

Autism

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MATTERS



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OUR MISSION: Creating a supportive and inclusive Ontario for Autism

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Save the Date!

Autism Society Ontario's Annual
General Meeting
will be held on
**Saturday,
September 24, 2022.**

Further details will be available
this summer.

Inscrivez cette date à votre agenda!

L'assemblée générale annuelle
d'Autisme Ontario aura lieu le
**samedi
24 septembre 2022.**

Nous vous communiquerons des
détails durant l'été.

Front cover: Magnus celebrates the spectrum by making a tie-dye shirt.

Photo courtesy of Joy Alma

Allow Me to Introduce Myself!



▲ Farrukh with his wife Farheen, daughters Zainab and Sara, and son Husayn (photo courtesy of Farrukh Abbas).

MY NAME IS FARRUKH ABBAS, and I am delighted to be the new Chief Financial and Information Officer (CFIO) with Autism Ontario. I believe strongly in serving humanity. My passion has always been in service because it is an important aspect of my faith. Hence, I have been serving in the not-for-profit sector where my knowledge and experience can be availed to the service of humanity. I also had the privilege of serving at Canadian Blood Services prior to joining Autism Ontario.

I have a connection with Autism Ontario: one of my close friends has an autistic child and I have seen firsthand the challenges families face. I always wanted to assist my friend and have done so to the best of my ability but there was also a desire to do more, not only for him and his wife but also for other families and children on the autism spectrum. I am both grateful and proud to have this role with Autism Ontario.

A little bit about my background

I am a Chartered Professional Accountant with an MBA, but I am also an engineer with a specialization in Aeronautical Sciences. I spent the earlier part of my post-graduate career in the quality assurance department of an aerospace manufacturer in California as the chief inspector. The coolest part of that job was to be able to test fly helicopters to diagnose problems and suggest fixes for them. In 2004 I moved to Canada. Because I faced the dilemma that many immigrants to Canada have of not having "Canadian experience," I returned to school to become a chartered professional accountant as I realized that there was a lot of growth potential in the finance industry.

I started off in Canada as a security guard and was fortunate enough to make my way up to be a regional manager of finance and now, CFIO. On my way I was able to serve and learn from great organizations such as Deloitte, NRC Health, Maple Leaf Foods, Canadian Blood Services, and the Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario.

I believe that these and the jobs I held during my studies in the US, such as dishwasher, waiter, hotel front desk clerk, night auditor, and cashier in a 7-11, helped shape me into a better human being who understands the realities of life at the grassroots level of our society. These learnings were the greatest assets I carried throughout my career as a professional.

Volunteer activities and hobbies

I volunteer my time with new immigrants to assist them in settling professionally in Canada by reviewing and editing résumés and preparing them for job interviews. I also attend newcomer seminars as a speaker organized by LinkedIn and the Peel Region YMCA.

In my 20s, I was an avid street racer in Los Angeles and used to modify my car with the help of my friends. But now I only race RC cars with my 5-year-old son.

My early life

I am originally from Karachi, Pakistan, where I attained my Grade 12 education. I subsequently moved to the US to follow my dream of becoming an aeronautical engineer as I had always loved airplanes. I am the only brother of four lovely sisters, the father of three beautiful children, Zainab, 20; Sara, 18; and Husayn, 5; and a decent husband to my very understanding wife, Farheen.

When I was four years old, I suffered a traumatic brain injury which caused me to be

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.

bedridden and hampered my educational endeavours in early childhood. My parents were told that I would not be able to have a normal life. I also suffered with poor memory and lifelong headache, but I never made this a barrier for myself. I always tell this story to inspire others that if I can do it, anybody can. ■

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.

Collaboration



Accountability



Respect



Evidence informed



Our Commitment to Ethical Fundraising

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We are 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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Families in your community need your help

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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.



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



Applied Behaviour Analysis

WHAT TO EXPECT

by Kristin Gunby, M.S., BCBA, Behaviour Analyst, Autism Ontario

APPLIED BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS (ABA) is a scientific approach to solving practical problems.⁵ ABA is commonly used to support individuals with autism in achieving meaningful goals.³ Although ABA has been proven for decades as an effective teaching approach for all individuals, including those with autism,⁷ navigating the ins and outs of this field and what it has to offer can be intimidating. If you or your child have received a diagnosis of autism and are interested in ABA, understanding what ABA is, how to choose the right clinician, and the best way to support someone accessing an ABA program can set up everyone involved for success.

What is it/How does it work? What makes ABA successful?

ABA focuses on a person's behaviour in relation to what is happening around them, with an emphasis on what happens before and after a behaviour.³

Clinicians can use several different strategies to help teach skills to individuals with autism. First, skills may be broken down into smaller, more manageable components through a task analysis (i.e., a step-by-step account of how this skill is performed).³ For example, if someone wanted to learn how to put on their shoes, a task analysis may be created first (e.g., pick up shoes, undo laces, place shoe on floor, place foot inside). Next, a reasonable starting point, or target skill, would be decided on. A target skill is an action that has been identified as something that needs to be worked on.³ In this example the target skill could be "pick up shoes."

Clinicians can also add additional cues (called *prompts* in ABA) to help someone complete a target skill. A prompt is a specific form of assistance given by someone else to support the person with the target skill.³ Clinicians can offer ways to help someone demonstrate a skill through the use of a variety of prompts: verbal prompts, time-delays, visual prompts or physical prompts (depending on an individual's unique needs and preferences).³

Evidence informed



Clinicians use rewards when a target skill is demonstrated to acknowledge the person's effort and to let them know they are on the right track. This involves providing a reinforcer (i.e., reward) following the demonstration of a skill to increase the likelihood that the skill will happen again.³ In the example of teaching someone to put shoes on, the clinician may ask the person which item or activity they would like. Once the person selects an activity (e.g., bubbles), the person would be asked to demonstrate the skill and then the preferred activity would be delivered (e.g., "Put your shoes on first, then we can go blow bubbles"). If the person were to demonstrate the target skill of putting on their shoes, the clinician would deliver the preferred activity immediately. If the person did not demonstrate the skill, the clinician would plan a systematic and individualized way to teach the skill using prompts or assistance.

Clinicians collect data on the target skills that have been chosen and then graph those data in order to see the results better. Graphs are used to make decisions on how a program is going and if the program needs modification to better support an individual with a goal.³ In this way, ABA is self-correcting. Programs can be adapted so that we keep what is working and modify or change what is not working.

Using ABA for interfering or harmful behaviours

When supporting an individual with autism in reducing interfering or harmful behaviour, clinicians work with individuals and their families to assess the underlying reasons for these behaviours. This is done through a functional behaviour assessment (FBA). The goal of an FBA is to determine what the individual wants (e.g., Do they want access to something or someone or are they trying to avoid something or someone?).³ Then clinicians come up with a plan to replace the interfering or harmful behaviour with a

new and more appropriate behaviour. The goal is to help the person get their needs and wants met more easily.³ For example, if an FBA shows that while completing a math worksheet an individual got up from their seat to leave the class because the math was too difficult, the plan may be to teach the individual to ask for a break or ask for help, or to revise the math worksheet to fit the individual's needs.

IBI vs ABA - What's the difference?

Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) or comprehensive ABA is when an ABA program is applied intensively, for 30-40 hours per week and includes a broad range of goals. When fewer hours are applied and the focus is narrower (e.g., only a few goals), we often refer to this as focused ABA.^{6,7} The number of hours per week an individual needs is recommended by the clinician from an initial baseline assessment and is then agreed to between the person, their family and the clinician. It's important to note that the needs of individuals change throughout their life and that the numbers of hours per week required to meet their needs will likely adjust accordingly.

Choosing the right clinician

Clinicians, called Behaviour Analysts, have recently been approved to become regulated healthcare professionals in Ontario.⁴ This means that it will get easier to identify who should run your ABA program because only qualified individuals will be regulated to practice. While regulation is being ironed out in the province, Autism Ontario has a list of approved Ontario Autism Program (OAP) providers that can be found at <https://www.oaproviderlist.ca>. Currently, Board Certified Behaviour Analysts™ (BCBAs™) and some approved individuals who are regulated in a related field and have education and experience in ABA can oversee ABA programs across Ontario. A BCBA or a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst-Doctoral™

(BCBA-D™) are credentials given to a person who has completed a graduate level degree, coursework in ABA, supervised fieldwork in ABA, and passed a Behaviour Analyst Certification Board (BACB) exam.¹ BCBA-Ds are individuals who have also completed a PhD.¹ Both BCBAs and BCBA-Ds must adhere to ethical rules and must obtain 32 hours of continuing education every two years to maintain the credential.¹

In an ABA program there are likely to be other levels of ABA professionals involved in a tiered system of service delivery. Every ABA provider structures their team a little differently; however you may have the following professionals involved:^{6,7} (See table on page 6.)

Before you make your decision on which ABA provider you will use, it is highly recommended that you meet with different teams to determine if they are a good fit for you. You can ask to meet with a clinician (either a Clinical Supervisor or a Senior Therapist) to discuss your needs. Preparing questions and thinking about the goals you want to set are great conversation starters to assess their experience with your particular needs (e.g., Will they collaborate with other professionals? What experience and education do they have? How will they share progress updates and how frequently?). It's also important to think about the best setting for the program. In Ontario, programs are typically run inside your home or in a centre/clinic; however, some ABA providers might have flexibility with location of service. Find one that suits your unique needs and one that is in line with your goals. For example, if you want to work on social skills, perhaps you want to have your program run in a centre with others. You can find a list of questions to ask providers from Autism Ontario at <https://www.autismontario.com/node/645> or from Holland Bloorview at <https://hollandbloorview.ca/sites/default/files/2021-03/GeneralQuestions-HiringBT.pdf>.

What happens next?

Once you have chosen the best clinician for your unique needs, you will sign a service agreement.² This written contract outlines the services to be provided. Take time to read this and ask questions. If you do not understand something, ask for clarification.

The next step is a behaviour analytic assessment.² Clinicians assess skills across various domains or skill areas. There are many different assessments that clinicians use to determine someone’s strengths and needs. Assessments vary based on the client’s age and the skills or behaviours that need assessing. Speak to your clinician about the assessment they recommend.

Once the assessment is completed, goals are identified by the individual, their family and the clinician.² Goals should reflect the individual's needs, values and culture. What to teach and how to teach are unique to each person on the spectrum and are determined

individually. An individualized program or set of programs will be developed and reviewed and consented to before starting.

