengths, as well as all the IEP goals and objectives for your child, deliberately "match" personal interests to the IEP goals and objectives. Doing so will: (a) help ensure that your child will have the opportunity to work on the development or maintenance of critical skills (embedding instruction within activities that individuals enjoy and naturally gravitate towards increases the likelihood that important skills will be addressed); (b) build upon a person's strengths and natural interests and avoid contrived situations that will ultimately be avoided; and (3) give everyone a choice, and a level of control, centered on summer activities and how they spend time with a child.

Solicit feedback from the critical people in your child's life. If grandmother enjoys cooking, her grandchild could use scissors to cut pieces of dough within the context of a cooking activity (fine motor skill development). If dad enjoys hiking, his daughter could follow a series of two-step directions to find a high interest item hidden on a favorite hiking trail (social communication skills development). If the babysitter enjoys Irish Step Dancing, your child might assist her in cutting out footprints and using them as a guide for foot placement during a dance routine (gross motor skill development). A demonstration of the

see *Development on page 29*

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Transition from page 1

the bridge program during previous summers. Get the perspective of not only the parents, but the student as well. Have your student ask the past participant of the program what they liked and did not like about their summer experience. Would they recommend the program? If they had to do it all over again, would they attend it again knowing what they know now?

Deciding how long a student should participate in a summer bridge program is a function of the goals of the summer experience, the structure of the program, and the student's previous experience with living away from home. Some programs can be as short as 1-2 weeks and are meant to be an introduction to living away from home. Others last longer and can be as long as seven weeks. The rationale for this length of time is that it is exactly half the length of a typical college semester. If a student can tolerate and even thrive living away from home in a college dormitory for this length of time, then chances are they will be successful staying a complete semester during an academic year. Some programs are the exact length of a college semester. In this case, students enrolled in these programs are earning college credit for their coursework as opposed to learning remedial, vocational or independent living skills in non-credit bearing classes.

What can a parent do to insure successful completion of a summer bridge program? There are a number of activities a parent can engage in to insure successful completion of a summer bridge program.



Ernst O. VanBergeijk, PhD, MSW

These behaviors can and should be done years in advance of attendance at a summer bridge program. Giving the child the opportunity to separate from caregivers by attending sleep overs, day camps, and eventually sleep away summer camps is a first activity a parent can engage in to insure success. The second activity that is a predictor of successful transition to post-secondary life is teaching your child how to set and use an alarm clock to get themselves up in the morning. A third ac-

tivity is teaching your son or daughter how to do his or her own laundry, organize his or her rooms, and organize his or her possessions. Doing laundry for the first time in an unfamiliar environment can be a considerable source of stress for any student, but especially for those on the autism spectrum. Many summer bridge programs and colleges have students share small dormitory rooms. One way to avoid roommate conflicts and successfully complete a summer bridge program is to make sure there are no conflicts over a messy living space. Finally, many students on the autism spectrum are on a variety of medications. Teaching your child how to manage their own medication will help them not only to be successful in a summer bridge program, but also throughout his or her life. Tools such as pill boxes and applications on smart phones can be used to organize and help the student remember when to take his or her medication.

Attendance at a summer bridge program 1-2 years before completing high school can help families determine if going away to school and pursuing a college degree is a realistic goal for a higher functioning student on the autism spectrum. It can also help identify what independent living skills need to be bolstered before the student leaves high school. Based upon feedback from a summer program, parents may decide that their student on the spectrum is not quite ready for living away from home and pursuing a college degree, but he or she might benefit from attending a Comprehensive Transition and Post-secondary program in between high school and college.

Participation in a summer bridge pro-

gram can also serve as a stress inoculator for students with ASDs. Often in summer bridge programs the emphasis is placed upon habituating the student to college life and the acquisition of independent living skills and possibly vocational skills. Students in these programs get used to living in the residence halls, eating in the cafeterias, the schedule, and the expectations of the faculty. When they transition into the program in the fall, then the only "new" situation to adapt to is the academic demands and rigor of college. For those students who come in "cold" or without the benefit of a summer bridge program to help them transition to college life the introduction of the environmental demands on top of the academic demands can be overwhelming.

Choosing a summer activity for a child on the autism spectrum is dependent upon the age of the child, his or her level of disability, and the goals for the child. For some older, higher functioning students on the autism spectrum choosing a summer bridge program is an option that can insure a successful transition to post-secondary education and life.

Ernst VanBergeijk is the Associate Dean and Executive Director, at New York Institute of Technology Vocational Independence Program (VIP). The Vocational Independence Program is a U.S. Department of Education approved Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) program. www.nyit.edu/vip. Dr. VanBergeijk also administers Introduction to Independence (I to I), a seven week summer college preview program for students ages 16 and up.

Do you have a child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and noncompliant behavior or hyperactivity?

Yale Child Study Center is conducting a research study comparing parent training and parent education for young children with ASD.

Eligible children are **between 3 and 6 years with ASD** accompanied by **irritability and noncompliant behavior**.

CONTACT: 203-785-5805. Yale IRB # 0411027217.



Yale Child Study Center is also conducting a research study to test the effectiveness of a **non-stimulant medication**, extended-release guanfacine (Intuniv®), for children with PDD and hyperactivity. Eligible children are **at least 5 but younger than 14 years old, with autism, Asperger's, or PDD-NOS**, and clinically significant **hyperactivity**, currently medication-free or on ineffective medication. **CONTACT: 203-737-5317. Yale IRB # 1001006172.**

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Conference from page 4

Alexandra Garcia, a Family Services Specialist with YAI for 13 years, recalls that her first assignment was to work with Kimberly and her mother. A mother of three, Alexandra admired Morahina's strength and willingness to do anything to help Kimberly, who had challenging behaviors.

"I learned very quickly that we need to change the way parents think," Alexandra said. "Once you change yourself, you can change anything. We have to see beyond what is presented to us. Our job is to set individuals up for success."

She recalled many trips to the grocery

store with mother and daughter. Kimberly would cry and scream because she couldn't get everything she wanted in the store. "We have to expose the people we support to environments that are going to upset them and help teach the individuals and their parents techniques for coping," Alexandra said.

Morahina and Kimberly's story illustrates how a family uses their professional and personal networks to enhance its quality of life, said Lisa Orbegoso, YAI's Clinic Liaison and Mental Health Regional Senior Supervisor. "The ability to perform and enjoy everyday activities, often what we typically take for granted, was not a positive experience for Kimberly and her family.

They persevered and are symbolic of many families who have a child with a disability and are confronting this very issue."

After five years of working with them, Alexandra felt it was time to bring in a new Family Services Specialist to work with Kimberly and her mother.

Alexandra, while working with other families, received YAI trainings in Applied Behavioral Analysis, and other techniques. Three years later, she was back working with Kimberly, implementing new strategies to help Kimberly and Morahina.

