

The ALL ABOARD NEWS



A Quarterly Publication from the Advisory Board on Autism and Related Disorders

Volume XV— Issue I

Winter 2011

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ABOARD's 7th Annual All Abilities Camp Fair

**Saturday, January 22, 2011
10:00 am – 3:00 pm**

Shoppes at NORTHWAY
Upper Level
8000 McKnight Road
(McKnight @ Babcock, North Hills)
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Shoppes at Northway (formerly Northway Mall) is located in the heart of the North Hills of Pittsburgh. Twenty minutes from downtown and is easily accessible from 279 North and the PA Turnpike.

Come See What Your Child Can Do This Summer!

Sponsored by:

- Camps and programs for school and preschool age children with disabilities
- Inclusion friendly camps and programs
- Full and half day programs
- Information regarding extended school year (ESY)



SAVE THE DATE

**ABOARD is proud to represent Autism at the
Walk for a Healthy Community presented by
Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield**

May 21, 2010 at Heinz Field
Online registration begins February 1, 2011
www.walkforahealthycommunity.org

Executive Director Message

Dear Readers,

Since taking the position as ABOARD's new executive director a few weeks ago, I have enjoyed reading and reflecting on what ABOARD is all about: families helping families. That 14 of them got together 15 years ago to help their children, and have since grown the organization to what it is today, is impressive.

An organization's quality is created by its constituents, not by a person who sits behind a desk in the office. So here's to all of our families, providers, physicians, therapists, psychologists, teachers and other supporters of people on the autism spectrum. You continue to make ABOARD what it is today - an organization that stands out in terms of quality information and solid referrals that reach thousands of people in need each year.

This success is due to the hard work of support group leaders, board members and office staff who make donor dollars (ABOARD's sole source of support) stretch to meet the ever-increasing needs of people on the spectrum.

We frequently cite the alarming increase in autism, which now occurs in at least 1 in 110 births. As the numbers rise, so does the demand on ABOARD's time and resources. Staff calendars are already filling through the end of February with meetings or events with goals to inform and to improve lives of those on the

spectrum. Outreach to struggling families, a biomedical conference, issues related to behavior and the law, and education about the possible ties between mitochondrial disorders and autism – these are only a few of the topics we plan to address this year.

So please party with us at our Gala on February 6th. Walk with us on May 21st at the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Communities – or walk FOR us in your local area if you cannot make it to Pittsburgh. Consider an honorary donation to ABOARD as a gift option to for that person who “has everything”. Let us help you raise awareness and funds within your synagogue, church, high school, or workplace. Do whatever you do best in order to pitch into the cause, just as our original families did “way back in the 90's.”

Other families need your help.

Thank you for being part of ABOARD's mission and for your continued support. Please contact our office any time to discuss concerns, or to tell us what you need in terms of information or support in 2011 and beyond.

Best wishes for living well with autism in the new year!

Lu Randall
Executive Director

A Special Thanks to our Supporters!

General Donation:

Susan Burke
Susan Cohen
Maureen O'Brien

In Honor of their students:

QVSD—Edgeworth Elementary
Teachers: Noreen Coyn
Christine Jobs
Christina Proctor
Cathy Gamble

In Recognition of

Beth Rom's Birthday
From Catherine Gross

In Honor of Joyce Douglas

From Staff of Pediatric
Alliance, Allergy Division

2009 United Way Campaign

Armstrong County
Gary P. Wolfe

Kevin Dunn Memorial Fund

for making ABOARD one of
the beneficiaries of the Kevin
Dunn Memorial Golf Outing.

Palmyra Area Education Association for raising funds for
ABOARD's Autism Spectrum
Support Group of Lebanon
County.

The following donations to
ABOARD were received from
The Pittsburgh Foundation
Day of Giving for 2010:

Stacey Becker
Jackie Bigler
Thomas Caste
Dorene Ciletti
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David Van Mook

Laurel Willingham-McLain
Jillian Zacks
Daniel Zove

In 2010 ABOARD

**responded to over 3,700
information requests for
guidance and support, gave
support to 63 family support
groups, distributed 1400
information packets and 750
publications from our lending
library, and provided
trainings to parents, para-
professionals, and educators.
It's a massive task made
possible only by the consid-
erable help of our friends
and supporters!**



ABOARD
presents
our Second

Integrative Biomedical Treatment Options For Children and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders

**Saturday,
March 19, 2011
Holiday Inn
Pittsburgh Airport**

Gut Biology, Pathology, and Treatment Strategies in Patients With Autism Spectrum Disorders

Anju Usman, MD

Patients diagnosed with autism have co-morbid medical conditions including gastrointestinal dysfunction. The most common issues that present are malabsorption, maldigestion, motility disorders, dysbiosis, and allergy/inflammation. This lecture will discuss gastrointestinal pathology, histology and treatment strategies for individuals on the autism spectrum as well as focus on the gut-brain-immune connection as it relates to autoimmunity and potentially PANDAS.

