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FIND YOUR SUMMER PLACE

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Info Autisme

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OUR MISSION: Creating a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autism

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Front cover photo: Jesse and Juaid with Cole, Chris and Izzy at Wet 'n Wild. See In Your Corner, p. 41.
Photo courtesy Laura Webb

Growing Up with Junk Science

OUR EXPERIENCES TELL THE REAL TRUTH

by Michael Cnudde, Managing Editor, *Autism Matters*

Michael Cnudde

I GREW UP IN A TIME when autism was blamed on poor mothering, also known as the "refrigerator mother" first proposed by Leo Kanner back in the 1950s. (Yes, I am *that* old!) Although time and science have long since disproven Kanner, I can't help wondering how this slapdash rush to judgment has hurt autistic children and affected many parents—mothers especially.

Kanner's judgement echoed throughout my life. My parents and I knew I was somehow different from the other children around me. They resisted having me assessed because they couldn't see how having me labelled mattered. Even then, the spectre of being forever labelled haunted my early years.

Time passed. I grew up. I knew I was different—and whatever I had—I dealt with it as best I could. I was torn between being myself and trying to fit in. Sometimes this worked—and sometimes it failed spectacularly. It wasn't until I was much older that I began to suspect that I might be on the autism spectrum. It seemed like too simple an answer at the time. It was only when I was in my mid-50s that I was able to get properly assessed and diagnosed.

I had an answer, but still a lot of questions. The good news is that I am learning more about myself and autism daily. Unfortunately, I also saw a darker side of things. Much of this was like the bullying and the othering I had experienced growing up and into adulthood. We know it as ableism or discrimination against people based on their disabilities. (Read the article on page 11.)

Much of this is based on junk science and its spurious foundations. Whether it is a claim by a minor personality that vaccines cause autism, a defence lawyer who tries to liken autism to a form of psychosis, or a claim that all autistic people are violent, these assertions are based on ignorance and, unfortunately, willful discrimination or ableism.

The autistic community still has a wall of worries to climb. But we are strong, and we are persistent. We have a growing number of friends and allies. We also have the truth on our side.

As someone who has only recently been diagnosed with autism and is still learning about what this means each day, I am still finding my voice as a self-advocate. Whether in person or in the pages of *Autism Matters*, which I have been entrusted with editing, I will continue that advocacy.

I am privileged to work for Autism Ontario. Together we can look forward to the coming day when we will live in a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autism.

If you've read this far, thank you. Now I have a favour to ask.

If you have a story to tell, please let me hear it. Perhaps you're a parent with a young child who has just been assessed. Perhaps you're an adult on the spectrum who is just entering university. Or anywhere in between or beyond. I would like to hear your story.

We are all by nature storytellers, but we all tell our stories differently. You can tell your story through the written word: fiction, poetry or prose. You can tell it through your art, photography, painting, sculpture or anything else. We don't judge here; we listen and share. What is life like for you? Let's open a conversation. Reach me at michael@autismontario.com.

Editor's Note: Inside the pages of *Autism Matters* we try to include a range of views about autism and its impact on people. These views may or may not reflect our own, but we trust that diversity of views adds to the reader's insight about complex issues.

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Autism in Canada

THE CANADIAN ACADEMY OF HEALTH SCIENCES ASSESSMENT REPORT

by Crystal Hunter, Manager, Communications and Resource Development, Autism Ontario

THIS SPRING, the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS) released its assessment report, *Autism in Canada: Considerations for future public policy development*. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) requested the report to inform the federal government as it considers the development of a National Autism Strategy to better support autistic people and their families.

During their research, CAHS consulted with autistic people and their families, as well as service providers, researchers and organizations. The report looks at the themes of Diversity; Social Inclusion; Diagnosis, Supports and Services, and Economic Inclusion as they relate to autism.

Key Findings

The results of the report focus on the needs of autistic people and their families, and the tools required to better support their inclusion in Canadian society.

The report underscores the importance of autism supports that meet the extra needs resulting from the diverse population of autistic individuals in Canada, and considers their language, learning and housing needs, among others.

Intersectionality and Diversity

Autism intersects with other identities such as race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, gender, and sexuality, which creates diversity in experiences and needs. Autistic Canadians face additional and unique barriers especially if they live in rural and remote areas or are part of equity-seeking groups.

To meet the varied needs that result from the diverse population of autistic individuals in Canada and build on the strengths of this diversity, partnering with Indigenous and racialized people to develop inclusive, culturally relevant, localized approaches and supports and services that respect, affirm and address the distinct lived experiences of Canada's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples is imperative.

Social Inclusion

The assessment report points to social inclusion in communities for autistic people as central to their belonging, meaningful participation and safety. Equitable access to public transportation, recreational facilities, leisure programs, technology and other resources and opportunities can enable inclusion for autistic people and contribute to their positive physical and emotional health, safety and quality of life.

Addressing stigma and discrimination through public acceptance and awareness public campaigns, as well as training and education programs for public safety personnel and mental health providers may help to improve outcomes of crisis situations.

Diagnosis, Supports and Services

The report found that many people are not diagnosed with autism early enough, resulting in large numbers of autistic people who don't receive the supports they need.

To address the gaps to equitable access to autism diagnostic and support services, the report suggests adopting family-centred models of service provision, providing effective early intervention approaches and improved school-aged supports, and implementing services and transitions to and through adulthood that may help promote better outcomes for autistic individuals throughout their life course.

Economic Inclusion

More than half of autistic Canadians rely on disability benefits. To promote financial stability for autistic Canadians, reforming access to benefit and tax credit programs, offering flexible income and/or medical benefits and encouraging job participation through more inclusive workplaces could result in more stable employment outcomes.

Appropriate post-secondary education pathways, including autism-specific programs that offer a combination of supports such as transition services, residence life planning, peer mentoring and support groups, tutoring, counselling, and life skills coaching can help meet the broad range of autistic students' needs and abilities. The report found that these programs are offered in the United States, but that there are comparatively few in Canada.

Improving the supply and adequacy of autism-inclusive housing solutions that consider the unique needs of autistic people within the design, layout, activities, geographic location and where necessary, staffing complement and access to other community supports, such as mental health services, can help create sustainable and inclusive communities and social care systems that better address the broad range of needs of autistic Canadians.

Conclusion

Most autism research has focused on causes and characterization in childhood, which offers important insights but overlooks many of the daily needs and priorities of autistic individuals and their families across their lives.

All Canadians benefit when our society accepts, includes and supports autistic people and their families. Systemic changes are possible but require ongoing collaboration among all levels of government and in partnership with autistic people and their families.

Autism in Canada: Considerations for future public policy development, is available for download at: https://cahs-acss.ca/autism-assessment/ More information about the National Autism Strategy is available at: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/autism-spectrum-disorder-asd/national-strategy.html

Introduce Us!

Are you affiliated with a foundation, corporation or charity that would consider making a donation to Autism Ontario?

We would appreciate learning about any opportunities to connect with potential supporters and would love to hear from you. Please contact Dawn Tuckwell, Grant and Stakeholder Engagement Supervisor at dawn@autismontario.com.

Back to School

TEN WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD GET READY

by Bethany Brewin, Occupational Therapist, Training and Education Team, Autism Ontario, and Danielle Nolan, Social Worker, Training and Education Team, Autism Ontario

Evidence informed

YOU SURVIVED THE LAST TWO YEARS of ups and downs, and now you have survived the summer. We know these last two school years have not been normal and we have seen the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our children's development, social skills and mental health. We hope that the 2022-2023 school year is a return to predictability and we want to give you some hope and excitement about what a school year can bring. Here are 10 ways that you can help your child—and your family—get ready to go back to school:

1 Let's get up! (Morning routine)

Work with your child to create a morning schedule—it can be a checklist, a visual schedule or photographs that show exactly what needs to be done to be ready for school in the morning. Some examples: take a picture of your child fully dressed (shoes, jacket, backpack, etc.) so they can see what they are working towards, or make a list of items that need to be included in their backpack.

2 Let's get dressed! (Dressing skills)

Help your child select a few favourite outfits that are comfortable and easy to put on. If your child likes routines, you can rotate through these favourite outfits, or have an outfit laid out the night before. Be mindful of sensory sensitivities: if your child will only tolerate a certain type of pants or socks, be prepared with multiples of this same preferred clothing item to make dressing easy and low stress. If your child wears a uniform, is there a comfortable version that would be acceptable for your child to wear (e.g. T-shirt and store-bought dress pants or sweatpants)? For younger children, offer dolls or dress-up clothes as an opportunity to practice fasteners such as zippers and buttons, (Halloween costumes are often a fun and motivating way to practice!)

3 Let's eat! (Feeding/mealtimes)

Work with your child to select some favourite lunch or snack items. Be sure to include some easy preferred foods each day, as well as offering some food challenges (exposure is important,

even if your child doesn't end up eating the less-preferred food). If possible, in the weeks leading up to school, try to time your snacks/meals at home to correspond to school nutrition breaks. You may want to set a timer or alarm as a reminder if this is helpful. Serve lunch/snack in the same lunchbox and containers your child will be using at school, so they have a chance to practice opening zippers and containers. If your child will have access to a cafeteria or meal-plan, check if it is possible to review menu/food options in advance so they know what to expect.

4 Let's get organized! (Organization/time management skills):

Create a family calendar where everyone can visualize daily and weekly plans. For younger children, you may want to create a daily visual schedule to manage expectations about what happens before and after school. For older children and teens, spend some time figuring out what might work best for tracking homework and assignments: a physical calendar or written agenda, or an app on their smartphone, tablet or computer. Discuss expectations for how your child will communicate with parents or the school team when they have questions or need clarification about assignments.

5 Let's play! (Fine motor skills)

Developing fine motor skills is key to many school activities, including handwriting. There are lots of great ways to build hand strength and skills through play. Some suggestions:

a. Make "cookies" using play dough and cookie cutters; older children and youth can sculpt with clay or plasticene.
b. Make a bracelet by threading beads onto a lace, or placing cereal, such as Cheerios or Froot Loops, on a pipe cleaner. Older children or youth can create patterns or spell messages with letters or coloured beads.
c. Use tongs or tweezers to pick up and sort pom poms or cotton balls
d. Build pencil skills by colouring or completing dot-to-dots or mazes

6 Let's play! (Gross motor skills)

Take your child to the park or playground at their school. Explore the space together. You can play "follow the leader" or "Simon says." Older children can help to create a scavenger hunt. Where will your child spend their time during recess or free time? What activities do they enjoy? Can you bring a ball, hula hoop, bean bags to create a game together?

7 Let's be friends! (Social skills)

Will your child know anyone at school? Is there a way to connect with other parents or children before school starts? Ideally you can reach out to another family before school and set up a time to meet—even spending a short time on the playground together will create a sense of familiarity. If it's not possible to set this up before school starts, your school team can help to facilitate a connection with one or more other students during the first few days. Does your child's school have any clubs or extra-curricular activities that might relate to your child's area(s) of interest? Can you reach out to a supportive teacher or admin staff about starting a Minecraft club, coding club, STEM, music, arts or sports your child enjoys?

8 Let's talk! (Emotional regulation)

Start talking about emotions in your home and normalize your child's worries about going back to school. For younger children, books and pictures can help them learn to identify these feelings. Older children may want to keep a journal, or use art or digital media to represent their thoughts and feelings.

9 Let's breathe! (Calming strategies)

Going back to school can feel stressful for your child. You can teach them strategies to help them manage this stress in the classroom. Breathing techniques such as cookie breathing (i.e., have your child pretend they are taking a deep breath while smelling freshly baked cookies, and then blowing out to cool the cookie down) can be used both at home and at school. Older children and youth may be receptive to practicing modified meditation and mindfulness strategies or using affirmations. For more ideas visit https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EDMH-ParentActivities-FINAL-EN.pdf

Danielle Nolan

Bethany Brewin

10 Let's go to bed! (Sleep and bedtime routines)

Practice getting into a regular bedtime routine. Limit electronics at least two hours before bed and encourage calming activities such as reading or meditation. Encourage exercise and physical activities during the day, as well as allowing for quieter activities (such as reading or listening to music) to rest and recharge.

Try to keep bedtime and wake-up times consistent.

We hope these suggestions will be helpful in giving you somewhere to start for your back to school routines and skills. As summer comes to an end, don't forget to take time to relax, connect and have fun as a family. Plan for a balance of rest and fun as you ease into the school routine. Happy Back to School!

Additional resources

An informative two-part live webinar on getting ready to go back to school will be shared on Autism Ontario's website on Wednesday, August 10 and Wednesday, August 17:

- Wednesday August 10: *Back to School Part 1: Strategies to Prepare for School Routines* with Kristin Gunby and Bethany Brewin: https://www.autismontario.com/civicrm/event/info?id=7378
- Wednesday, August 17: *Back to School Part 2: Strategies for Connecting with your School Team* with Tracie Lindblad and Danielle Nolan: https://www.autismontario.com/civicrm/event/info?id=7379

References: School Mental Health Ontario. (2020). Parent activities. https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EDMH-ParentActivities-FINAL-EN.pdf

Autism Ontario's Values: CARE

Collaboration – We believe in the power of working side by side with individuals, families and communities to make informed choices about autism.

Accountability – We hold ourselves and others responsible to achieve successful outcomes through high standards of integrity and fiscal responsibility.

Respect – We value equity, diversity and inclusion, and we listen to understand.

Evidence informed – We use and create knowledge to guide our decisions and work.

Help Supercharge our Fall Appeal with a Match!

Have you been considering an exceptional gift to Autism Ontario? We are looking for a donor to help us multiply the impact of our Fall appeal. There's no better way to encourage supporters to donate, and to give more. Can you help?
Contact our Fund Development and Community Engagement Director, Sarah Morison at sarah.morison@autismontario.com to learn more.

Get Creative with Autism Ontario

We're looking for submissions from you, the Ontario autism community, for *Autism Matters* and the Autistic Creativity section of our website.

Written pieces, vlogs, music, visual art, photography and more, are welcome.

Autistic people of all ages are especially encouraged to submit.

Please email questions, ideas and submissions to submissions@autismontario.com

Finding Help on Your Terms

INTRODUCING AIDE CANADA'S WEBSITE

by Allison Jaeger, Webinar Specialist and Community Partnership Coordinator, Autism Ontario, and Ontario Hub Coordinator for AIDE Canada, Autism Ontario

The Autism and/or Intellectual Disability Knowledge Exchange Network (AIDE Canada) is a national initiative to connect members of the neurodiverse community to the information and resources that they need. The AIDE website (https://aidecanada.ca/) is a tool that provides users with the information and resources they need. It is designed to deliver credible, reliable and evidence-informed content in an unbiased and accessible way.

