

Aukids

Issue 33
Autumn 2016

£15 annually
Available from
www.aukids.co.uk

Positive Parenting for Children with Autism Spectrum Conditions

Bumper Issue!

Four extra pages filled with Christmas advice, tinsel, glitter, you name it...



Brain Training

Improving flexibility of thought



'Dead' Ringers

Tips for spectrumite trick or treaters

PLUS

WIN A BIKE

for Christmas from Pediball!



Letter from the Editors

Debby Tori



Jingle All the Way to the Centre Spread



JOHN WILLIAMS:
MY SON'S NOT RAINMAN
BBC RADIO 4 PICK OF THE YEAR 2015

★★★★★
"An incredibly funny man... well crafted, funny and full of heart. Go and see it!"
- The Skinny

★★★★★
"A sincere and moving hour"
- Three Weeks

John is a stand-up comedian and single dad.
His son is twelve years old and autistic... he isn't a genius.
His only special power is making his dad laugh. A lot.
This is their story.

all proceeds to
AuKids
www.aukids.co.uk

7PM WED 16 NOVEMBER 2016
Priestnall School, Stockport, SK4 3HP
mysonsnotrainman-aukids.eventbrite.co.uk
With special thanks to Priestnall School

£7
plus booking fee

Okay, let's not get ahead of ourselves. We can't exactly call the centre spread a 'supplement', or you'd probably be looking up the Trades Description Act.

Let's just say it's a little festive extra to give you and your family a head start for Christmas. As usual, the companies advertising in our extended pages have been cherry picked as ones we'd recommend to a friend. Not everyone who comes forward gets a space in AuKids. Oh no. We are fusspots.

And wow – win a bike for Christmas! If only we were reading this magazine instead of writing it, sigh... What we like about Pedibal's balance bikes is that they teach the rider how to cycle. What we also like is their realistic prices. No extra zeros added just because they're aimed at our market. So even if you don't win, do check them out.

So, onto the rest of our autumn issue. Since we know that inflexibility comes with autism, we spend a lot of our lives working around it. Your child's inflexibility may mean that to compensate you are now the most flexible you've ever been – congratulations!

But there are ways of gently decreasing rigidity and we love Lauren Kerstein's 2014 book **A Week of Switching, Shifting, and Stretching: How to Make My Thinking More Flexible**. We asked Lauren to share some of her top tips with you and we hope you enjoy her wisdom on pages 12-13.

Pokemon Go has made the headlines this summer, something of an Olympic sport in its own right! We know you love to read about other families, so one Manchester mum who made the national news shares with us the inside story of how the game has made a life-changing impact on her teenage son.

Before Christmas it's Hallowe'en and another great author with tonnes of experience working with autistic kids, Elizabeth Sautter, has written us a great guide to spectrumite spooking. You don't have to 'do' Hallowe'en, but if you do, it's worth a look.

Finally, if you live in the North West, don't forget to grab your tickets for our comedy fundraiser in November, where John Williams, author of the acclaimed My Son's Not Rainman blog (and now book), will be performing in aid of AuKids. An autism-themed raffle including signed books from big names will add to the fun at this not to be missed event.

If you don't live in the North West and want to support us, you can now read your favourite autism mag whilst clasping a cuppa made in your very own AuKids mug. You can buy one at www.finsdesignandprint.co.uk and a percentage of every purchase goes towards the magazine.

Enjoy this issue and see you in the New Year!

Tori & Debby

Living with autism isn't easy. But finding out all about it should be.

Everything you need to know in one place
www.autismlinks.co.uk

autismlinks

Whilst the products and services advertised in AuKids are recommended to us by readers, we are not an industry inspector or regulator. We advise readers to seek independent advice from regulatory bodies before signing up with a new service provider and to check that products and equipment meet with industry standards.

The opinions expressed in AuKids magazine are those of the contributor. Please seek medical advice before embarking on any therapy or behaviour intervention. All articles are copyright AuKids.

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Tim Mixes in Café Society

INSCAPE HOUSE SCHOOL in Cheadle, Cheshire, part of the Together Trust, provides specialist autism provision for children aged between 4 and 19. We love the school's latest initiative, an onsite café run by the pupils and open to members of the public. At the new InCafe, a range of hot and cold drinks, cakes and light snacks are available. By running the café, students learn lots of transferable employment skills including baking, food hygiene, time keeping, numeracy, problem solving, customer service and teamwork.

In September, the café welcomed AuKids' autism advocate Tim Tuff, who enjoyed lunch there before teacher Marie Young hosted him in

the school's hall where he spoke to students about overcoming obstacles when getting a job. His audience heard about Tim's early fears about employment, and how he overcame them through his own strategies and a positive outlook.

Marie said: "Our pupils really engaged and related to Tim's speech. At Inscape we do a lot of work around employability skills and work experience, so the speech was very relevant and meaningful to our pupils who have autism".

Tim's talks raise money for AuKids. If you're interested in hosting one of his talks, write to us at editors@aukids.co.uk

Simon Says...

Simon is a little boy who has autism. Sometimes he has to think quite hard about what to say or do next. Use our Simon cartoons as talking points with your autistic child.



Simon is so excited about his new Mario game that he can't stop talking about it! How is his school friend feeling? What should he do next?



JUST THE JOB! Tim talks about careers for people with autism

Cover Star

★ **Flynn McHugh** ★
Age: 7

Diagnosis: ASD, ADHD, SPD (Sensory Processing Disorder), PICA.

Likes: Jammie Dodgers, trifles, eating in general! Swimming, trampolining, iPad, the beach, the forest

Dislikes: Being told 'No!' Not getting his own way!

If he were Prime Minister: He would do a better job than the current one!



I like: Jammie Dodgers
I don't like: Being told 'No!'



NEW Download Only Option

Do you live abroad and don't fancy paying extra postage for your copy of AuKids? Or do you prefer reading it on your Smartphone? You can now buy a Download Only subscription from our website. Same price but without the postage and the wait. Go to www.aukids.co.uk

Our system will still ask for your name and address but the download option appears later on in the usual subscription pages.

25% OFF
your first
download year
- just £12!

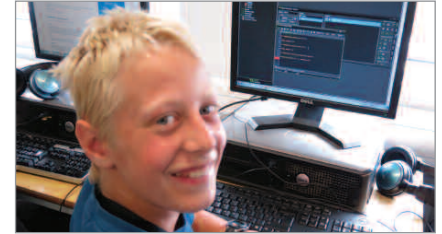
From January 2017, AuKids will go up to £16 a year. It's a rise of just 25p an issue which reluctantly we've had to do in order to keep up with the rising costs of postage and production. But to put it in perspective, an annual subscription to AuKids costs the equivalent of two cups of coffee, a cake and a car wash in Manchester. So it's probably still worth it.

Reviews & Prizes

Kids Review **techcamp**
.org.uk

Last issue, we featured Tech Camp courses for kids aged between 9-16 who love technology, whether on the spectrum or not. Here are two reviews from kids who attended different camps this year:

Luke (aged 13) attended Quadcopters in 2016



I did the residential course and it was really interesting and I learned a lot. We learned about how the Quadcopter stays up in the air and the technology used to fly it. We learned all about the parts as we put them together. We also learned how to fly the Quadcopter, so that we didn't crash it when we took it home! I have been to about 10 tech camps, including Gamemaker, Laser Tag, Inventor Workshop, FPS Gaming, Raspberry Pi, Robotics, Rocketry and Web Design. I definitely want to go again next year because they are really fun and I always learn loads.

(Neither Henry or Luke are on the autistic spectrum).

To book a camp for 2017, go to www.techcamp.org.uk - bookings open from November.

Henry (aged 11) attended the Inventor School Course, 2016



I did the residential course and I loved it, I've now been to Tech Camp for two years and it's amazing. I would like to go to Tech Camp every year. The courses are really interesting and fun, I have learnt so much more about science and technology. At Tech Camp you do things that you would never do at school.