Autism and the Autonomic Nervous System

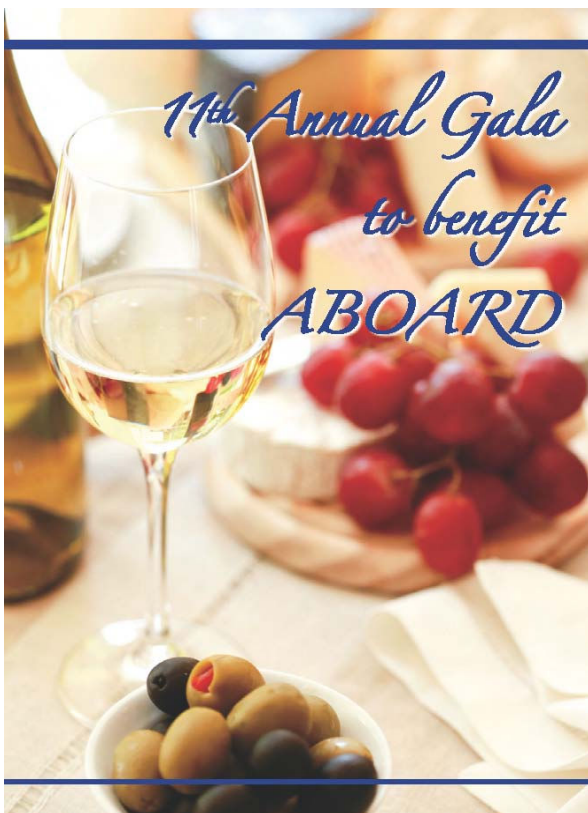
Anju Usman, MD

Patients with autism are in a state of chronic stress. This stress causes a particular arm of the autonomic nervous system to be turned on or activated. When chronically turned on the sympathetic nervous system can cause symptoms such as hyperactivity, anxiety, attention and focus difficulties. A chronic fight or flight response to stress can also lead to medical issues such as impaired gastrointestinal motility, immune dysregulation, and hormonal imbalances. These issues can be identified and addressed with proper testing, good nutrition, targeted nutraceuticals, and adaptogenic herbs.

Raising a Healthy Child in a Toxic World

Suruchi Chandra, MD

With the rise of environmental toxins, there has been an increased incidence of children experiencing health challenges such as allergies, digestive problems, difficulty focusing and delayed development. We will begin with a brief overview of the scientific literature of the effects of various toxins on health, including BPA, phthalates, flame retardants and toxins in our food supply. Then, tools and strategies will be presented to help you to eat well and create a healthy home that will allow your child and entire family to achieve true health. Finally, we will look at ways to help support the body's detoxification systems in eliminating the everyday toxins that we are all exposed to.



*11th Annual Gala
to benefit
ABOARD*

*The Advisory Board on Autism and Related Disorders
(ABOARD) Cordially Invites You to Attend
Our Eleventh Annual Gala.*

February 5, 2011

J Verno Studio

3030 June Street, Pittsburgh 15203

7:00 pm Wine Tasting and Auctions

8:30 pm Dinner Stroll and Program

*Creative Cocktail Attire
Complimentary Valet Parking*

**To those who give
so much and ask so
little, our heartfelt
thanks.**

We join all of our friends in the community in expressing our deep appreciation for all you've done.

Thank you to ABOARD. Their great efforts have touched the lives of so many in the community.



A Grandfather's Observation of ABOARD

I am the Grandfather of a loving, bright, and handsome grandson. He is 7 years old and trying to cope with ASD. My Daughter is a single parent who works everyday. Therefore it has been my responsibility and my great pleasure to be an advocate for this child.

I knew nothing about autism so I spent many hours searching for all resources that may help with this task.

Recently I became aware of "ABOARD ". I have visited their office ; gone to conferences ; and E-mailed them for support. When they mailed the original packet to me, I found so much additional information on autism that I was overwhelmed.

They have been extremely helpful on any matter that I may have encountered. On numerous occasions they have put me in touch with key individuals who have assisted me with issues like:

1. my Grandson's rights as it pertains to legal issues
2. services he is entitled to
3. shaping our response to reduced therapies and wrap-around services at hearings

Their "Mission Statement" says---"their policy is to inform". They surely meet those goals.