Direct intervention

The frontline therapist (e.g., Instructor Therapist, RBT) will then begin working with the person on the spectrum. During the first few sessions the Instructor Therapist is likely to focus more on relationship building. It is important that an individual have the time to develop a relationship with the Instructor Therapist before working on goals. Once a relationship is established, the Instructor Therapist begins to work with the individual on the set target skills. This learning process includes a lot of practice and repetition with target skills. The Instructor Therapist implements the program, collects data, and graphs the progress.⁶ The Senior Therapist and/or Clinical Supervisor monitors results and determines if any programming

modifications are required.⁶ Clinicians will include your family throughout the learning process. Parent and family inclusion is a critical step in ensuring consistency in a person’s program.⁶ Understanding how to best support your loved one at home and in the community will help promote a successful ABA experience. Once a person’s goals are met, the Clinical Supervisor and/or Senior Therapist meets with the individual and their family to determine next steps. This may include discharge and transition planning so that there is a systematic and smooth transition to the next stage of the person’s life.⁶ ABA is a scientific approach to learning that can help individuals with autism across their lifespan.⁷ As our field is always evolving, it is important that people with autism and their families ask questions, self advocate, and get involved with their ABA program so they can ensure they are making the most of their learning experience in a way that benefits them best. ■

Clinical Supervisor/BCBA	Senior Therapist/BCaBA or BCBA	Instructor Therapist/RBT
Oversees the ABA program. Is responsible for the program. May oversee more than one team or centre/clinic. May be a BCBA, BCBA-D or on the approved provider list. Typically have a graduate level degree and education and experience in the field of ABA.	Manages a team of Instructors. May support program development, family involvement, and staff training. May be a BCBA, or a BCaBA™ (Board Certified Assistant Behaviour Analyst™), or on the approved provider list. Typically have a graduate or undergraduate level degree and experience in the field. There is no regulation in Ontario on the specific degree required for a Senior Therapist role.	Carries out the ABA program. Works directly with the person. May also be called an Instructor, Behaviour Technician, they may or may not hold a credential with the BACB called a Registered Behaviour Technician™ (RBT™)- requiring the supervision of a BCaBA or BCBA. Typically have a secondary school diploma or undergraduate/ college degree. There is no regulation in Ontario on the specific degree required for an Instructor Therapist role. Often more than one Instructor will work with a person.

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Are You Ready?

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

Photos.com

by Michael Cnudde, Managing Editor,
Autism Matters

Natural disasters such as severe storms, tornados, forest fires or earthquakes, or unexpected events such as a housefire or social disturbances such as the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, or a prolonged power outage can have a marked impact on most families, but for families of autistic children and youth, without proper planning, the impact can be magnified.

Evidence informed



WITH THE ONSET OF CLIMATE CHANGE and the increased likelihood of severe weather patterns, emergency preparedness is becoming even more important.

Children on the autism spectrum require greater consideration when planning for emergencies as they are considered more vulnerable.^{1,2,3} Even so, according to Statistics Canada's 2014 *Emergency Preparedness in Canada*, certain segments of the population, such as those with mental health conditions, were less likely to plan for emergencies such as natural disasters.⁴ A 2015 American study confirmed this, reporting that families with children with developmental disabilities such as autism were not well prepared for disasters or emergencies.⁵

An emergency or prolonged social disturbance can severely impact a child, youth or young adult on the autism spectrum. For example, during the pandemic which was a broad social disruption, children with autism and their families who depended on routine found their lives upended.⁶ During a fire or other emergency, it may be quite easy for an autistic person to experience sensory overload due to loud alarms, bright strobe lights, or general confusion.⁷

Preparing ahead of time is key

How do parents, caregivers and autistic people begin to plan for such potential emergency situations? "Parents can take the first step and feel really prepared themselves," said Faye Harper, M.ADS, BCBA, Clinical Coordinator at the McMaster Children's Hospital Autism Program. Being prepared, she said, sets an example because children can and will pick up on their parents' emotions.

As a part of preparation, most emergency planning guides suggest packing an emergency kit for each family member at the ready. For example, the Canadian



Government suggests for each person, such a kit would include two litres of water per day; prescription drugs; non-perishable foodstuffs like canned goods, dried foods, and energy bars; flashlight; and a wind-up portable radio.⁸

Beyond this, says Faye, when considering the needs of an autistic youth or child, an emergency kit might also include items to deal with sensory issues, such as noise-cancelling headphones or sunglasses. Also important, she says, is to pack chargers if you plan on packing devices such as cellphones or tablets. But Faye also stressed the need for a “busy bag.” “It’s a bag you bring with you that keeps your child busy during unpredictable events,” Faye says. “Some families might already have this if they have a child or youth that requires diapers, they might have [something] like a diaper bag that also has other items from a busy bag.”

Fire

Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors that make a shrill sound may contribute to an autistic person’s sensory overload and their potential for confusion.⁹ However, many manufacturers now offer detectors with voice alarms, which can lessen their discomfort.

It cannot be overstated that smoke detectors save lives, and it’s important that your home has working smoke detectors that you test regularly to ensure they are operational. Ideally these should be replaced every 10 years.¹⁰

Power failures

Disruptions such as power failures that last more than a few hours can pose their own challenges. Says Rebecca Ensor, MA BCBA, Clinical Coordinator at the McMaster Children’s Hospital Autism Program, “It’s good to have some low-tech options readily available. Familiar spaces and the presence of trusted and reliable family members will help maintain a sense of continuity for children. That might be a way to make what is happening feel more routine, even if it’s something like a power outage.”

Having a safe meeting location planned and agreed-upon in advance is also important. “We often teach kids there’s a good place to go, no matter what happens,” says Rebecca. She encourages parents and caregivers to think about those places in advance so they’re not left scrambling at the last minute. “Where’s that place you can go to for safety? Can you get there at any time?”

Using social stories to familiarize children on the spectrum with these situations is another good strategy.¹¹ A social story might introduce the concept of fire drills and the attendant alarms, why these occur and what to do when one happens. Social stories for these types of events can help to normalize the situation in the child’s eyes.¹² Many self-advocates have reported to researchers that they benefit from regular emergency planning practice.¹³

It’s also important that first responders are aware that the individual they may encounter is autistic and understand how to act accordingly, thus saving time—and potentially lives. Ensuring readily available identification specifying the person is autistic is crucial, especially if they are non-responsive or separated from family.¹⁴ This might be as simple as having an identification card, said Faye, or having pertinent information updated on devices such as a tablet the person might use.

Although no one knows what the future might hold, whatever happens, emergency planning and preparedness is critical. Planning now can pay dividends when it matters most, in the protection of your life and those of your loved ones. ■

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Help When You Need It

HEALTHCARE BARRIERS PREVENT MANY AUTISTIC PEOPLE FROM SEEKING MEDICAL TREATMENT

by Nikko McCarthy, Guest writer

Many autistic people with a serious or life-threatening condition do not seek medical care, according to a new study. The most common healthcare barriers include difficulties communicating with physicians or making appointments by telephone.

“FOR ME, as a physician, to realize that patients are sitting at home with medically serious conditions, unable to access health care or pick up the phone and call an ambulance when they need an ambulance, it’s absolutely shocking,” says lead investigator Mary Doherty, founder of Autistic Doctors International and consultant anesthetist at Our Lady’s Hospital in Navan, Ireland.

The data come from a 52-item online survey of 507 autistic and 157 non-autistic people who were recruited through social media and live mainly in the United Kingdom or Ireland. Doherty began developing the survey in consultation with autistic attendees at the 2018 Autscope conference in Tonbridge, England. Some survey questions were multiple-choice or yes-no, and others

Accountability



were open ended.

Among the autistic respondents, 77 percent had a formal diagnosis, 23 percent self-identified as autistic but did not have a diagnosis, and 62 percent were women. The median age for both groups was 38 years. In Ireland, there is no pathway to an autism diagnosis through the national health system; the only way to be diagnosed “is via private services, which means autistic adults are largely invisible in health care,” Doherty says. Receiving a formal diagnosis in Ireland can take several years after a referral from a general practitioner.

Most autistic people surveyed—80 percent—said they had difficulty visiting their doctor when needed. A driving factor was difficulty in using the telephone to book an appointment. Survey responses were similar for autistic people with and without a formal diagnosis.

Despite these barriers, autistic people were more likely to rate their physician relationship as ‘very important’ or ‘important,’ compared with non-autistic people. Still, only 33 percent of autistic respondents said they had a good relationship with their general practitioner. The statistical analyses did not account for potential confounding factors, such as ethnicity or socioeconomic status, and online surveys are prone to myriad sources of bias.

Nearly 70 percent of autistic people said they had untreated mental health

issues, nearly half said that they “did not attend referral to a specialist,” and 34 percent said they didn’t access treatment for a “potentially serious or life-threatening condition,” according to the study, published in *BMJ Open* in February.

“I wasn’t prepared for the level of difficulty that people were experiencing,” Doherty says. “As an autistic person, I had also experienced difficulty accessing health care, but I hadn’t put it together that this is a common autistic experience. I thought it was just me.”

Survey results are prone to ‘under-coverage bias.’ Online respondents are more likely to be white and female, and so results are not always representative of the group as a whole.

Still, Doherty has used the results to shape health care in Ireland. Clonakilty, a town in southern Ireland near the Celtic Sea, was the first “autism-friendly town” to be certified by the Irish autism charity AsIAM. The certification requires that half of the healthcare professionals in the town go through an autism-centric training program; Doherty was involved in those trainings. At least a dozen towns in Ireland are now certified as “autism-friendly.”

To ease barriers to health care, Doherty recommends that physicians allow autistic people to schedule appointments online, give them extra time to describe their symptoms and conduct ‘sensory’ audits on their waiting rooms.

Many autistic people reported in the survey that they felt uncomfortable at the doctor’s office because of noise, crowds or bright lights.

In the UK, anyone older than 14 years with an intellectual disability is invited each year to attend a health checkup through the national health service, and doctors are incentivized to participate in the program. Sebastian Shaw, an honorary clinical lecturer at Brighton and Sussex Medical School who worked with Doherty on the new study, is pushing to expand that scheme to include autistic adults without intellectual disability too.

“I’m not aware of any large studies that have previously associated these adverse outcomes in the way that our study did,” says Shaw, who is autistic. “But it takes a lot of time for research to filter down into practice.”

Reprinted with permission. This article originally appeared in the March 10, 2022, online edition of Spectrum, Autism Research News https://www.spectrumnews.org/news/health-care-barriers-prevent-many-autistic-people-from-seeking-medical-treatment/?utm_source=Spectrum+Newsletters&utm_campaign=fdb0769f86-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_03_09_08_31&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_529db1161f-fdb0769f86-168810225 ■



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On the Spectrum

A NEW TWIST TO AUTISTIC REPRESENTATION

by Michael Cnudde, Managing Editor,
Autism Matters



▼ L to R: Naomi Levov, Niv Majar and Ben Yosipovich

Photo courtesy of CBC Gem

ON THE SPECTRUM is an Israeli television series that depicts the lives of three autistic young adults who live together—Ron, Zohar and Armit (played respectively by Niv Majar, Naomi Levov and Ben Yosipovich). Filmed as a series of ten 30-minute episodes in 2018, it is unique in that it features autistic actors playing the lead roles. The program is currently being streamed on CBC Gem.

On the surface, *On the Spectrum* would seem to answer the demands of many autistic self-advocates for better representation of autistic people in the media. But how does our panel of self-advocates see this? The Autism Ontario Adult Media Panel recently discussed these and other questions. Courtney Weaver, freelance writer and self-advocate; David Moloney, Autism Ontario Board Member, self-advocate, and Mutual Fund Indexer with CIBC; and self-advocate Nicole Corrado, participated in the conversation moderated by *Autism Matters* Managing Editor, Michael Cnudde.