"I was so impressed with the presentations," said Jennifer Shaoul, Senior Coordinator, YAI [LINK](#). "They were so

thorough and of such high caliber that our Spanish-speaking parents received the most current and relevant information to support their family members."

"We are vested and proud to use our bilingual skills, knowledge and experience to help families feel connected to a larger community," Lisa added. "Our staff members are motivated to continue promoting advocacy, education and training to Latino families and professionals."

For more information on services and programs offered in English and Spanish, please contact YAI [LINK](#) at 866-2-YAI-LINK or email LINK@yai.org.



ROBIN'S VOICE ~ A Resilient Mom's Commentary on Autism

By Robin H. Morris, Freelance Writer

Change It Up: Consider Summer Camp For Your Child's Educational Plan

Summer Solstice defines a ritual. It is a multi-cultural event. The word solstice derives from Latin sol (sun) and sistere (to stand still). However, for children living with autism, it is an oxymoron. A wise doctor once told me that as long as my child did not plateau, there was always hope. It has been our mantra for nearly 26 years. Never, ever, stand still in your child's plan for potential.

An IEP or Individualized Education Program is simply a guide to construct goals for a child in special education. Should those goals take place over 9 months, or 12 months? This is a rhetorical question, as logic prevails. Maintaining skills over summer vacation is as essential as eating and breathing.

My strategic role as that of mom, advocate and defender of all things possible does not give me a shingle or a doc-

torate preceding my name. However, it is the school of hard knocks that trumps all. I knew that if our son Paul was left to flounder over summer break that he would regress. Fortunately, logic prevailed and a summer program was put in to place during his school years.

With every year end PPT (Parent and Placement Team) meeting, it became more apparent that honing and reinforcing Paul's skills were vital partners in his success. However, our small town environment made it difficult to create a full day of summer school for special education. We crafted hours of speech and behavioral therapies, and as the years flew by, he picked up more skills to integrate into the world. It was time for the next step.

Sleep away summer camp made the biggest difference in our son's life. Ideally, when considering your goals for your child, make that proverbial list. What do you want summer to mean for your son or daughter? Do you want them to learn how to socialize? Do you want them to learn how to cook, swim, or simply learn to live with others? Do you want them to have an hour of education a day, working on math and language

skills? Do you want them to be in a musical, even if they don't sing? Do you want them to find a home, where their differences are applauded and behaviors addressed?

While this is not a plug for Camp Northwood in Remsen, New York, it is our only point of reference and what an impact it made for Paul! He needed to earn independence and learn success. Northwood made this happen for our boy. Gordie and Donna Felt, directors of Camp Northwood, have fostered a safe environment where campers learn to know and feel proud of accomplishment. We cherish this couple as devoted and selfless human beings. They describe the participants at the camp as:

"Socially immature, learning challenged children in need of structure and individualized attention. It is our 2:1 camper/counselor ratio, non-competitive recreational programming and intentional focus on social skill development that enables our students to experience acceptance in a thriving camp community."

While making that list of goals, consider your child's strengths and weaknesses. What would be the best hope for the summer's end? Research summer camps for

special needs children. Interview camps. Watch their videos. Visit camps, a year prior to your designated application time. Talk to other parents, a most invaluable resource. Lastly, trust your instincts.

Today, I asked Paul what his favorite part of Camp Northwood was. He replied, "Banana boating." When I pressed him for his favorite song in a musical he participated in, he replied Consider Yourself, from Oliver. The lyrics say it all.

*"Consider yourself at home
Consider yourself one of the family
We've taken to you so strong
It's clear we're going to get along
Consider yourself well in
Consider yourself part of the furniture
There isn't a lot to spare
Who cares?
What ever we've goin we share!"*

Robin Hausman Morris is a freelance writer and can be reached at RobinHausmanMorris@gmail.com. Robin is a parent examiner for Examiner.com - www.examiner.com/autism-and-parenting-in-national/robin-hausman-morris.

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YAI International Conference May 6-9 at Hilton New York

By The YAI Network

Faced with expanding needs and diminishing funds, the field of developmental disabilities is at a critical point in its history. YAI's International Conference, "The Dawn of a New Era," will address the current environment by exploring new program models and other innovations on May 6-9, 2013, at the Hilton New York, 1335 Ave. of the Americas.

The conference will feature more expanded workshops on autism, providing attendees with access to hands-on training and leading experts.

"For far too long, we have defined individuals with autism and intellectual and other developmental disabilities by their deficits," said Stephen E. Freeman, CEO of YAI. "It's now time to move our field forward, defining new models of care based on strengths. We need to find new and better ways of enabling people with challenges to live the life they desire and deserve."

Dr. Peter Gerhardt, Director of The McCarton School in New York City, will conduct a full-day workshop, "Evidence-Based Practices in Support of the Whole Person: Adults with Autism and Quality of Life" on Monday, May 6.

Michelle Garcia Winner, of Social Thinking, will present a full-day ses-

sion on Tuesday, May 7. Her workshop, "Thinking about YOU thinking about ME," will help attendees better understand the specific social communication and academic needs of their school-age students and adults who have social and communication difficulties.

Al Condeluci, CEO of UCP/CLASS in Pittsburgh, will hold a full-day workshop "Pathways to the Good Life" on Wednesday, May 8, where he will explore why the individuals we support seems to be isolated and have limited options.

Sexuality and Autism will be explored in full-day workshop also on Wednesday. Dr. Isabelle Henault, Psychologist and Sexologist with the Autism & Asperger's Clinic of Montreal, and Dr. Stephen Shore, Assistant Professor of Special Education at Adelphi University, will examine relationships and sexuality of people on the autism spectrum.

Dr. Todd Levine, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, will focus on the relationship between autism spectrum disorders and anxiety during an extended workshop on Thursday, May 9.

For more information and to see the full conference brochure, visit yai.org/conference2013. Questions? Contact Abbe Wittenberg, Conference Planner, at 212-273-6472 or abbe.wittenberg@yai.org.

Safety from page 8

concern shared by caregivers during these seminars. Due to the high risk for drowning, it is strongly recommended that families have their child wear a life jacket at all times when near pools or bodies of water. In addition to locking cleaning products and medicines in cabinets, caregivers need to supervise children more closely outdoors to insure that they do not ingest poisonous plants or harmful objects, particularly if a child is prone to eating non-food items. For families who plan to travel or attend community events with a child who tends to wander away, technology solutions (i.e., GPS watches or bracelets) might be helpful. For children who frequently wander away from home, GPS devices might be an effective addition to window and door locks and alarms. Local police officials may be a valuable resource in assisting families with access to such devices, which can often be linked to the local emergency response system.