The tutors at Tech Camp are really friendly and help you with your course, they are experts and teach you so much. I love Tech Camp - everyone is so friendly and it's great to meet lots of other geeks from around the world!



BOOK My Son's Not Rainman

By John Williams

Published by
Michael O'Mara

£7.99

ISBN 9781782433880

Sometimes you want reasons. Sometimes you want answers. And then sometimes, you just need to know that you're not alone. And if so, this book is for you. Comedian John Williams has taken his popular blog one step further with this book of the same title, which explains the background to his son's diagnosis and his difficult early schooling - but is so much more than that.

John's central mission is not comedy but truth and as a result his story isn't one long belly laugh but a series of anecdotes, some wistful and reflective, some gently entertaining, some absolutely hilarious and some nothing short of painful.

There are no attempts to make himself look like Super Dad. John's a parent who, like the rest of us, sometimes misses the cues from his son and sometimes fails to find the answers he is searching for. There's so much in his personal story that I could relate to, from the thick skin he develops in response

to public reactions, to feelings of pride in small but momentous achievements. Even very specific stories were endearingly familiar; apparently, my son isn't the only one who eats the bread he's meant to be throwing for ducks...

During these reflections, the author shares beautiful, profound lessons learned in some very special moments. But he also highlights some disturbing inadequacies in our education system and there are lessons to be learned from this, too.

This isn't an attempt to teach readers about autism and it doesn't lecture. It's simply a heartfelt account of what it means to love a child on the spectrum. Interspersed with some entertaining highlights from the blog itself, it's inspiring, insightful and rib-tickling in equal measures.

**John is performing in aid of AuKids in November - see advertisement Page 2.*

Debby Elley,
AuKids
co-editor

WIN A COPY!

AuKids has two copies of My Son's Not Rainman to give away. Simply e-mail competitions@aukids.co.uk with your name and address, quoting **RAINMAN** in the subject header, no later than November 30th 2016. Or, send a postcard to AuKids, PO Box 259, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 9BE. Two lucky winners will be selected at random after the closing date. Good luck!



MONTHLY AUTISM-FRIENDLY TOUR

The Low Down - Relaxed @ Newman Brothers at Coffin Works

Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham

Newman Brothers Museum at Coffin Works opened in October 2014. It is a capsule experience where visitors go back in time to the factory's heyday - they made some of the world's finest coffin furniture for over 100 years. Visitors see machinery in operation and the sights and sounds of day to day life. All the original stock is on the shelves.

The museum runs monthly autism-friendly tours. Suzanne Carter, a volunteer at Coffin Works, told me: "We have adapted the museum experience, reducing volume of sound effects, providing a relaxed, non-judgmental environment. Tours are led by a volunteer with experience of the autistic spectrum. Only families and individuals on the autistic spectrum are invited and during this time it isn't open to the general public. Visitors are invited to have fun as well as learning about the fascinating building".

Suzanne continues: "We have had some glowing reviews from our visitors so far and families have enjoyed their visit. There are museum trails to try for children and young adults if they wish and there is a quiet room available for anyone who would like time out during the tour".

I visited this tour as part of a social activity with Project Aspie, a Birmingham-based advocacy group. This was a look into Birmingham's industrial heritage, learning all the processes and history of the factory. The relaxed tour gives people on the spectrum the opportunity to enjoy the tour with a chill out room and sit out on certain aspects that can cause a sensory overload or at any point if they feel overwhelmed by the experience. I would definitely visit again.

Lewis Summerfield, Project Aspie



The Project Aspie team on their group visit



TOOLKIT The Emotional Brainboost Box

Maryhan Baker was studying for a PhD in child development when she originally invented a series of toolkits to help parents support their children's development. They proved so popular that she launched Brainboost Box, a company that supplies parents, carers and teachers with exciting 'toolkits' for specific areas of development.

The **Emotional Brainboost Box**, Maryhan explains, is particularly suited to children on the autistic spectrum: "I work with lots of children who really struggle to understand, manage, and modify their emotions in different situations. Children with anxiety, lack of confidence, friendship issues and those with ASC. This often gets in the way of them getting the most out of social situations, relationships with their peers and generally coping with the challenges of life.

"Emotional intelligence is one of the biggest predictors of later success in life, and whilst we know some children are naturally more emotionally intelligent than others, the good news is that it can be taught.

"I designed the **Emotional Brainboost Box** as an informal, play-based way to

give children a greater understanding of emotional states and how best to respond to their feelings. The hands-on activities teach children to tune into their body's emotional language and teaches them ways to switch their emotional states at will.

"They learn the secret signs to understand how others might be feeling and how they can use this knowledge to make better friendships. There are guided techniques which teach children how to self-soothe and pause for thought using visualisation. Detailed instructions are included for parents as well as all the resources needed to play".

Each **Emotional Brainboost Box** comes with ten guided activities, all the exciting resources needed to play, a reading book with an emotion theme and detailed instructions for parents on how to play the games and how best to support children ongoing. All activities are tailored to the developmental age and stage of the child.

After you've finished the box, you can buy extra activities individually. To order your Emotional Brainboost Box, go to www.brainboostbox.com and look in the Shop section.

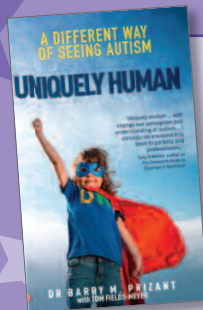
WIN!

AN EMOTIONAL BRAINBOOST BOX!

One lucky AuKids reader will win an Emotional Brainboost Box worth £40!

Just answer this question: **All the brains on the Brainboost Box website have names. What's the name of the Emotionally Intelligent brain?** Send your answers with your name and address to competitions@aukids.co.uk stating 'BRAINBOOST' in the subject header, or write to us at AuKids, PO Box 259, Cheadle Cheshire SK8 9BE. The first correct answer chosen at random after the closing date of November 30th 2016 will be the winner. Good luck!

Use the special AuKids promotional discount code **AUK1610** to get 10% off anything from the site until the end of this year!



BOOK Uniquely Human (Hardcover)

By Barry M. Prizant
with Tom Fields-Meyer
Published by Souvenir
Press Ltd
£20.00
ISBN 9780285643338

When I'm learning about autism I love to hear stories. In *Uniquely Human*, Barry Prizant - a global name in autism - has given us a treasure trove of his own recollections, forged through a 40-year career of working with autistic youngsters. The result is a deeply informative masterclass in autism.

It's difficult to imagine where I'd be now if I hadn't learnt from very early on that different behaviours in autism aren't random and nonsensical but serve a purpose, sometimes to alleviate disorientation or discomfort and also for self-regulation, self-expression and communication.

Discovering the cause of each behaviour is what makes autism

fascinating and often perplexing. Dr Prizant has spent his career encouraging others to look for each message communicated through behaviour, rather than seeking to crush the behaviour as unwanted or irrelevant. This is central to a good understanding of the condition both for parents and practitioners.

Autism presents us with a different collection of mysteries for each individual. You'll enjoy the detective work in this book and find it satisfying (and emotional) when each little mystery is solved. Hugely thought-provoking, it's one of the most important books on autism I've ever read.

Debby Elley, AuKids co-editor

WIN A COPY!

We have two copies of *Uniquely Human* to give away. Email your name and address to competitions@aukids.co.uk with 'UNIQUE' in the subject header, no later than November 30th 2016. Winners will be chosen at random.



BOOK Making Sense - A Guide to Sensory Issues

By Rachel S. Schneider
Published by Future
Horizons
£11.95
ISBN 99781935567561

I don't care how much I love you, you're not borrowing this book. It's just too good. SPD (Sensory Processing Disorder), which is highly common in people with autism, is mind-blowing in its complexity and yet this guide somehow makes great sense of it in just ten short chapters. For more than a basic understanding of SPD, and for up to date thinking on the condition, you could do a lot worse.