"I thought it illustrated some very real executive functioning related challenges



in daily living that can be faced by many adults diagnosed on the autism spectrum and those closest to them," Courtney said, reflecting on the first episode. She noted some of the everyday challenges portrayed in the episode including using the telephone which the character Ron turned off due to its noise. Doing this, however, cut him off from communication with family members who wanted to remain in contact. Also accurately reflected were some characters' lack of understanding of the value of money. It [this episode] reminded me of an experience my mom had at a social house for persons with developmental disabilities "since the money and communication experiences reminded me of the social house."

"It was a very good, very honest and truthful and accurate representation of people on the spectrum," said David. "I was really quite pleased with how the director essentially allowed those featured to operate as they normally would." He said the show was well done, especially how the producers and directors appeared to take in all facets of individuals on the spectrum.

Courtney noted that she had recently learned that the actors who played the lead autistic characters also identified as autistic. "Their lived and acting experience came together to give great performances."

Nicole's opinion differed, however. While she appreciated the fact that there were autistic actors on the program, she hoped that they would also have writers and directors who were also on the spectrum. "The actors are only going by what's on the script, and they can only do the best with whatever scripts they have," she said. "They can be autistic actors. But if the scripts depict autism in an inaccurate way, the depictions will only be as accurate as the script. The actors can only do as well as they can with the script."

Of all the characters, Ron turned out to be the favourite of both David and

Nicole. Although she considered Ron rude to the people around him, she felt that came from fear. "A lot of his stuff does come from fear, but you do see the most growth," Nicole said. "I do see the potential. There is a kindness buried under his rude exterior. We really start to see him change once he begins to leave his house."

During this and the other six episodes she had watched, Nicole noted that Ron was the only character who demonstrated much growth, citing how he had grown when interacting with a neighbour. At first, she said, they didn't get along, but they began to help each other. "I found he was the only one who really had character progression."

David agreed with Nicole that Ron was his favourite character. He said he found parallels between his experiences and those of the character, particularly in the job search process. "I can understand his frustrations in trying to find suitable employment, and I can understand his difficulty in the interview. I was once there myself." When he was job hunting, he said he had no idea how to prepare for an interview. David is pleased that the

character is depicted as seeking—however begrudgingly—employment. "It's my hope that as long it takes, he will find something suitable."

Nicole reserved stronger opinions for the other two main characters, Zohar and Armit. She felt that Zohar lacked boundaries when searching for potential romantic partners, saying she presented a negative image of women on the autism spectrum. Nicole found Armit's romantic pursuit of a waitress who worked in a nearby café "just creepy."

The fact that the program was filmed in Hebrew and broadcast with English subtitles, while an accessibility device, posed some issues for group members. One member not present reported he could not watch the program because of the subtitles. David said that while he watched the episode, he found the subtitles particularly demanding due to his age-related vision loss and that he had to look at computer screens for much of his work. "It's challenging to view content on a mobile device, or other personal computers or other products for a prolonged period." ■



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



A Call to Action

A MOTHER'S ELECTION WISH LIST

by Rita Miceli, Parent and Guest Writer

▲ Rita Miceli and her son, Giaci

Photo courtesy of Rita Miceli

EVERY AUTISTIC CHILD IS DIFFERENT, and every autistic adult is different. There are no two cases the same, so their needs must be addressed individually with consultation from their loved ones. I know this firsthand because I am the mother of an autistic adult son.

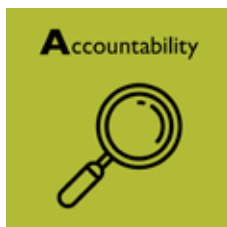
My son is now 26 years old. When he turned 18, services available to him dropped off significantly. It was a frightening time for us.

As the mother of four children, I am concerned about the responsibilities my three daughters will have to carry when my husband and I can no longer support our son. I'm concerned about my child's well-being when I am no longer able to care for him. These are worries shared by all parents, and they are magnified when you have an autistic child who is nonverbal.

As an autism community, we continue to feel isolated, ignored and alone. More services need to be provided. More financial support must be given.

Families affected by autism are already under considerable stress, and it is unfair to make them spend their precious resources and the little time they have wondering what to do, where to go for help, what help to get, whom to trust and whom to believe. Life is challenging enough when caring for someone with a developmental disability. No one should have also to battle the system for support.

So, what would I like to see happen? There are many things on my wish list, but I will keep it simple.



More needs to be done

The government needs to provide more support to autistic adults. All political parties need to take a hard look at where this population has been forgotten and overlooked. They need to address the lack of opportunities for autistic adults in the workforce, especially those who may be nonverbal or have minimal language, cognitive abilities, or both.

Every human has the right to lead a dignified life and fulfil their potential. Everyone should be valued and respected. However, in our society, persons with autism are still not fully understood, and they continue to be overlooked.

If a person receives Ontario Disability Support Program supports and they work making over \$200 per month, monies are taken away from their monthly support. Taking away earnings is not proactive and does not give the person the ability to live with dignity. They are penalized for working. They should be allowed to make more and not have the government take funds away. The government needs to increase the employment income threshold, from

\$200 to at least \$800. I would also love to see programs available to address continued education, vocational training and life skills training. Currently, there isn't much out there, if anything at all.

More needs to be offered

Other unmet service needs include social skills programs, activity-based programs, recreation programs and specialized summer activities for adults with autism. Day programs should promote activities such as gardening, life skills, crafts, computer skills, social skill development and mental health programs.

There needs to be a focal point for autism information, provided by a trusted source, to save time navigating the current confusing and unreliable maze of information.

An appointed social worker dedicated to each family would be ideal to help them navigate the system and address all their needs. This person could address securing job coaching, employment and housing.

There is a serious deficit for housing opportunities. Many autistic adults are

in need of a safe and comfortable home that provides 24-hour support. Our government must address the lack of housing, group homes and supported living arrangements for adults with autism. An increase in the housing allowance to match market rent (based on the city the recipient lives in) would go a long way to resolving this.

Our society should ponder the social and economic benefits of encouraging continued development and increased quality of life for the autism community.

It doesn't take a village to raise a child on the spectrum; it takes a committed, open and honest government that is held accountable by our society.

This is a call for action. Address it now. There is no time to waste. ■

Autism does matter

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

AutismMATTERS contains valuable articles for educators and parents, written by clinicians, educators and researchers as well as personal stories by students and adults on the spectrum.

Members of Autism Ontario receive this quarterly publication free. We encourage schools to register as professional members of Autism Ontario, which will give them a subscription to every issue of **AutismMATTERS** along with many other benefits.

If you have a child in an Ontario school, please encourage your school's principal or special educators to enroll as a professional member of Autism Ontario to make your school and community an inclusive place for students on the autism spectrum.

For more information, visit <https://www.autismontario.com/membership>.



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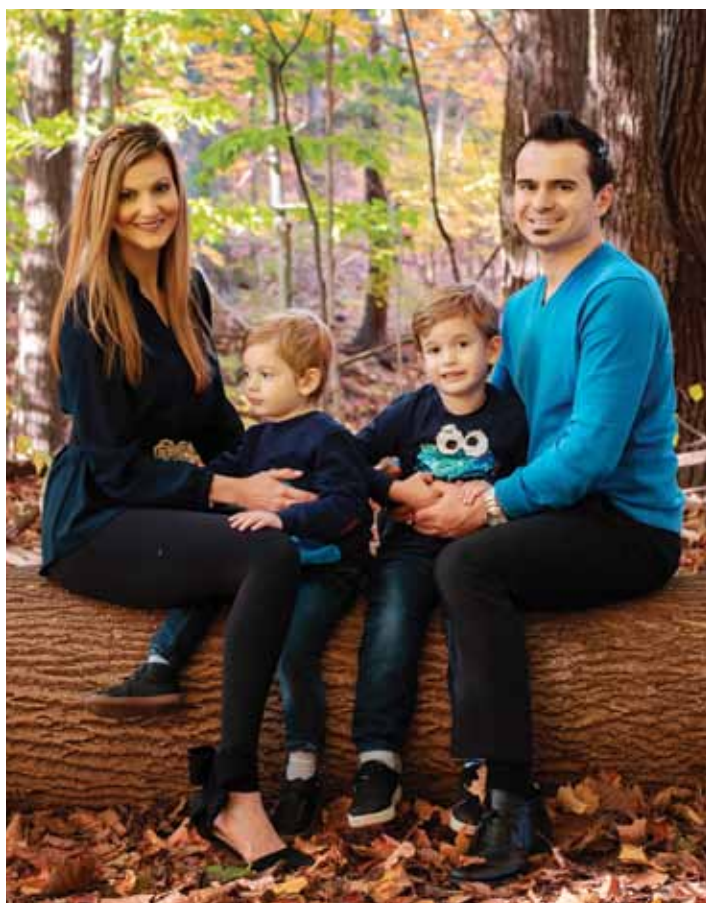
Understanding Lenny

A STORY WITH A HAPPY ENDING

by Michael Cnudde, Managing Editor, *Autism Matters*

Natalie Abkarian Cimini and her husband Michael with their sons Lorenzo (left) and Leo.

Photo courtesy of Natalie Abkarian Cimini



ABOUT THE TIME that Natalie Abkarian Cimini and her husband Michael received the diagnosis that their sons Leo now 7, and Lorenzo, now 5, were on the autism spectrum, they began to wonder how best to explain it to their boys as they grew older. Initially, Natalie, and Michael had decided not to tell the boys but wait and see how it developed organically.

What changed the matter, said Natalie, was the boys' response to speech therapy. "The boys were responding well to rhyming books," she said, "and it was helping with their speech development. I loved it."

Natalie started looking around for rhyming picture books that were age-appropriate and were about autistic children. She wanted to find characters her boys could relate to so it would be natural for them when the conversation about autism occurred. Unfortunately, Natalie quickly realized those books didn't exist—yet. "So since I couldn't find it, I just thought, you know what? I'm going to put pen to paper and start writing my own book. And one thing led to another."

As she wrote the book, Natalie took a cautious approach to the story. "I was a little bit nervous about how I was going to portray the main character, Lenny." Writing a story like this demands care, she said, because you don't want the reader to assume that every child with autism is the same. We know that's incorrect.

Natalie decided to base the book on what she knew best. "I based it on our story, like the sensitivities that we deal with in our household, the challenges that our boys face." In a brief forward to *Understanding Lenny*, she wrote how she based the book on a true story. "I wrote that it's based on our true story and what we experienced ourselves and that all children with autism, or all persons with autism, are different."

The main character, Lenny, is an amalgam of her two boys, Leo and Lorenzo. "I thought Lenny was a nice little mix of both of them." The book's primary purpose was to educate the reader about what a child on the spectrum experiences and what neurotypical children around them might expect if they



meet someone with autism. Ultimately, the book's goal is to create awareness, understanding and acceptance of people on the autism spectrum. "Hopefully, it will help people understand why they're saying things the way they are, why they're behaving the way they are, and to understand and be kind and inclusive in their play and interactions."

Although *Understanding Lenny* has been well received, a review from the toughest critics—Leo and Lorenzo—was yet to come. But she needn't have worried. "The first time I read it to them," said Natalie, "Leo was sitting beside me on the bed on one side, and Lorenzo was sitting on the other." As she started to read the book, Leo began to notice things. "As I'm turning the pages, he goes to the one part where the boy covers his ears. He says, 'That's what I do.' And then I read another page. He says, 'I do that too.' And then it's almost like, without me saying anything, he's making the connection. At the end, he says, 'I can be friends with Lenny.'"