In terms of child-based skills, Miltenberger (2008) recommends that safety skill training emphasize three skill sets: detecting threat and avoiding contact with a hazard, escaping the hazard situation, and informing a caregiver so the threat can be removed. The first skill set is critical to reducing injury risk since injury occurs when a child comes into contact with a hazard. If children can be taught to identify and avoid hazards, informing a caregiver becomes an additional safeguard. Thus far, the most effective methods to train safety skills have used applied behavior analysis procedures, such as modeling and role-playing/rehearsal, chaining, prompting, and reinforcement (Batu, Ergenekon, Erbas, & Akmanoglu, 2004; Page, Iwata, Neef, 1976). In other

words, children are trained to engage in safe behavior by introducing small steps toward a desired behavior and providing guidance and rewards to promote success. In the case of developing safe pedestrian skills, a child could first be taught to approach a street corner by walking on the sidewalk while holding an adult's hand. Each time the child walked to the corner appropriately (i.e., without attempting to pull away), he or she would be provided with praise and a preferred item. The next step would involve approaching the corner while holding the adult's hand and looking both ways before receiving praise and a preferred item, and so on. If the risk for injury is thought to be too great, skill practice can occur in an alternate, but similar location (i.e., fenced yard with the driveway as a "road"). However, additional training in the natural environment is sometimes necessary to support the use of skills in the community setting.

Ideally, one would teach children to mediate their injury risk independently; however, child-based strategies used in the absence of adult injury prevention methods are rarely effective. Adult supervision and barrier methods (i.e., stair gates, window locks) are more likely to lead to success. In summary, families are best protected against injury by evaluating their child's strengths and weaknesses in safety skills, and then altering supervision and environmental supports during skill training. For further information, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2012) have several helpful resources and tips for families as part of their Protect the Ones You Love initiative. Information is available at www.cdc.gov/safechild/.

For more information on clinical services and research projects at the Institute for

Child Development at Binghamton University, please visit <https://icd.binghamton.edu>.

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Workplace from page 14

minds" (Social Thinking at Work, Michelle Garcia Winner and Pamela Crooke, 2011). Learning these social strategies provides the foundation for further development of skills for the workplace. These social thinking skills are needed for an individual to interview successfully, as adaptability and the ability to understand the perspective of the interviewer are critical for providing strong interview responses that would help an individual obtain employment. Practicing these skills within a group setting provides the opportunity for individuals to engage in role play and rehearsal with peers and to receive and provide feedback to one another. It also promotes generalization of social functioning that can be applied to the workplace. Additionally, the peer group offers the opportunity for discussion of diagnosis disclosure and ways to advocate for individual needs during the interview process. Furthermore, if a young adult is not offered a job he or she hoped to obtain, the group can offer a peer support system to facilitate understanding of ways to improve for the next interview. The group process can be instrumental in facilitating a successful transitional experience to the work setting.

Once the individual has obtained a job, communication, perspective taking, and emotional regulation are the next critical skills needed for successful and effective social behaviors in the workplace. Targeting Social Thinking® skills prior to obtaining employment can facilitate increased

success and confidence within the workplace from the outset of a work experience. If an individual can enter the workplace with a foundation of social communication skills, he or she is more likely to experience success with perspective taking and developing social relationships within the workplace. Aspects of communication that should be targeted in the curriculum include understanding of nonverbal and verbal aspects of communication, and working on the ability to "read between the lines" and decode the aspects of communication that are left unsaid. Furthermore, learning how to gauge the appropriate topics of conversation for the time and with whom one is communicating should also be targeted through the lens of Social Thinking® to facilitate improved socialization within the workplace environment. These aspects of social communication are often challenging for individuals with social learning needs, but are critical for being successful within the workplace. Perspective taking, recognition of social norms and social communication are interrelated aspects of social functioning within the workplace. Participating in a group targeting development of these skills is likely to establish a strong foundation before entering the workplace.

Another domain which should be targeted in an effective curriculum to prepare individuals with social learning needs for the workplace is development of emotion regulation skills. Many individuals with AS or HFA experience difficulty managing their emotions in the moment; as such, many aspects of the workplace (i.e. a su-

pervisor providing constructive feedback) have potential to result in a variety of emotional responses that may not always be appropriate for a work setting. Learning emotion regulation strategies and coping skills are needed areas of developing effective social behaviors for the workplace. Becoming aware of one's own emotional states, the way one responds to constructive feedback, praise, and frustration is an important first step toward managing emotional responses in the work place. When emotions are not managed in the work environment in an effective manner, individuals are at risk for experiencing difficulty establishing positive social relationships in the workplace, disciplinary action, or even termination of employment making this skill set a necessary component of effective skill development.

One of the last areas of social behavior skill development for the workplace focuses upon developing appropriate boundaries. These boundaries are needed specifically in two different areas: development of workplace relationships and use of technology in the workplace. Navigating the social maze of determining the difference between work relationships, real friendships, and the possible development of romantic relationships is difficult for any person, let alone an individual with social learning needs. As such, using Social Thinking® strategies to develop understanding of the boundaries around these relationships within the workplace is needed to facilitate the development of successful relationships in a work setting. The other area requir-

ing attention to boundaries is the use of technology in the workplace. With the increasing popularity of social networking websites and difficulty determining what information is appropriate for these forums, it is also increasingly difficult for individuals with social learning needs to control the use of technology. As such, understanding the social norms and rules for use of personal technology (i.e. cell phones, tablets, etc.) within the work setting and how to control one's own use are now imperative components of being prepared for the work place.

Given the many areas of potential for skill development prior to entering the workplace, the summer vacations prior to entering the working world are rich opportunities for teaching the skills needed and ways of thinking in a social manner. Participating in a social group targeting these areas is likely to facilitate improvement in each of the suggested domains and create a foundation for using social cognition in the workplace. This foundation will more likely result in a more successful and smooth working experience for the individual with social learning needs.

For more information regarding the Fay J. Lindner Center and our services, please visit our website at www.FayJLindnerCenter.org, or you may call our office at (516) 686-4440. In addition, Katherine Cody, PsyD is a Licensed Psychologist at Spectrum Services. For more information about Dr. Cody's work at Spectrum Services, e-mail her at katherinecodypsyd@gmail.com or call her at (917) 512-7751.

Planning from page 20

- Finalize all summer activities your child will attend and map them on your summer calendar.
- Confirm your summer support and schedule needs. Again, it will be difficult to recruit and interview staff without this.
- Identify the skills your child will work on during summer.
- Hire home staff.

One of the most important things to do this month is to schedule a summer planning meeting with your child's teacher for the end of the month or early May. This is a meeting with important members of your child's education and treatment team to define summer goals and objectives. It may include the teacher, paraprofessional, behavior analyst,

speech pathologist, occupational therapist, and others that work with your child.

Schedule a summer planning meeting with your child's teacher for the end of the month or early May. It's important to give you and the teacher enough time to identify summer skills to work on, as well as gather the materials necessary for implementation.