If you're the sort of person who feels irritated by a chummy tone then you probably won't appreciate Rachel's constant witty asides, but for someone used to more clinical volumes on this subject, her chatty style made the meaty content really easy to digest, even in the hour before bed!

Apart from the author's excellent

in depth explanation of the various aspects of SPD, Rachel summarises modern research on the subject and the latest interventions, too. The author's own experience of SPD adds a warm human dimension to her material. As an undiagnosed child with SPD, Rachel constantly felt disengaged from her own body and confused by physical experiences that she assumed were the norm and didn't have the knowledge to interpret or explain. Now an advocate for the adult SPD community, Rachel's personal experiences are as valuable as her considerable knowledge on the subject.

Making Sense is the perfect pocket guide to SPD for parents and practitioners. Explanations this simple can only really be given by someone in total, confident command of their subject. Written with passion, enthusiasm and empathy, it will also be a heartening companion for those who themselves have SPD and want some self-help advice.

Debby Elley,
AuKids co-editor



Why do we seem to like all these books? We read plenty - we only feature those we particularly like. If you are thinking of reading a book, please ask for our readers' thoughts on Facebook or Twitter.

CAST YOUR OWN SPELL FOR AN AUTISM-FRIENDLY HALLOWE'EN



Elizabeth Sautter

co-directs Communication Works in Oakland, California, which offers speech, language, social, and occupational therapy for children and adults. For the last 20 years, she has worked with people of all ages who have autism and their families in private practice, schools, and hospitals. Elizabeth specializes in social communication, self-regulation and executive functioning.

HALLOWE'EN frights can go way beyond the thrill of ghosts and goblins. Fun can quickly become real fear for some children, even though they've been told repeatedly that the scary witches and bloody masks are pretend.

For some kids with autism, any costume creates confusion and anxiety about what's real and what isn't. Others become giddy from all the excitement and sugar, then can't calm themselves down. Because Hallowe'en typically comes with plenty of hype, the build-up can be stressful and distracting for weeks in advance.

This Hallowe'en, take some steps to reduce overwhelming experiences. At the same time, you can seize the social learning opportunities that come with a night of adventure.

Here are ten tips and tricks to make the experience calmer, happier, and even - dare I say it? - educational (*you just did* - editors).

1 NO SPOOKY SURPRISES

Reduce anxiety by planning ahead and trying on costumes in advance, so your child can assert control about being in costume or not. Some kids will benefit from visiting a costume store to see that even the scariest costumes are just fabric in a box or on a rack.

2 HAPPY HAUNTING

Some children are sensitive to certain textures and fabrics. Involve them in making the costume or have them wear a store-bought one around the house to make sure it doesn't create discomfort on the big evening.

3 WIN WITH A GRIN

Use pumpkins to carve out various emotions. What is a Jack-o'-Lantern's expression telling you about its emotions? How will it make others feel when they come to the door and see that Jack-o-Lantern's face? Try to read other pumpkins' expressions!

4 LOOKING THROUGH NEW SPOOKTACLES

Help your child act out the character they have chosen for Hallowe'en. What does this person or creature think and feel? If your child is wearing a scary costume, remind him to think about how others might feel if they were looking at or talking with him.

5 GHOSTLY GUESSES

Hallowe'en is filled with teachable moments for understanding emotions. When looking at others in costume or at pictures of people in costume, encourage your child to make guesses about what those characters might feel and say, based on the child's knowledge about those types of characters.

6 A WITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE

Prime your child for what the plans are for the night and help them recall what past Hallowe'ens have looked like. Do they remember anything that might have been a trigger in the past? What tools could be helpful if that happens again?



7 BEFORE YOU GO GOBLIN...

Before trick-or-treating, give your child a healthy dinner to balance some of the sugar to come. Make sure the meal includes plenty of water.

8 SOCIAL SPOOKS

Review the hidden rules of Hallowe'en with your child prior to the big night. For example, take just one candy when trick or treating, and thank the person who offered the treat. If the lights are out at someone's home, don't ring the bell.

9 WISE WIZARDRY

Remind your child that if they want to comment on someone else's costume, they should say something positive and not insult anyone's costume. The same goes for any treats that they are given. Talk about it in advance, ask them if they know why thoughts are sometimes best kept privately when it comes to people's choice of clothes or gifts!

10 TIME TO FLY

Keep a careful watch on your child during trick-or-treating to check for signs of overload. Regularly ask your child how she's doing and if she'd like a break. If your parental radar tells you that your child is on the edge, wrap up the evening as quickly as possible.

ENJOY HALLOWE'EN, AND KEEP THOSE FRIGHTS UNDER CONTROL!

EXTRA TIPS

FROM THE AUKIDS EDITORS



YOU SAY PUMPKIN, I SAY JACK O' LANTERN

The author is American. She refers to sweets as candy. We figured you had the imagination to make the jump, so we didn't adapt it.

WIZARD WATCH

Autistic kids have a reduced sense of danger and Hallowe'en costumes made of manmade fibres can be highly flammable. Don't let them anywhere near a naked flame and preferably dress them in cotton.



DON'T GO BATTY!

Some kids find pretend play really threatening. Dressing up as someone who doesn't look like them is just too much. If they don't want to join their friends in this, don't dismay and don't force it. Opening the door to spooks is just as much fun. A liking for dressing up can come with age, when the child has a more confident sense of self.

WHACKY WARDROBE?

It really doesn't matter if your child wants to dress up in line with a special interest that isn't particularly spooky. One child we knew arrived at a spooky disco dressed as a mobile phone and in our opinion his was the best costume.



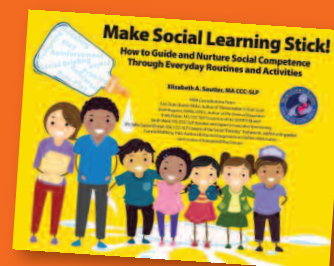
TERRIFYING DIN

If the only thing stopping your child from attending Hallowe'en parties is the noise, let them wear some ear defenders and don't stay for the entire party. Half an hour of joining in is still taking part.



SCARY MONSTERS

Co-editor Debby's son Bobby caused confusion all round by answering his own front door shouting 'TRICK OR TREAT?' If your child isn't into dressing up, this can be a great way of them taking part AND getting rid of visitors quickly at the same time!



For more useful tips and tricks for holidays and every day routines and activities, check out **Make Social Learning Stick!** This guide offers over 185 practical tools and activities that you can easily fit into everyday routines and holidays to help children gain and improve social and emotional competence.

Books by Elizabeth Sautter:

Make Social Learning Stick! Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC Publishing.

Whole Body Listening Larry at Home! (co-written with Kristen Wilson) published by Think Social Publishing.

Whole Body Listening Larry at School! (co-written with Kristen Wilson) published by Think Social Publishing.



When the World Shares Your Special Interest...

This summer, it wasn't only the Olympics capturing our global imagination. Pokemon Go also took the world by storm. Not only that, but its significance for some people with autism has been staggering. Imagine having Pokemon as your special interest and waking up to find that everyone wants to talk about it – and passers-by in the street are as gripped as you! Satoshi Tajiri, the inventor of Pokemon, is himself on the spectrum. But even he couldn't have predicted the sort of story shared here by mum Jan Barkworth



PHOTO COURTESY OF BENGT OBERGER

Useful Life Lessons From Pokemon Go



Patience

When learning a new skill, you're like a Pokemon who hasn't yet evolved...think how Pokemon change over time, until they're unbeatable. That will be you if you don't give up!



Tenacity

We don't always win when we battle at gyms, and there may always be someone better than us. But that doesn't mean we should stop trying or that it's not worth playing. It's the same in real life.



Teamwork

If we can't take over an area ourselves, someone in our team will! Working together in real life means using the strengths of our team – just like in Pokemon Go! It also means we get to support people who aren't as experienced as us.



Practice

The more we play Pokemon Go, the more Pokemon we acquire. They make us stronger and better in battle. In life, it's the same. The more you practice doing something, the better you become and the more skills you collect.