At that moment, what she sought from a wider audience—the acceptance of autism—also occurred with Leo. "I couldn't believe how it just happened so organically that we had a conversation. We didn't have to plan it. He saw himself in the character. And it was almost like that was the end of the story. Like it's not a big deal."

With the success of *Understanding Lenny*, Natalie is already planning to share Lenny's future adventures. Perhaps

she said, future books will go into deeper discussions with Lenny expressing interest in having a girlfriend. "I want to have that opportunity in the future to let children with autism experience other social situations."

The paperback and ebook versions of *Understanding Lenny* are available for purchase at Amazon.ca: <https://www.amazon.ca/Understanding-Lenny-Book-About-Autism/dp/B09PHHCDZT> and

the hardcover is available at Barnes and Noble online.

Natalie donated proceeds from each sale to Kerry's Place Autism Services on World Autism Day on April 2, 2022 and has extended her campaign, to continue to give back to Kerry's Place for the remainder of the year. ■

Our Son's Superpowers

cartoon by Cassandre Mentor



From the Goodness of their Hearts

GOODNESS GIFT KEEPS ON GIVING

The SAAAC Autism Centre Goodness Gift Program began in 2015 with two people and the goal of providing employment experience for people from neurodiverse communities who would typically have difficulty finding and maintaining employment. Since then, the program has grown in both size and scope.

THE ONSET OF THE PANDEMIC has only made finding and maintaining employment even more difficult. According to an August 2020 Statistics Canada report, one-third of people with disabilities surveyed reported a temporary or permanent job loss due to the pandemic.

Even during these difficult times, SAAAC's Goodness Gift Program continues to expand and evolve. It's a social enterprise that allows neurodiverse individuals to learn soft skills such as team building, communication and time management, as well as hard skills like how to use spreadsheet software. Those are the very skills that employers look for, said Pravena Udayakumar, SAAAC spokesperson. "We have a lot of hard and soft skill training programs that are integrated into our sessions. So we're really getting them ready for the working world."

Michael Tucker, an individual with exceptionalities, works at Goodness Gift. He'd been with the program for three months after coming from a job funding club when interviewed. Michael found the posting on a job site for the position at Goodness Gift and, after applying, got the job. "I've worked at other jobs," he says, "where you're working at a sprint pace. That's hard to maintain. Here, I get the support that's tailored to me and other people."

Because of the pandemic, Michael comes to work two days a week to free up needed social distancing space for his co-workers.

Since 2015, both SAAAC and the program have expanded their outreach to the broader neurodiverse community. "Initially," said Pravena, "SAAAC's founder, Geetha Moorthy, was attuned to the needs of the South Asian community. But when we started understanding the needs expressed by diverse populations, and the lack of resources that existed for everyone beyond just the South Asian community, we opened for everyone. So that is why I am here at SAAAC. It's just everywhere."

"We're taking historically underprivileged populations out of this marginalized aspect," she says. The goal, she says, is to foster an inclusive work environment for the neurodiverse, where traditionally employers may have not been so inclusive.

The pandemic has slowed their program somewhat, but Pravena remains confident that things will pick up again.

"It's so humbling," she says. "It makes me very hopeful and excited to see where this goes, because the program may not have been here in 2015 when I first started, but I have been through the evolving process, and to see how we've changed the lives of these individuals, but also the social impact that we're creating. It means so much."

As she's out in the community, Pravena meets people who are presently employed and have gone through the Goodness Gift program. "Industries are now more aware and educated on how to train and employ individuals on the spectrum. We are creating an impact, and it just makes me so hopeful for the future." ■

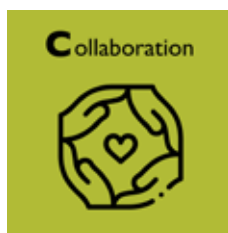


Photo courtesy SAAAC



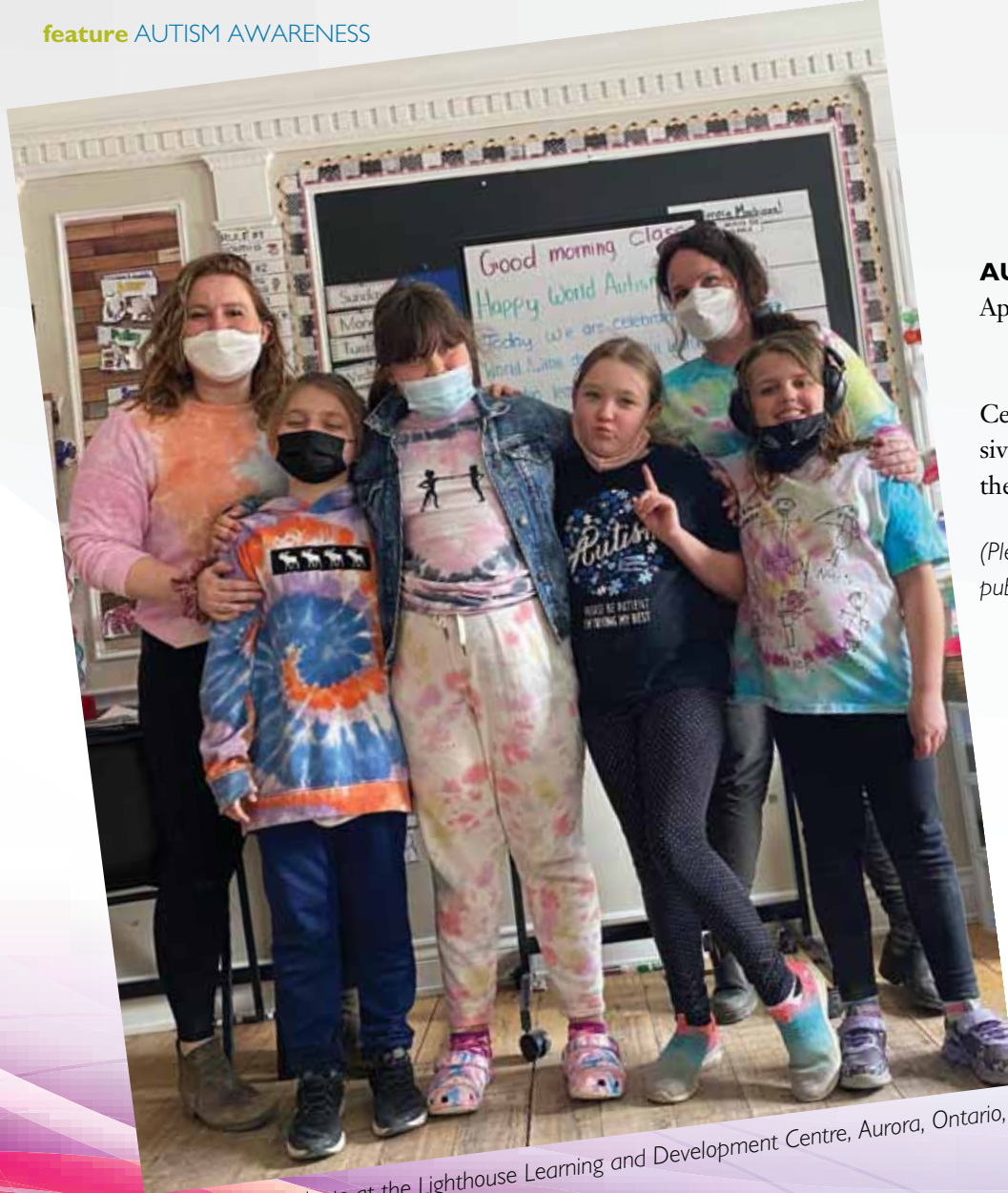
Celebrate the S

AUTISM ONTARIO launched *Celebrate the Spectrum* on April 2, 2022, which ran throughout April.

Thank you to everyone who made it a success!

Across the province, people on the spectrum, families, and educators celebrated *Celebrate the Spectrum* in classrooms, backyards, and community spaces across Ontario for autism. People taking part were encouraged to celebrate the spectrum in their unique ways via social media.

(Please note where not specified, all photos provided by participants.)



▲ Staff and students at the Lighthouse Learning and Development Centre, Aurora, Ontario, proudly wear their handiwork.



▲ Staff and students celebrating the Spectrum



▲ Staff of Anne Frank Public School, Maple, Ontario, lead by example.



▲ Arthur Azzopardi has some serious fun
Photo courtesy of Monica Azzopardi



▲ Joy Alma
Photo courtesy of Monica Azzopardi

Spectrum, 2022!

Spectrum, marking World Autism Day on Saturday,

s.

their families and friends enthusiastically shared their homes and offices to help create a supportive and inclusive environment. We encouraged to share images of how they celebrated the day. Here's a selection of what you sent us. Enjoy!

Our contributors have also kindly given their consent for



at École secondaire catholique l'Essor gather to Celebrate the



with her sons Ryder and Magnus, show off their tie-dye handiwork of Joy Alma



▲ Jacob with his mom and Auntie Liz
Photo courtesy of Liz Mitchell



▲ Finnegan and Gus hang out

INFO Autisme



L'analyse comportementale appliquée

À QUOI S'ATTENDRE?

par Kristin Gunby, M.S., BCBA, analyste du comportement,
Autisme Ontario

L'ANALYSE COMPORTEMENTALE APPLIQUÉE (ACA) est une approche scientifique qui vise à résoudre des problèmes pratiques.⁵ On y recourt couramment pour aider les personnes autistes à atteindre des objectifs significatifs.³ Même si l'ACA a fait ses preuves depuis des décennies comme méthode d'enseignement pour tous les individus, y compris les personnes autistes,⁷ il peut être intimidant de connaître tous les tenants et aboutissants de ce domaine et de ce qu'il peut nous offrir! Si vous-même ou votre enfant avez reçu un diagnostic d'autisme et êtes intéressé par l'ACA, c'est une bonne idée au départ de savoir ce qu'est l'ACA et de comprendre comment choisir le bon praticien et la meilleure façon d'appuyer une personne qui accède à un programme d'ACA.

Qu'est-ce que l'ACA/Comment ça fonctionne? Qu'est-ce qui en fait l'efficacité?

L'ACA s'intéresse au comportement d'un individu à l'égard de ce qui se passe autour de lui, plus particulièrement à ce qui se passe avant et après le comportement.³

Les praticiens ou intervenants peuvent appliquer diverses stratégies pour enseigner des habiletés. Tout d'abord, ils peuvent décomposer les habiletés en composantes plus petites et plus maniables en procédant à une analyse des tâches (c'est-à-dire une description étape par étape de l'exécution de cette habileté).³ Par exemple, pour apprendre à une personne comment chausser ses souliers, on pourrait tout d'abord créer une analyse des tâches (p. ex. prendre les chaussures, défaire les lacets, placer une chaussure sur le sol, insérer le pied). Ensuite, on déterminerait un point de départ, ou une habileté cible, raisonnable. Une habileté cible est une action identifiée comme méritant d'être travaillée.³ Dans cet exemple, l'habileté cible pourrait être « prendre les chaussures ».