ACCORDING TO AIDE CANADA'S 2021-22 Year in Review report, 92 percent of surveyed users reported an increased knowledge of intellectual disabilities and autism after accessing the AIDE website. In 2021, nearly 70,000 Canadians accessed the website for a total of 203,500 page views.

The AIDE Canada Initiative is a trusted source of information supporting self-advocates, parents, families, caregivers and service providers in the autism and intellectual disability communities. It was founded by the Miriam Foundation in Montreal and the Pacific Autism Family Network in Vancouver and is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). AIDE Canada is comprised of six regional hubs including British Columbia, Prairies, Yukon, Quebec, Maritimes and Ontario. These hubs are partnered with 16 other organizations across Canada.

Together, these hubs leverage existing resources, forge new partnerships and increase community capacity.

Autism Ontario leads the AIDE Ontario Hub. We are partnered with Holland Bloorview Hospital, Reena, Empowered Kids Ontario, SAAAC (South Asian Autism Awareness Centre) Autism Centre and Pooran Law. In 2021, the Ontario hub hosted six webinars and developed content that was viewed by nearly 1,000 different participants.

A Commitment to Online Community Content

In the online sphere, AIDE is committed to understanding the needs of its diverse community members and their individual preferences.

Between 2019 and 2021, AIDE Canada consulted with communities, key researchers and stakeholders to identify gaps in the current resources available to develop their online content development plan. Because opinions on resource gaps may differ between individual researchers, families and self-advocates, one of the goals of the consultations was to be as inclusive as possible.

To determine the needs and wants of the autistic and intellectual disability community, AIDE implemented an innovative and accessible consultation strategy. This included open format surveys, one-on-one interviews and focus groups.

AIDE found there was a need to develop content and resources that included indigenous communities, mental health, access to safe and affordable housing, aging, siblings, teens in transition to adulthood, human rights, remote and rural communities, and women and girls.

To reach out to these underserved audiences, AIDE committed to create and deliver more than 100 new meaningful resources by 2022 including toolkits, webinars, books, research summaries and courses. These have received over 10,000 distinct views.

The most requested resource was information on the education of healthcare professionals about ableism and tools to foster more positive experiences while accessing health care. So far, six new resources with a focus on health care have been put into development, including projects with Autism Ontario.

Navigating aidecanada.ca

The AIDE website features an accessible and user-friendly interface to deliver content in both English and French. The website is broken into four major areas:

Borrow - *AIDE's Library Collection:* AIDE Canada hosts the largest library of autism and intellectual disability resources in Canada. The collection includes audiobooks, books, book sets, CD-ROMs, DVDs, educational games and eBooks. Anyone who currently lives in Canada has free access to all materials within the library. There is free shipping of library materials for people living in rural and remote communities in Canada. Our collection contains 260 resources by autistic creators and now features over 3,200 items available to borrow.

Learn - *Research Summaries, Articles, Toolkits, Videos and Courses:* Users can search our content by description or keywords or can select from a drop-down list by topic, need, journey stages or article type. They can create a free AIDE Canada Community Member Account profile and receive suggestions on resources based on the information that has been input on your profile. Users can also freely access the resources without a creating a profile.

Locate - *Regional Asset Maps:* Over 3,700 programs and services are listed on our asset maps, which allow users to find programs and services related to autism and intellectual disabilities in their region. Asset maps direct users to program pages belonging to external organizations. This allows users to quickly access the specific information and registration pages on the programs they are looking for. The locate function allows users to find services and programs by topic, life stage journey, service type, language—and most importantly—location.

Connect - *Chat Support, Peer Advice Videos, and Events:* The Live Chat is monitored 8am – 8pm (Eastern time) during the week and helps individuals with accessing the tools and resources within the website. This feature aims to make the AIDE site as barrier-free as possible.

AIDE's Peer Advice videos, developed by Voices of Autism and Autism BC, cover various topics on social skills, diagnosis disclosure, employment, daily living skills and much more and have received over 3,000 views. By the end of the year, Autism Ontario will expand this series with an additional 40 videos, with a focus on self-advocates with intellectual disabilities and various communication styles, as well as their caregivers and siblings.

Allison Jaeger

The AIDE website hosts a number of upcoming free-of-charge events, including webinars. Users can register for these events through the website.

The AIDE Canada website is a free-to-use platform that meets the needs of Canada's neurodiverse community. As the needs of the autistic and intellectual disabilities communities continue to grow and evolve, the AIDE online portal will continue to grow and evolve to meet those needs.

References:

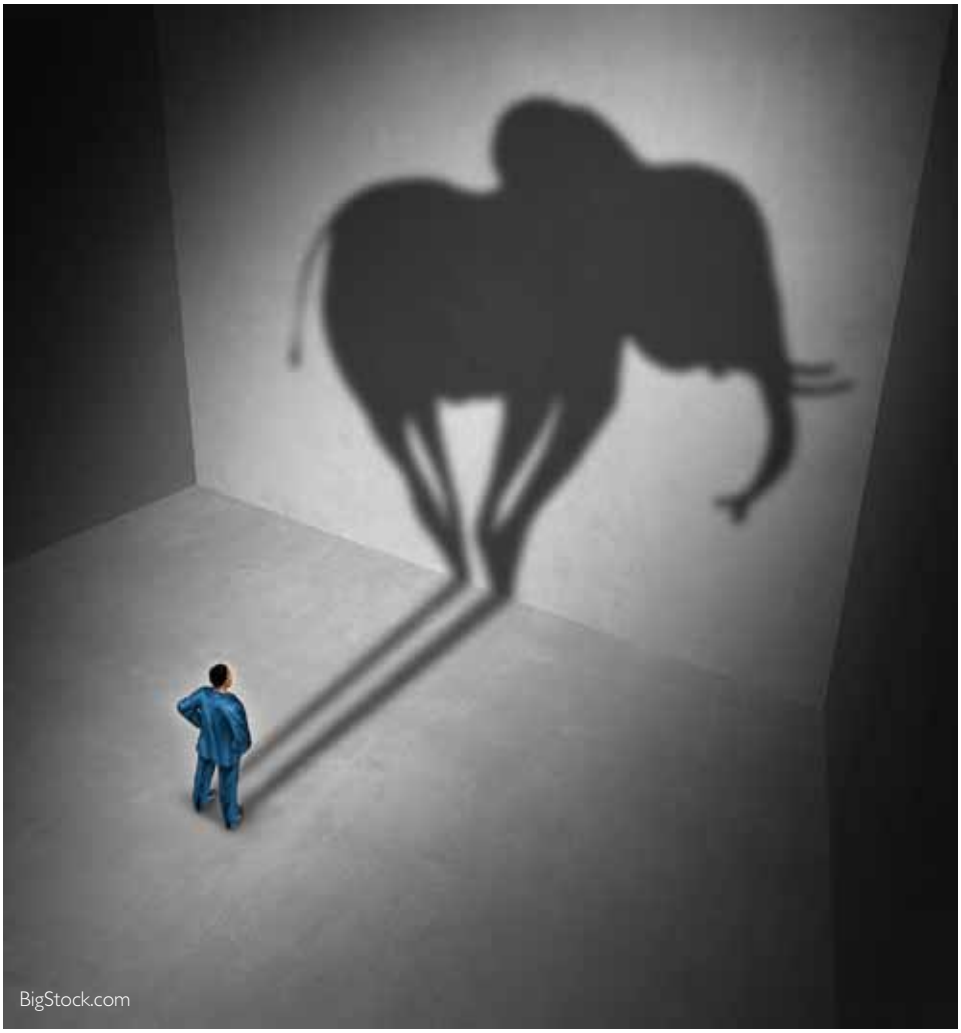
Aidecanada.ca

AIDE Canada. (n.d.). *2021-22 Year in Review* (v5).

Ableism

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

by Michael Cnudde, Managing Editor, *Autism Matters*



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For many autistic people, their families, caregivers and allies, ableism is the elephant in the room. Most of us have experienced it to one degree or another. We know what it feels like. Yet what is it? What's more, how do you fight it?

WHEN ASKED THE QUESTION, most of us will reply that ableism is discrimination against the disabled. Ableism is discrimination, whether visible or invisible, intentional or not, against people with disabilities. Any practice that sets one group aside and lessens its rights while holding others to be superior is wrong. Yet, some people have referred to ableism as one of the last socially acceptable forms of discrimination. Legally, ableism is defined as a belief system similar to racism that sees persons with disabilities as being "less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or of less inherent value than others."[1]

As a form of discrimination, ableism may appear differently in a variety of contexts. It may be the bullying that an autistic individual endures at school. It may be an ill-informed comment by a well-meaning person, something written by an internet troll, or the mechanics deeply entrenched in a company's hiring decisions. It may be one of these or a dozen others.

According to lawyer Brendon Pooran of Pooran Law in Toronto, the experience of ableism can happen every day and sometimes occurs much closer to home than we care to think about. "People may face barriers within their own circles," he says. Pooran says trusted family members and friends may be trying to act in a person's best interests but are not necessarily thinking about what the individual wants and not providing them with the opportunity to make their own choices. "I think that's quite prevalent."

Pooran says that much of ableism is also structural, as part of the very support system that is in place for people with disabilities. "When you look at, for example, the amount that is paid out through Ontario's social assistance program for people

with disabilities, people cannot sustain any semblance of a quality of life, based on $800 to $1,200 a month. So they're the structural inefficiencies, gaps and barriers that people face."

Structural ableism exists in many places, including the workplace. According to the 2017 study, *Describing Heterogeneity of Unmet Needs Among Adults with a Developmental Disability: An Examination of the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability*, the income of those individuals with a developmental disability such as autism was less than one-third of their neurotypical counterparts.[2] The same study noted that the most reported challenges for those with developmental disabilities such as autism experienced inadequate training and experience, lack of appropriate jobs, lack of accommodation, discrimination, and fear of losing support. Of the respondents, 22.4 percent of autistic adults believed their employer considered them disadvantaged in the workplace, and one in five reported being refused a job, interview or promotion because of autism.[3]

For many of the self-advocates who shared their stories for this article, ableism is something they know well. For Christian Malatesta, it was something as basic as being excluded from playground activities by classmates. "When I was growing up, I was excluded from many events on the playground, simply because I was slow to understand, and I was considered 'rude' because I was slow to comprehend certain things due to my autism." It wasn't until he was a little older, at age seven, that he was told about his autism, an experience he likens to a "bombshell."

Part of the issue with ableism, says Pooran, is the presumption that people with disabilities need to be taken care of. Although that belief can come from a good place, he says, the rights of people with disabilities to make their own decisions can often be overlooked. "What I often find when we talk about disability," he said, "is that the legally recognized presumption of capacity is reversed, so there's a presumption of incapacity. And that now becomes the starting point."

> Part of the issue with ableism... is the presumption that people with disabilities need to be taken care of.

Perhaps it is the sting of the best intentions that is most disturbing. Self-advocate Nicole Corrado says that, like many autistic women, she has learned to mask her autism to the point that she does not bring it up in conversation. However, during a conversation with another person who mentioned that their family member was on the autism spectrum, Nicole mentioned that she was autistic. "The person was surprised and said, 'Really? But you look normal.'" Nicole says, "I understand this may have been intended as a compliment, but it underestimated my autism and reflected a stereotyped view of what autism 'looks like.' Autism is not always visible, and I wish people would realize that autism is a spectrum, and even 'normal-looking' people sometimes need support."

Although she had not experienced any outright forms of ableism, self-advocate Julie Green, like Nicole, had become quite proficient at masking, primarily because of her diagnosis later in life. Yet, before her diagnosis, she did not understand or manage her triggers, which led to severe migraine attacks. "Most of my employers were understanding," she says. "One, however, accused me of faking and lying about being ill. So I quit on the spot. It's been much easier since I have worked from home and can set my own schedule and accommodations. My partner is very supportive; we have a great balance according to each other's abilities and needs..."

For self-advocate Courtney Weaver, her experience with ableism came with an awkward pause in a conversation with colleagues at her office that revealed a wealth of ignorance. She was talking with an individual to whom she had previously disclosed her diagnosis when that person asked, "How did you get over your problem?" Courtney recalls the difficult decision she made as she wrestled with her anger. Another colleague in the conversation noticed her discomfort and mentioned it. She replied she was not so much uncomfortable as angry. "The colleague who had initially asked me the question blinked their eyes in

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surprise, wondering what I had been angry about," said Courtney. "I said, 'I was angry at your question where you had called my autism diagnosis a problem. Everyone else that I live and work with and I, have seen my autism as something to work with, not my problem.' The colleague was so distressed at this and came over to hug me. I accepted the hug."

How we respond to an encounter with ableism is up to us when it happens. "It's all about the context in which the person is experiencing it," says Pooran. "What is happening to a person experiencing discrimination against them may be different from person to person. For example," he says, "it may occur in a housing or education context rather than an individual's own immediate support circle."

If an individual experiences ableism involving housing or employment, Pooran says the individual could look for ways to help them address the barriers they're facing. This could involve speaking with someone in their personal network, retaining a lawyer, or calling the Human Rights Legal Support Centre.[4]

"I think when it comes to issues that are more personal in nature... if they're experiencing ableism within the context of their own family," Pooran says, "it becomes a lot more difficult to find that external support." He says it may require some work to engage a lawyer, and the person may require support to understand their rights. "It becomes a lot more difficult."

Christian Malatesta remains hopeful. "As I grew up, I began to accept my autism. I hope no one else has to endure ableism in any form whatsoever."

This article is for information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For more information, please consult with a lawyer.

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3 Zwicker, et al.
4 The Human Rights Legal Support Centre provides legal advice and assistance to individuals who have experienced discrimination in communities across Ontario. https://www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/home

Autism *does* matter

Parents, make sure that your child's school is an inclusive place for children on the autism spectrum.

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For more information, visit **www.autismontario.com/membership.**

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Autism and Mental Health

PSYCHIATRIC CONDITIONS HOSPITALIZE ALMOST ONE IN FOUR AUTISTIC WOMEN BY AGE 25

by Nikko McCarthy, Guest Writer

MediaBakery.com

Reprinted with permission. The article first appeared in the May 17, 2022, online edition of *Spectrum, Autism Research News*. https://www.spectrumnews.org/news/psychiatric-conditions-hospitalize-almost-one-in-four-autistic-women-by-age-25/

MORE THAN 22 PERCENT of autistic women are hospitalized for a psychiatric condition by age 25, a fraction five times higher than for women without autism and nearly twice that of autistic men.

"That is quite a shocking number," says Miriam Martini, a graduate student in medical epidemiology and biostatistics who works in Mark Taylor's group at the Karolinska Institute in Solna, Sweden.

Martini presented the findings on May 13, 2022 a the International Society for Autism Research (INSAR) annual meeting.