Level up!

Ever wondered why you are not perfect at something straight away? Does it frustrate or worry you? In Pokemon Go there are many levels. As you get better at the game, you move up a level. But being on a lower level than another person doesn't mean you're rubbish at it, it means you need a bit more time and practise. You can still enjoy the game and be good at it. It's the same with real life. Don't give up if you aren't scoring top marks, just keep trying!



Adam was withdrawn and found it hard to engage with others



Pokemon Go has made Adam feel a lot easier in social settings

'My son Adam is 17 and we live in Stockport. He has autism due to a rare chromosome disorder. He was diagnosed with autism at 14 after he started to withdraw and isolate himself from school peers when he started high school.

'It was a long, hard journey to get his diagnosis and sadly it came too late to help Adam. He started suffering with social anxiety at 12 and was having anxiety attacks when we left the home.

'He rarely went to school due to his anxiety and his life revolved around Minecraft. We tried all sorts to help his anxiety, but he was locked away in his own world and nobody could get through to him unless you talked about Minecraft to him.

'Adam is verbal, but only with those he feels safe around; he struggles to communicate with anybody he doesn't know or feel safe with. He now attends an SEN Sixth Form College and has full-time one-to-one support.

'When Pokemon Go came out I thought 'Let's give it a try.' I was shocked when Adam agreed to download it and came outside around my local area for an hour with me!

'From there his interest grew and he started

wanting to go out hunting Pokemon. For someone who hadn't wanted to step foot outdoors, this was amazing. We now meet other Pokemon hunters and although he rarely verbally communicates with them, he has started interacting with them in his own way.

'In just the 7 weeks since we downloaded the game, Adam's life has transformed. We are now going out on average 3-4 times a week for 3-4 hours each time. Not only that, but in the last month he's had just one anxiety attack. He's managed to go inside a pub that is a Pokestop and he played pool with somebody there! He has gone for a short break with me and he's had a meal out at a restaurant (which was a Pokestop!). My friend was with us and he actually

spoke to her.

'It's been amazing watching the change in Adam. He even walks straighter when outside. He uses a Chewigem necklace and he is no longer constantly chewing it - but the biggest change in his appearance is that the hood of his jacket is now down the majority of the time!

'When people heard about the change in Adam we started to make the news. We were in the local papers – the Stockport Express and the Manchester Evening News. Then before we knew it, he'd appeared in the Daily Mirror and on the Victoria Derbyshire show on BBC2 as well as BBC News. The BBC News video of him was watched by over 5 million people and even the official Niantic blog has covered our story.

'Adam is interacting a bit more with his siblings and my bond with him has become so much stronger. I feel like I have a bit of my old cheeky quirky son back, the one I had before his regression and isolation started - and I have the game to thank for doing this'.



OUT AND ABOUT: Pokemon Go encouraged Adam to go outdoors on a regular basis

You can see Adam on the Victoria Derbyshire show here: bbc.in/2aKufHf

4
page
extra!



Don't Go Crackers at Christmas!

Christmas brings a lot of change and sometimes isn't relaxing. You're not alone! Here are some tips to stop your nerves from jingle jangling on the big day...

Make a note of Christmas time on the calendar, creating a clear colour to mark school holidays.

Do Christmas shopping online to avoid stress and overload.

Going for a long walk with your kids can prevent overload from crowded, hot rooms.

Remove plastic ties and complex wrapping before wrapping a gift. Saves waiting!

Don't get upset if new toys get temporarily discarded. Too much change can be overwhelming. Gradual introduction to new things is better.

Let your child be alone in their room if they want to be, don't worry about it being 'anti-social'. They need time to recharge from the change and disruption.

Have images of friends or relatives (and their homes) ready to show your child before a visit.

Cut the snap inside crackers to prevent a sudden noise.

Buy a lot of spare batteries for unexpected gifts, and make sure Santa's gifts have batteries in them before wrapping!

Hide chocolate coins in a lucky dip made from shredded paper and tinsel - great for discrimination skills and it will slow them down!

Keep to their normal bedtime hours - if you have normal bedtime hours! It's important for a sense of stability when routine is upside down.

Keep to important parts of the routine even on Christmas Day.

Look up our online archive for tips on visiting relatives from Issue 28.





Kid friendly iPad
super-protection
system



An iPad for Christmas?

Designed by mum of 2 children with additional support needs, fatframe is here to help keep your iPad, iPad mini or iPad Air safe from being dropped and thrown.



I bounce if
dropped



Light as a
feather



Handles to
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PULL-OUT

Shopping Guide for Friends and Family

GETTING Christmas presents for a young relative can be a challenge at the best of times, but what if that youngster has autism? AuKids has ten tips for friends and relatives buying presents over the festive season for that very special someone.

1 All I Want for Christmas...

Add to wishlist

Some autistic children don't like surprises or change very much. The run-up to Christmas, with its unpredictable routine, can be very stressful. To spare them any further change, try and stick to their wishlist. On Amazon, parents can make a wishlist and pop it on their computer's toolbar. Then if they spot anything from ANY shop (not just Amazon), it can be added to that wishlist. Just ask the parent for the name of the wishlist and you can buy from it. Parents will know which items have been bought to avoid duplication.

2 Yule Be Glad You Made the Effort



Most kids have collections of some sort, particularly as many computer games now have associated interactive figures. When an autistic child builds a collection, this isn't just an ordinary haphazard semi-completed collection, oh no. When autistic kids like something, they like it A LOT. Their collection will be cherished; their collection will be complete - and having to complete it is the nightmare of most parents. So seek out the figures that they don't already own. If you want to spend money on something that doesn't gather dust, this is it.

3 Hark the Herald Angels Sing...



For those little angels who have autism and don't speak yet, any toy that rewards vocalisation by responding to your sounds is a good bet. How about a voice-changer toy or little 'pets' that respond to you? The **Hear Myself Sound Phone** from www.specialdirect.com for £10.20 is a fun way of encouraging communication.

4 Jingle Bells



If the child is at a sensory stage of exploration and enjoys lights and music, there's a wealth of toys that will appeal. Explore Your Senses also has plenty of tactile and light-up toys. You needn't worry about age appropriateness, they're fun for everyone! www.exploreyoursenses.co.uk or search.stores.ebay.co.uk/starpacksltd (website coming soon).

5 Driving Around the Christmas Tree...



Vehicles on tracks tend to be popular with autistic kids, as they have a definite purpose and the repetitive movement of them can be quite comforting. Thomas the Tank Engine is particularly popular. Find out which track the child owns and buy an interesting new piece for it.



6 Do You Hear What I Hear?



For some children who don't have speech and have learning difficulties alongside autism, cause and effect toys (that is, toys that light up or make a sound at the press of a button) can be particularly rewarding. Once a child knows what the cause and effect is, a parent can immediately engage with them and model simple words and phrases, helping them to absorb language. It's a powerful learning tool, as you only drink in vocabulary when it's meaningful to you.

8 High-Tech Holiday



Many autistic kids are glued to iPads or computers. Colourful keyboards or a keyboard mouse might be a nice bet (you can even get large letter keyboards from Amazon if their hand-eye coordination is developing). Cordless headphones that use Bluetooth can save endless headaches, as getting a fiddly jack into an iPad wearing a protective case can be a struggle. (try KitSound Manhattan Bluetooth Over-Ear Headphones which are compatible with iPads and Androids). And what about an iPad protector from Fatframe to protect the most expensive purchase of all?

9 Say It With Slogans

Parents spend so much extra on special needs children that they often don't have as much disposable income as they'd like

to spend on clothing. Positive messages are great signals for the public and families alike. You can get specialist autism T-shirts with positive slogans on them, designed by AuKids magazine, from www.finsdesignandprint.co.uk Just check any sensory sensitivities before you buy clothing.