Des indices supplémentaires (appelés « incitations » en ACA) peuvent aider l'individu à exécuter l'habileté cible. Une

Éclairé par des
preuves



incitation est un type d'aide particulier donné par un tiers à l'individu pour l'aider à accomplir l'action ciblée.³ Quelques exemples: incitations verbales, délais, incitations visuelles ou incitations physiques (selon les préférences et les besoins particuliers de l'individu).³

Des récompenses sont utilisées pour reconnaître l'effort de l'individu et lui faire savoir qu'il est sur la bonne voie! Un renforçateur (c'est-à-dire une récompense) est fourni après l'exécution de l'habileté pour accroître la probabilité de réexécution de cette habileté.³ Dans le cas de la personne qui apprend à chausser ses souliers, l'intervenant peut lui demander quel article elle aimerait avoir ou quelle activité elle aimerait faire. Une fois que la personne a exprimé son choix (p. ex. souffler des bulles), l'intervenant lui demanderait d'exécuter l'habileté, et lui offrirait ensuite l'activité choisie (p. ex. « Commence par mettre tes souliers, puis après nous allons souffler des bulles »). Si la personne peut exécuter l'habileté cible (mettre ses souliers), l'intervenant lui offrirait alors immédiatement l'activité choisie. Si la personne ne peut pas exécuter l'habileté cible, l'intervenant établit une façon systématique et individualisée d'enseigner l'habileté en recourant aux incitations ou à l'aide.

L'intervenant recueille des données sur les habiletés cibles qui ont été choisies, puis il en fait une représentation graphique pour mieux visualiser les

résultats. Ces graphiques servent à éclairer le déroulement du programme et à déterminer s'il convient de le modifier pour mieux appuyer l'apprentissage.³ En ce sens, l'ACA est une méthode auto-correctrice. On peut adapter les programmes pour conserver les éléments qui fonctionnent, et rectifier ou changer ceux qui ne fonctionnent pas.

Recours à l'ACA pour les comportements à défi ou nuisibles

Pour aider une personne autiste à réduire des comportements à défi ou nuisibles, le praticien travaille avec cet individu et sa famille pour évaluer les raisons sous-jacentes à ces comportements. Pour ce faire, il procède à une évaluation fonctionnelle du comportement, qui vise à déterminer ce que l'individu veut (par exemple, souhaite-t-il accéder à quelque chose ou à quelqu'un, ou essaie-t-il d'éviter quelque chose ou quelqu'un ?).³ Ensuite, un plan est élaboré pour remplacer le comportement à défi ou nuisible par un nouveau comportement plus approprié. L'objectif est d'aider l'individu à satisfaire plus facilement ses besoins et ses désirs.³ Par exemple, si l'évaluation révèle que l'individu, lorsqu'il devait remplir une feuille de calcul mathématique, s'est levé et a quitté la classe parce que les mathématiques sont trop difficiles, alors le plan pourrait être de lui apprendre à demander une pause ou à demander de l'aide, ou encore de réviser la feuille de calcul en fonction de ses besoins.

ICI et ACA - Quelle est la différence?

L'intervention comportementale intensive (ICI) ou l'ACA complet consiste en l'application intensive d'un programme d'ACA (30 à 40 heures par semaine) en fonction d'un large éventail de buts. Lorsque l'intervention compte moins d'heures et a une portée plus étroite (p. ex. seulement quelques buts), on parle plutôt d'ACA ciblée.^{6,7} À la lumière d'une évaluation de base initiale, le praticien recommande un nombre hebdomadaire d'heures, dont il convient ensuite avec l'individu et sa famille. Un certain nombre de facteurs peuvent influencer la décision finale concernant le nombre d'heures, y compris, mais sans s'y limiter, l'accès à une aide financière ou les contraintes d'horaire. Il importe de souligner que les besoins de l'individu évolueront tout au long de sa vie et qu'il faudra vraisemblablement rajuster en conséquence le nombre hebdomadaire d'heures nécessaire pour répondre à ses besoins.

Choisir le bon fournisseur

Les analystes du comportement ont récemment obtenu en Ontario le statut de professionnel de la santé réglementé.⁴ Cela vous permettra de déterminer plus facilement à qui vous adresser pour votre programme d'ACA, puisque seules les personnes qualifiées seront autorisées à s'identifier comme analystes du comportement. Pendant

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



que les autorités provinciales peaufinent la réglementation, Autisme Ontario a dressé une liste de fournisseurs approuvés par le Programme ontarien des services en matière d'autisme (POSA), qu'on peut consulter à <https://www.oaproviderlist.ca/fr>. À l'heure actuelle, en Ontario, les programmes d'ACA ne peuvent être supervisés que par les analystes du comportement agréés par le Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) et par certaines personnes autorisées qui exercent une profession connexe réglementée et qui possèdent une formation et une expérience en ACA. Les titres d'analyste du comportement agréé (BCBA) ou et d'analyste du comportement agréé—doctoral (BCBA-D) sont décernés à une personne qui possède un grade d'études supérieures, a suivi des cours en ACA, a effectué un stage pratique supervisé en ACA et réussi un examen du BACB.¹ Le titre de BCBA-D est décerné aux personnes qui ont également obtenu un doctorat.¹ Les BCBA aussi bien que les BCBA-D sont assujettis à un code de déontologie et doivent accumuler aux deux ans 32 heures de formation continue pour conserver leur titre.¹

Un programme d'ACA fera probablement intervenir d'autres professionnels de l'ACA, dans un système de traitement à plusieurs paliers. Chaque fournisseur de services d'ACA structurera son équipe un peu différemment, mais il est possible que les professionnels figurant dans le tableau en fassent partie.^{6,7}

Avant d'arrêter votre choix sur un fournisseur de services d'ACA, il est fortement recommandé de rencontrer différentes équipes pour déterminer si elles vous conviennent. Vous pouvez demander de rencontrer un autre praticien (un superviseur clinique ou un thérapeute principal) pour discuter de vos besoins. Pour amorcer la conversation afin d'évaluer leur expérience par rapport à vos besoins particuliers

Superviseur clinique/BCBA	Thérapeute principal/ BCaBA ou BCBA	Thérapeute de première ligne
Supervise le programme d'ACA. Il est responsable du programme. Peut superviser plus d'une équipe ou plus d'un centre/d'une clinique. Peut être un BCBA, un BCBA-D ou faire partie de la liste des fournisseurs approuvés. Possède généralement un grade d'études supérieures, avec formation et expérience dans le domaine.	Dirige une équipe de thérapeutes de première ligne. Peut appuyer l'élaboration du programme, la participation de la famille et la formation du personnel. Peut être un BCBA ou un BCaBA (Board Certified assistant Behavior Analyst), ou figurer sur la liste des fournisseurs approuvés. Possède généralement un diplôme universitaire ou de premier cycle et une expérience dans le domaine. La réglementation ontarienne ne précise pas le diplôme requis pour ce rôle.	Met en œuvre le programme d'ACA. Travaille directement avec l'individu. Ces thérapeutes peuvent être désignés thérapeute instructeur ou technicien du comportement enregistré (RBT). Les compétences des RBT sont reconnues par le Behavior Analyst Certification Board, et ils doivent être supervisés par un BCaBA ou un BCBA. Les thérapeutes de première ligne détiennent généralement un diplôme d'études secondaires ou un diplôme de premier cycle/d'études collégiales. La réglementation ontarienne ne précise pas le diplôme requis pour ce rôle. Souvent, plus d'un thérapeute travaillera avec un individu.

(par exemple, vont-ils collaborer avec d'autres professionnels? Quelle est leur expérience et leur formation? Comment et à quelle fréquence vous tiendront-ils au courant des progrès accomplis?), c'est une bonne idée de préparer à l'avance des questions et de réfléchir aux buts que vous souhaitez atteindre. Pensez également au cadre le plus approprié pour le programme. En Ontario, les programmes se déroulent généralement à domicile ou dans un centre/clinique; cependant, certains fournisseurs de services d'ACA peuvent être flexibles à ce sujet. Trouvez un fournisseur qui convient à vos besoins et à vos buts particuliers. Par exemple, si vous voulez travailler sur les habiletés sociales, il serait peut-être bon que le programme ait lieu dans un centre, avec d'autres personnes. Vous trouverez à <https://www.autismontario.com/fr/node/645> une liste de questions à poser aux fournisseurs de services; consultez également la page <https://hollandbloorview.ca/sites/default/files/2021-03/GeneralQuestions-HiringBT.pdf> (en anglais) de l'hôpital Holland Bloorview.

com/fr/node/645 une liste de questions à poser aux fournisseurs de services; consultez également la page <https://hollandbloorview.ca/sites/default/files/2021-03/GeneralQuestions-HiringBT.pdf> (en anglais) de l'hôpital Holland Bloorview.

Et ensuite?

Après avoir choisi le fournisseur qui répond le mieux à vos besoins particuliers, on vous demandera de signer une convention de services, c'est-à-dire un contrat écrit qui décrit les services devant être fournis.² Prenez le temps de le lire et de poser des questions. Si vous ne comprenez pas quelque chose, demandez des éclaircissements.

L'étape suivante est une évaluation analytique du comportement.² Les praticiens évaluent les habiletés de

l'individu dans divers domaines ou secteurs d'habiletés. Il existe pour cela diverses méthodes d'évaluation, permettant de cerner les points forts et les besoins d'une personne. Le type d'évaluation dépendra de l'âge du client et des habiletés ou comportements à évaluer. Discutez avec votre équipe de l'évaluation qu'elle recommande.

Une fois l'évaluation terminée, le praticien fixe les buts à atteindre, avec l'individu et sa famille.² Ces buts doivent refléter les besoins, les valeurs et la culture de l'individu. Ce qu'il faut enseigner et comment il faut l'enseigner dépend de chaque personne autiste, et est déterminé individuellement. Avant de commencer, un programme ou un ensemble de programmes individualisés est élaboré, passé en revue et accepté.

Intervention directe

Le thérapeute de première ligne (p. ex. le thérapeute instructeur ou le technicien du comportement enregistré) commencera alors à travailler avec la personne. Il consacrera vraisemblablement les premières séances à établir une relation. Avant de travailler sur ses buts, il importe que l'individu ait le temps de nouer une relation avec le thérapeute. Une fois la relation nouée, le thérapeute et l'individu commencent à travailler sur les habiletés cibles définies. Ce processus d'apprentissage implique beaucoup de pratique et de répétition des habiletés cibles. Le thérapeute applique le programme, il recueille des données et il reporte les progrès sur un graphique.⁶ Le thérapeute principal et/ou le superviseur clinique suit les résultats et détermine s'il convient d'apporter des modifications au programme.⁶

Tout au long du processus d'apprentissage, l'équipe mettra à contribution votre famille. La participation des parents et de la famille est un élément essentiel à la cohérence du programme.⁶ Le fait de comprendre comment apporter un soutien optimal à votre proche, tant à la maison que dans

la communauté, favorisera la réussite du programme d'ACA.