May: Complete a Summer Planning Meeting and Get Your Home Ready

By now, hopefully you have completed most everything needed to prepare for a great summer. So what's left? By the beginning of May you should have completed the summer planning meeting with your child's teacher and education team.

Use this time to identify the skills your child is currently working on, the level of support your child needs to be successful in each area and the materials

required when practicing these subjects during the summer months. Map a daily and weekly schedule the team feels would be the most appropriate based upon your child's learning style and rate. Close the meeting with a set time and date for the team to resume when school starts next year to share your child's progress over the summer. This will ensure everyone starts the year with a good understanding of where your child is in his or her development. In addition, consider asking your summer staff to observe your child in the classroom or spend time with him and your family in the evenings and weekends to help acclimate everyone to the upcoming changes.

Finally, prepare your home to be an ideal learning environment to meet the needs of your child. If necessary, set up a structured learning area in your home with the needed working materials and absence of distractions. As part of natural environment teaching, walk through

each room of the house and identify your skills target list per room. Meet with the behavior analyst to identify needed behavior supports, environmental modifications, specialized training materials, staff training schedule and needs and other tips on how to make the summer successful. Then, get ready for summer to begin!

Michele LaMarche, BCBS, executive director of Step by Step, has more than 15 years of clinical, hands-on experience working with those affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) while delivering evidenced-based treatment solutions to encourage their growth and development.

In 2011, LeMarche received the Best Practice Award by the Ohio Governor's Council for People with Disabilities. LeMarche also is the co-founder of Special Learning (www.special-learning.com), a company dedicated to delivering the most advanced educational and web-based tools and resources to those affected by autism.

Social Skills from page 16

Maintaining skills over summer is important for the overall development of your child, especially when developmental delays are involved. The great part about practicing social skills is that kids can have fun while doing it, challenging as it may be for them sometimes. If they are not having fun, that is a clue that they are not involved in the right type of activity for them. One final and simple rule to follow, especially if

you have a child who just dreads interacting with others, is to help him get involved with something he is truly interested in. If your child loves science, then sign him up for science camp, not regular camp. If he enjoys building and creating structures (even if usually alone), don't force him to do sports, get him into a Lego club. It's a simple concept, but parents too often push for what they think is a typical group or activity to be a part of. Just remember, the basis of forming friendships is having things

in common, so help your child find his peers! Hopefully you will see the results are worth the effort, especially once school starts again, and everything is on track.

COLLAGE

For the past 25 years, the *COLLAGE* program has provided group and private social skills interventions for over 2,000 children and young adults. The program provides an extensive variety of enriching

and enjoyable activities for the development of social skills in a safe and welcoming environment. An integral component of the program is the establishment and monitoring of individualized goals. This stimulating and interactive program for ages 3½ years through adulthood is part of the comprehensive programs offered by Melmark, based in Berwyn, Pennsylvania. For more information about *COLLAGE* please call 610-356-7355 or visit our website at www.collage-otp.org.

Genetic from page 5

another calcium channel gene, called CACNB2, was also linked to the disorders.

Alterations in calcium-channel signaling could represent a fundamental mechanism contributing to a broad vulnerability to psychopathology, suggest the researchers.

They also discovered illness-linked variation for all five disorders in certain regions of chromosomes 3 and 10. Each of these sites spans several genes, and the specific causal factors within them

remain elusive. However, one region, called 3p21, which produced the strongest signal of illness association, harbors suspect variations identified in previous genome-wide studies of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

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Monday from page 19

marshmallows. As I read through the book one final time, making last-minute changes and edits, I realized the book puts a voice to the message I've been saying every single day since Jack was diagnosed: that beneath the rigidity and anxiety and stimulating there is a charming, intelligent, witty child peeking out.

It's about how Jack brings out the best in me, my husband, and my children every single day.

Throughout the summer I struggled to title the book, tossing around ideas like *Life with Autism* and *Loving Autism*. For a while I decided to use the word snowflake in the name, because that's often the image that comes to my mind when I think of Jack and autism; a beautiful, fragile snowflake that is always changing, always in

motion. But one afternoon in late August I was driving the kids to the town pool, and Jack said *look the sky is so blue*. And as I peered up through the windshield at the rich blue summer sky, I thought again of our conversation the previous fall, when he talked about the colors of the week.

For a short time I thought about calling the book *Thursday is Purple*, but then Jack off-handedly remarked *Thursday is sometimes green*. (Come on, Jack-a-boo. I'm trying to write a book about you here. For real.)

And so, *What Color is Monday?* it is. How autism changed one family for the better.

What Color Is Monday? will be released on April 22nd, 2013 and is available for pre-order on Amazon.com. You can also follow Carrie on her weekly blog: www.WhatColorIsMonday.com and Facebook.com/WhatColorIsMonday.

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Kingdoms from page 12

genetics research as eugenics, see causal explanations as irrelevant, and view treatment as coercive conformity. As with many other disability communities, their focus is on community supports, educational and occupational services, and civil rights.

Injury

One of the more heated arguments surrounding autism has been on the purported role of vaccine injury as a cause. This kingdom was founded by parents who report marked regression after the 18-month vaccination series, when their previously interactive, communicative toddler withdraws and stops speaking. While epidemiological studies do not support a link between vaccination and autism, those convinced that autism is an injury argue that population studies may obscure a link in rare individual cases. In contrast to the self-advocate quest for identity, many of these children are severely disabled by the core symptoms of autism and by immune dysfunction, gastrointestinal symptoms, and seizures. Many of these parents, feeling that mainstream science and medicine have failed them, have turned to alternative treatments based on detoxification, diet, or oxidative stress. But their guiding

assumption is that autism has been caused by injury. This kingdom advocates for prevention, recognizing that identifying the cause is the most direct path to stopping the soaring prevalence of autism.

Insight

Just as scientists have studied blindness to understand the visual system, scientists in the kingdom of insight assume that the study of people with social and communication deficits is a remarkable opportunity to understand the social brain. This kingdom belongs to social neuroscientists, using tools from cognitive science, neuroimaging, and neuroanatomy. Their goal is to map brain pathways for social information such as face recognition or theory of mind. For scientists in the insight kingdom, studies of social behavior in animals or mapping the brain's wiring diagram (the connectome) are critically important for gaining insight about the social brain even when these studies do not reveal a cause or a cure for autism.

These four kingdoms may not capture the entire universe of the autism spectrum, but they describe largely non-overlapping perspectives that now divide the world of autism. Not surprisingly, professional societies, social networks, and publications have emerged to fortify each kingdom,

which may serve to limit interactions and constructive exchange of ideas between their communities. That explains the confusion of social neuroscientists when they see their work criticized by parents from the injury kingdom as useless or the bewilderment of geneticists who are criticized by self-advocates as trying to eliminate people with autism by searching for a prenatal diagnostic that could be used to abort the next generation.