10 Page Turners

For the high-functioning autistic child in your life, a book based around a special interest might be very worthwhile. There is an entire series of Minecraft and Skylander adventure stories, for instance, as well as many gaming guide books. You may need to check you aren't duplicating, though.



A Little Warning for Christmas Morning

Books with too many words in them may be hard for children whose language is more profoundly affected by their autism. Beware buying delicate toys with many moving parts for autistic kids who like putting things in their mouth or dropping objects from a height. Find out about their aversions, too, which can be quite extreme. A child we knew hated stickers and yet kind-hearted relatives often bought him sticker books on his favourite subjects. It's far better to ask, even if you feel the surprise is slightly spoilt, than to guess and waste your money.

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The super lightweight aluminium frame on Pedibal bicycles means that kids can easily push their bike along as a balance bike, then move it along easily as a scetera (seated scooter) using independently

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The smallest in Pedibal's range, the Scampa (£129.99), is for ages 18 months-5 years; the Sprinta (£149.99) is for children age 4 up to 12 and the Suprema (£359.99) is designed for teens and upwards and is foldable for storage and easy transporting. Scampa and Sprinta bikes are available in metallic red, blue, pink or white and Suprema in metallic silver.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS!

to the readers of Aukids

from all at Jessica Kingsley Publishers



www.jkp.com

WIN A Pedibal Bicycle for Christmas with AuKids Magazine!

Fancy unwrapping one of these on Christmas morning? One lucky AuKids reader will be able to wheel away a Scampa or Sprinta bike in time for Christmas! Just answer this question:

What is the smallest bike in the Pedibal range called?

- a) A Scampa
- b) A Scrambler
- c) A Scater

E-mail your answer, name and address to competitions@aukids.co.uk no later than November 30th 2016, putting **Pedibal** in the subject header, or send us a postcard with your details to AuKids, PO Box 259, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 9BE. **Don't forget to tell us which type of bicycle you'd prefer and the colour.**

Good luck!



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BLOGDASHINA

A paper blog by autism expert Olga Bogdashina



Olga Bogdashina is an internationally renowned researcher and lecturer in autism and the author of books on sensory perception, the Theory of Mind, communication and spirituality in autism. Her autistic son Alyosha, 28, is the inspiration behind her career.

Blog 7



RED ALERT: Incoming Sensory Missiles...

At the time of my ignorance about autism, I remember how proud I was of some Alyosha's 'oddities' (rarely, if ever, observed in my friends' children of the same age).

My son was very tidy: he would avoid messy things and places, never step on a puddle or touch anything if he didn't know the texture of it. When Alyosha started talking, some of his 'announcements' were also different from other children, so my pride gave way to puzzlement. For example, my boy often complained of 'moths' flying around him. Years later, I realised that his vision was so hypersensitive that he could see air particles which became foreground, with the rest of his environment fading away.

Alyosha's hearing was also very acute: the boy seemed to hear noises before others became aware of any sound, so he'd inform me about his dad coming home before I had spotted the car turning into the drive. Even now, as noises seem so much louder to him, Alyosha tends to move

away from conversations and avoids crowded places.

Hypersensitivities to sensory stimuli are very common in autism. During the years, I've worked with children with various hypersensitivities. Alongside my own son, several of my students were hypersensitive to fluorescent light; they could see a 60-cycle flickering, making the room pulsate on and off. Their reactions to it differed, however. Some tried to escape the room, while one fell asleep.

My pupil Inna ran to escape her smell sensitivities. We banned perfume on the premises but, unfortunately, it was not good enough. At lunch break, the odours from some food was too strong to her and at home she had a special diet of 'unsmelly' food.

If it was raining, Sasha (with *auditory hypersensitivity*) was likely to miss his classes. The sound of thunder physically hurt his ears and he refused point blank to leave his flat – sitting on his bed (sometimes crawling under the bed) with his index fingers pushed into his ears.

Often, *auditory hypersensitivity* isn't necessarily about loud sounds. Sometimes the most disturbing sounds for an autistic individual are those that cannot be heard by non-autistic people. They might cover their ears when the noise is painful for them, though others in the same room may be unaware of any disturbing sounds at all. Sometimes *hyperauditory* children make repetitive noises to block out other disturbing sounds.

Vita was hypersensitive to touch and smell. If she was being touched by somebody, she immediately smelt the place of touch, and more often than not she took off her jacket or dress with this 'spoilt spot' on and refused to wear it again unless it was washed. Because of her *hypertactility*, the girl pulled away when people tried to hug her; even the slightest touch could

send her into a panic attack. Washing her hair was an ordeal. She was also sensitive to temperature and didn't like wearing shoes.

Pete refused to wear silk shirts because he couldn't tolerate the fabric on his skin. His parents learned to accommodate this, because if they forced him to wear it, the boy would strip the offending item off at the earliest opportunity – on the bus, in the town centre, or at school.



SPARKLING SWORDS:
Pretty to you, painful arrows to others. Fireworks can feel deeply unpleasant to someone with over-sensitivities.

Children with *proprioceptive hypersensitivity* hold their bodies in odd positions and have difficulty manipulating small objects. Those with *vestibular hypersensitivity* have a low tolerance for any activity that involves movement or a quick change in the position of the body. They experience difficulty changing directions and walking or crawling on uneven or unstable surfaces. They are poor at sports and feel disoriented after spinning, jumping or running. Often, they express fear and anxiety at having their feet leave the ground.

Autistic children have to live in a world which is not designed for them. If we look at their 'bizarre' behaviour and responses through their eyes, they make sense. Our behaviour may seem equally odd to autistic children. They might

think, how can you enjoy fireworks if your eyes are hit with 'bunches of bright arrows' and the sound in your ears 'tears them raw'? (descriptions given by people who have autism).

At times, our 'treatment' can do more harm than good. For example, when a family was struggling to find a solution when their son removed his clothes in public, the specialist's advice was to reward him with a biscuit when he kept them on. If we look at this situation from an autistic perspective, tactile processing problems should have been considered. It would have been more logical to identify the fabrics the boy couldn't tolerate, while desensitizing his tactile system.

Depending on the sensitivity, the objective should be both to desensitize the child and to provide aids to help them cope with 'offensive' stimuli.

One technique used to address hypersensitivity to touch is the Deep Pressure Proprioceptive Touch Technique, which involves the use of a small brush and massage. The therapist makes firm, brisk movements over the body, especially the arms, hands, legs and feet. Touch sensitivity can also be reduced by massaging the body. Eventually, the child's tolerance to tactile stimulation increases. An Occupational Therapist can teach you to use these techniques at home as part of a child's 'sensory diet' to increase tolerance very gradually through sensory activities.

So, if your child's behaviour seems unusual, do consider their level of 'sensory pollution' and if they are hypersensitive, it is important to keep sensory distraction to a minimum.

If we can create a *sensorily safe* environment for people to meet their very special needs, then the world will become more comfortable for them and barriers to learning and to their daily relationships will be greatly reduced.



From a Black and White World to Thinking in COLOUR

How to improve flexibility of thought

Denver-based author Lauren Kerstein is a licensed clinical social worker who works with children and adolescents who have autism. She specializes in anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties and parenting support. We loved Lauren's book *A Week of Switching, Shifting, and Stretching: How to Make My Thinking More Flexible* – so we asked her for top tips on improving flexibility to share with you. Here's what she said...

In today's chaotic world, change is one of the few things we can predict with certainty. While change provides opportunities for perspective shifts and positive experiences, change is also scary. Embracing and surviving change requires flexible or 'rainbow' thinking.

Rainbow thinking is a skill that is elusive to many of us and particularly to people who have autism. So, it's important that we actively teach rainbow thinking.

The following steps and strategies will help your child to learn about rainbow thinking, making them more flexible.

First, let's look at some of the reasons people on the autistic spectrum struggle with flexibility:

★ Predictable Sameness

Consistency, routines and familiarity provide comfort to children with ASC* (and people in general). The desire for "sameness" can lead to black-and-white thinking which in turn leads to increased rigidity.