Une fois les buts atteints, le superviseur clinique et/ou le thérapeute principal rencontre l'individu et sa famille pour établir les prochaines étapes. Cela peut consister à planifier la sortie du programme et une transition systématique et harmonieuse vers la prochaine étape de vie de l'individu.⁶

En résumé, l'ACA est une approche scientifique d'apprentissage qui peut venir en aide aux personnes autistes tout au long de leur vie.⁷ Comme il s'agit d'un domaine en constante évolution, il est important que les personnes autistes et leur famille posent des questions, revendiquent leurs droits et s'impliquent dans leur programme d'ACA pour tirer le meilleur parti de leur expérience d'apprentissage, de la manière qui leur profite le mieux.

Références

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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*.

Soumettez-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



Emilie Geigel-Clermont

LA PHOTOGRAPHIE, UN MODE D'OUVERTURE SUR LE MONDE POUR EMILIE

par Jennifer Geigel

Respect



EMILIE GEIGEL-CLERMONT est une adolescente de 16 ans qui vit à Embrun, en Ontario, avec ses parents David et Jennifer ainsi que son frère aîné Jakob. Depuis sa jeune enfance, Emilie a toujours aimé l'art et la photographie. En effet, les photographies ont été pour elle, le début de la communication. Emilie a appris à communiquer avec le système de PECS (Système de communication par échange d'images) lorsqu'elle avait deux ans et demi. Sa mère utilise des photos réelles d'objets afin de faciliter la compréhension d'Emilie. Jusqu'à l'âge de huit ans, Emilie se sert de ses petites photographies pour faire connaître ses besoins, même si elle possède un certain vocabulaire. Lorsqu'elle était en première année, ses parents lui ont acheté un iPad pour l'aider à communiquer. Emilie peut prendre des photographies et des vidéos du monde qui l'entoure, et les utiliser pour présenter des événements qu'elle a vécus. Le visuel l'aide à trouver les mots dont elle a besoin pour décrire ses pensées. On découvre chez elle « l'œil artistique ». Ses photographies sont particulièrement esthétiques même à ce jeune âge!

Emilie devient une adolescente avec un vocabulaire surprenant en français et en anglais. Elle aime faire des vidéos sur YouTube et des présentations orales. Lors d'une présentation sur l'autisme à la municipalité de Russell pour



la Journée mondiale de l'autisme, Emilie explique qu'elle veut devenir photographe. Elle dit que sa photographie l'aide à comprendre le monde qui l'entoure. Emilie explique que lorsqu'elle prend des photos, elle peut les analyser à la suite des événements qui ont lieu. « Parfois les choses vont vite...mais lorsque je prends une photo, je peux la regarder par après et mieux comprendre ce qui se passe », dit l'adolescente.

Vers l'âge de 13 ans, elle s'amuse à prendre des photos créatives de ses animaux de compagnie, ses cochons d'Inde, maintenant avec le téléphone cellulaire de sa mère. Ensemble, mère et fille choisissent des arrière-plans et des accessoires et placent les cochons d'Inde. Pendant que la mère encourage les petits animaux à rester sages, l'adolescente prend des photographies. Sa mère, Jennifer, publie les photos sur sa page Facebook style « blogue » intitulée « Emilie and the Autism Journey ». Emilie commence à vouloir exposer ses photographies, qui émerveillent les gens. Des personnes demandent parfois si elles peuvent acheter des copies de certaines photos comiques ou simplement adorables. Jennifer

suggère à Emilie de fabriquer des petites cartes de souhait avec les photographies afin de pouvoir « vendre son produit ». C'est comment est née sa petite entreprise « Photographie J'EM ».

Aujourd'hui, à l'âge de 16 ans, Emilie continue de développer sa passion pour la photographie. Elle fabrique des cartes, des signets, des cartes postales et même des chandails avec sa photographie! Emilie vend aussi ses cartes dans certaines entreprises des régions d'Embrun, Ottawa et Orléans. Après un peu de pratique, elle est capable de se présenter devant les propriétaires avec ses produits pour demander la permission de les exposer et les vendre. C'est tout un exploit pour une jeune fille qui avait tellement de difficulté à communiquer! Emilie a su surmonter plusieurs obstacles pour arriver où elle est dans son cheminement. Cette petite entreprise est un choix idéal d'emploi pour Emilie. Elle peut travailler les heures qu'elle désire, explorer sa créativité et passer du temps avec ses animaux de compagnie, tout en restant en pyjama!

Découvrez les nouveautés d'Emilie sur la page Facebook « Emilie and the Autism Journey ».



AutismONTARIO
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...



Journée mondiale de l'autisme

Algonquin

Célébrons le spectre!

par Annie Tremblay

Les élèves de la classe 111 de l'École secondaire catholique Algonquin, à North Bay, ont célébré la Journée mondiale de l'autisme avec beaucoup d'enthousiasme. Ils ont fabriqué des rubans afin de sensibiliser les élèves et le personnel à la Journée de l'autisme et à la diversité des enfants autistes. Les élèves ont distribué leurs rubans à toutes les classes et chaque élève en a porté un avec fierté. « Nous sommes tous différents et cela nous rend tous spéciaux d'une façon ou d'une autre », a dit Daniel Hull, un élève de la classe 111.

Les élèves de la classe 111 ont aussi dégusté des délicieux petits gâteaux en célébration de la journée.

À la fin de la journée, les élèves sont retournés à la maison avec de bons souvenirs de leur journée!



La Croisée

par Jennifer Geigel



Le vendredi 1^{er} avril, l'école La Croisée, à Embrun, a souligné la Journée mondiale de l'autisme en participant à une activité d'art pendant la télé scolaire. M^{me} Jennifer Geigel, enseignante ressource en autorégulation, a encouragé les jeunes de la maternelle à la 6^e année à créer un arbre coloré qui représente la diversité. Les élèves avaient le choix de faire l'œuvre à la gouache ou aux crayons-feutres. Étape par étape, M^{me} Jennifer a expliqué comment les arbres sont toujours en croissance, comme nous. Comme nous également, chaque arbre sera différent. Les élèves ont tous été attentifs et ont créé des œuvres fantastiques pendant ces 15 minutes! Après l'activité, les dessins et peintures ont été affichés dans le corridor et sur les murs de certaines classes afin de démontrer que malgré nos différences, ensemble, nous formons une forêt merveilleuse d'arbres fantastiques!

Comme le dit si bien le CSDCEO : L'inclusion nous fait tous grandir!



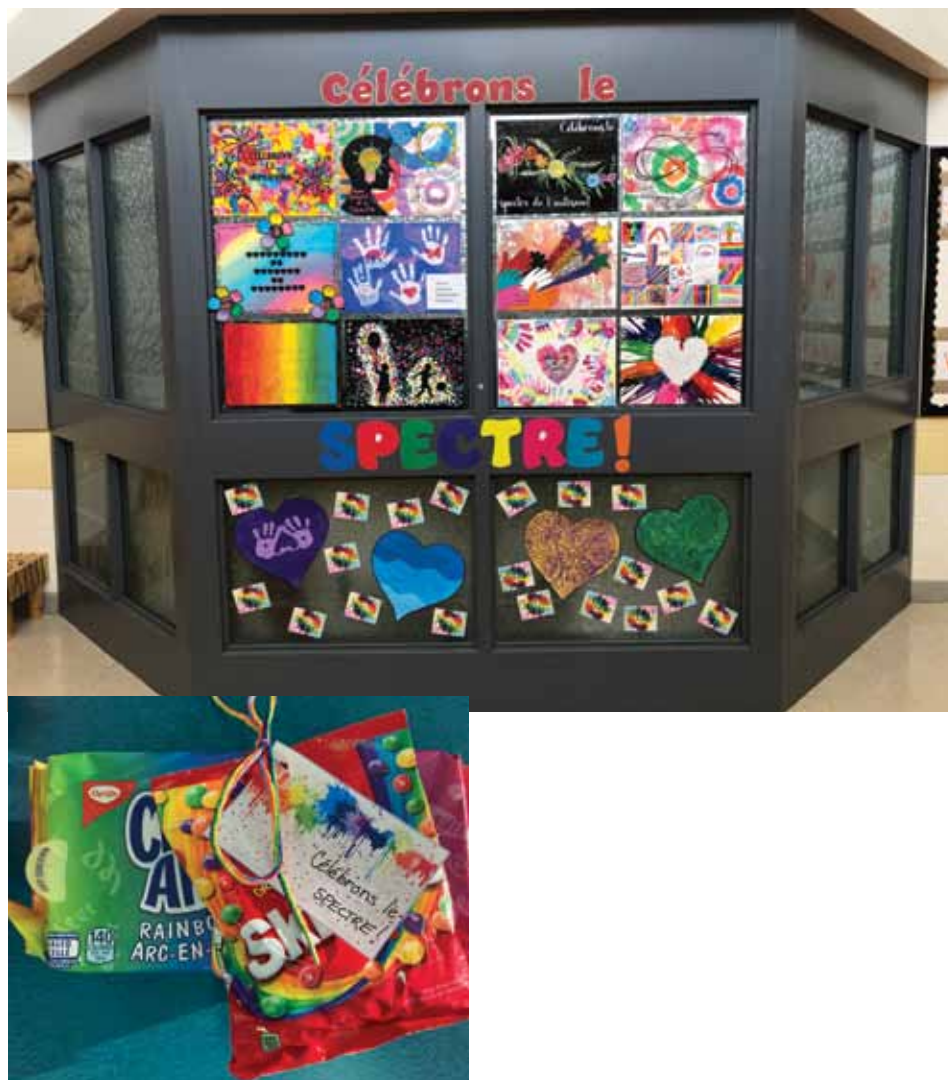
La Résurrection

Une célébration de toute beauté!

par Lacey Pigeau

C'est le lundi 4 avril que les élèves et le personnel de l'École catholique élémentaire La Résurrection, à Sturgeon Falls, se sont rencontrés pour « Célébrer le SPECTRE! ». Habillés de vêtements teints noués aux couleurs de l'arc-en-ciel, tous étaient présents à l'intersection de l'école pour faire briller nos élèves. Au préalable, chaque classe devait collaborer pour dessiner, peindre et bricoler un chef-d'œuvre représentant et valorisant le spectre de l'autisme. Ensemble, nous avons affiché chaque chef-d'œuvre pour enfin représenter ce que pour nous, à La Résurrection, signifie l'autisme. De toute beauté!

Pour conclure, nous avons partagé une gâterie spéciale : des Skittles et des biscuits aux pépites de chocolat arc-en-ciel. Quelle belle fête!



Lorrain

Un drapeau, des chandails et des bas!

par Jill Wrathall

Les élèves et le personnel de l'École catholique élémentaire Lorrain, à Bonfield, ont choisi deux belles façons de célébrer la Journée mondiale de l'autisme. La communauté scolaire a hissé le drapeau en portant un chandail à teinture à nœuds et des bas dépareillés pour souligner l'unicité de chaque personne. Tout comme chaque chandail à teinture à nœuds est unique, beau et spécial à sa façon, nous le sommes tous et toutes! Ensemble, notre communauté bâtit un monde plus solidaire et inclusif pour les personnes autistes.

Une telle célébration demande une soigneuse planification. En préparation, la classe de M. Mathieu a monté un atelier pour aider les plus petits à faire leurs chandails. Même nos amis en apprentissage virtuel ont pu participer en suivant les directives fournies pendant qu'ils étaient branchés. Quel plaisir! Quel bel exemple d'entraide! Quelle belle célébration du spectre!