Thanks for all you do for families confronted with the challenges of "Autism Spectrum Disorder".

Your staff is tremendous. Keep up the good work. - Grandpap

SAVE THE DATE

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Community Partners Program
To Benefit ABOARD

Thursday, June 23, 2011

Featuring:

BOYZ II MEN

**More information to come on
how to buy tickets to this
exciting concert and all
proceeds will benefit
ABOARD from
our tickets sales!**



Support Group Happenings

The impact of a child with disabilities on the family is intense. We all know this and that knowledge is the basis for ABOARD's support groups. We recognize that families need other families and we want to help. We wish to thank all those who help.

WASHINGTON COUNTY HOPE4AUTISM

PATTY NEIL
patty.neil@yahoo.com

We have gotten so many contacts/referrals the last few months from our posting on ABOARD's web page. Even though our attendance is not what I would like for our area, I still feel like I help the many emails or calls I get for information. I feel if I can help one person one time it makes a difference.

A couple of things our group is working on is more on the social side of our families---planning a video tournament open to all kids in our community--I would also like to have an autism awareness concert with local bands held at the school. We are opening our group up to other close school districts in our area in hopes to have more attend. We are working on our big meeting we have at the school that I coordinate with the special education director -- we get a few speakers and he invites all aides and teachers and families and this is our huge turnout meeting.

SOUTHWESTERN POA ADULT AUTISM SOCIAL GROUP

WWW.MMETUP.COM/SWPA-AUTISM-SUPPORT/
swpa-hfaa@comcast.net

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Adult Autism Social Support Group offers a social support network by providing outings and socially integrated occasions for adults on the spectrum ages 18 and up. Most of our individuals reside in the metropolitan Pittsburgh area, but we have members participating from as far as Greensburg to Natrona Heights, Murrysburg and Washington, PA. Most recently, we celebrated our

3rd anniversary with a bowling event and dinner topped off by an anniversary cake at a local restaurant. In November, the group organized a field trip to the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland! The day went off without a hitch, and all 17 who participated enjoyed themselves immensely. The group worked with Budget rental vans for transportation. For those who did not attend, a group worked amongst themselves to organize a Pittsburgh Light Up Night Meetup. We are planning a trip to Amish country in the spring with a goal to meet up with the Harrisburg adult support group. (read note from Nate). In December, the group will hold a pot-luck holiday party at the Irish Centre in the east-end area of Pittsburgh. Each of members sign off on a provided list of food or dishes to bring---traditional, vegan, gluten-free. The holiday party was a huge success last year with many of our members contributed generously, and everyone pitching in one way or another. We will again celebrate the holiday season.

HARRISBURG ADULT SOCIAL GROUP

NOTE FROM NATE GEYER:
natche24@yahoo.com

After reading some of your comments that were placed on the list serve about autistic children struggling to find a place in the world, there is always going to be hope somewhere. When I was growing up in the 1990's there were very little services for people with autism, but I persevered earning a high school degree at Central Dauphin with honors. I even took classes at Harrisburg Area Community College during my senior year. As an undergraduate, I got accepted into Lebanon Valley College where there was only one other person with autism. I persevered earning a Bachelor's in Science with a major in Biology. Now there are more than 20 students with Autism and LVC even has an Autism club. After that I earned my Master's degree in Health Evaluation Sciences where there were no people with any disability. After that I applied for an online doctorate at Walden University in November 2010 where I start in December 2010 and I hope to preserve yet again. I hope that others can learn by my example and provide guidance to their children and help them recognize their potential instead of their limitations.

LANCASTER COUNTY AUTISM MOMMIES (LCAM)

KIM SHANK
lcamonline@yahoo.com

Lancaster County Autism Mommies (LCAM) continues to be active in the community. Our president was a speaker at the Lancaster County Library as part of the grand opening of their new Autism Resource Center. In November we had a family fall fun party at Schreiber Pediatrics, where families were able to enjoy swimming in the indoor therapy pool, participate in various sensory stations, food and socializing! A second Helping Hands Day paired families affected by autism with volunteers from the community and a local college to complete tasks that the families needed help to complete, such as painting fences or yard work. Members continue to outreach to families newly affected by autism and members requesting assistance with challenges such as IEP meetings.

BEDFORD COUNTY

DEBBIE OTT
Bcasgl@embarqmail.com

We are the Bedford County Autism Support Group. We meet once a month in Bedford @ The Colonial Hills Baptist Church every 2nd Thurs. of the month from 6:30-8:30pm. We are a group of parents that get together to share advice, tears, praises, & suggestions.