★ Control. Control.

The need for control can lead to rigid thinking. So, if a child believes eating apples will make her sick, even if that has never happened, she will hold onto control and rigid thinking in order to avoid that food.

★ Anxiety is Kryptonite

Anxiety is kryptonite to rainbow thinking. Children and adolescents with ASC have a higher tendency to struggle with anxiety than their peers.

★ Carnival Mirrors

Distorted thinking patterns can lead to anxiety and vice versa. Thought patterns can be warped much like our bodies in carnival

mirrors. People with ASC have a tendency to develop negative thought patterns which can impact feelings and behaviour.

★ Scattered and Flustered

People on the spectrum often struggle with executive functioning or executive skills. Executive skills help us to plan, prioritize, focus, shift attention, regulate emotions and use flexible or rainbow thinking.

★ Walking in Another's Shoes

Struggles with Theory of Mind (the ability to take another's perspective) can lead to black-and-white thinking. Conversely, perspective-taking and the ability to recognize the differences in others' experiences can lead to rainbow thinking.

★ Guiding Principles

External and internal emotional experiences can lead to black-and-white thinking. If we have a negative external experience, we may use that one negative experience as our guiding principle. We develop belief systems about situations based upon the external and internal emotional experiences we encounter. These belief systems can lead to black-and-white thought patterns.

To sum up, children with autism rely on black-and-white thinking or rigid thinking as a coping strategy. They believe that sameness, rigidity and trusting their distorted thought patterns will provide a higher level of control over life. However, the reality is that this thought is distorted. Rigidity actually decreases control.

The following strategies are designed to help

people with autism increase their flexibility. Steps 1, 2 and 5 are particularly helpful for children who aren't as verbal. Create visual supports to enhance each step:

1 Model flexible thinking

Narrate and demonstrate your rainbow thinking. "I wanted to make lettuce wraps tonight, but I'm missing Hoisin sauce. I have everything I need for Spanish rice. I'll be flexible and make that instead."

2 Try one thing each week or each day that's different from the typical routine.

Know your child and if necessary, proceed cautiously. For example, eat breakfast for dinner or dinner for breakfast. If you have typical seats at the kitchen table, switch seats. Drive a different way home from the store. Highlight the positives that come from rainbow thinking. Perhaps you discovered breakfast for dinner is delicious!

3 Play a game called, "Can You Think of Three?"

Create scenarios like: *You are at a party, and the zipper on your trousers breaks. The task in this game is to think of three things you can do in this situation. Think creatively. Have fun using your rainbow thinking together.*

4 Help your child increase self-awareness.

The more your child understands black-and-white thinking, the more success your child will have with rainbow thinking. Begin increasing self-awareness by talking through the reasons for black-and-white thinking that are listed in this article. Self-awareness is the key to more lasting growth.

5 Develop common language and cues around rainbow thinking.

You can help your child find their "brain-poline" which is described in my book, *A Week of Switching, Shifting, and Stretching*. A brain-poline picture (showing how you can bounce from a problem to a solution) is a useful visual prompt to remind your child of the value of rainbow thinking. Catch each other using your brain-polines. Reinforce each other with high fives and praise. Teamwork around flexible thinking can be rewarding for everyone involved.



What Kids Can Do!

1 Why?

Help your child understand why rainbow thinking is helpful. Pair black-and-white thinking with rainbow thinking.

For example: **Black-and-White Thought:** We have to obey the speed limit!

Rainbow Thought: If we are driving someone to the emergency room, it's okay to safely speed since it's an emergency. Brainstorm other examples and talk about them as they happen.

2 Triggers.

Make a trigger chart or draw pictures of triggers with your child. Help them to understand the concept of a trigger as well as the fact that triggers cause feelings (negative and positive). You can also identify sensory triggers that might cause anxiety. For children delayed verbally, you might also create visual supports that fit into the framework, "if... then." This will show the relationship between triggers and feelings. "If it's loud... then I feel sad."

3 Intensity.

Use scales or rating systems like *The Incredible 5-Point Scale* by Kari Dunn Buron and Mitzi Curtis (2012) or the concept of lift floors in order to help your child to identify their level of emotional intensity. Knowing the intensity of

Help your child try these interventions / games to increase rainbow thinking:

a feeling can guide your strategies. A deep breath may work for a lower level of intensity (1st-3rd floors) while a 20-minute break may be more effective with a higher level of intensity (4th-5th floors). Visual supports will help children better understand this concept.

4 Strategies.

As children develop an understanding of triggers and intensity, they can try strategies such as exercise, mindfulness, yoga, chewing gum, squishy balls or planned breaks in order to decrease anxiety. Decreasing anxiety will increase rainbow thinking. These strategies can be placed on a choice board, in a strategy toolkit and/or offered visually (on index cards, for example) during stressful times. Depending on your child's development, the ultimate goal can be choosing their own strategy or simply the willingness to try strategies in moments of stress.

5 Flip It!

Children can practise switching negative thoughts. I call this technique **FLIPPING IT!** Write a negative thought on an index card and then **FLIP** the card over and write a positive way of thinking about the same thing on the other side. Flipping thoughts increases positive thinking. Positive thinking leads to rainbow thinking.

6 Variations.

Help your child create new games from games you typically play. For

example, play a game like **Blink®** (Mattel) traditionally and then try it as a matching game. You can then play it as a guessing game where someone holds the card up to their forehead and you provide clues (similar to **HedBanz®** from Spin Master Games). See how many variations your child can invent. Celebrate the fun that comes with flexible thinking. (*Debby and her son Bobby made Scrabble into a nonsense word game – see AuKids You Tube channel - editors.*)

Rainbow thinking is a skill. The more you work on it, the easier it will become. Play with ways to incorporate rainbow thinking into your daily life. With small steps, and patience, you'll help your child jump from black to white, to the rainbow in between!

This isn't just a tin of beans. It's a milestone. A massive victory. A success story in tomato sauce.



For one of the young people we care for at Hesley, the thought of going to the shops to stock up on weekly groceries was unthinkable. A constant challenge for him, his parents, his previous care providers, but not us.

There were many difficulties to overcome. It wasn't easy, but we got there by finding effective and innovative coping techniques.

The young man who wouldn't step foot in a supermarket now shops for himself.

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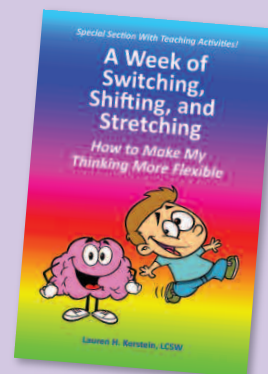


Established in 1975, the Hesley Group provides specialist support through its schools, colleges and adult residential services with a highly experienced and expert multidisciplinary educational, care and therapeutic staff resource, in high quality purpose built settings. We're focused on positive outcomes and progress towards sustainable independence.

Win!

AuKids has 2 copies of Lauren's book **A Week of Switching, Shifting, and Stretching: How to Make My Thinking More Flexible** (published by AAPC) to give away. Just email competitions@aukids.co.uk with your name and address, typing 'flexible' in the subject header. Send your entry in no later than November 30th 2016.

Good luck!



* Autism Spectrum Condition, interchangeable with the term ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder. In line with our general outlook on autism, AuKids has been using ASC for some years. In the States, where Lauren is based, ASD is more widely used.

THE SIXTH SENSE

No, it's not an ability to see dead people. The sense you may not have heard of is proprioception. 'Er, proprio-what-shon?' we don't necessarily hear you say. Even if you know about it, your understanding might be slightly on the hazy side as it's not often well explained. So, off we go in search of straight talk...



We interviewed specialist paediatric Occupational Therapist Breanne Black and gave her one mission - to make our understanding of proprioception crystal clear once and for all. Over to Breanne...

You can put a glass of water on the desk without smashing the glass - you know instinctively how much force is needed.