Ste. Thérèse

Le joli babillard Célébrons le spectre met en vedette des bricolages multicolores des élèves de la classe distincte de l'École élémentaire catholique Sainte-Thérèse, à Windsor.



▲ De gauche à droite : Chantal, Denise, Parker, Carl, et Natalie

St.-Thomas-d'Aquin



▲ De gauche à droite : Dominic et Jacob



Faisons briller l'autisme à l'école Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin!

par Tanya Scratch

Le vendredi 1^{er} avril, les élèves et le personnel de l'École élémentaire catholique Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin, à Astorville, ont souligné la Journée mondiale de l'autisme en portant un t-shirt teint par nœuds et en tenant une rencontre virtuelle sur TEAMS. Après la présentation du thème de cette année et une brève explication de ce que c'est l'autisme, les participants ont visionné une entrevue avec Jacob Cousineau, un élève autiste, animée par les journalistes en herbe Emmett Clouthier et Dominic St-Georges. Les questions soigneusement préparées et posées avec respect et encouragement ont sûrement servi à accroître la compréhension de l'autisme chez les participants. Après le visionnement, Jacob a pris la parole

pour expliquer comment il s'est senti par rapport à la préparation et au déroulement de cette entrevue. Il était fier du résultat de ses efforts. Merci à Jacob, Emmett et Dominic pour cette vidéo éducative!

À la suite de la rencontre, tous les élèves de l'école ont été invités à colorier un drapeau de couleurs vibrantes pour souligner le thème « Faisons briller l'autisme ». Les drapeaux sont exposés dans le foyer de l'école.

Christ-Roi

Les mains de solidarité!

par Julie Lachance

Les élèves de l'École catholique élémentaire Christ-Roi, à River Valley, se sont amusés à laisser l'empreinte de leur main comme signe de solidarité en cette Journée mondiale de sensibilisation à l'autisme. Merci à Julie Poitras et Diane Legault pour avoir planifié ce beau projet. ■




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-selectionnez-sur «Bulletins des services en français»](http://www.autismontario.com/fr/bulletin-dinformation-et-selectionnez-sur-«Bulletins-des-services-en-français»).

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 <https://www.autismontario.com/membership>.



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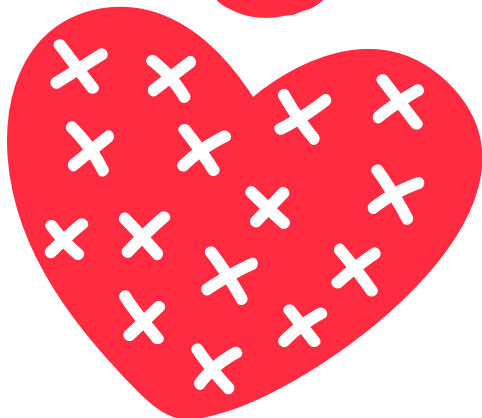
Les membres d'Autisme Ontario reçoivent automatiquement cette revue.



A Positive Outlook

A TRUCKLOAD OF HEART CAN CARRY YOU A LONG WAY

by Thomas C. Currie, Self Advocate



MY OUTLOOK ON BEING AUTISTIC is one of sunny optimism. Growing up was a constant battle, and I had to deal with a plethora of lifelong issues such as OCD, ADD, and my fine and gross motor skill impairment, among other peculiarities. My hyper-empathy is something I've come to consider among my best and worst autistic traits because it breeds compassion within me like nobody's business. Still, it's a double-edged sword because I tend to care too much about others, while being cautious about giving too much of myself away.

I struggled to conquer language and communications barriers, and I am learning new ways to connect with people, particularly neurotypicals. I used to flounder with self-loathing and hatred for my existence.

Along the way, I realized something. I can't control what I am, so there's no advantage in stewing in my lamentations. I worked towards making myself the complete version I could be. From then on, my life and outlook would never be the same.

I got into creative writing over a decade ago, and it has become my sovereign ruling passion alongside Pokemon games and chatting with like-minded souls who are my best friends. The support system I've carefully cultivated for myself is one of the biggest reasons for my paradigm shift.

These days, my self-love knows almost no bounds, and I've directed my creative passion towards experiencing everything this world has to offer so that I may continue this journey of perpetual growth. I've learned that our struggles in life help us maintain perspective, among other crucial life lessons and pieces of insight I've picked up over the years due to my time as a writer.

I honestly doubt I could relay my experiences with autism without giving you a wall of text the size of Olympus Mons,* but I hope you get the gist of it by now.

As far as my experiences with Autism Ontario, all I can say is that the kids seem sweet, and it's nice to know I'm not alone even if I didn't say much for the zoom meeting, I was taking it all in.

I consider myself a pioneer as far as support programs for people like me. My mom had to fight tooth and nail just to get the little bit of support for me that she could back in my time. Nowadays, because people like her didn't take it lying down, people with my neurology have access to support programs my child self could've scarcely fathomed and will likely 'normalize' and function in society far more seamlessly than I did. I'm so honoured to have played my part in all of this.

One day, when my creative energy generates a Kugelblitz** in my soul that takes the world of epic fantasy writing by storm, I'll look back on moments like this that set off a second Big Bang. When a little autistic boy or girl has been counted out by society, they can look back on my example and realize that the only thing standing in their way is themselves. Whether as a writer or anything they wish to be, they need



▲ Thomas Currie

Photo courtesy of Thomas Currie



only look back at my legacy to reaffirm what they can accomplish. That may be the most important thing I ever accomplish, both as a writer and a motivator for autistic children. The human spirit and imagination are limitless in their potential, and I'd gladly stake almost everything on their greatness.

Willow Springs Winery offered me an outlet for my ever-increasing go-getting attitude, and I've picked up a lot of skills and abilities in just the short time I've been with them. I still plan on taking the world by storm with my writing but making a little extra money towards my hobbies and writing programs never hurts. Also, I've recently decided to take up digital artwork and am saving up for a really nice drawing tablet. The mere thought of being able to bring my characters to life in a way I never could before fills my heart with joy. At this point, I've gotten so confident in myself that I honestly believe I'm capable of anything I set my mind to. I'm a specialized fighter, and I've honed my linear focus as an autistic mind as a result, so that I excel at any endeavour I undertake.

Never be afraid to dream big and never settle for mediocrity when you have the power to achieve excellence. Autistic brains are neither better nor worse than the mind of a neurotypical, just different. What defines a great mind is not some intellectual capacity you're supposedly predisposed to, but how well you make the most of whatever nature, life and genetics give you. A truckload of heart will take you further in life than all the natural aptitude in the world, as long as you always believe in yourself.

**Located on Mars, it is largest known volcano in the Solar System.*

***A very powerful type of black hole, formed from radiation instead of matter. ■*

Stepping Up to the Plate

"I AM NOT A HERO. I AM A BLACK FATHER."

by Clovis Grant, Parent and Guest Writer

WHY IS IT SEEN AS AN ACT OF HEROISM when a father is engaged with his child? What does that say about the views about fathers? Would it be any more the case if that father was Black, and had an autistic child? Well, that father is me, and at times, I have been given that uncomfortable label of being a hero, a superdad, father of the year, because of the level of engagement I have with my sons. I am here to say that I am NOT a hero, I am a Black father—someone who is caring for his young adult son of 25 who has autism; one who is there for his 27-year-old son and his young family.



While it was seen to be okay for my wife to be busy doing household things including looking after the kids, as these are the things a woman are “supposed” to do, my very presence at a medical appointment or parent-teacher interview appear to be a cause for celebration. I believe that this is due to the low expectation of fathers in society, and the bar is even lower for Black fathers, where I am not even expected to be involved in my child's life.

While unfortunately I didn't see many fathers at these appointments, one has to ask the question, “Why?” Were they too dejected to be involved? Have they chosen to remain on the periphery because they are not expected to be there and have internalized this role? Could this be the reason why there are so many women at the parent groups because the fathers feel—whether personally or due to societal expectations—that it's not for them and so they remain in the background?

Society has told Black fathers that

◀ Clovis Grant and his son, Isaiah.

Photo courtesy of Clovis Grant



their presence is not valid. Yet I know of fathers who have given up careers to be at home to care for their child with extra-ordinary needs, who go sleepless at night to care for their severely disabled child; those who are advocates, who are at the skating rink, baseball diamond,

"...when I saw the needs of my son and the workload my wife was carrying, I had to get involved."

swimming pool, spending time helping their child develop skills that many take for granted.

It is no easy task raising children. It is an even harder task when, like my son, they have autism or another type of disability. Our journey as a family has not been an easy one due to my son's disability. His behaviours—which at times can be called aggressive—have gotten him kicked out of programs or made him ineligible for most. Very frustrating! Despite the challenges, we never gave up on our desire to see him integrated and be accepted into community—whether it be our family, church or neighbourhood. While many issues have tapered off as he got older and matured, we're not out of the woods. He continues to need ongoing supervision, which we now get from a team of support workers.

I must admit, I have not always been engaged. I fell into the trap of thinking

that the early years stuff is not for me—that's what the women do. The few parent groups and workshops I attended were populated by women. Men were scarce and I did not fit in. However, when I saw the needs of my son and the workload my wife was carrying, I had to get involved. You see, as a Black person from the Caribbean, having a child with a disability can be a lonely affair. There exists a deep lack of understanding in our culture about disability, preconceived notions about the cause and the 'fix,' especially the case for 'invisible' disabilities like autism. The marginalization that we felt, however, was not only experienced among our people; we also felt it from mainstream services where there was often a lack of diversity among the staff, lack of awareness of the microaggressions they would display to racialized families, and the unwelcoming environment that was created for families that look like ours.

With these realities and challenges, I had to get engaged—and I wanted to be engaged. It was a necessity if I was going to help my son grow and thrive. Eventually, I got my act together and took over many of the visits to doctors, therapy, helped him develop his social skills, and took him to the baseball and hockey practices where he learned new skills. I also ended up doing more advocacy work when I took over as the representative on the Toronto District School Board Special Education Advisory

Committee for Community Living Toronto—a role I had for close to 10 years. Through these experiences, I met many fathers, just as committed as I am, to seeing their children grow, learn and thrive. My only regret is that I did not engage earlier.

So I say to fathers, especially Black fathers—get engaged with your children. Don't let the narrative of the absentee or disengaged father be your story. Don't allow the low expectations of society to discourage you from giving your all to your kids, especially those who have a disability. After all, we are called, not to be heroes, but dads. ■



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.oaproviderlist.ca

Good Morning, Blake

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF "CRASH" PRIDDLE

by Michael Cnudde, Managing Editor,
Autism Matters

AUTHOR, BROADCASTER AND ARTIST Blake "Crash" Priddle is accomplished by any measure.

So it was perhaps natural that the self-advocate decided to tell his life story. The idea of writing *Good Morning Blake, Growing Up Autistic and Being Okay* was something he had been considering for a long time when a chance conversation with a friend brought it into focus. He thought about it for a while; after he got the job as news director with radio station 102.9 CJAR in The Pas, Manitoba, he was ready. "I've been through so much," he said. "It's time to tell my story."