Who has the right answer? In autism in 2013, as for what Caryn James saw for Africa, there is no single answer. At different times and for different people, each of these kingdoms has something to offer. We need better diagnostics and treatments; we need better services, especially for adults; we need a strategy for prevention; and we need a deeper understanding of the social brain. As long as each kingdom stays behind its own walls, there is little hope for progress overall.

A better way forward will be to find some common ground where the entire community can work together. One such area is the need for better services. Clinicians, self-advocates, parents, scientists, and educators should be able to embrace a goal of ensuring that every person on the spectrum, irrespective of wealth, geography, or ethnicity, receives the best treatments and services. We are unconscionably far from

this goal now as families move from one state to another to find services for their child. The challenge only becomes more complex when children with autism become adults with autism. There are over 1 million parents of Americans with autism—nearly all worried about how their offspring will be cared for if he or she outlives them.

Fifty years ago, President Kennedy, chiding the nation for its neglect of those with mental illness and developmental disabilities, said, "This neglect must end, if our nation is to live up to its own standards of compassion and dignity and achieve the maximum use of its manpower." Fifty years from now we don't want to look back at this period and wonder why we stayed so long behind these kingdoms' respective bastions, empowering conflict rather than cooperation. Instead, by focusing now on both short term needs and long term solutions we need a collective commitment to science and service to improve the world for both children and adults on the spectrum.

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Reinforce from page 18

To role-play a trip to the beach, for example, take out beach toys and towels. Act out any problems that might occur, such as being asked to share toys, and when possible give the child options for how to handle them. Families may want to practice several times for a specific situation until the child becomes more comfortable. Offer different scenarios, changing the situation slightly to prepare the child.

Prompting and Use of Praise as a Reinforcer

For both role-play and regular interactions, parents should praise the child for small achievements such as using their words to request something rather than gesturing or making eye contact. Parents and other caregivers should be most enthusiastic when the child demonstrates an emerging skill rather than a skill she has already mastered.

When at all possible, all adults interacting with the child should use the same prompts. Coordinate between schools, camps and caregivers or service providers so that the same language is being used to describe the same behavior to reduce confusion. For example, when prompting a child to stop flapping his hands, it is better if everyone uses the prompt "hands quiet" instead of some providers saying "hands down." Prompts should be clear, positive and age appropriate.

Establish regular play sessions frequently during the week. In those sessions parents can choose the activities that they wish to reinforce. At other play sessions the child can pick something that piques his interests. Parents should avoid letting the child win and should even find fair ways to decide who goes first or gets to be a certain color. By do-

ing this, the parent prepares the child to play with other peers who may also care about these issues. Play sessions should be slightly shorter than the child can normally tolerate. If the child is getting frustrated, parents can prompt the child to ask for a break.

Specific Ideas for Games To Improve Skills

Many of the games and strategies used in the WJCS groups reinforce non-verbal communication. They can be played with commonly accepted rules or with slight modifications to improve specific social skills.

To reinforce joint attention and eye contact in school-age children, families can play "hot and cold". An adult hides an object and instead of saying the words "hot" or "cold" give the child a thumbs up or thumbs down whenever he looks at the adult to signal how close he is getting to the hidden object. For a more advanced version, the parent can smile or frown to communicate how close the child is to the object. Other familiar games, like "Charades" and "Simon Says" also are good for reinforcing eye contact, listening skills and joint attention.

Another strategy to enhance eye contact and looking is "Picture Bingo." Parents can show the picture to visually cue the child without talking and ask the child to match the picture with the one on his card. Several websites have free bingo cards to print. Families can choose whatever theme and complexity will most interest their child. It's important to praise the child for good looking skills rather than for winning.

This game also can be used to work on listening skills. In that case, the parent does not show the child the picture, but

instead describes and asks the child to match it to a picture he has on his bingo card. By changing the descriptions using colors and shapes, the parent is able to promote good listening.

To decide who goes first in a game, parents should teach the child "rock, paper, scissors," "odds and evens" or another fair way of making decisions. Practice both the gestures and using it to decide things before applying it to a game.

For younger children or those with newly emerging language skills, families can play a clapping game, such as clap when you hear the word "cat." Parents state a series of different words and the child has to clap at the word "cat." To make the game more difficult use similar sounding words such as caterpillar. This game can be adjusted to the child's particular interests, such as clap when you hear the word "train." Parents can allow the child to choose the word.

Older children can play a drawing game. The child draws a picture responding to verbal cues or parents can place numbers on the page and ask the child to write something next to the number such as an x on #1 or circle around #2. Parents can cut out pictures of the child's special interest characters for this as well.

To reinforce good sportsmanship, families can play board games with an element of chance in them such as "Chutes and Ladders" or "Sorry." It may be easier for a child to accept losing a game like this than a more skill-based game. Parents and siblings can model having fun going down a chute, or self-calming when something frustrating occurs. Throughout the game, the parent should praise the child for staying calm or calming down when they have bad luck. At the end of the game talk about how much fun they had rather than who won.

To reinforce conversational skills, families can make a block tower. For every on-topic comment or question someone makes, a block is added to the tower. Families can try to break their own record by counting how many blocks they can get on the tower until someone goes off-topic or the tower falls. This activity also reinforces taking turns in conversation.

Make Play-Time Fun and Easy

The ultimate goal of parents playing and practicing skills with their child is to help keep the skills fresh. This goes much easier, however, when the child sees the practice play as an enjoyable activity rather than a chore. Parents should make sure that they are initiating play when the child is calm and adequate time is given to transition from the previous task.

When possible, parents should give their child options about what to play. Parents also can create excitement prior to play by letting the child know if the play will include a new toy or a special interest. It is crucial that the parent praise the child for good social skills, especially the skill they are focusing on, throughout the play and also at the end.

Summertime for children with ASD can be a time for fun, exploration and discovery. By using specific, simple strategies, the child's social skills can continue to improve throughout the summer, and family play time can become a treasured part of the weekly schedule.

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creative synthesis of these ideas involves a mom who wanted her child (John) to use a visual schedule (an IEP goal) to support the consistency and predictability of routines he required. She advocated using motivating visual schedules incorporating John's interests in a fun and engaging way. One idea she had for her pirate-infatuated son was to use a pirate map that incorporated both a visual schedule and "if-then" contingencies. Each day John would assist in the creation of his pirate map using construction paper, pirate-themed stickers, and markers. His map included all of the tasks and activities for the day. The idea was that John would start at the beginning and would need to complete each item to continue toward his "treasure." Playing games on his iPad and eating frozen yogurt were highly preferred activities; therefore, each was represented as "treasure" on his map. Opportunities to reach the treasure were interspersed among daily living activities, chores, and academic work; he did not have to wait the whole day to access preferred activities.