A 2021 study, which used a Danish health registry, analyzed data on co-occurring conditions for about 16,000 autistic people up to age 16. The new study appears to be the first national registry-based effort to do the same for women up to age 25, thus capturing a critical time point in young adulthood, when many mental health disorders are first diagnosed.

Data for the study came from about 1.3 million people born in Sweden between 1985 and 1997, nearly 21,000 of whom have autism and about 7,100 of whom are women. The researchers pooled together multiple databases—including the Medical Birth Register, National Patient Register and Prescribed Drug Register—to track 13 different psychiatric diagnoses, from anxiety and depression to sleep disorders and self-harm.

By age 25, more than 60 percent of autistic women and about 45 percent of autistic men had been diagnosed with a psychiatric condition, according to Martini. Among non-autistic women and men, these values fall to about 14 percent and nine percent, respectively.

After controlling for birth year and co-occurring attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder or intellectual disability, autistic men and women were still significantly more likely than non-autistic people to be hospitalized for any psychiatric condition.

"Now we know that psychiatric hospitalization is much more common among autistic individuals, and especially among autistic women," Martini says. "So it would be nice to identify what are the precursors for this. How did they get to this stage?"

The findings are dire; they suggest a critical need for expanded mental health services, Martini says, especially for women with autism. ■

Evidence informed

SPECTRUM

Understanding and Exploring Our Senses

TESTING THE WATERS

Photos.com

by Bethany Brewin, Occupational Therapist, Training and Education Team, Autism Ontario

Evidence informed

Bethany Brewin is an experienced occupational therapist living in Simcoe County. She attended the University of Toronto for her Master of Science in Occupational Therapy. She has worked with children, youth and families across Canada, as well as providing consultation services to childcare settings, schools and community organizations. Bethany has presented on a variety of topics over the years, from fine motor skills to healthy eating. She was a panelist at a recent symposium on the impact of screen time on early childhood development. She is particularly passionate about connecting with the world around us through mindfulness: engaging our senses to connect with our surroundings. Bethany is a part of Autism Ontario's Subject Matter Expert team.

IMAGINE YOURSELF ON A DESERTED BEACH. *Try to imagine things you might see: the water, sand, boats, trees; what you might hear: the waves lapping gently on the shore, birds calling in the sky, the wind softly blowing through the trees; what you might smell: the water, a fishy smell; what you might feel on your skin: the sand between your toes, the breeze on your face; and what you might feel in your body: are you sitting down? Standing up? Lying down? Thinking of all of these different sensory experiences, how might you be feeling (emotionally)? Calm? Relaxed? Bored? Sleepy? Or is the sand feeling sticky? Itchy? Are you too hot? Is the sun too bright? The birds too loud? How might you behave? Will you stay sitting quietly on the sand, or take a nap? Will you go for a walk or a swim? Will you try to find a way to leave this beach?*

For some of us, it might be difficult to imagine a situation like this if we have never been to a beach before. For some of us, this imagination exercise might have been a relaxing break in our day. For others, this may have felt stressful or overwhelming. Regardless of how you are feeling, hopefully this little exercise has gotten you thinking about sensory experiences and information, and how things that are going on in the environment might be affecting how we are feeling, and as a result, how we are behaving.

It also reminds us that different people have different sensory needs. Some people may find a quiet environment relaxing, while others might feel bored, restless or sleepy. Some people may find a busy environment exciting, while others might feel overwhelmed. And what feels like a quiet environment for some, may feel busy to another. Paying attention to our environment, our senses, our feelings and behaviours can help to set us up for success in our day-to-day interactions with others and the world around us.

You may have already found strategies that work for you, to help you stay calm and regulated even when the environment is not ideal for your sensory needs. You may be able to stay attuned to your environment and adjust as needed to stay focused and regulated. Understanding how our bodies take in and interpret sensory information, as well as how our bodies respond to this information, may give us insight into why we may react the way we do in certain situations. Understanding our sensory

Bethany Brewin

needs also allows us to make changes to the environment, or to make use of tools and strategies to help cope with sensory information that may cause distress.

We receive and perceive sensory input through our common five senses: visual—sights; olfactory—smells; gustatory—taste; auditory—sounds; and, tactile—touch. We also have important senses related to movement and body position: vestibular—movement and balance and proprioception—body position and muscle control (i.e. awareness of joints). Finally, interoception is our perception of sensations from inside the body and includes physical sensations such as heartbeat, breathing, sense of fullness (satiety), as well as how our nervous system activity reacts to and expresses our emotions.

As children develop through infancy and childhood, neural pathways and patterns are being created and solidified to take in information from the outside world). These connections in the brain then allow us to understand, interpret and respond to this sensory information: sensory integration. Integrating sensory information is key at every stage of development. The senses contribute to learning through sight, smell, touch, taste, sound, body awareness and gravitational awareness.

Sensory integration involves information coming in through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, muscles, joints and skin: INPUT. This information is then sent through nerves in our body to our brain, where it is interpreted: PROCESSING. Finally, the brain responds to this information with an action, and a behaviour is observed: OUTPUT. The senses are constantly interacting with the environment to understand: "Where am I? What am I doing? What do I want? How will I react?"

Sometimes, sensory information is received through the senses, but processed through the brain in an atypical way. Differences in sensory processing can form a continuum from hyper (over) responsivity to hypo (under) responsivity. For example, someone who is hyper (over) responsive to sensory information may react to only a small amount of sensory information, such as hating the sound of people chewing or complaining about tags in clothing. Likewise, someone who is hypo (under) responsive may crave spinning or crashing movements or may chew on clothing or objects.

Returning to our mindfulness exercise from the beginning of this article, can you now tune in to the sensory environment around you as you read these words? What are some of the sights, sounds, smells, tastes you experience? Can you tune in to feelings in your body? Are you using strategies to keep yourself focused and attentive: drinking water, coffee, chewing gum, eating a snack, fidgeting with a pen, playing with

Try It Yourself

Getting outside and exploring the environment using all of our senses is a great way to take a break from online learning, work or screen time. You can create your own "sensory scavenger hunt" using these ideas as inspiration:

1. **Sight:** Create a "spot it" or "I Spy" game to find local plants, animals and objects. Pay attention to colours and shapes.
2. **Sound:** Close your eyes and listen. What sounds can you recognize? Birds? The wind? Water? Cars/traffic? Animals (squirrels chattering, dogs barking)? Try to imitate a sound with your voice. Can you chirp like a bird? Blow like the wind?
3. **Touch:** Collect (safely) items in the forest, at the beach, at a park, in your neighbourhood. Can you find something soft? Something hard? Something rough? Something bumpy?
4. **Smell/taste:** Sample fresh local fruits or vegetables—can you guess how they will taste by smelling, then try touching with your fingers, your lips, your tongue, your teeth. Did anything surprise you?
5. **Movement: Experiment** (safely) with movement at a park or playground. Can you move quickly? Super slowly? Can you find a way to be upside down? Can you spin, roll or twirl? Can you bounce or jump?

Can you relate to any of the following sensory concerns?

- I hate having my hair washed, brushed or cut
- I cry and shield my eyes from the sun and other bright lights
- I am a picky eater
- I dislike the feeling of certain clothing
- I seem to be unaware of normal touch or pain; I often touch others too soft or too hard
- I hate being tickled or cuddled
- I am overly sensitive to loud sounds
- I chew on everything
- I have poor fine or gross motor skills
- I find certain movement patterns very comforting (e.g. spinning or bouncing)

your hair. How are you seated? Are you comfortable?

Environmental modifications can make a huge difference in meeting our sensory needs through reducing unwanted or stressful stimuli and increasing opportunities for preferred input. Strategies for helping with sensory issues may involve either reducing the amount of stimuli—for example, noise-cancelling headphones—or offering opportunities to meet sensory needs, such as using a fidget spinner or chewy tube, jumping on a trampoline.

Have you tried any of the following sensory tools or strategies?

- noise-cancelling headphones, ear buds
- "cozy corner" (bed tent, book corner, egg chair)
- fidget tools
- chewy tubes
- move and sit cushion; ball chair; standing desk; bouncy band
- weighted blanket; weighted animal; weighted vest; pressure vest

Resources

There is an informative series of webinars about sensory strategies available to watch:

Exploring the Senses Part 1: An introduction to the sensory system
https://www.autismontario.com/node/876

Exploring the Senses Part 2: The Sensory Detective—Understanding Special Sensory Needs
https://www.autismontario.com/node/877

Exploring the Senses Part 3: The Sensory Detective—Understanding Special Sensory Needs
https://www.autismontario.com/node/880

What is Bibliotherapy?

"BOOKS TRAIN YOUR IMAGINATION TO THINK BIG" ~ TAYLOR SWIFT

by Danielle Nolan, Social Worker, Training and Education Team, Autism Ontario

WE ALL KNOW that books are a wonderful way of connecting with your child, encouraging their imagination, and helping to calm them before bed, but books can also have significant therapeutic benefits. Bibliotherapy is an evidence-based therapy technique proven to improve mental health (Rapee et al., 2006). Bibliotherapy normalizes and validates the child's experiences and sends the message that it is okay to talk about the issues identified in a book. It also provides a concrete example of how the character might solve a problem.

It is important to remember that it is not only the act of reading the story that is beneficial, but the discussion. Forgan (2002) wrote at length about how to use bibliotherapy to teach children and he emphasized the importance of the post-reading discussion and a reinforcement activity. In the discussion, children can re-tell the story and explore the character's feelings. Parents can then help the child connect the character's experience with a similar event or feeling that the child has experienced. Then, a reinforcement activity helps the child practice and apply the solutions or ideas from the book.

Case Example: Seven-year-old Sam was recently diagnosed with autism and his pediatrician had noted concerns related to anxiety. Sam was quiet at school and had started to withdraw at home. He struggled with high-level verbal communication skills and his parents were looking for ways to connect. I suggested that they read *Huge Bag of Worries* by Virginia Ironside every night before bed. Over the week, Sam became familiar with the main character, Jenny, and the "bag of worries" that follows her everywhere. His parents talked about the worries every night and pointed out the identified strategies for dealing with them: discussing them with others, normalizing them, giving some to trusted adults, etc. By the time Sam returned to my office he understood Jenny's story and Sam was able to draw a "Huge Bag of Worries" of his own that identified the things he had been worrying about.

My final note to you as a parent or caregiver is to never underestimate the value of your time and attention and closeness. Children with autism benefit from strong attachment relationships with their caregivers in the same way that neurotypical children do (Teague et al., 2017). Their relationship with you reduces stress, improves coping, and better prepares them to go out in the world. The time spent physically close together, sharing in a joint activity, like reading a book, is invaluable in building that relationship.

Danielle Nolan

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Danielle is the Social Worker on Autism Ontario's newly formed, Subject Matter Expert team. She lives in the East Region and has a particular interest in supporting rural populations. She completed her Master of Social Work designation at the University of Toronto where she gained practicum experience at the Hospital for Sick Children. Over the past seven years, Danielle has worked in child welfare and children's treatment. Most recently, Danielle was the social worker in an Autism Hub. She provided brief and ongoing emotional and instrumental support to autistic children and their families.

Reading List

Children's Books about Autism

- *The Abilities in Me—Autism* by Gemma Keir
- *Do You Want to Play?* by Daniel Sharestrom
- *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures* by Julia Finley Mosca
- *Leah's Voice* by Lori DeMonia
- *All My Stripes* by Shaina Rudolph and Danielle Royer

Children's Books about Mental Health

- *Huge Bag of Worries* by Virginia Ironside
- *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae and Guy Parker-Rees
- *Franklin's Bad Day* by Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark
- *The Colour Monster* by Anna Llenas
- *In My Heart—A Book of Feelings* by Jo Witek

Children's Books about Attachment

- *This Moose Belongs to Me* by Oliver Jeffers
- *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
- *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst

Evidence informed

From BPSG to Sawubona

RE-CREATING THE VILLAGE FOR OUR FAMILIES

by Sherron Grant, Guest Writer and Parent

▲ *Sherron (centre) was recently honoured to receive a Humanitarian Service Medal for the work she has done in supporting Black families caring for a loved one with a disability. The award was presented by Member of Parliament Shaun Chen (right) and Alvin Curing (left), a former Member of Parliament.*

Photo courtesy of Sherron Grant

Sherron Grant is a proud grandmother and advocate, mother to Isaiah who is now 25 and continues to make his family proud as he finds his way in this world towards a meaningful and productive life.

BLACK AND DISABLED. Two adjectives that are not often used simultaneously in a sentence, but a lived reality that must be acknowledged and responded to appropriately. Living with a disability. Caring for a loved one with a disability. Is this experience any different for those who are not of African descent?

Depends on who you talk to. When my husband and I started the Black Parent Support Group (BPSG) in November, 2020, it was in response to our own journey of raising a Black child with Autism in a society where neither of his identities are viewed as the norm or a part of the dominant culture (i.e. Euro-Canadian and able-bodied). I felt alone and became increasingly frustrated after attending workshop after workshop, parent group after parent group, and my husband attending father's group after father's group, to see that we were the only Black face in the space, or one of only a handful of Black faces amidst some limited representation of faces from other racialized communities. Yet, when we took our son to social skills groups, ABA therapy and even within his classroom at school, we saw a virtual United Nations represented. But where were their parents and caregivers? From where are they receiving their help, support, inspiration and fuel to continue on this challenging and seemingly never-ending struggle?

When I attended the parent groups, notwithstanding the fact that the participants were friendly and the speakers generally knowledgeable, neither of them spoke to me and my experience as a Black caregiver. These experiences include the different needs that I have in navigating a school system as a Black mother considering the often-times hostile school environment Black children and their parents have to navigate; the challenge in receiving a diagnosis in the first place to avoid my child's behaviour not merely being pathologized as malicious or the fault of bad and neglectful parenting; or the struggle of my child's invisible disability being accepted by my family and community in a culture where issues of disability or mental health are not openly talked about nor accepted.

When I attempted to raise my concerns, I often felt either brushed off or left unfulfilled. These feelings manifested typically due to the group's speaker often appearing uncomfortable to address my specific needs as a Black mother, which clearly differed from their own, much less the other predominately White participants whose experiences, collectively, differed from mine and other Black—and I presume racialized—parents alike. Their responses were sensible considering they will never intrinsically understand the experience of Black people of African descent.

This is the reason why BPSG was formed. And these are the issues that many parent and caregiver members have raised at our bi-weekly meetings. The irony of creating this group is that, despite the clear need for and absence of these types of culturally specific groups for Black people, those of us who take on this responsibility are sometimes met with resistance and at other times, confusion as to the justification

for such a group. For instance, I was once asked in a radio interview why there is a need for a separate group considering the apparent plethora of parent support groups for children with disabilities already in place. Hopefully my aforementioned points about my experience lays this confusion to rest.