What goes wrong when our proprioceptive sense is disturbed?

Some people are not able to adequately process or receive information from their muscles, joints, tendons and ligaments. This means they get poor sensory feedback about the body and how it is moving.

Usually, they'll opt for plan B, which is to use vision instead of relying on internal sensory feedback. Those who have reduced proprioceptive awareness are frequently reliant on looking at where their limbs are.

But what happens in the dark, or when vision is needed for another

part of a task? You may be looking at your handwriting and unable to watch how you are holding your pencil at the same time. So you may hold it too tightly, too loosely or too close to the tip. Sound familiar? Poor proprioception often impacts on motor skills.

How can we tell that someone has poor proprioception?

John is always crashing into his school friends when lining up.

Sam constantly breaks crayons when colouring, as a result of using too much pressure.

Jane is often in trouble during playground games, for using too much force during a game of tag.

Sara is constantly fidgeting and is unable to sit still when working at the table.

Here are some difficulties that you may see in children with reduced proprioception:

- Using too much or too little force during motor skills and play
- Constantly move feet or legs when in a seated position
- Seeking out movement like running, jumping, crashing
- They may injure themselves or others
- They may shout instead of talking
- They may appear clumsy or lacking coordination, bumping into others
- They may seek out extra proprioceptive input by chewing on fingers, pens or clothes.
- They may enjoy wearing tight clothes

What is proprioception?

Proprioception is a sensation that is delivered through stimulation to a muscle, (speed, rate, sequencing, timing and force of movement). The accurate interpretation of this movement allows subconscious awareness of our body's position in space. So, we have a 'sense' of where our limbs are without looking at them.

So how does proprioception work when everything is okay?

When it works well, it tells us about the position of our body parts, their relation to one another, and their relation to other people and objects. It can tell us how much force our muscles need to use in order to carry out coordinated movements.

For example, you can change gear in your car whilst looking at the road, not your hand.

You can ride a bike through traffic without looking at your feet.



How does it feel if you have reduced proprioception?

When the proprioceptive sense is not working accurately, it impacts daily activities that we take for granted. As a result it can have a knock-on effect on self-confidence and self-esteem. Often people just avoid activities that they find challenging and so it can be isolating.

Okay, so what can we do to help?

Proprioceptive input is additionally known as 'heavy work'. Activities such as pushing, pulling and jumping, or actions that place weight or compression on muscles and joints often provide a large amount of proprioceptive input. Here are some ways to do it:



FOUR BY FOUR

Walking like different animals or doing wheelbarrow walks.

KNEES UP!

Marching or jogging on the spot



HARD CASE

Turtle walks (place a large pillow on your child's back and see how long they can crawl around with the heavy shell on their back).

A PRESSING MATTER

Push ups against a wall



POUR YOUR HEART OUT

Pouring sand, dried beans, dry rice or water back and forth between containers.



Books Well Worth a Read

The Out of Sync Child Has fun; Activities for Kids with sensory Processing Disorder, Carol Stock Kranowitz (2006)

Building Bridges Through Sensory Integration, Paula Aquilla (2006)

Sensational Kids, Lucy Jane Miller (2014)

Raising a Sensory Smart Child: The Definitive Handbook for Helping Your Child with Sensory Processing Issues, Lindsey Biel and Nancy Peske (2009)

RIP OFF

Ripping paper or pieces of cardboard to make a collage.



SOFT TOUCH

Playing catch with a large pillow or ball

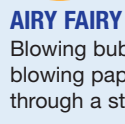
KING OF THE CASTLE

Building a fort including large chairs and large pillows



GOT SOME FRONT

Lying on your tummy while reading, doing a puzzle or on the iPad.



AIRY FAIRY

Blowing bubbles or blowing paper balls through a straw



CAUSING A STIR

Mixing a cake mixture, kneading dough, tidying toys into a basket and sweeping.

COMES TO THE CRUNCH

Eating chewy crunchy food and drinking thick drinks such as milkshakes or smoothies through a straw.

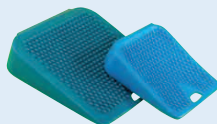


How can I tell if my input's working?

Hopefully a consistent programme will result in improved body awareness, improved use of graded force and control during motor actions and a reduction in bumps and scrapes.

What sort of materials can you recommend?

- Weighted backpacks, belts, jackets or lap animals
- A 'movin sit' cushion



- Peanut Ball



- Body Sox



- TheraBand



- Theraputty



Autism Friendly Screenings...

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Autism Friendly Screenings are now brought to you at over 200 cinemas, by Dimensions in partnership with Cineworld, ODEON, Showcase and Vue.

www.dimensions-uk.org/autismfilms



These are just a few resources that can provide additional proprioceptive feedback. Here are a few places that sell them:

- **Special Direct**
www.specialdirect.com
- **Sensory Plus**
www.sensoryplus.co.uk

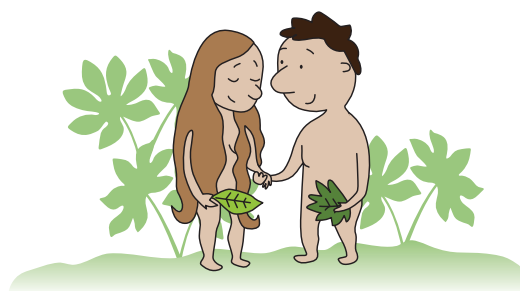
- **Sense Toys**
www.sensetoys.com
- **Sensory Toy Warehouse**
www.sensorytoywarehouse.com
- **Cheap Disability Aids**
www.cheapdisabilityaids.co.uk

Breanne Black can be found at www.coolforkidsoccupationaltherapy.co.uk





“My older son can't have friends round because his autistic brother, who is 8, removes his clothes. What can I do? ”



It's a little known fact that Eve had clothing sensitivities and Adam, who generally wore a jumper and slacks, tended to remove his clothes when Eve had visitors.



Greg Loynes

Admissions, Transitions and Outreach Manager at Together Trust's Inscape House School, a specialist school supporting young people with autism.

Greg has taught students with autism for over 15 years and is involved in partnership working with several mainstream schools in the North West. He also has an interest in behaviour and is a PROACT SCIP® UK Instructor.

www.togethertrust.uk

first thing I would do is introduce schedules at home. I would also use Social Stories™ and comic strip conversations* about visitors.

Schedules make life a whole lot more predictable. It could be that everyone has a schedule so the young person with autism knows what everyone is doing. When setting up schedules, we always include a 'something different' symbol to add in when needed.

The schedule would show when the eldest boy had visitors and where they would be, for example, in the bedroom on the Xbox. On the younger brother's schedule would be 'clothes on' and a favoured activity. It could be that a timer was used and when the timer finished, the visitor left and the favourite activity stopped.

We would then need to recruit some willing visitors who would turn up on time and follow the schedule. As this became routine, it would be extended to having scheduled visitors in other parts of the house and for increasing amounts of time.

When having scheduled visitors becomes part of the routine, we can then have someone 'turning up unannounced'. There's a knock at the door, 'something different' is placed on the schedules and we follow the 'visitor routine' we have become used to.

Good Luck!



Emily Kellett and Nicola Reeder

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Firstly, we would recommend an assessment from an Occupational Therapist to identify any sensory processing difficulties. Children who present with such behaviours generally experience tactile hypersensitivity and defensiveness, leading them to remove their clothing. This is because labels, seams, textures and waist bands touching their skin can feel painful and be challenging to tolerate.

Some children work hard to tolerate their clothing in social situations (for example, at school), but when they arrive home they can no longer cope with the sensation.

Successful strategies that have been proven to be beneficial involve tight clothing (such as

compression vests), clothing without seams and soft clothing. Deep pressure squeezes, squashes with cushions, wrapping with blankets or 'heavy work' activities around the home (pushing or pulling things safely) will also provide children with additional sensory feedback. There are companies who provide specialist all-in-one clothing designed specifically for people with sensory issues which may work as a preventative strategy to maintain dignity.