BUTLER COUNTY

CATHERINE LALONDE
clalonde@zoominternet.net

I facilitate the Autism Support Group at Parents in Toto. We usually meet the 4th Thursday of the month from Sept to May. Sometimes that has to be changed because of holidays. We have between 5-10 people each meeting. Lately, there have been new faces. People who attend are from Cranberry, Zelienople, Beaver, Butler, Mars, and Wexford. Our focus is on children at the more severe end of the spectrum but not entirely. Often, we also discuss Asperger's. We talk a lot about school issues and getting other services for our kids, medications. As

Support Group Happenings—Continued

some of the kids are getting older, we are starting to talk about the transition to adulthood and what has to be done. We try to have some fun and get some laughs and generally help support each other emotionally as well as share information.

CENTRE COUNTY PENNS VALLEY ASD SUPPORT GROUP

ANGELA SMITH

Tdsmit1@verizon.net

Our support group was founded by 4 mothers of autistic children in 2005. We meet every other month but have become close friends and lean on each other for support between meetings. We call ourselves the Penns Valley Area support group but never limit ourselves to just Penns Valley because we welcome all that need support. A grandparents group has sprung off of our group. Families kind of come and go - it's hard to find the time but we are an amazing resource for each other.

AUTISM ADVOCACY GROUP OF PITTSBURGH

PHIL GARROW & CAITLIN FREEMAN
phil@garrow.com

Following a yearlong development effort with the Allegheny County Office of the Public Defender, the production of the Autism ID Cards is complete. Individuals with autism can present these cards to police and other first responders in the event of an emergency. These cards will be available to members of the autism community on <http://www.autismidcard.com/> or by contacting ABOARD. As Search Engine Optimization specialists, we have created two new Meetup.com web sites to provide greater outreach to members of the teen and adult autism spectrum communities here in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area: <http://www.teenautismsupportpgh.com/>, and <http://www.autismdiscussionpgh.com/>. These web sites have been so successful in bringing in new members to these groups that we are now in need of a larger meeting space! We are looking for a space with one large meeting room and several smaller conference rooms available on

Sunday afternoons. We have made several calls, but are still open to suggestions for potential spaces.

LEBANON COUNTY ASD SUPPORT GROUP

DIANE & GARY GRUMBINE
diane@lebanonautism.com

The Autism Spectrum Support Group of Lebanon County has been quite active this fall. We have had 3 monthly meetings featuring a back to school night, an autism resiliency night and a fitness demonstration. For fun, we had the ever popular hayride and bonfire. We were lucky with the weather once again and we all had a great time, plus we had it earlier while it was still light and could actually see the kids being rowdy. We had a pool party in November and a Christmas party is coming right up this Friday. We have a record crowd signed up for this one, about 75 people, it should be hoppin'. I hope Santa's lap doesn't get calloused! Coming up in the new year we have a speaker about the GFCF diet in January, an Autism specialist from the IU talking about fitness, and Tony House, our question and answer guy from CBHNP. Laser tag is the fun family event in January. We are planning a family activity each month since that is where the need seems to lie. Parents can chat and visit while the children are occupied. Thank-you ABOARD for your support!!

SNYDER COUNTY CENTRAL SUSQUE- HANNA AUTISM SUP- PORT GROUP

Sib725@hotmail.com

We are a support group for parents, family and friends of children touched by Autism, PDD or Asperger's Syndrome. All are welcome to come and meet other families dealing with these challenges. Our purpose is to be supportive of each other, learn new ideas and techniques for teaching our children and to be educated about autism and services that are available. Meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of every month at the Children's Center on the campus of the Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, PA from 6:30-8:30pm.

WESTMORELAND COUNTY FBR NEW KENSINGTON FAMILY, SOCIAL & PLAY GROUP

newkensington@familybehavioralresources.com

In September we had Dr. Valletta in to speak about chiropractic care and nutrition and supplements, her relationship with autism. In January we will be having Janet Blystone, a Westmoreland county educational advocate, in to speak about advocating in the schools.

WESTMORELAND COUNTY FBR LATROBE FAMILY, SOCIAL & PLAY GROUP

latrobe@familybehavioralresources.com

In November, Cathy Hughes, Family Behavioral Resources family supports coordinator came in to speak to the parent support group. In December we discussed the holidays and strategies for families to make the holidays a success.

ABOARD is the largest facilitator of autism support groups in Pennsylvania. We currently have 63 groups in 48 counties.

ABOARD owes a big thanks to the facilitators, who volunteer much more than the 2-3 hours at a monthly meeting. We are so grateful for their help in providing education, advocacy and support to the families and professionals in their community.