Blake's story begins in Espanola, Ontario, a small town west of Sudbury. He grew up listening to the radio. He knew he wanted a career in the media, but exactly what he wasn't sure. "...I thought, maybe I'll do TV news. And then I remembered how much I loved listening to the radio as a kid. I thought, they sound like they're having a lot of fun on the air. So I think I'll try it on for size."

His nickname, "Crash," came from being in a car accident. "You'll have to read that in the book," he said.

Growing up, Blake had a limited vocabulary and found it challenging to hold a conversation naturally until age five. "I really couldn't have a conversation. When I did, at an early age, it was through echolalia and things that I heard other people say, and I didn't use my own words."

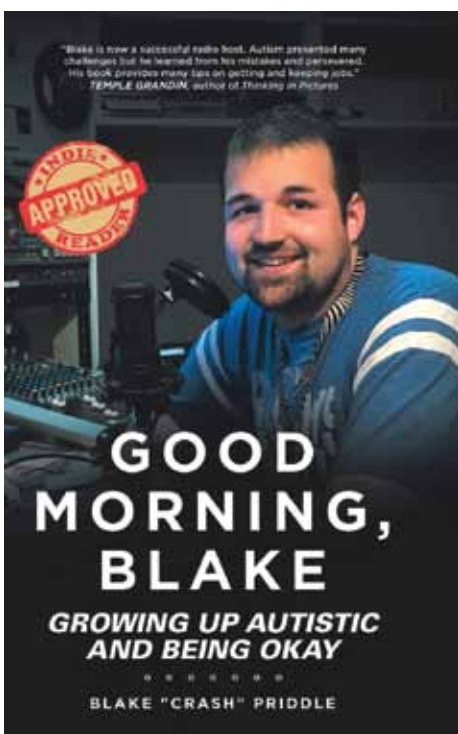
Blake knew he was different when he grew up. "I did certain things that other people didn't do, but I did them anyway. I didn't understand why I was bothered by things that didn't seem to bother other people. And I didn't know why," he said. "My parents knew that I was different as well."

He was diagnosed with autism at age six; it answered many of his questions when his parents told him. He wrote in his book about how his parents advocated on his behalf not only with his school but also with politicians. "My parents advocated for me to give me the things that I needed to be successful in school. At times they didn't mince words with those in authority at the school."

The response to *Good Morning, Blake* has been overwhelmingly positive. Pioneering autism researcher and advocate Temple Grandin lauded the book, especially where it concerned Blake's entering the workforce in his chosen field of broadcast journalism. She wrote, "Autism presented many challenges, but he [Blake] learned from his mistakes and persevered. His book provides many tips on getting and keeping jobs."

Blake's many readers would seem to agree. Recently, *Good Morning, Blake* won a Reader Views Reviewers Choice Award, where he placed bronze in the Memoir/Autobiography/Biography category.

Perhaps the most significant prize came later. Blake tells the story of an email



he received from the grandmother of a girl with severe autism. She had been looking for an inspiring story about autism. "She said I really inspired her," Blake said. "It's just an incredible feeling to know that I was able to help."

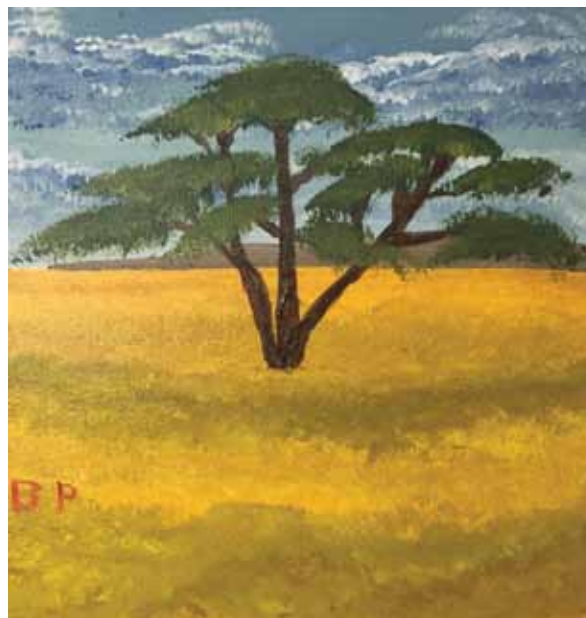
Next up, said Blake, is the audiobook version of his book. "I hope to have it completed within the next couple of months."

As an autistic person working in the media, Blake is always mindful of how the media portrays autistic people. "I think we need to do better," he said, noting there are actors on the autism spectrum, such as Dan Ackroyd and Daryl Hannah. "More needs to be done. It would be nice to see more of them in movies."

In his book, Blake wrote how it took a village to raise an autistic child and how that meant tolerance and acceptance of him by the people around him. It's an understanding on behalf of members of the community that someone else is different. "We have to do our part to do whatever we can to help them and not turn our backs on them just because they're different," he said. "And I was lucky, being in a small town. Some people were ignorant and didn't help. But for the most part, it was great. They looked out for my family and me and helped make me the person I am."

Aside from writing his autobiography and working as a radio broadcaster, Blake also engages in his painting hobby. A semi-professional artist, he has sold a few paintings. He began painting as a kid and took it up again a few years ago. Blake cites artist, instructor, and PBS host Bob Ross as one of his influences. "It's a way to spend spare time and get creative... Lately, I have been focused on other creative works, such as story writing. I would like to take up painting again for sure."

Good Morning, Blake closes on a triumphant note, where Blake writes, "I grew up autistic, and now I'm more than okay." "That's true," he reflects. "I think I am more than all right."



Paintings by Blake. ▲ Savannah
▼ Pine Trees



Good Morning, Blake, *Growing Up Autistic* and *Being Okay* by Blake Priddle is available in electronic, hardcover and paperback formats at Amazon.ca <https://www.amazon.ca/Good-Morning-Blake-Growing-Autistic/dp/0228859697>. It is also available online at Chapters and Barnes and Noble. ■



AutismONTARIO Learning Resources

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Autism Ontario's learning resources are here to assist you on your journey from diagnosis onward.

Webinars | Fact Sheets
Helpful Articles | Personal Stories
Archived Issues of *Autism Matters*
and more...

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

WHILE MANY PROGRAMS and events remained online, Autism Ontario's Regions provided families with many opportunities to explore, learn and forge new friendships.

Long-standing volunteer and community member drops the puck

Central East Region families were present on March 11 as the Kingston Frontenacs celebrated Autism Awareness Night. Paula Ball, an Autism Ontario volunteer and Conor Pap, a member of the local adult autistic community, dropped the puck to open the game.

Conor is a graduate of Lindsay College and Vocational Institute and currently works at Planet Fitness. A Special Olympian in curling, swimming, golf, and track and field, he won a gold medal in track at the 2017 Provincial Games.

Paula, a 25-year Autism Ontario volunteer, developed a buddy program between chil-

dren on the spectrum and Queens University students, a family support group, facilitated workshops in schools and supported the popular Lego Club. She has been recognized for her dedication to people with autism and their families by being awarded the Ontario Medal of Good Citizenship and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. Thank you, Paula (and all Autism Ontario volunteers) for your ongoing dedication to creating an inclusive Ontario for Autism.



▲ Paula and Conor at centre ice

Good food and good friends!

The **Central West** and **South Region** partnered to host a five-week cooking class with an Autism Ontario favourite, Chef Anthony. Chef Anthony is an adult on the spectrum and a graduate of George Brown's Chef School. His ongoing dedication to running informative programs is appreciated by all who attend.

Isabelle, a grateful parent, wrote: "This program is amazing and Chef Anthony is awesome. It has been such an enriching experience for my son, and he has learned so much. He must make a weekly ingredient list. He then goes shopping with my husband to buy his ingredients. We give him our credit card and he is responsible for making his own purchase. We are trying to teach him price matching in the process as well. He then must do

Collaboration



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.





▲ Food fun

all his prep work and make the meal on a fun, safe and inviting platform. And the best part is that dinner or dessert is ready! We post his weekly sessions on social media and the response from family and friends has been amazing. They love following Daniel's cooking journey. Thank you for running this program. We can't wait for the next one. "Thank you to the many vendors and partners who continue to work alongside Autism Ontario as we continue providing meaningful programs across Ontario.

Minecraft Masterclass

Autism Ontario **Toronto Region** is thrilled to respond to our community's demand for STEM-based programming with the launch of a six-week Minecraft Masterclass. The program is designed to leverage kids' interest in Minecraft to introduce them to other STEM topics such as robotics and coding. Minecraft is also a great medium for teaching positive communication skills. Participants in the program develop social skills such as patience, communication, problem solving and teamwork. Along the way, they learn about coding and 3D design. One parent raved, "Elliot loves the class! He looks forward to it all week saying it's the most fun club he has ever been a part of. He loves the instructor and thinks the activities are so fun. He's been telling everyone about it. Groups and activities don't always go smoothly for us, but this has been a big success!"



▲ Minecraft mastery

Bunny Smash House

Toronto Region delighted families this Easter with Bunny Smash Houses from The Rolling Pin Bakery. The kit proved very popular with families and was the perfect kiddie activity for the launch of Spring. One happy parent reported, "We had a lovely time decorating and smashing the house. Leah thought it was the best-ever gift." Another parent added, "We loved the Bunny Smash House! Everyone took part decorating and Marcus smashed! Thank you for such a sweet idea!"

Gourmet Chocolate Crunch Donuts

Toronto Region catered to our community's love of donuts with a Gourmet Chocolate Crunch Donut kit from The Innocent Baker. This family fun kit included not just the gourmet donut mix and decorations but the piping bags and donut pans as well. Parents thought it was the best thing since the invention of donuts. "Thank you so much for this wonderful kit," said one parent. "It was a great activity that kids enjoyed with dad and grandparents. They turned out soft and fluffy. I kept the recipe card, will make again, the molds are very nice."

"Thank you so much for this experience," wrote another parent. "My son was thrilled to do this. He was engaged the entire time. I was surprised at how much it interested him, and the fact that it was easy enough for him to be able to do."

March Break Happenings

With so many families home for March Break, Autism Ontario **Toronto Region** sent out a Curiosity Box Staycation kit to keep folks busy. The kit provided endless entertainment and there was something fun for everyone. The reaction to these high-quality kits was overwhelmingly positive, as parents gushed that there was enough to do to keep their kids creativity engaged for the entire week. "My kid loves art, colouring, gluing and drawing," said one parent. "He had so much fun making the projects. I'm super



▲ Marcus' bunny house is a smash

impressed with the quality and thought that went into the curiosity box. Thank you. Autism Ontario for supporting us."

"My daughter absolutely loved it," wrote another parent "Thank you so much for what you do and what you bring to families.

It couldn't have been a more perfect thing, especially home all week!"

Toronto Region families also got creative with their Artshine Premium Clay kits, which offered families a chance to nurture the creativity and imaginations of their chil-

dren, this kit provided kids the rewarding sensory experience of working in clay. The kits provided materials and step-by-step tutorials for three projects.

We had an incredible time playing with the Artshine box," said one happy parent. "The projects were very well organized. My child loved the sensory experience of squeezing the clay and was able to practice

his fine motor skills and following instructions. Thank you, Autism Ontario!" ■



◀ Far left: Paul ices up a donut
Left: Melissa satisfies her curiosity

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



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:

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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
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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 à 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.

HAS YOUR ADDRESS CHANGED?

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