The group has been meeting for almost two years now and membership continues to grow with members coming from coast to coast, the United States, the Caribbean, and even countries in Africa. Friends tell friends. Educators, healthcare professionals and agencies are sharing with other families and they are reaching out to us. To be clear, engagement in our group certainly does not suggest stopping participation in other agencies and programs. Instead, our groups complement the pre-existing groups but add an Africentric lens to suit the cultural needs, ideologies and values of our Black members of African descent.

We have since changed our name to something that we believe will encompass our growing reach and impact—Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support. Why the name change? *Sawubona* is a Zulu greeting. It means *I/we see you*. It is not just referring to the physical "seeing" of a person, but seeing them for all that they are, their value and worth to community. Those of us raising or caring for a loved one with autism or any other disability can understand the feeling of invisibility that our loved one(s) experiences on a daily basis. When you add on the additional barrier of race, socio-economic status, that invisibility feels magnified and is felt not just by the individual but the entire family. Sawubona hopes to respond by ensuring that Black families feel not only seen but heard, valued, included and inspired. As we support caregivers and work with community, this can only mean improved outcomes for the loved ones we care for and for ourselves—the resilience and camaraderie we need to continue strong and "stay in the battle" as I like to say. ■

My Start to Becoming an Advocate

SEEING THE POTENTIAL

by Courtney Weaver, Self-Advocate

IT WAS IN MY FIRST YEAR at Queen's University as an undergraduate student that I realized I enjoyed and was interested in speaking on disability issues. Heidi Penning, the Equity Advisor and my then Teaching Assistant Stephanie Cork encouraged me to do a speech during Disability Awareness Month (March) at Stauffer Library.

I ended up giving a speech on various learning methods that Dr. Temple Grandin had mentioned in her book, *The Way I See It*. I had a great time doing it and from there on out, I would do at least one speech during Disability Awareness Month for all of my years as an undergraduate student, on subjects such as the *Temple Grandin* HBO film or on written pieces I'd done.

Graduate school at York University in the Critical Disability Studies program was also an incredible educational experience for learning about and examining the idea of disability as well as disability issues in-depth. Since then, I have written multiple pieces and done many speaking engagements on autism and disability.

I am extremely thankful to Stephanie and Heidi for having seen the potential in me as a speaker and advocate and for helping me to realize that it is a passion of mine. Finally, I am also proud of myself for being the engaged individual that I am. ■

▼ *Courtney Weaver*

Photo courtesy Courtney Weaver

Autism Ontario's Butterfly Kits

SYMBOLIZING HOPE, GROWTH AND RESILIENCE

by Allen Steinberg, Guest Writer

▼ *Top: Wyatt observes his butterflies hatching. According to Mandy, Wyatt enjoys watching the process of metamorphosis while Harvick prefers watching the butterflies fly into the wild when they release them.*
Bottom: Harvick, Truex, Mandy and Wyatt camping together in summer 2019.
Photo Credit: Mandy Roach

WHEN MANDY ROACH'S two sons were diagnosed with autism, she was puzzled.

As other caregivers can attest, the future becomes unclear after discovering your child has autism. Mandy and her husband, Craig Swerdfeger, initially didn't know where to find resources in her small community of Ingleside, Ontario, and longed to find families in a similar situation to her own.

"I thought to myself, *What do I do now?* I finally came across Autism Ontario and they had lots of great information, events and a network of parents with kids also on the spectrum," says Mandy. "I found a sense of family with them."

And family means everything to Mandy. She lovingly calls her boys Wyatt, 9 and Harvick, 7, a "handful," but they inspire her daily. Their diagnoses led Mandy to familiarize herself better with autism and learn the reasons for her boys' exceptionalities. She became well-acquainted with Autism Ontario, even taking on the role of President of Autism Ontario's Upper Canada Chapter. There's never a dull moment in the Roach-Swerdfeger household, but they learned to embrace the storm instead of trying to weather it. In the following years, the family proved they were ready for their next adventure: Another baby.

In 2018, the family welcomed their third baby boy, Truex. But after just 20 months, he tragically passed away. The family was devastated, and their children were confused.

"They had a hard time understanding what had happened originally. We all did. Truex seemed very bright, very active and very typical. He followed the other two everywhere. Wyatt and Harvick play extremely rough, but they were always so gentle with Truex," says Mandy.

The shocking gentleness that Truex ignited in his older brothers stuck around long after he passed on. After their loss, Mandy tells a story of Wyatt delicately handling butterflies; a sense of care she had only ever seen him show to Truex:

"We went to the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa after we lost Truex, and they had a live exhibition of butterflies. One followed us around and stayed on Wyatt until we had to leave. I had to move it off of him physically, so butterflies have a special meaning for us."

From that point forward, the family saw butterflies as a symbol for Truex. So of course, they did everything they could to welcome them into their yard. "After everything had happened, I had built a couple of garden boxes in the backyard, specifically designed to attract butterflies. We saw it as a memorial for our youngest. Our boys were so excited to be a part of it," says Mandy.

Truex would continue to perform more little miracles for his family. Coincidentally, shortly after associating their youngest with butterflies, Autism

Ontario began offering Butterfly Kits, easy take-home kits where children can watch the beautiful metamorphosis of caterpillars. They were an instant hit in their household and became a tranquil pastime for the Roach-Swerdfegers.

"We registered right away when Autism Ontario started offering the kits. Wyatt and Harvick are so gentle with the butterflies. They delicately place twigs in the kit for them. It's beautiful watching them get excited to release the butterflies into the wild… My kids constantly fight each other. I have never seen them handle something so precious," says Mandy.

These kits serve as a distraction from a tragic time for the family and a reminder of Truex's presence and the joy he brought during their time together. "I found that not only does it help distract the boys, but it also helps distract me a little bit. It feels good to create some life," she says.

For her two autistic kids, Mandy says seeing a butterfly leave their chrysalis with damaged wings was a confusing ordeal.

"Some butterflies hatched with crumpled wings, and Wyatt needed to know what was wrong with them. I researched it, and there are certain ones that come out with an infection that grows on them when they're in the chrysalis. Even though their chances of surviving in the wild are slimmer, Wyatt insisted we still release them. I was trying not to bawl my eyes out."

Wyatt and Harvick, too, have exceptionalities that challenge how they operate in their daily lives. Make no mistake, for their parents and others around them, watching them grow is no less of a beautiful experience.

As the Roach-Swerdfeger family carries on, they focus on methods of healing. They've recently converted their property into an animal-assisted therapy space called Wytrueharvatt farm, offering bunnies, chickens, roosters, ducks, a cat and two dogs to those who could benefit from their company. Visit wytrueharvattfarm.ca for more details.

Autism Matters Magazine Readership Survey

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! Autism Ontario is gathering important readership information about our quarterly magazine, *Autism Matters*. Your responses will be kept anonymous and will help us to plan and develop content that matters to you. Visit bit.ly/3NvcR9f to take the survey.

Sondage auprès du lectorat d'*Autism Matters*

NOUS VOULONS CONNAÎTRE VOTRE OPINION! Autisme Ontario souhaite recueillir des renseignements importants auprès des lecteurs et lectrices de son magazine trimestriel *Autism Matters*. Vos réponses demeureront anonymes et nous aideront à planifier et à élaborer un contenu qui saura vous intéresser. Visitez bit.ly/3ub8vgD pour répondre au sondage.

Autism Ontario Members:
SAVE THE DATE
Annual General Meeting
September 24, 2022 at 9:00am
Autism ONTARIO

Membres d'Autisme Ontario :
RÉSERVEZ LA DATE
Assemblée générale annuelle
Le 24 septembre 2022, à 9 h 00
Autism ONTARIO

INFO Autisme

Trouver de l'aide selon vos conditions

PRÉSENTATION DU SITE WEB D'AIDE CANADA

par Allison Jaeger, spécialiste des webinaires et coordonnatrice des partenariats communautaires, Autisme Ontario, et coordonnatrice du centre de l'Ontario pour AIDE Canada

Le Réseau d'échange de connaissances sur l'autisme et la déficience intellectuelle (AIDE Canada) est une initiative nationale visant à présenter aux membres de la communauté neurodiverse des informations et des ressources dont ils ont besoin. Le site Web d'AIDE (https://aidecanada.ca/fr/) est un outil qui permet aux utilisateurs d'accéder aux informations et aux ressources qu'ils recherchent. Il est conçu pour présenter du contenu crédible, fiable et éclairé par des données probantes, de manière impartiale et accessible.

SELON LE RAPPORT DE L'ANNÉE 2021-22 d'AIDE Canada, 92 percent des utilisateurs interrogés ont déclaré avoir amélioré leurs connaissances sur les déficiences intellectuelles et l'autisme après avoir consulté le site Web d'AIDE Canada. En 2021, près de 70 000 Canadiens ont accédé au site Web, pour un total de 203 500 visites sur la page.

L'initiative AIDE Canada représente une source d'information fiable pour les auto-représentants, les parents, les familles, les aidants et les fournisseurs de services dans les communautés de l'autisme et des déficiences intellectuelles. Elle a été créée par la Fondation Miriam, à Montréal, et le Pacific Autism Family Network, à Vancouver, et est financée par l'Agence de la santé publique du Canada. AIDE Canada comprend six centres régionaux, situés notamment en Colombie-Britannique, dans les Prairies, au Yukon, au Québec, dans les Maritimes et en Ontario. Ces centres sont en partenariat avec 16 autres organisations au Canada.

Ensemble, ils tirent parti des ressources existantes, établissent de nouveaux partenariats et renforcent les capacités de la communauté.

Autisme Ontario dirige le centre de l'Ontario d'AIDE. Nous nous sommes associés à l'hôpital Holland Bloorview, à Reena, à Enfants Avenir Ontario, au SAAAC (South Asian Autism Awareness Centre) et à PooranLaw. En 2021, le centre de l'Ontario a organisé six webinaires et élaboré du contenu consulté par près de 1 000 participants différents.

aide canada

Un engagement envers le contenu de la communauté en ligne :

En ligne, AIDE s'engage à comprendre les besoins des divers membres de sa communauté et leurs préférences individuelles.

Entre 2019 et 2021, AIDE Canada a consulté les communautés, les chercheurs principaux et les parties prenantes afin d'identifier les lacunes dans les ressources actuellement offertes pour mettre en œuvre un plan de développement de contenu en ligne. Étant donné que les opinions sur les lacunes en matière de ressources peuvent différer entre les chercheurs, les familles et les auto-représentants, l'un des objectifs des consultations était d'être aussi inclusif que possible.

Pour déterminer les besoins et les souhaits de la communauté de l'autisme et des déficiences intellectuelles, AIDE a mis en place une stratégie de consultation innovante et accessible. Il s'agissait notamment de sondages en format ouvert, de rencontres individuelles et de groupes de discussion.

AIDE Canada a constaté qu'il était nécessaire de développer du contenu et des ressources qui tiennent compte des communautés autochtones, de la santé mentale, de l'accès à un logement sûr et abordable, du vieillissement, des frères et des sœurs, des adolescents en transition vers l'âge adulte, des droits de l'homme, des communautés éloignées et rurales, et des femmes et des filles.

Pour toucher ces groupes mal desservis, AIDE s'est engagée à créer et à transmettre plus de 100 nouvelles ressources utiles d'ici 2022, notamment des trousses, des webinaires, des livres, des résumés de recherche et des cours. Ces dernières ont été consultées plus de 10 000 fois.

La ressource la plus demandée était des informations sur l'éducation des professionnels de la santé au sujet de l'handicapisme (aussi appelé le capacitisme et validisme) et des outils pour favoriser des expériences plus positives lors de l'accès aux soins de santé. Jusqu'à présent, six nouvelles ressources axées sur les soins de santé ont été développées, comprenant entre autres des projets avec Autisme Ontario.

Naviguer sur aidecanada.ca

Le site Web d'AIDE est doté d'une interface accessible et conviviale qui permet de présenter du contenu en anglais et en français à ses utilisateurs. Il est divisé en quatre grandes sections :

Emprunter - *Bibliothèque d'AIDE Canada :* AIDE Canada possède la plus grande bibliothèque de ressources sur l'autisme et la déficience intellectuelle au Canada. Sa collection comprend des livres audio, des livres, des ensembles de livres, des CD-ROM, des DVD, des jeux éducatifs et des livres électroniques. Toute personne vivant actuellement au Canada a un accès gratuit à tous les documents de la bibliothèque. Les personnes vivant dans des communautés rurales et éloignées du Canada peuvent recevoir les documents de la bibliothèque sans frais de livraison. Notre collection contient 260 ressources développées par des créateurs autistes et compte désormais plus de 3 200 articles disponibles à l'emprunt.

Apprendre - *Résumés des recherches, articles, boîtes à outils, vidéos et cours :* Les utilisateurs peuvent rechercher notre contenu par description ou par mots clés, ou le sélectionner dans une liste déroulante par sujet ou besoin, étape du parcours ou type d'article. Ils peuvent créer gratuitement un profil de membre de la communauté d'AIDE Canada et recevoir des suggestions de ressources en fonction des informations saisies dans leur profil. Les utilisateurs peuvent également accéder librement aux ressources sans créer de profil.

Situer - *Cartes des atouts régionaux :* Plus de 3 700 programmes et services sont répertoriés sur nos cartes d'atouts, qui permettent aux utilisateurs de trouver les programmes et services liés à l'autisme et aux déficiences intellectuelles dans leur région. Les cartes des atouts dirigent les utilisateurs vers des pages de programmes appartenant à des organisations externes. Ils peuvent ainsi accéder rapidement aux informations spécifiques et aux pages d'inscription des programmes qu'ils recherchent. La fonction « Situer » permet aux utilisateurs de rechercher des services et des programmes par sujet, par parcours, par type de service, par langue et, surtout, par lieu.

Allison Jaeger

Clavardez avec nous - *Soutien par clavardage, vidéos de conseils par les pairs et événements :* La fonction de clavardage en temps réel est ouverte de 8 h à 20 h (heure de l'Est) pendant la semaine et aide les personnes à accéder aux outils et ressources du site Web. Cette fonction a pour but de rendre le site d'AIDE aussi facile d'accès que possible.

Les vidéos de conseils par les pairs d'AIDE, créées par Voices of Autism et Autism BC, couvrent divers sujets, notamment les compétences sociales, la divulgation du diagnostic, l'emploi, les aptitudes à la vie quotidienne et bien plus encore, et ont été visionnées plus de 3 000 fois. D'ici la fin de l'année, Autisme Ontario ajoutera 40 autres vidéos à cette série, en mettant l'accent sur les auto-représentants ayant une déficience intellectuelle et différents styles de communication, ainsi que sur les aidants et les frères et sœurs.