Bathing and swimming are also great activities, as water provides the body with some resistance. Deep pressure massage can also be introduced following such activities, which could also have a calming effect. An Occupational Therapist may also recommend a tactile desensitisation programme which would help your child to tolerate lighter touch by using a step by step approach.

In addition, introducing structured time where the child can undress into daily routines at home (perhaps in the bedroom) can be beneficial. Teaching the child the difference between public and private would work to promote their understanding of when it is appropriate/acceptable to be undressed. Communication methods like visual supports or Social Stories™ might help your younger son better understand what's expected of him.

Finally, it would be useful to educate siblings so they understand why these behaviours exist so that they can be confident in explaining to their friends any possible behaviours that happen during their visit.



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friends, that makes him happy).

Have him mark the date and event on a calendar. Explain verbally or in a Social Story™ what's going to happen (i.e. who is coming, when, what they're going to do, where). Then address attire for the day and positive things he can do during the visit: do some brainstorming with him. These can be added to the Social Story™ or shown as options on the calendar - visual reminders always help.

Depending on what the other children will be doing, he might be able to help them even in small ways (e.g. bring them a snack - that's called being a good host), to engage in the same activity perhaps in parallel with his brother and friends, to do a favourite activity of his own, or to have his own friends come over to play in a different area of the house or garden.

The main points are (a) to forewarn him and make the visit feel less chaotic, (b) to dress for the occasion, and (c) to ensure he has something positive to do during the visit. The child will learn about friends and having friends come over to visit, respecting your brother and his friends and their right to enjoy themselves and share the house, and how he can do things to keep himself positively engaged.

Did you notice that removing clothes was never mentioned? Regardless of what approach you take, it's critical that you never mention stripping. That is because most children will focus on the words you use, even negative ones.

If you wish to talk about keeping clothes on, do so within the context of how everyone visiting will wear shirts, shorts or jeans (or whatever) and it's really important for everyone to do the same. You can throw in some humour and suggest that maybe everyone will wear dresses or bathing suits - that helps emphasize the importance of context when deciding on what to wear.

As this is so situation-specific to his brother's friends coming over, I suspect this is not a sensory difficulty and so I'm approaching this from a behavioural perspective.

You might think it's a good idea to impose restrictions so clothing removal won't occur (such as putting him in difficult to remove clothing). Or you might be tempted to remove him from the situation altogether to avoid his brother's embarrassment.

The trouble is, neither of these methods will help him learn anything about appropriate social behaviour and the first strategy is likely to frustrate him.

Dealing positively with the situation means setting the child up for success. Behaviour is communication - so what is he trying to communicate by stripping?

It may be a response to not knowing what else to do, combined with anxiety related to having more people in his house. If that is the case, he needs to be forewarned at least a few days ahead about the visitors, being sure to put a positive 'spin' on it (e.g. Just like you, your brother can share our house with his



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would speak with your son (if his receptive language will allow) to ask some basic questions, for example: "Do you like your brother's friend George?" This will give you a good idea of the function but will also normalise the situation. And regardless it will be a nice lead into the next strategies.

Remember that your son has communication and social difficulties so has neither the language nor the skills to gain George's attention in a more appropriate way. So teach him how to make friends and to get another person's attention appropriately. Practice with real people and when ready help him implement his new skills with his brother's friend.

I would couple this with a Social Story™ about making friends and getting people's attention in a positive way, making sure that you note that taking our clothes off in front of people we don't know can make those people feel uncomfortable. Make sure that you remain positive and end by stating that if he follows these guidelines, George and other people will be more likely to want to be around him.

Firstly, let me put your mind at rest. These behaviours are common in most children. As with any behaviour, it is important to ascertain the function. I would guess that this is likely to be multi-functional, consisting of attention and sensory stimulation and maybe even to get things that he likes.

I would suggest a collection of interventions. First of all I

Further Information

*Social Stories and Comic Strip Conversations were both created by Carol Gray and are easy to master strategies that will help you to describe a social situation in a non-threatening way so that your child can reflect on it slowly and learn what's required from them. They can help a person with autism understand a situation and everyone else's experience of that situation.

Online

Read the National Autistic Society's information about Social Stories™ and Comic Book Conversations here: www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx

Download AuKids Issue 15 for a full explanation of what a Social Story™ is and how to write one.



Books

Comic Strip Conversations: Illustrated interactions that teach conversation skills to students with autism and related disorders by Carol Gray, published by EDS Publications Ltd.

The New Social Story Book™ by Carol Gray, published by EDS Publications Ltd.



Do you have a question for Ask the Experts?
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The Last Word

By Debby Elley, journalist and mum of twins with autism.

The Household Olympic Games

I have been an autism mum for almost 13 years now. True, three of those years were spent completely oblivious to this, wondering instead whether a career in the circus beckoned for my twins, who'd spin anything on sight. During the remaining ten years, however, I've developed some very special powers of my own.

True, my powers don't stretch to recalling 721 Pokemon and their evolved forms.

However, when cheering our Olympic heroes this summer, I wondered whether medals could be dished out to parents like us.

For instance, I reckon I've now moved past the Bronze stage and am proudly sporting Gold in the **Becoming Deaf to Annoying Noises** event. Thomas the Tank Engine Third Series, episode 10 for the 35,064th time? No problem. Musical toys made in China occasionally get the better of me, but it now takes several hours before I feel like stomping one into tiny pieces.

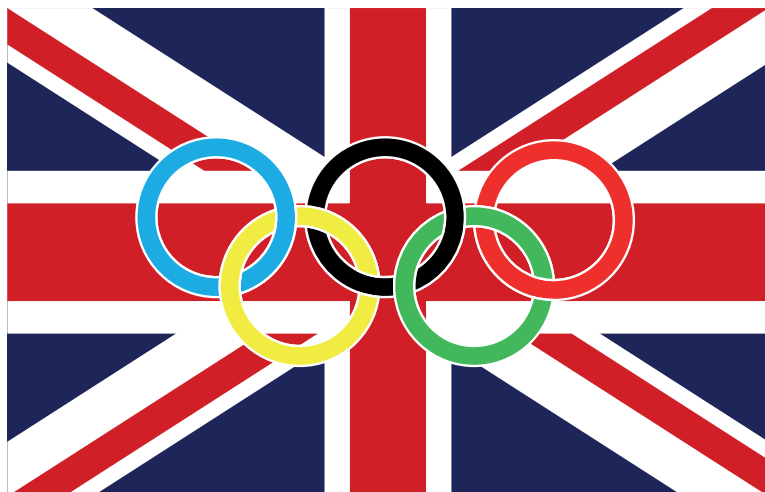
In the **Chatting About Console Games I Know Nothing About** event I am lagging slightly behind, somewhat short of a Bronze at this stage, but am getting good at responding with reasonably appropriate phrases like: "Really? That's released in December is it?" and "It can defeat him, can it? Oh

wow! Impressive!" So I am encouraging conversation skills whilst at the same time not having the foggiest what we're talking about.

Although I have some bad days, my best event is **Not Rising to An Argument**. This event requires you to let your opponent argue on their own for half an hour whilst breathing deeply.

The event I've progressed most in is the **Serene Response to Your House Being Trashed** one. Being a house-proud kind of girl, I'm particularly proud of my improvements in this area. Just before I wrote this paragraph, I was in intense training in the kitchen, where Bobby had spilled a third of a packet of Rice Krispies over the sideboard. Whilst he was pacing around saying 'Well this is embarrassing, you weren't supposed to see this!' I managed a very patient 'Well this is how we learn, isn't it? Never mind, you just do your milk over there...' As I said it, I could almost sense the GB flag rising to the opening bars of the National Anthem. I couldn't really, but it would have been nice.

So here's to us, Olympic heroes in our own little way. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got to prepare for the opening ceremony of the **Christmas Holiday** games. This happens a long way before the games themselves, as the warm-up goes on forever.



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