Create a Visual Matrix - After identifying interests and strengths of those involved in your child's life and outlining all IEP goals and objectives, a Summer Skills Matrix should be prepared. The matrix is a simple grid that displays: (a)

SUMMER SKILLS MATRIX							
Support Person	Interests	Activity	Fine Motor	Gross Motor	Language	Social	Adaptive
Nana	• Cooking • Kayak	• Baking • River trip	• Cut dough with scissors • Adjust straps on life vest	• Use rolling pin • Paddle kayak	• Request more dough to cut • Label items on the shore	• Bring baked goods to people • Greet other boaters	• Wash hands • Clear boat, return paddles & vests
Dad	• Hiking • Model airplane flying	• Nature walk • Trip to the airfield	• Pick up acorns • Lower landing gear on plane	• Step up on rocks • Run to retrieve plane after landing	• Request trail mix • Request a turn to fly and handle controls	• Talk to other hikers • Comment about other's airplanes	• Use public rest room • Dress for flying

all individuals who will spend time with your child and coordinate learning opportunities; (b) the interests, preferred activities, and strengths of all individuals (including those of your child); (c) categorized IEP goals and objectives (e.g., gross motor, fine motor); and (d) activities that will serve as a vehicle for instructional opportunities. Note that grid content is not static; regular updates and changes are required during the course of the summer to avoid boredom and accommodate changes in context (i.e., where the family is spending time).

Take Photos, Make Movies - Taking photographs and movies with a cell phone is a good way of capturing a child's progress and sharing information with others. Images can later be edited on a computer with the child if doing so aligns with his or her interests. The actual Summer Skills Matrix can be used to track progress on completing planned activities.

Summary

For a child with ASD, the summer recess

is certainly a time to enjoy a less structured lifestyle; however, the season can occasion further skill development if skill maintenance is planned properly. Therefore, it is important to:

- Use activity-based intervention whereby learning opportunities are embedded within the rhythm and routine of a child's day;
- Make a plan based on: the participation of extended family, friends, and babysitters; the personal strengths and interests of all individuals; and the child's IEP goals and objectives;
- Create a Summer Skills Matrix that defines each person's role and the learning objectives for the child; and finally
- Capture the child's progress through photographs and movies to share with everyone interested in the child's development.

"Summertime is always the best of what might be." — Charles Bowden

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concussion, learning differences, Tourette Syndrome and tics, cerebral palsy, developmental delays, speech and language disorders and neuropsychiatric disorders such as anxiety, depression, mood disorder, obsessive/compulsive and bipolar disorder.

CNNH recently expanded to three new sites in Rochelle Park, NJ, Wall Township, NJ and King of Prussia, PA, allowing them to increase accessibility and extend the reach of exceptional neurological care to a greater range of people.

Above and Beyond Care

"At CNNH, we have a team of specialists who can cohesively say, 'This is what we see and this is how we'll treat it,'" explains Dr. Mintz, who is triple-board certified in child neurology, pediatrics and neurodevelopmental disabilities. "We are concerned about understanding the biological causes of neurodevelopmental and neurobehavioral disorders so that we can design therapeutic interventions that target mechanisms, not only symptoms."

Dr. Mintz attended medical school at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ)-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. He performed his pediatric residency training at Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center, and completed a pediatric neurology fellowship at UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School.

He is on the faculty of UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School, and has been on the faculties of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at Camden, and is presently a member of the medical staffs of Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center-Camden, Weisman Children's Rehabilitation Hospital, South Jersey Healthcare and Bancroft.

Dr. Mintz is widely published in the medical literature, and has been an invited lecturer at a number of national and international conferences. He functions as the principal investigator on a variety of clinical drug trials, has been the protocol neurologist for a number of national pediatric AIDS clinical trials, and has participated on an array of committees and task forces of the National Institutes of Health and the New Jersey governor's office. Additionally, Dr. Mintz has served in the National Health Service Corps of the United States Public Health Service, and has volunteered for medical relief missions in Romania and Russia.

"What we've done is essentially eliminate fragmented care," he continues, "which is one of the biggest costs and inefficiencies of our healthcare system and is especially acute in the special needs population. Rather than each provider focusing only on a narrow aspect of a patient, or referring individuals to other specialists, we have all the necessary experts working collaboratively within one organization,

all 'under one roof'. Our clinicians do not work in 'silos', but work together for the benefit of our patients."

CNNH employs the latest in neurodiagnostic technology, such as *Dense Array Encephalography (dEEG)* - a more sophisticated and comfortable technology than traditional EEG (a "brain wave" test) - leading to more accurate diagnoses and more personalized treatment plans. "We have the most pediatric experience in the region with this technology," states Dr. Mintz.

They also work with families, teachers and other important people in an individual's life to build a supportive framework for continued success. "There's such a great deal of satisfaction seeing people make breakthroughs," he says. "It's why we're here. It's exhilarating. We want to make a difference in people's lives. Not a day goes by that it isn't interesting and rewarding. There's that old cliché: It takes a village. We believe that. We don't feel an individual provider, physician or other specialist can fully do what we do. It takes a team like we have, each member trained in their own expertise. That's how you get a consensus and an accurate diagnosis."

Mrs. Fredhoff gushes in her praise for this neurohealth organization. "Brady has come so far and I always want to brag about him," she says. "I credit a large portion of his recovery to CNNH. The great thing about it is [that] it allows him to grow and offers new opportunities to assist him in his maturity. Brady now talks continu-

ously and is so happy and interacts with other children all the time. Even though [he] has improved a lot, he still has [even more] growth potential, [and a] great partner like CNNH will help Brady to develop to the highest level possible."

"This is not a job for us—" says Dr. Mintz, "it's a way of life. We're here to serve those who need our help."

You can learn more about the way CNNH is making a difference by visiting www.TheCNNH.org or calling Toll Free at 855-852-8150.

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Girls from page 5

DNA deletions and duplications — than are boys with autism. What's more, the CNVs that girls carry tend to be larger, suggesting that they only get autism when exposed to the most powerful genetic hits^{3,4}.

"Those original findings could be taken in two ways," Robinson says. For example, she says, one explanation is a diagnostic bias. "Sure, the girls show more insults, but it's just because to get diagnosed with autism as a girl, you generally have to be more impaired."

The other possibility is that there is a bona fide protective effect in girls, she says.

In the new study, she and Ronald investigated whether girls in the general population are protected from autism risk factors that run in families. The study measured autism traits on a continuum, rather than by categorical diagnoses. For example, a child might have some repetitive behaviors without being diagnosed as having autism.

The researchers relied on two large samples of fraternal twins: 3,842 pairs from the Twins Early Development Study in the U.K. and 6,040 pairs from the Child and Adolescent Twin Study in Sweden. Both studies used questionnaires to measure autism traits, such as speech delay or difficulty making conversation, in the twins as children.