Le site Web d'AIDE propose un certain nombre d'événements gratuits à venir, notamment des webinaires. Les utilisateurs peuvent s'y inscrire sur le site Web.

Le site Web d'AIDE Canada est une plateforme gratuite qui répond aux besoins de la communauté neurodiverse du Canada. Le portail en ligne d'AIDE continuera à se développer et à évoluer pour répondre aux besoins changeants et croissants des communautés de l'autisme et des déficiences intellectuelles.

Références :
Aidecanada.ca
AIDE Canada. (s.d.). Rapport de l'année 2021-22 (v5).

Libérez votre créativité avec Autisme Ontario!

Nous faisons appel à vous, aux contributions de la communauté de l'autisme de l'Ontario, pour la section Autisme et créativité de notre site web et pour *Autism Matters* et *Info Autisme.*

Submettez-nous vos créations de tout type : textes écrits, vlogues, oeuvres visuelles, photos, etc.

Nous encourageons tout particulièrement les personnes artistes de tout âge à nous soumettre leur contribution.

Pour obtenir plus d'information, proposer des idées et soumettre vos créations :
submissions@autismontario.com

L'autisme, *c'est* important

Parents, assurez-vous que l'école de votre enfant favorise l'inclusion des enfants qui ont un trouble du spectre de l'autisme.

Autism Matters contient des articles fort intéressants pour les membres du personnel enseignant et pour les parents. Ces articles sont rédigés par des cliniciens ou cliniciennes, des éducateurs ou éducatrices ainsi que des chercheurs ou chercheuses, ou encore par des élèves et des adultes autistes qui acceptent de nous livrer leurs histoires personnelles.

Les membres d'Autisme Ontario reçoivent automatiquement cette revue trimestrielle. Nous invitons les écoles à s'inscrire comme membres professionnels d'Autisme Ontario. Cette inscription leur permettra de recevoir tous les numéros ***d'Autism Matters*** et leur procurera aussi de nombreux autres avantages.

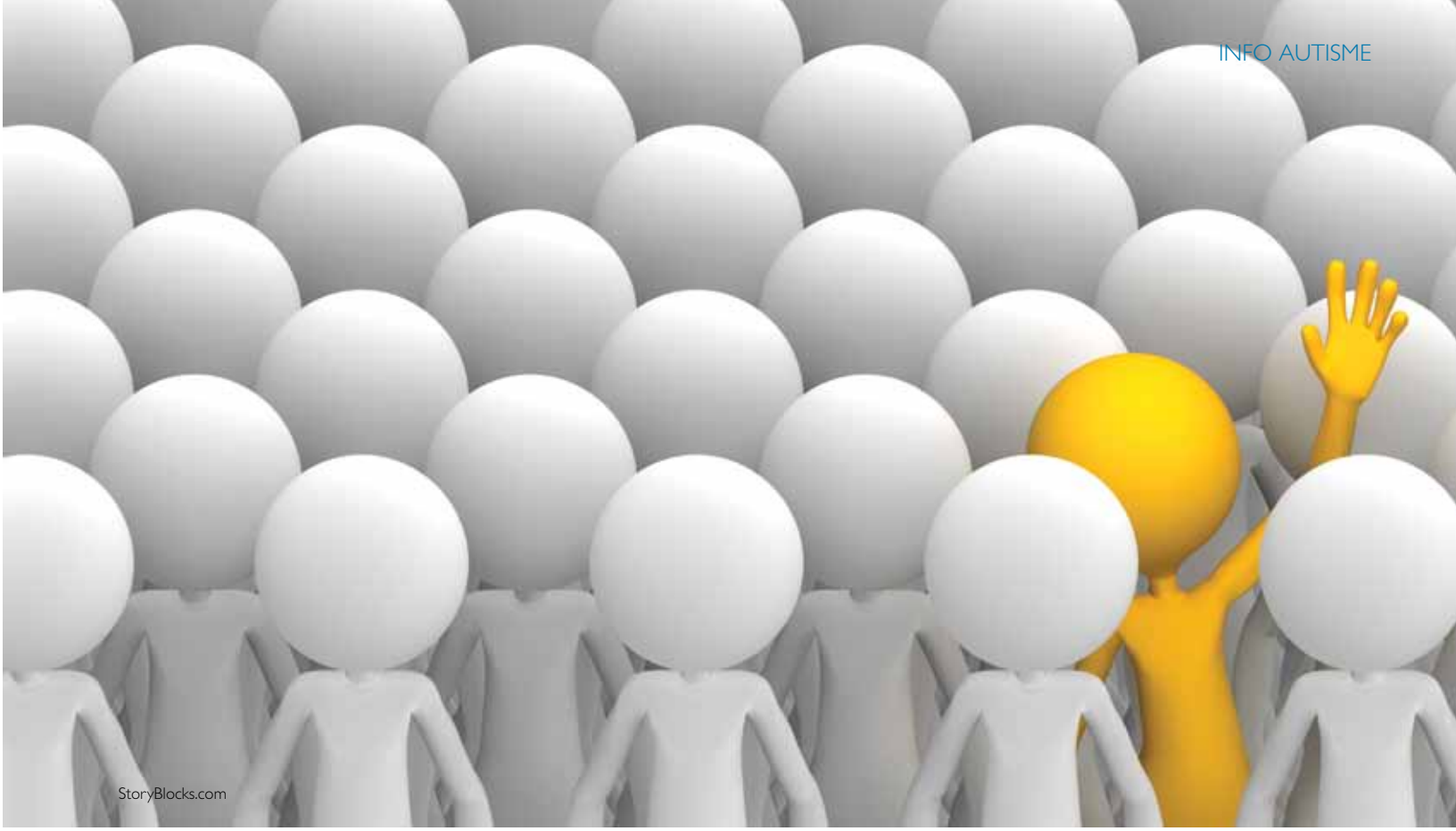
Si l'un de vos enfants fréquente une école de l'Ontario, demandez à la direction ou aux enseignantes et enseignants à l'enfance en difficulté de devenir membre professionnel d'Autisme Ontario et continuer ainsi de travailler à faire de votre école et de votre collectivité un milieu de vie inclusif pour les élèves qui vivent avec un trouble du spectre de l'autisme.

Pour de plus amples renseignements, visitez le site **www.autismontario.com/fr/membership.**

AutismMATTERS est une publication d'Autisme Ontario.

AutismONTARIO
1179, rue King Ouest, bureau 004
Toronto, ON M6K 3C5

Les membres d'Autisme Ontario reçoivent automatiquement cette revue.



L'autisme au Canada

RAPPORT D'ÉVALUATION DE L'ACADÉMIE CANADIENNE DES SCIENCES DE LA SANTÉ

par Crystal Hunter, gestionnaire des communications et du développement des ressources, Autisme Ontario

CE PRINTEMPS, l'Académie canadienne des sciences de la santé (ACSS) a publié son rapport d'évaluation intitulé L'autisme au Canada : Réflexions pour l'élaboration de futures politiques publiques. L'Agence de la santé publique du Canada (ASPC) avait demandé ce rapport pour guider le gouvernement fédéral dans l'élaboration d'une stratégie nationale sur l'autisme visant à mieux venir en aide aux personnes autistes et à leurs familles.

Au cours de ses recherches, l'ACSS a consulté des personnes autistes et leurs familles, ainsi que des fournisseurs de services, des chercheurs et divers organismes. Le rapport aborde plusieurs thèmes (diversité, inclusion sociale, diagnostic et services de soutien, inclusion économique) sous l'angle de l'autisme.

Principales conclusions

Les résultats du rapport mettent l'accent sur les besoins des personnes autistes et de leurs familles, et sur les outils nécessaires pour favoriser leur inclusion dans la société canadienne.

Le rapport souligne l'importance d'offrir aux personnes autistes des services de soutien qui répondent aux besoins supplémentaires résultant de la diversité de la communauté autiste canadienne tout en tenant compte de facteurs comme la langue, l'apprentissage et le logement, entre autres.

Intersectionnalité et diversité

L'autisme se situe à l'intersection d'autres identités comme la race, l'origine ethnique, la culture, le statut socioéconomique, le genre et la sexualité, ce qui créée une diversité d'expériences et de besoins. Les Canadiens autistes font face à des obstacles additionnels et uniques, surtout s'ils vivent dans des régions rurales et éloignées ou s'ils font partie de groupes en quête d'équité.

Pour répondre aux besoins variés résultant de la pluralité de la population autiste au Canada et tirer parti des forces de cette pluralité, il est essentiel de nouer des partenariats avec les populations autochtones et racialisées pour concevoir des approches et des services de soutien inclusifs, adaptés à la culture et localisés qui prennent en compte, reconnaissent et respectent les expériences propres aux Premières Nations, aux Métis et aux Inuits du Canada.

Inclusion sociale

Le rapport d'évaluation fait remarquer que l'inclusion sociale des personnes autistes dans leur communauté est essentielle à leur sentiment d'appartenance, à leur sécurité et à une participation significative. Un accès équitable aux transports publics, aux installations récréatives, aux programmes de loisirs, à la technologie et aux autres ressources et possibilités peut faciliter l'inclusion des personnes autistes et contribuer à leur mieux-être physique et émotionnel, à leur sécurité et à leur qualité de vie.

La lutte contre la stigmatisation et la discrimination au moyen de campagnes publiques d'acceptation et de sensibilisation, ainsi que l'offre de programmes de formation et d'éducation au personnel de sécurité publique et aux prestataires de services de santé mentale, peuvent contribuer à améliorer l'issue des situations de crise.

Diagnostic, soutien et services

Selon le rapport, le fait que de nombreuses personnes ne reçoivent pas un diagnostic d'autisme assez tôt a pour effet de priver bon nombre d'entre elles du soutien nécessaire.

Pour combler les lacunes dans l'équité d'accès aux services de diagnostic et de soutien, les auteurs du rapport proposent l'adoption de modèles de prestation de services centrés sur la famille, l'implantation d'approches efficaces d'intervention précoce et de meilleurs soutiens et services pour les enfants d'âge scolaire, et la mise en œuvre de services et d'aides à la transition vers l'âge adulte et au cours de la vie adulte qui peuvent assurer aux personnes autistes de meilleurs résultats tout au long de leur vie.

Inclusion économique

Plus de la moitié des Canadiens autistes dépendent des prestations d'invalidité. Pour promouvoir la stabilité financière des Canadiens autistes, on pourrait réformer l'accès aux programmes de prestations et de crédits d'impôt, proposer des revenus et/ou des prestations médicales flexibles et encourager une participation à l'emploi grâce à la création de lieux de travail plus inclusif, ce qui contribuerait à stabiliser les résultats d'emploi.

En offrant des voies d'accès appropriées à l'éducation postsecondaire, notamment des programmes spécifiques à l'autisme combinant différents types de soutiens (services de transition, planification de la vie en résidence, mentorat par les pairs et groupes de soutien, tutorat, counselling, coaching en habiletés de la vie courante, etc.), il est possible de mieux répondre à la grande diversité des besoins de la population autiste canadienne. Le rapport signale qu'il existe de tels programmes offerts aux États-Unis, mais qu'il y en a comparativement peu au Canada.

Par ailleurs, l'amélioration de l'offre et de l'adéquation de solutions de logement inclusives pour l'autisme qui tiennent compte des besoins particuliers des personnes autistes dans la conception, l'aménagement, les activités, l'emplacement géographique et, si nécessaire, les besoins en matière de personnel complémentaire et d'accès à d'autres soutiens communautaires, tels que les services de santé mentale, pourrait favoriser l'émergence de communautés et de systèmes d'aide sociale durables et inclusifs qui satisfont mieux à la grande diversité des besoins des Canadiens autistes.

Conclusion

Jusqu'à présent, l'essentiel de la recherche sur l'autisme s'est concentré sur les causes de l'autisme et sa caractérisation dans l'enfance, ce qui jette un important éclairage sur l'autisme tout en négligeant une grande partie des besoins et des priorités auxquels les Canadiens autistes doivent faire face au quotidien.

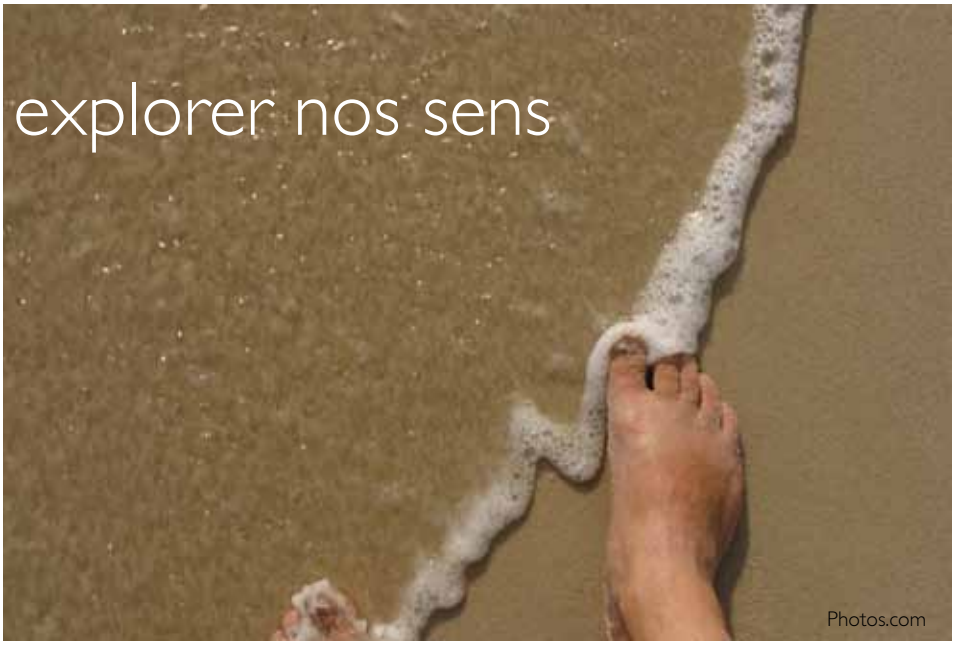
L'acceptation des personnes autistes et leurs familles par la société, leur inclusion et leur soutien profitent à l'ensemble de la population canadienne. Des changements systémiques sont possibles, mais ils nécessiteront une collaboration constante de tous les ordres de gouvernement, en partenariat avec les personnes autistes et leurs familles.

Le rapport *L'autisme au Canada : Réflexions pour l'élaboration de futures politiques publiques* peut être téléchargé à : https://cahs-acss.ca/evaluation-sur-lautisme/?lang=fr.