The researchers focused on pairs in which one of the twins — dubbed the 'proband' — scored in the top five percent of

autism trait scores. Siblings of female probands showed significantly more autism symptoms than did siblings of male probands, the study found.

That suggests that girls don't have autism-like behaviors unless they come from families with high risk, whereas boys can have these traits even in low-risk families.

"This female protective effect idea is something that's tossed around all the time, but really hasn't had much strong evidence behind it," says Lauren Weiss, assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco. "I think this study provides some very good evidence."

Researchers would have had to study many more twin pairs to reach the same level of statistical power in a study based on autism diagnoses rather than on traits of the disorder, she adds.

Serve and Protect

Although the data strongly support the 'female protective effect' hypothesis, they don't completely rule out other explanations, Ronald says.

For example, the questionnaires used to measure autism traits are based on ratings from parents, which are susceptible to cultural biases. What's more, many instruments used to assess autism and autism-like symptoms were designed and validated largely in groups of boys, who

may manifest the symptoms of autism differently than girls do.

The data are also somewhat puzzling in light of older studies on spontaneous risk factors in girls with autism.

The Neuron studies found that girls with autism are more likely than boys to have spontaneous mutations. Because these mutations are not inherited, it would suggest that the girls' siblings would be less likely to show autism traits — exactly the opposite of the new findings.

"It struck me that on its surface, there seem to be some kind of a contradiction," says Jeremy Silverman, professor of psychiatry at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, who was not involved in the new work.

However, Robinson says that because spontaneous mutations are rare in the general population, they wouldn't be expected to play a "meaningful role" in this sample.

Robinson and Ronald are next looking at whether specific genetic risk factors for autism and related disorders are more likely to lead to traits of the disorder in boys than in girls. If the female protective effect hypothesis is correct, then "you should see a greater trait burden in boys who carry these risk factors than girls, on average," Robinson says.

Everybody agrees that the autism field would benefit from more studies of girls with the disorder, who have historically been ignored.

"Understanding the sex difference is going to help everyone, boys and girls with autism," Ronald says. "It's part of the whole mechanism by which autism develops."

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College from page 6

students will be working, they also need to learn how to deposit checks into the ATM machine, in addition to learning how to make withdrawals.

Purchase a calendar or planner of some type to record important dates and appointments to practice time management - Many students make it through high school keeping due dates in their heads and somehow manage to remember to hand things in (sometimes) on time. In college, students will have more long-term deadlines, more appointments and meetings they'll be responsible for remembering, and parents won't be around to remind them. A planner of some kind is crucial! Taking some time over the summer to figure out what type of planner system works best for you will help you be ready to get started when college begins. A personal preference, some students prefer to write in a paper planner, while others like using their phone calendars because they're always with them.

Communicate using phone calls, emails and texts to practice communication skills - Try using different methods of communication over the summer and get used to checking them frequently. Colleges communicate important information with students through email so it's important to update your email address to the one

the college will be using and to check it daily. Parents and friends will probably text or call you, so be sure to keep your phone charged and check it several times a day for text messages or voicemails. If you receive a text or voicemail, practice texting or calling back so that the person knows you received it, even if you think it doesn't seem like you need to respond. Keeping the lines of communication open when students leave for college is very important in reducing stress and anxiety for both parents and students. While parents need to respect their student's need for independence, students need to understand that parents feel disconnected and need to know that their children are doing well. Take time during the summer to discuss what works best for your family and keep the discussion going when the student leaves home. For students living at home, it's still important to stay connected so parents know if you need a ride, if you'll be late getting home, etc. so they don't need to worry unnecessarily.

Make your own appointments with doctors, friends, etc. to practice self-advocacy skills - One of the most important factors of success in college is the ability to self-advocate. Practice these important skills over the summer whenever the situation arises, whether it's ordering food at a restaurant, asking for the bill, calling for information about something, or making a date with a

friend or an appointment with a doctor. Almost every situation in college presents the opportunity for self-advocacy, and many opportunities can be missed if a student doesn't know how to self-advocate. For instance, a professor explains an assignment but the student doesn't understand what they are supposed to do and doesn't ask and fails. A student who is supposed to receive accommodations for tests doesn't let the professor know so doesn't receive accommodations and fails.

Practice self-awareness skills by making time for self-hygiene, doing laundry, cleaning up your space and record them in your planner to practice time management - In addition to attending classes, doing homework, studying and socializing, college students must learn to recognize when it's time to shower, do laundry, and clean up their space on their own. These are often the first things to go when students become overwhelmed with all of the other adjustments of college life. Beginning to make these a consistent part of a student's lives while they are still at home can help them remember that these are important skills that they will continue to be responsible for when college (and the rest of their life) begins.

Practice healthy stress management skills by finding a type of exercise or way to reduce stress that works for you - Having a

toolbox full of techniques that have been tried and tested will go far when anxiety and stress hit, and I guarantee they will! Summer is the perfect time to find the types of exercise (outdoor and indoor) that work for you. Take some classes (yoga, cycling, dance) and see what you like best. Learn breathing techniques, visualizations, music that helps you relax and unwind. Research support and counseling services on campus that are available to students and have a list of names and contact information handy for when you might need it.

If you can build many of these skills before leaving for college you will find that the transition to college will be smoother and your chances for a successful college experience will surely increase. Taking the unknown factor out of the equation can relax everyone involved in the transition and can prevent unnecessary stress.

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individuals of all ages diagnosed with ASD. Through its 23 treatment centers and worldwide network of providers, CARD has developed a successful model of treatment based on the principles of applied behavior analysis. The treatment is approved by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the US Surgeon General as the only scientifically proven treatment for autism.

Founded by leading autism researcher and clinical psychologist Doreen Granpeesheh, PhD, BCBA-D, CARD has successfully treated tens of thousands of individuals and is committed to success for each one. For more information, visit www.centerforautism.com or call (855) 345-2273.

About Autism Research Group (ARG):

ARG is a nonprofit organization dedi-

cated to using science to help individuals with autism spectrum disorders. The mission of ARG is to use science to improve the quality of life for people with autism spectrum disorders and the families who love them. The goal is to conduct research that matters to families and to share the results with the world, thereby helping more families to access effective treatment. A brighter tomorrow is possible for individuals with autism spectrum

disorders, and ARG is using science to make it happen. For more information, visit www.autismresearchgroup.org or call (818) 620-9161.

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regarding generalization of skills to the “real” world. Staff should have training and experience working with children who have social skills difficulties.

It is important to review the program’s daily schedule, looking for a balance of formal social skills instruction, sports and recreational activities, and opportunities for creative and child-directed activities. Staff members should provide frequent feedback to the children, including behavior-specific praise, activity rewards and/or tangible rewards. Strategies should be shared with the parents to transfer skills across environments. And with all quality programs, there should be on-going data collection to ensure accountability for the student’s progress and to evaluate performance.