Pour un complément d'information concernant la Stratégie nationale sur l'autisme : https://www.canada.ca/fr/sante-publique/services/maladies/trouble-spectre-autistique-tsa/strategie-nationale.html

Comprendre et explorer nos sens

TESTER LES EAUX



Éclairé par des preuves

par Bethany Brewin, ergothérapeute, Formation et éducation, Autisme Ontario

IMAGINEZ-VOUS SUR UNE PLAGE DÉSERTE. *Essayez d'imaginer des choses que vous pourriez voir : l'eau, le sable, des bateaux, des arbres; ce que vous pourriez entendre : les vagues qui clapotent doucement sur le rivage, les oiseaux qui crient dans le ciel, le vent qui souffle doucement à travers les arbres; ce que vous pourriez sentir : l'eau, une odeur de poisson; ce que vous pourriez sentir sur votre peau : le sable entre vos orteils, la brise sur votre visage; et ce que vous pourriez sentir dans votre corps : êtes-vous assis? Ou debout? Ou allongé? En pensant à toutes ces expériences sensorielles différentes, comment pourriez-vous vous sentir (émotionnellement)? Calme? Détendu? Ennuyé? Somnolent? Ou le sable est-il collant? Chatouille-t-il? Avez-vous trop chaud? Le soleil est-il trop brillant? Les oiseaux sont-ils trop bruyants? Comment allez-vous vous comporter? Resterez-vous tranquillement assis sur le sable, ou ferez-vous une sieste? Allez-vous vous promener ou vous baigner? Allez-vous essayer de trouver un moyen de quitter cette plage?*

Pour certains d'entre nous qui ne sommes jamais allés à la plage auparavant, il peut être difficile d'imaginer une situation comme celle-ci. Pour certains d'entre nous, cet exercice d'imagination peut représenter une pause-détente dans notre journée. Pour d'autres, il peut être stressant ou accablant. Indépendamment de la façon dont vous vous sentez, j'espère que ce petit exercice vous a fait réfléchir aux expériences et aux informations sensorielles, et à la façon dont les choses qui se passent dans notre environnement pourraient affecter la manière dont nous nous sentons et, par conséquent, la manière dont nous nous comportons.

Cela nous rappelle également que des personnes différentes ont des besoins sensoriels différents : certaines personnes peuvent trouver un environnement calme relaxant, tandis que d'autres peuvent se sentir ennuyées, agitées ou somnolentes. Certaines personnes peuvent trouver un environnement mouvementé excitant, tandis que d'autres pourraient se sentir submergées. Et ce qui ressemble à un environnement calme pour certains peut paraître mouvementé pour d'autres. Prêter attention à notre environnement, à nos sens, à nos sensations et à nos comportements peut nous aider à réussir dans nos interactions quotidiennes avec les autres et le monde qui nous entoure.

Bethany est une ergothérapeute chevronnée qui habite le comté de Simcoe. Après avoir obtenu sa maîtrise en sciences (ergothérapie) à l'Université de Toronto, elle a travaillé auprès d'enfants, d'adolescents et de familles un peu partout au Canada, en plus de fournir des services-conseils à des garderies, des écoles et des organismes communautaires. Au fil des ans, Bethany a présenté des conférences sur divers sujets, allant de la motricité fine à l'alimentation saine; elle a récemment été panéliste à un symposium sur l'impact du temps d'écran sur le développement des jeunes enfants. Elle s'intéresse avec passion à l'importance de s'ancrer dans le monde par la pleine conscience : mobiliser nos sens pour se connecter à notre environnement. Bethany fait partie de l'équipe d' « experts en la matière » d'Autisme Ontario.

Vous avez peut-être déjà trouvé des stratégies qui fonctionnent pour vous, pour vous aider à rester calme et régulé même lorsque l'environnement n'est pas idéal pour vos besoins sensoriels. Vous pourrez peut-être rester à l'écoute de votre environnement et vous adapter, au besoin, pour rester concentré et régulé. Comprendre comment notre corps absorbe et interprète les informations sensorielles ainsi que comment notre corps réagit à ces informations peut nous donner un aperçu des raisons pour lesquelles nous pouvons réagir comme nous le faisons dans certaines situations. Comprendre nos besoins sensoriels nous permet également d'apporter des changements à l'environnement ou d'utiliser des outils et des stratégies pour nous aider à faire face aux informations sensorielles qui peuvent causer de la détresse.

Pouvez-vous vous identifier à l'une des préoccupations sensorielles suivantes?

- Je déteste qu'on me lave, me brosse ou me coupe les cheveux (je pleure, je crie ou je m'enfuis)
- Je pleure et je protège mes yeux du soleil et des autres lumières vives
- Je suis un « mangeur difficile »
- Je n'aime pas la sensation de certains vêtements
- Il semble que je ne sois pas conscient du toucher normal ou de la douleur; je touche souvent les autres trop doucement ou trop fort
- Je déteste être chatouillé ou recevoir des câlins
- Je suis excessivement sensible aux bruits forts
- Je sens les gens, la nourriture et les objets
- Je mordille tout
- J'ai une pauvre motricité fine ou motricité globale
- Je trouve certains types de mouvement très réconfortants (par exemple, tourner ou faire des bonds)

Essayez-le vous-même

Sortir et explorer l'environnement en utilisant tous nos sens est un excellent moyen de faire une pause de l'apprentissage en ligne, du travail ou du temps passé devant un écran. Vous pouvez créer votre propre « chasse au trésor sensorielle » en vous inspirant des idées suivantes :

1. **Vue** : créez un jeu « Trouvez-le » ou « J'espionne » pour trouver des plantes, des animaux et des objets locaux. Prêtez attention aux couleurs et aux formes.
2. **Sons** : fermez les yeux et écoutez… quels sons reconnaissez-vous? Les oiseaux? Le vent? De l'eau? Des voitures ou la circulation? Des animaux (des écureuils qui grognent, des chiens qui aboient)? Essayez d'imiter un son avec votre voix : arrivez-vous à gazouiller comme un oiseau? À souffler comme le vent?
3. **Toucher** : rassemblez (en toute sécurité) des objets dans la forêt, à la plage, dans un parc, dans votre quartier. Pouvez-vous trouver quelque chose de mou? Quelque chose de dur? Quelque chose de rugueux? Quelque chose de bosselé?
4. **Odeur/goût** : dégustez des fruits ou des légumes frais locaux. Pouvez-vous deviner leur goût en les sentant? Essayez ensuite de les toucher avec vos doigts, vos lèvres, votre langue, vos dents. Quelque chose vous a-t-il surpris?
5. **Mouvements** : expérimentez (en toute sécurité) des mouvements dans un parc ou à un terrain de jeu. Pouvez-vous vous déplacer rapidement? Hyper lentement? Pouvez-vous trouver un moyen pour vous retrouver en position tête en bas? Pouvez-vous tourner, rouler ou virevolter? Pouvez-vous faire des bonds ou sauter?

Nous recevons et percevons les signaux sensoriels par le biais de nos cinq sens ommuns : vision (vue), olfactif (odorat), gustatif (goût), auditif (ouïe) et tactile (toucher). Nous possédons également des sens importants liés au mouvement et à la position du corps : vestibulaire (mouvement et équilibre) et proprioceptif (position du corps et contrôle musculaire, c.-à-d. conscience des articulations). Enfin, l'intéroception est notre perception des sensations à l'intérieur du corps, ce qui comprend des sensations physiques telles que le battement du cœur, la respiration, la sensation de plénitude (satiété), ainsi que la manière dont l'activité de notre système nerveux réagit à nos émotions et les exprime.

À mesure que les enfants se développent au cours de la petite enfance et de l'enfance, des voies et des schémas neuronaux sont créés et solidifiés pour absorber les informations du monde extérieur. Ces connexions dans le cerveau nous permettent alors de comprendre et d'interpréter ces informations sensorielles, puis d'y réagir : c'est l'intégration sensorielle. L'intégration des infor-mations sensorielles est essentielle à chaque étape du développement. Les sens contribuent à notre apprentissage par la vue, l'odorat, le toucher, le goût, le son, la conscience du corps et la conscience gravitationnelle.

L'intégration sensorielle implique l'entrée d'informations par nos yeux, nos oreilles, notre nez, notre langue, nos muscles, nos articulations et notre peau : les ENTRÉES. Ces signaux sont ensuite envoyés par les nerfs de notre corps à notre cerveau, où ils sont interprétés : le TRAITEMENT. Enfin, le cerveau réagit à ces informations par une action, et un comportement est observé : le RÉSULTAT. Les sens interagissent constamment avec l'environnement pour comprendre : « Où suis-je? Que suis-je en train de faire? Qu'est-ce que je veux? Comment vais-je réagir? »

Parfois, les informations sensorielles

sont reçues par les sens, mais traitées par le cerveau de manière atypique. Les différences dans le traitement sensoriel peuvent former un continuum allant de l'hyperréactivité (surréactivité) à l'hyporéactivité (sous-réactivité). Par exemple, une personne hyperréactive (surréactive) aux informations sensorielles peut réagir à une très petite quantité d'informations sensorielles, et ainsi détester le bruit des gens qui mâchent ou se plaignent des étiquettes dans les vêtements. De même, une personne qui est hyporéactive (sous-réactive) peut brûler d'envie de tourner sur elle-même ou d'effectuer des mouvements de collision, ou encore de mâcher des vêtements ou des objets.

Revenons à notre exercice de pleine conscience du début de cet article. Pouvez-vous maintenant vous adapter à l'environnement sensoriel qui vous entoure pendant que vous lisez ces mots : quels sont les choses visuelles, les sons, les odeurs et les goûts que vous pourriez ressentir? Arrivez-vous à vous adapter aux sensations de votre corps? Utilisez-vous des stratégies pour améliorer votre concentration et votre attention? Par exemple : boire de l'eau ou du café, mâcher de la gomme, manger une collation, jouer avec un stylo ou jouer avec vos cheveux. Comment êtes-vous assis? Êtes-vous confortable?

Les modifications de l'environnement peuvent avoir une incidence énorme sur la satisfaction de nos besoins sensoriels en réduisant les stimuli indésirables ou stressants et en augmentant les opportunités de signaux bienvenus. Les stratégies aidant à résoudre les problèmes sensoriels peuvent impliquer de réduire la quantité de stimuli (en utilisant des écouteurs avec suppression du bruit, par exemple) ou d'offrir des moyens de répondre aux besoins sensoriels (en utilisant une toupie de main ou un tube à mâchouiller ou en sautant sur une trampoline, par exemple).

Avez-vous essayé des stratégies ou des outils sensoriels parmi les suivants?

- Écouteurs ou casque avec suppression du bruit, oreillettes
- « Coin confortable » (tente-lit, coin lecture, chaise en forme d'œuf)
- Outils sensoriels/à manier
- Tubes à mâchouiller
- Coussin « move and sit », chaise ballon, bureau debout, bande rebondissante
- Couverture lestée, animal lesté, veston lesté, gilet de compression

Ressources

Il existe une série de webinaires instructifs sur les stratégies sensorielles que vous pouvez regarder (en anglais*) :

Explorer les sens - partie 1: Introduction aux systèmes sensoriels
https://www.autismontario.com/fr/node/876

Explorer les sens - partie 2: Le détective sensoriel—Comprendre les besoins sensoriels particuliers
https://www.autismontario.com/fr/node/877

Explorer les sens - partie 3: Stratégies et outils sensoriels pour les enfants
https://www.autismontario.com/fr/node/880

*À noter : Le webinaire est animé en anglais cependant, le diaporama est disponible en français.

Bethany Brewin

Autism ONTARIO
Ressources d'apprentissage
Visitez autismontario.com/ressources-dapprentissage

Les ressources d'apprentissage d'Autisme Ontario peuvent vous accompagner dans votre cheminement à partir du diagnostic.

Webinaires | Articles utiles
Fiches d'information | Récits personnels
Numéros archivés d'*Autism Matters*
et plus encore...

Qu'est-ce que la bibliothérapie?

« LES LIVRES ENTRAÎNENT VOTRE IMAGINATION À VOIR GRAND » ~ TAYLOR SWIFT

par Danielle Nolan, travailleuse sociale,
Formation et éducation, Autisme Ontario

Éclairé par des preuves

CHACUN D'ENTRE NOUS sait que les livres sont un merveilleux moyen de tisser des liens avec votre enfant, de stimuler son imagination et de l'aider à se calmer avant d'aller au lit. Cela dit, les livres peuvent aussi avoir de grands bienfaits thérapeutiques. La bibliothérapie est une technique thérapeutique fondée sur des données probantes qui a des effets positifs avérés sur la santé mentale (Rapee et coll., 2006). La bibliothérapie normalise et valide les expériences de l'enfant et lui enseigne que c'est correct de parler des enjeux soulevés dans un livre. Elle offre également un exemple concret de la manière dont le personnage pourrait résoudre un problème.

Il est important de se rappeler que le bienfait de la lecture réside non seulement dans l'acte de lire le récit, mais aussi dans la discussion. Forgan (2002), qui a beaucoup écrit sur le recours à la bibliothérapie dans l'enseignement aux enfants, souligne l'importance de la discussion post-lecture et d'une activité de renforcement. Durant la discussion, les enfants peuvent raconter à nouveau l'histoire et explorer les sentiments du personnage. Les parents peuvent ensuite aider l'enfant à mettre en lien l'expérience du personnage avec un événement ou un sentiment similaire que l'enfant lui-même a vécu. Subséquemment, une activité de renforcement aide l'enfant à pratiquer et à appliquer les solutions ou les idées tirées du livre.

Exemple de cas : Sam, sept ans, a récemment reçu un diagnostic d'autisme, et son pédiatre avait noté de possibles enjeux d'anxiété. Sam était calme à l'école et avait commencé à se replier sur soi à la maison. Il avait de la difficulté avec les habiletés de communication verbale de haut niveau, et ses parents cherchaient des moyens de forger des liens avec lui. Je leur ai suggéré de lire tous les soirs, avant l'heure du coucher, le livre *Huge Bag of Worries* de Virginia Ironside. Au fil de la semaine, Sam s'est familiarisé avec la principale protagoniste, Jenny, et avec le « sac de soucis » qui la suit partout.

Liste pour lire

Livres pour enfants sur l'autisme

- *The Abilities in Me—Autism* de Gemma Keir
- *Do You Want to Play?* de Daniel Sharestrom
- *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures* de Julia Finley Mosca
- *Leah's Voice* de Lori DeMonia
- *All My Stripes* de Shaina Rudolph et Danielle Royer
- *Laisse-moi t'expliquer l'autisme* de Stéphanie Deslaurier
- *Laurent, c'est moi!* de Stéphanie Deslauriers et Geneviève Després
- *Caillou et Sophie : une histoire sur l'autisme* de Kim Thompson
- *L'autisme raconté aux enfants* de Gabryel Bouchard, Karine Bouchard et Jean Morin

Livres pour enfants sur la santé mentale

- *Huge Bag of Worries* de Virginia Ironside
- *Giraffes Can't Dance* de Giles Andreae et Guy Parker-Rees
- *Franklin's Bad Day* de Paulette Bourgeois et Brenda Clark
- *The Colour Monster* de Anna Llenas
- *In My Heart—A Book of Feelings* de Jo Witek
- *Toubillon d'émotions* de Janan Cain
- *La ronde des émotions* de Molly Potter
- *Tout le monde!* d'Elise Gravel

Livres pour enfants sur l'attachement

- *This Moose Belongs to Me* de Oliver Jeffers
- *The Kissing Hand* de Audrey Penn
- *The Invisible String* de Patrice Karst

Tous les soirs, les parents de Sam ont parlé avec lui des soucis, en mettant en évidence les stratégies indiquées pour y faire face : en parler avec quelqu'un d'autre, les normaliser, en remettre certains à des adultes de confiance, etc. À sa prochaine consultation dans mon bureau, Sam comprenait l'histoire de Jenny et il a pu dessiner son propre « énorme sac de soucis » qui illustrait les choses qui l'inquiétaient.

Pour conclure, je vous invite, comme parent ou aidant, à ne jamais sous-estimer la valeur du temps et de l'attention que vous consacrez à l'enfant et de l'intimité que vous partagez avec lui. La création de solides relations d'attachement avec les aidants est aussi profitable pour les enfants autistes que pour les enfants neurotypiques (Teague et coll., 2017). Leur relation avec vous atténue le stress, rehausse leur capacité d'adaptation et les prépare à mieux affronter le monde. Le temps physiquement passé près l'un de l'autre dans une activité commune, comme lire un livre, est d'une valeur inestimable dans la construction de cette relation.

Références

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Danielle Nolan

Danielle est la travailleuse sociale de l'équipe d'experts en la matière nouvellement mise sur pied par Autisme Ontario. Elle vit dans la région de l'Est et s'intéresse particulièrement au soutien des populations rurales. Elle a obtenu sa maîtrise en travail social à l'Université de Toronto, où elle a fait un stage à l'Hospital for Sick Children. Au cours des sept dernières années, Danielle a travaillé dans le domaine de la protection de l'enfance et du traitement des enfants. Plus récemment, elle était la travailleuse sociale d'un centre de diagnostic de l'autisme, où elle offrait un soutien émotionnel et instrumental, de brève durée ou continu aux enfants autistes et à leurs familles.

Renseignements en français

Désirez-vous recevoir des renseignements en français? Pour vous inscrire sur notre liste d'envois électroniques, rendez-vous au www.autismontario.com/fr/bulletin-dinformation et sélectionnez sur « Bulletins des services en français ».

Retour à l'école

DIX FAÇONS D'AIDER VOTRE ENFANT À SE PRÉPARER POUR LA RENTRÉE SCOLAIRE

Éclairé par des preuves

par Bethany Brewin, ergothérapeute, Formation et éducation, Autisme Ontario, et Danielle Nolan, travailleuse sociale, Formation et éducation, Autisme Ontario

APRÈS AVOIR SURVÉCU aux turbulences des deux dernières années, vous avez maintenant survécu à l'été. Nous savons que les deux dernières années scolaires n'ont pas été « normales », et nous avons constaté les impacts négatifs de la pandémie de COVID-19 sur le développement, les habiletés sociales et la santé mentale de nos enfants. Pour l'année scolaire 2022-2023, nous souhaitons un retour de la prévisibilité et nous aimerions vous apporter un peu d'espoir et d'enthousiasme sur ce qu'une année scolaire peut amener. Voici dix façons d'aider votre enfant et votre famille à se préparer pour la rentrée scolaire :

1 On se lève! (Routine du matin)

Avec l'aide de votre enfant, créez un programme du matin—vous pouvez recourir à une liste de vérification, à un horaire visuel ou à des photos qui illustrent exactement ce qu'il faut faire afin d'être « prêt » pour l'école le matin. Par exemple, vous pourriez photographier votre enfant complètement habillé (chaussures, veste, sac à dos, etc.) pour qu'il puisse visualiser le but de ses efforts; ou encore, vous pourriez dresser une liste des articles à placer dans le sac à dos.

2 On s'habille! (Habiletés d'habillage)

Aidez votre enfant à choisir quelques tenues qu'il affectionne particulièrement et qui sont faciles à enfiler. Si votre enfant aime les routines, vous pouvez faire une « rotation » de ces tenues préférées, ou disposer la veille sur un fauteuil la tenue qu'il enfilera le lendemain. Tenez compte des sensibilités sensorielles : si votre enfant ne tolère qu'un certain type de pantalon ou de chaussettes, prévoyez plusieurs options pour ces types préférés, afin de faciliter l'habillage et de réduire le stress. Si votre enfant porte un uniforme, existe-t-il une version « confortable » qu'il serait autorisé à porter (p. ex. T-shirt et pantalon acheté ailleurs que chez le distributeur, pantalon molletonné ou de jogging)? Pour les enfants plus jeunes, proposez-leur de s'exercer à ouvrir et fermer les attaches comme les fermetures-éclair et les boutons sur des poupées ou des déguisements (les costumes d'Halloween offrent un moyen amusant et motivant de pratiquer).

3 On mange! (Alimentation/heures de repas)

Avec votre enfant, choisissez quelques aliments préférés pour le dîner ou la collation. Chaque jour, tout en veillant à inclure des aliments « préférés », vous pourrez proposer des « défis » alimentaires (l'exposition à l'aliment est importante, même si en fin de compte votre enfant ne le mange pas). Durant les semaines qui précèdent la rentrée, essayez si possible de faire coïncider les heures des collations/repas à la maison avec celles qui seront établies à l'école—au besoin, vous pourriez programmer une minuterie ou une « alarme » pour vous en souvenir. Servez le dîner/la collation dans la même boîte à dîner et les mêmes contenants que ceux qu'utilisera votre enfant à l'école, pour lui donner l'occasion de s'exercer à ouvrir les fermetures-éclair et les contenants. Si votre enfant aura accès à une cafétéria ou à un plan de repas, est-il possible d'examiner à l'avance les menus et les options de repas pour qu'il sache à quoi s'attendre?

4 On s'organise! (Habiletés d'organisation et de gestion du temps)

Créez un calendrier familial où tous les membres de la famille peuvent visualiser les plans quotidiens et hebdomadaires. Pour les enfants plus jeunes, vous pourriez créer un horaire visuel quotidien pour gérer les attentes sur les activités à faire avant et après l'école. Pour les enfants plus âgés et les adolescents, prenez le temps de déterminer la méthode qui pourrait être la meilleure pour faire le suivi des devoirs et des travaux : un calendrier papier ou un agenda écrit, ou encore une application sur leur téléphone intelligent, leur tablette ou leur ordinateur. Discutez de la manière dont votre enfant devra communiquer avec ses parents ou avec l'équipe-école lorsqu'il aura des questions ou aura besoin de précisions sur ses travaux scolaires.

5 On joue! (Motricité fine)

Le développement de la motricité fine est essentiel pour de nombreuses activités scolaires, notamment l'écriture. Il existe de nombreuses et excellentes façons de développer par le jeu la force et l'habileté des mains. Quelques suggestions :

a. Confectionner des « biscuits » avec de la pâte à modeler et des emporte-pièces; les enfants plus âgés et les jeunes peuvent sculpter leurs « biscuits » avec de l'argile ou de la plasticine.
b. Fabriquer un bracelet en enfilant des perles sur un lacet, ou en plaçant des céréales (p. ex. Cheerios ou Froot Loops) sur un cure-pipe. Les enfants plus âgés ou les adolescents peuvent créer des motifs ou épeler des messages avec des lettres ou des perles de couleur.
c. Ramasser et trier des pompons ou des boules de coton à l'aide de pincettes ou d'une pince à épiler.
d. Renforcer les habiletés de maniement du crayon en coloriant ou en réalisant des dessins de points à relier ou des labyrinthes.

6 On joue! (Motricité globale)

Emmenez votre enfant au parc ou à la cour de récréation de son école. Explorez les lieux ensemble. Vous pouvez jouer à « Suivez le chef » ou à « Jean dit ». Les enfants plus âgés peuvent aider à créer une chasse au trésor. Où votre enfant passera-t-il son temps durant la récréation ou la période de temps libre? Quelles sont les activités qu'il apprécie? Pouvez-vous apporter un ballon, un cerceau ou des sacs de fèves pour créer un jeu ensemble?

7 On se fait des amis! (Habiletés sociales)

Est-ce que votre enfant va connaître quelqu'un à l'école? Vous est-il possible d'entrer en contact avec d'autres parents ou enfants avant la rentrée? Idéalement, vous pouvez contacter une autre famille avant la rentrée scolaire et fixer une heure de rendez-vous—le seul fait de passer un peu de temps ensemble dans la cour de récréation créera un sentiment de familiarité. S'il n'est pas possible de le faire avant la rentrée, votre équipe-école peut vous aider à nouer des liens avec un ou plusieurs autres élèves durant les quelques premiers jours. L'école de votre enfant propose-t-elle des clubs ou des activités parascolaires qui pourraient correspondre à ses centres d'intérêt? Pouvez-vous contacter un enseignant ou un membre de la direction qui serait intéressé à créer un « club Minecraft », un « club de codage » ou un projet STIM (science, technologie, ingénierie et mathématiques), ou encore à organiser une activité musicale, artistique ou sportive qui plairait à votre enfant?

Danielle Nolan

Bethany Brewin

8 On se parle! (Régulation émotionnelle)

Commencez à parler des émotions à la maison, et normalisez les inquiétudes qu'entretient votre enfant au sujet de la rentrée. Dans le cas des jeunes enfants, l'utilisation de livres et d'images peut les aider à nommer ces sentiments. Quant aux enfants plus âgés, ils pourraient peut-être tenir un journal ou recourir à l'art ou aux médias numériques pour dépeindre leurs pensées et leurs sentiments.

9 On respire! (Stratégies d'apaisement)

La rentrée scolaire peut être une source de stress pour votre enfant. Vous pouvez lui enseigner des stratégies pour mieux gérer ce stress en classe. Des techniques de respiration comme « humer le biscuit » (demander à votre enfant d'imaginer qu'il hume des biscuits fraîchement sortis du four en inspirant profondément, puis d'expirer en soufflant sur les biscuits) peuvent être employées à la maison et à l'école. Les enfants plus âgés et les adolescents aimeront peut-être pratiquer des stratégies modifiées de méditation et de pleine conscience, ou la méthode des affirmations. Pour plus d'idées : https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EDMH-ParentActivities-FINAL-FR.pdf.

10 Au lit! (Routines et heure du coucher)

Habituez-vous à une routine régulière pour l'heure du coucher—limitez l'utilisation des appareils électroniques au moins deux heures avant le coucher et incitez votre enfant à s'adonner à des activités apaisantes comme la lecture ou la méditation. Encouragez l'exercice et les activités actives pendant la journée, tout en autorisant les activités plus calmes (comme lire ou écouter de la musique) qui favorisent le repos et la récupération. Encouragez la régularité dans les heures de coucher et de lever.

Nous espérons que ces suggestions vous seront utiles et constitueront un bon point de départ pour vos routines et habiletés de rentrée scolaire. En cette fin d'été, n'oubliez pas de prendre le temps de vous détendre, de communiquer et de vous amuser en famille. Trouvez un équilibre entre le repos et le plaisir durant la transition vers la routine scolaire. Bonne rentrée!

Un webinaire informatif en deux parties concernant la préparation de la rentrée scolaire sera diffusé en direct sur le site Web d'Autisme Ontario les mercredis 10 août et 17 août :

- Mercredi 10 août : La rentrée scolaire, partie 1 : Stratégies de préparation aux routines scolaires, avec Kristin Gunby et Bethany Brewin : https://www.autismontario.com/fr/civicrm/event/info?id=7378
- Mercredi 17 août : La rentrée scolaire, partie 2 : Stratégies pour nouer des liens avec l'équipe-école, avec Tracie Lindblad et Danielle Nolan : https://www.autismontario.com/fr/civicrm/event/info?id=7379

Références

Santé mentale en milieu scolaire Ontario. (2020). Activités pour les parents. https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EDMH-ParentActivities-FINAL-FR.pdf

Liste des fournisseurs du POSA

La Liste des fournisseurs du Programme ontarien des services en matière d'autisme (POSA) énumère les ergothérapeutes, les orthophonistes et les superviseurs cliniques des services comportementaux financés par l'entremise du POSA (y compris les services comportementaux achetés à l'aide des budgets pour les services aux enfants ou d'un financement provisoire ponctuel). Cette liste consiste en une base de données accessible au public qui comprend des cliniciens dans les diverses régions de l'Ontario.

Trouvez un fournisseur!

www.oaproviderlist.ca/fr

A Message from the Fund Development Team

AT AUTISM ONTARIO, we are committed to making evidence-informed decisions, and this applies both to our program development and our fundraising efforts. We are working hard to improve our donor service and always appreciate hearing from you about how we can be better.

We've heard from you that our donation form needs updating. The list of programs that you can donate to was long and difficult to decipher, so we've adjusted it so that you can easily find the funding category that means the most to you. You can find the updated list with descriptions on our website. We hope that you find the overview helpful in making informed decisions about how you support autistic people in Ontario.

If you would like to support specific activities that no longer appear on our donation form, there are still options for donating to your favorite program. You may donate by phone at 1-800-472-7789 ext. 335 or send a cheque with the designation noted in the memo field. Cheques may be sent to Autism Ontario, Attn. Fundraising Department, 004-1179 King Street West, Toronto, ON M6K 3C5.

We want Autism Ontario to be your charity of choice, so stay tuned for continuous improvements and increased communications about the impact of your philanthropy, so that you may continue to know that Autism Ontario is a worthy recipient of your annual giving. We appreciate your ongoing support.

We're here to help

We love hearing from our donors. If you have any questions, please contact us and we would be happy to help build your connection with Autism Ontario and make sure that you are being provided with an exceptional philanthropic experience.

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AutismONTARIO

Families in your community need your help

You can help those families today. Please consider becoming a **monthly donor**. You can give a monthly gift in the amount of your choice from your Visa or MasterCard. You save paper and stamps, and you get one consolidated tax receipt at the end of the year, but perhaps most importantly, you make a difference in your community.

There are three ways to become a **monthly donor**:

- Contact Autism Ontario at 416-246-9592 Ext. 335.
- Donate online at www.autismontario.com (click on the Donate button).
- Mail your cheque, payable to Autism Ontario, 1179 King Street West, Suite 004, Toronto, ON M6K 3C5.