Best Practices for Teaching Social Skills

Like reading and math, social skills can be taught. Best practices for helping children acquire, perform and generalize social skills involves a comprehensive, consistent and individualized approach. Having a systematic plan is at the heart of successful programming. The plan must have several components:

1. The child’s parents, school personnel and any private professionals involved should work collaboratively throughout the process. The child should be included and treated with respect and dignity.
2. The team should select relevant social skills to target for intervention. These should be socially meaningful and important. Like all other aspects of the IEP, social skills objectives should be specific, observable and measurable. The team should obtain baseline data regarding the child’s social skills strengths and weaknesses.
3. The plan should include a variety of evidence-based strategies including systematic teaching of skills, modeling the desired skills, video modeling and video self-modeling, role play, behavior-specific feedback, reinforcement, and training to ‘fluency’ so the child can use the skill quickly in a social situation.
4. Programming should be continuous and on-going.
5. There should be a systematic plan to generalize skills across environments, with ‘coaching’ to provide prompting and feedback.
6. The team should plan carefully to incorporate classmates who have good social, behavior and language skills.
7. The child’s progress should be monitored throughout the year. A data-driven approach allows the team to determine how the child is doing, decide whether the plan is effective, and to identify when modifications within the plan are needed. The student should be observed across social situations in school, the home and community by multiple observers. Data should be collected regarding the specific objectives. It is possible to use ‘norm-referenced rating scales’ to monitor progress. Children can also be included to self-monitor.

Michael C. Selbst, PhD, BCBA-D is Director of Behavior Therapy Associates, P.A. in Somerset, New Jersey. He is a Licensed Psychologist and a Certified School Psychologist in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. He is also a Board Certified Behavior Analyst at the Doctor-

al level. Dr. Selbst has co-founded and is the Executive Director of HI-STEP® Summer Social Skills Program, an intensive 6-week day program for children to improve their social skills and problem solving ability, and the Executive Director of the Weekend to Improve Social Effectiveness (W.I.S.E.). He has extensive experience working with pre-school aged children through adults. Dr. Selbst provides individual and family therapy, behavioral parent training, social skills training, school-based consultation, functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans, psychological and psychoeducational evaluations, and expert/independent evaluations. He has led numerous workshops, including at local, statewide, national and international conferences, as well as for parent advocacy groups and school districts. Dr. Selbst has collaborated with three of Behavior Therapy Associates’ doctors to co-author the Behavior Problems Resource Kit: Forms and Procedures for Identification, Measurement and Intervention. With Steven B. Gordon, Ph.D., ABPP, Dr. Selbst has co-authored the social skills curriculum, POWER-Solving®: Stepping Stones to Solving Life’s Everyday Social Problems.

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the pages like a real comic book, print it and take it with you or refer to it on your electronic device. These apps could also be used after the trip to recreate what happened and continue the discussion and generalization of social skills. These and many of the social story apps allow for the final story to be “published” and shared electronically with family members and friends.

Apps for Peer Interactions

Summer is also a great time to set up play dates with peers at the park for a picnic or a day at the movies. Using the Conversation Builder or Social Skill Builder apps will help children expand on their conversational skills, turn taking, negotiation tools, and flexibility when interacting with a peer on the slide, playing a game of duck duck goose or just sharing a bag of pop-

corn. Having fun while working on these skills in a natural setting is a great way to see how the child is doing with skill generalization. Video tape these interactions for review and further use after the get together is over. Always remember to ask for permission from other parents before videotaping. Usually this is not a problem, and it can provide a great reason for the kids to get together again to see themselves “starring” in their own movie.

This video footage can be downloaded into the iMovie app to edit into smaller clips. These clips can be used to highlight facial expression, body language and communication subtleties that are hard to see in real time action. These might include hand gestures, body posture, eye gazes or eye rolls. Keep in mind what is being “said” through the non-verbal cues. This is often where children on the autism spectrum get tripped up. Ask prompting questions as you watch these spliced videos with your child. For

example, “How can we tell Peter is getting tired of this game and wants to play on the swings?” Helping your child become a social detective during this review helps them become a social predictor instead of a reactor and is another step down the path of social skills mastery.

With low cost, fun, and entertaining options, social apps are a great way to keep social learning going strong during summer break. For all of the apps mentioned, start with the free or lowest cost version first, then invest more if you find the app is a good fit with your child and the upgrade has features that make the investment worthwhile. A simple internet search of “social apps” will provide many reviews and top 10 lists to help choose what app fits your child or student best, and input from the child’s teacher is always invaluable and would be a great start on where to focus social learning efforts.

Laurie Jacobs, M.A. CCC-SLP, is co-founder of Social Skill Builder, a company launched in 1999 to provide computer-based tools for teaching social skills to children affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Laurie, along with her sister and co-founder Jennifer Jacobs, M.S. CCC-SLP, develops software products based on the unique needs of the ASD community.

Based on Social Skill Builder’s award-winning educational software series, the Social Skill Builder App features more than 100 videos for the user to view and react to by answering multiple choice questions. Video scenarios are real interactions in preschool, elementary, middle and high school and community settings. Within these settings, children and young adults demonstrate common social interactions with their peers and other adults. The Social Skill Builder App has been listed as a Top 100 Educational Apps for iPad.

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The focus of the support group is to assist families in understanding the complex issues related to their adult child impaired with Asperger’s Syndrome or High Functioning Autism. At many of our meetings, we have speakers address various topics of importance related to these syndromes.

For more information, visit our website www.FAAHFA.com or contact the facilitators:

Bonnie Kaplan - Parenttalk@gmail.com | Judith Omidvaran - Judyomid@aol.com

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Patricia Rowan, LMSW - (914) 736-7898 - Patrowan@bestweb.net | Susan Cortilet, MS, LMHC - (845) 406-8730 - Susan.cortilet@gmail.com

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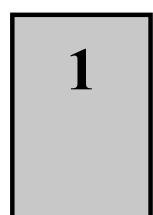
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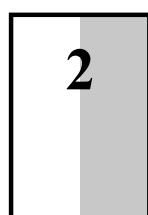
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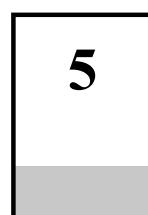
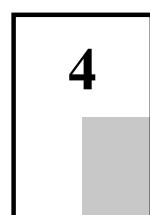
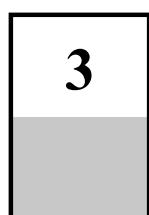
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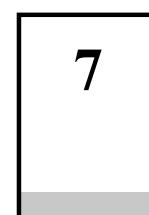
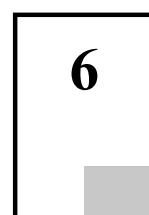
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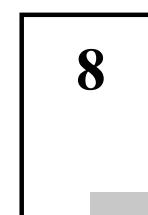
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