Thank you for your generosity, and for helping us create a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autism.

Visit our website:
www.autismontario.com/autism-matters-magazine
to view back issues of our magazine.

My Story . . . So Far

UNICORNS AND RAINBOWS

by Michelle Unruh, Self-Advocate

▼ *Below: Michelle Unruh*
Below right: Some of the unicorns she received from friends and family

I AM 32 YEARS OLD. From the time I was a baby, my parents knew there was something different about me. I didn't walk until I was 18 months old. My fine motor and gross motor skills were also delayed. When I turned five, I went for testing and after two years of testing, I was diagnosed with PDD (Pervasive Developmental Disorder).

By the time I was school age, I had gone through lots of occupational therapy. I have also received a lot of tutoring and went into a low-enrollment class. While school was challenging enough for me, I also had to endure severe bullying throughout my school life. But that didn't stop me. It didn't stop me from having the biggest smile all the time. It didn't stop me from helping others when they needed a friend. During my school life, I received many citizenship awards. I received the Student Success Award, Ontario Scholar Award, and was on the Honour Role when I graduated high school.

I remember a doctor I once met who said, "We're not sure what Michelle will do, but she will find her way and it will be something special." That doctor was absolutely right. In 2020, I learned how to colour and I quickly developed a passion for it. During the pandemic, I wanted to make other people smile, so I sent the pictures I coloured to family, friends and even strangers who inspired me. There was one special lady who became my friend. Her name is Bernadette. We are friends forever.

A wonderful thing happened through my colouring. My colouring expanded into bracelet making as my new friends began to teach me. I made several bracelets and I decided to sell them for charity. I made $441 and donated that to Autism Ontario's Niagara Chapter (now South Region). I still make bracelets with the money raised going to Kids' Help Phone. I ended up making and selling my bracelets recently at Autism Ontario South Region's, ParticipACTION event. I raised $100 that morning towards my next donation to Autism Ontario. The most important part of that morning was that I was able to talk with different families who told me that I was an inspiration and gave some hope for their child's future. I reminded their kids to never give up.

Since then, I have done many other things that I am proud of. I have my own FaceBook page (Autism Awareness—Life with Michelle & Friends) to spread autism awareness and have fun. My page has 617 followers. Last October, I was interviewed by the Autism Perspectives YouTube Channel, where I talked about being bullied.

Unicorns are special to me because everyone tells me that I'm unique—like a unicorn. For Autism Awareness Month in April, I asked all my family and friends if they could decorate a unicorn for me and write an inspirational message. I ended up receiving 75 unicorns! ■

As We See It

WHAT DO AUTISTIC ADULTS SEE IN THIS SERIES?

▲ *L-R: Jack, Violet, Harrison*

Photo credit: *Amazon Canada*

by Michael Cnudde, Managing Editor, *Autism Matters*

As We See It, the story of three 20-something adult autistics sharing an apartment, has gained much positive attention from the autistic community for its portrayal of people on the spectrum.

AS WE SEE IT is based on the 2018 Israeli television production, *On the Spectrum* (see the Spring 2022 issue of *Autism Matters* for our review). The 2022 Amazon Prime production features autistic actors in the leading roles of Jack (played by Rick Glassman), Harrison (played by Albert Rutecki), and Violet (played by Sue Ann Pien).

Autism Ontario assembled a panel of adults on the spectrum to discuss *As We See It* and the questions it raised. The panel included self-advocates Courtney Weaver, freelance writer; Christian Malatesta; and Nicole Corrado. Michael Cnudde, Managing Editor of *Autism Matters*, acted as moderator. The panel discussed the first episode, *"Pilot."*

One of the natural questions arising from the discussion was the differences and similarities between *As We See It* and *On the Spectrum*.

"I thought this show was actually more believable regarding autism. I found the characters more accurate in *As We See It*," said Nicole. She said the characters from *On the Spectrum* were more stereotyped. In the earlier program, Nicole felt the characters were one-sided. From watching the first episode of *As We See It*, she found this cast far more relatable. "I found the characters in *As We See It* to be more nuanced," she said, "They're more multifaceted and multi-dimensional. You see more growth in the characters, and I just it found way more relatable, way more believable, more

likeable, and less stereotyped."

Courtney also found the characters more relatable, which made her want to cheer them on. From watching the first episode, she thought they were all different. She felt the first episode set the stage for further character growth and development. "Just within the pilot alone, we see Harrison struggling with his sensitivity to audio stimuli and even going across the street to the coffee shop."

Christian said that the series took some getting used to. "It brought me back to those days of not understanding what my autism was because I didn't." Christian didn't receive his autism diagnosis until age seven and spent some time undergoing therapy. He said he found Violet's meltdown particularly hard to watch. "It was a bit like a culture shock to see that extreme behaviour."

Courtney noted that some of the techniques used by the show's producers to illustrate some of the characters' sensory sensitivities were well done. "The sound amplification used in the scene when Harrison was making his way to the coffee shop, for example... was done as great as the sound of the black marker in the *Temple Grandin* movie."

"I might relate to the sound sensitivities," said Nicole. "I have noise-cancelling headphones." She said that dogs don't bother her as much as they did Harrison because she loves dogs. The other sounds that bothered Harrison also bothered her; she says she stays in the house and sometimes avoids going places because of sound sensitivity. "I also relate to Violet," she said, "because of her vulnerability in wanting to find a partner."

"I mostly relate with Jack because I have a high IQ," says Christian. He says that sometimes his parents will tell him that he can't say something because not everyone is as intelligent as he and that he must be polite. He says he struggles with this sometimes while trying just to be himself. "I don't think people who have autism are free to express that they have autism."

Nicole agrees with Christian. "I relate to Jack in that regard... he knows he's smarter than the rest. I often feel that I don't have a lot of patience for people who are really ignorant about things." When she makes a deputation to the local Police Board or City Council, for example, it's because she sees the problems with things. "It's kind of like the story of the *Emperor's New Clothes*."

Courtney found herself relating o Harrison, especially experiences she had as a younger person. "I can relate to Harrison," she said, "in his sensitivity to sound and everyday stimuli; I was much more like that when I was younger."

"In a way, it was nice," says Christian, "but they overdramatized it." He wasn't impressed when Violet screamed on the floor after her date. Several other things, he said, "such as the use of the R-word, and the fact that the characters had a worker, didn't ring true for him. "This doesn't feel like the series was made in 2022. I had people working with me, but I've never been in a group home situation where people almost live in with their workers. So I thought it was a bit antiquated," he said.

Nicole thought having autistic actors in the lead roles playing autistics was an excellent idea and could better represent people on the spectrum because it shows a wide range of support needs. "Harrison had more complex support needs, and so does Violet," she said, "while Jack has minimal support needs." Nicole noted that Violet is good at masking in public but has more complex support needs in selecting a partner.

"Everybody was so messed up, but they did a good job," said Christian. "But it seemed they brought in their issues too much. It was well done, but they didn't have to go that far." He conceded that, although the acting was superb, it was perhaps a little too realistic for comfort.

Courtney believes that *As We See It* has furthered the discussion of autistic representation in media. She's not as concerned about having neurotypicals play autistic people. It's more important now to ensure that when parts like these come up, autistic actors have an opportunity to audition for them. "Within the last five years, this has become more of a discussion," she says. "It might slowly but surely become more of a practice."

Autism Ontario extends its gratitude to Amazon Canada, not only for the image accompanying this article but also for the assistance that enabled the participation of several members of this group.

The OAP Provider List

The Ontario Autism Program (OAP) Provider List is a listing of Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Pathologists, and Clinical Supervisors of behavioural services funded through the Ontario Autism Program (including behavioural services purchased using childhood budgets or interim one-time funding). The OAP Provider List is a publicly available database which includes clinicians across Ontario.

Find a Provider!
www.oapproviderlist.ca

In Your Corner

HIGHLIGHTING SUCCESSES, ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS. A SPACE DEDICATED TO SHARING, LEARNING AND FINDING WAYS TO SERVE OUR FAMILIES LOCALLY.

by Lisa Nightingale, Region and Volunteer Supervisor, Autism Ontario

WITH THE EASING OF PUBLIC HEALTH restrictions across the province, Autism Ontario's programs, events and activities have slowly but safely returned to in-person, outdoor events. It has been both exciting and inspiring to reconnect with families, community members and various supporters.

West Region

In June, West Region hosted its first Huron Perth Walk for Autism in Goderich for the first time in two years. Families and friends joined in for a walk along Lake Huron to support Autism Ontario. With personally crafted banners held high, participants ended the walk with a visit from the "Dragon Man" and his cast of reptiles. West Region thanks everyone for making it a particular day, with special thanks going to Domino's Pizza, Goderich for donating yummy pizza for all participants.

Toronto Region

It's not officially summer until you make, bake and taste funnel cake! Sixty families in Toronto received these sticky treats to kick off their summer in a sweet way.

"Our family thoroughly enjoyed the funnel cake event offered by Autism Ontario," enthused Patricia, a parent. "It allowed our son to independently prepare and serve dessert to the whole family. It also provided us with the peace of mind to not worry about his safety in the kitchen. We enjoyed the wide variety of toppings included and the bonus magnet and key chain takeaways. We were very impressed with the kit, and the quality and taste of the funnel cakes far exceeded our expectations. Thank you for providing our family with

A notice to our Regions: In Your Corner is your space to highlight your successes and share stories of how you're making a difference in your communities.
By contributing, you are:

- *Accessing thousands of families, professionals and agencies*
- *Providing ideas and insight to other Regions for activities, programs and events*
- *Building a stronger community across Ontario*
- *Demonstrating what you've accomplished locally*
- *Creating opportunities for dialogue and increased information sharing*

To share your stories, please submit ideas and content to lisa@autismontario.com.

▼▶ *The West Region's Huron Perth Walk for Autism had many happy participants.*

◀ *Far left: On the swings*
Left: Audrey and Jack at Wet 'n Wild

▼ *Below and bottom left: Activities at Central West's Summer Inclusion Olympics*

All photos are provided by contributors who provided consent for publication.

this memorable experience."

"Thank you, Autism Ontario," wrote another parent, Melanie, "for having this event as it allows me to have some quality time with my daughter and my son, who was able to participate as well. My daughter really enjoyed it, and she was learning something new at the same time."

North Region

Wizard School101, hosted by stage magician Ryan McFarling was more magical than one parent expected. Attendees of the 45-minute virtual program were taught how to perform a magic trick with a deck of cards.

"When I registered my son for Wizard School," wrote one grateful parent, "I had no idea what his level of engagement would be. But, boy-oh-boy, it was pretty clear he was 'all in' from the moment he signed on. I must have missed the bit about needing a deck of cards from the instructor, but my son heard the request and located them himself.

"I didn't have to sit with him during this activity, as I sometimes need to, for prompting, with online school. He was engaged the whole time and even asked Ryan a question, at the end, about a card trick.

"Hours after the program ended, my son still had the cards in his hands. He remains enamoured with them even today,

"Thank you for providing this bright spot in our week! Looking forward to the next session."

Central East and South Region kick off Summer Camp

Central West and South Region both launched their eagerly-awaited summer camps this season. Parents raved about the opportunity for their children to reconnect with friends and camp counsellors. Wrote one parent, Amanda: "My son looks forward to Autism Ontario Summer Camp every year… He successfully connects and interacts with his peers at camp and smiles and laughs when I mention their names. I am always so impressed with the quality of care and the support the counsellors at camp offer. They really understand autism and how to keep individuals focused and calm and quickly recognize signs that my son may need quiet time or a break from the day's activities. My son is primarily non-verbal and rarely able to share with me about his day. It was amazing to see an increase in his communication—I believe it's a testament to how much he enjoyed the camp. This is my son's favourite summer camp, and because of his excitement, enthusiasm and energy when it comes to his week at camp—it's my favourite week too!"

Central West

Summer Inclusion Olympics

Always Connected Treatment Network and Autism Ontario collaborated to provide a fun and interactive end-of-school event called the Summer Inclusion Olympics. Participants had the opportunity to explore local recreational vendors and a variety of different activities at the CanLan Sports Centre in Mississauga. It was a fun day of inclusion, sport and friendship.

Autism Ontario is recruiting passionate individuals for various Volunteer Committee roles.

As Autism Ontario continues to expand to meet the growing needs of autistic children, youth, adults and their families, we are looking for passionate volunteers eager to support programs, community events and fundraising initiatives.

If you are interested in volunteering, please email me at lisa@autismontario.com ■

Autism ONTARIO

Yes! I want to make a difference helping people on the autism spectrum.

I would like to make a monthly donation of:
❑ $1,000 ❑ $500 ❑ $250 ❑ $100 ❑ $25
❑ Other $_____

❑ Enclosed is my cheque made payable to Autism Ontario
OR
I'd prefer to pay with my credit card. Please charge to:
❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard

Card Number: _____/_____/_____/_____

CVV Number: _____ Expiration: _____/_____

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

City: _____

Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Please send this completed form with your donation to
Autism Ontario
1179 King St. W., Suite 004
Toronto, ON M6K 3C5

Please note that all donations over $25 automatically receive a tax receipt.
From all the families, volunteers and staff at Autism Ontario, thank you!

Incorporated as Autism Society Ontario
Charitable Registration #11924 8789R R0001

Community Connect

autismontario.com/communityconnect

autismontario.com/fr/communityconnect

Autism Ontario CommunityConnect is a centralized community portal that is home to:

Service Listings

Search for autism-related services such as mental health professionals, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, social workers, ABA providers, and more!

Learning Resources

Webinars, fact sheets, helpful articles, personal stories, and more to assist you on your journey from diagnosis onward.

Autism Ontario Events

Virtual and local programs to support autistic people and their families, including support groups, information sessions, recreational activities, and more!

CommunityConnect d'Autisme Ontario est un portail communautaire centralisé qui héberge :

Répertoire de services

Chercher des services reliés a l'autisme (professionnels de la santé mentale, ergothérapeutes, orthophonistes, travailleurs sociaux, fournisseurs d'ACA, et plus!)

Activités d'Autisme Ontario

Des programmes virtuels et locaux pour venir en aide aux personnes autistes et à leur famille, y compris des groupes de soutien, des séances d'information, des activités récréatives et bien d'autres choses encore!

Ressources d'apprentissage

Webinaires, articles utiles, fiches d'information, récits personnels et plus encore pouvant vous accompagner dans votre cheminement à partir du diagnostic.

Autism ONTARIO

HAS YOUR ADDRESS CHANGED?/ VOUS AVEZ CHANGÉ D'ADRESSE?
Send your old mailing label and your new address to: Autism Ontario, at the address below.
Envoyez à Autisme Ontario votre ancienne étiquette postale et communiquez-nous votre nouvelle adresse à l'adresse ci-dessous.
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