If you are interested in attending a support group or starting a support group with ABOARD, please contact Marie Mambuca, Family Support Director at 412-781-4116.

The Autism ID Card

helps people on the autism spectrum explain their medical condition to **Police, EMTs, and other first responders** in the event of an emergency.

In November 2009, Autism Speaks hosted a National Town Hall Meeting to address the needs of adults with autism. The number one priority agreed upon by the hundreds of autism service providers, parents, and people on the autism spectrum was improved training for first responders. To meet this need, SEO Pittsburgh, in collaboration with the Allegheny County Office of the Public Defender, have created an Autism ID Card for individuals on the autism spectrum to present to police, medical personnel, and other first responders in the event of an emergency.

ABOARD has produced these cards and are available for FREE!

To order Autism ID Cards, please contact ABOARD at (800) 827-9385 or at support@aboard.org!

I Have Autism:

My medical condition impairs my ability to communicate with others. As a result I may have difficulty understanding your directions, and I may not be able to respond to your questions. I may also become physically agitated if you touch me or move too close to me.

Please do not interpret this behavior as a refusal to cooperate. I am not intentionally defying your instructions.

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Over Please ➡

I am requesting that you contact the person noted below on my behalf; s/he will confirm my diagnosis and provide information you may need about my identity. Sincerely,

My Printed Name

Contact Printed Name

Produced by <http://SEOPittsburgh.com>
An Autism Owned and Run Business

Funded by ABOARD (Advisory Board On Autism and Related Disorders)

Contact Phone #

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The P.L.A.Y. (Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters) Project

Working with children and early childhood programs has been a significant part of my working life for the past 36 years. Two years ago I was working with a home visitation model (Parents as Teachers) and had been involved in the development of a play center for children through 6 years of age. The home visitation model emphasized the importance of the parent's role as **'their child's first and most important teacher'**. The play center highlighted child-directed play and its critical role in a child's development. It became apparent that more children with an autism diagnosis and their families were utilizing the play center. The play center was meeting one need, but the home-based model (Parents as Teachers) did not offer the intense interventions, as many as 25 hours a week, necessary for children with autism. I began an exploration for a home visitation model that would meet the needs of this particular population. I was introduced to the P.L.A.Y. Project by an occupational therapist I met at a conference about the importance of sensory motor play.

The P.L.A.Y. (Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters) Project was developed by Richard Solomon, MD in 2001. It is based on the DIR (Developmental Individualized Relationship-based) theory of Stanley Greenspan, MD, sometimes referred to as Floortime. The program emphasizes the importance of helping parents become their child's best P.L.A.Y. partner. The approach follows The National Academy of Science recommendation for the education of young children with autism spectrum disorders. Their recommendations include:

- Begin interventions early (18 months to 5 years)
- Use intensive intervention 25 hours per week
- Have a teacher/play partner to child ratio of 1:1 or 1:2

- Use interventions that are engaging and have a strategic direction (e.g. social skills, language, etc.)

Dr. Solomon's P.L.A.Y. approach can be taught to families, giving them the tools to implement interventions throughout the day—through the use of play! It teaches how to adjust the play approach to meet the child's level of understanding and slowly move the child to higher levels of functioning. Because the approach focuses on the very young child, during critical malleable periods in their development, it increases the possibilities for the greatest outcomes. Parents learn to recognize their child's way of relating, their sensory-motor preferences and deficits, and their child's current level of functional development. The approach also meets a need in our rural communities where treatment options can be less available.

A typical home visit lasts approximately 3 hours and is divided into three parts: one hour of the home consultant modeling play techniques with the child, one hour of the consultant coaching the family during their play session and 1 hour of reviewing feedback. Play sessions are video-taped to monitor the child's progress and to use as a training tool to help families learn more effective techniques. Most families participate in the program for one year with visits occurring monthly.

An evaluation of the P.L.A.Y. Project Home Consulting Program has been published by a highly regarded scientific journal. There is growing scientific evidence that parents can learn the methods of the P.L.A.Y. Project and that most of the children with autism spectrum disorders can make substantial developmental progress when parents use the methods consistently. The methods are fun, based in child development and respectful of the child's

individuality.

It is important to note, that as autism spectrum disorders are identified at a younger age—we must have time intensive, effective techniques that are available to families even in areas where localized services are not as readily available.

I continue to believe that the parent is the child's first and most effective teacher. The P.L.A.Y. Project offers parents of children with autism a new set of unique tools they need to effectively step into that role for their children.

For more information about the P.L.A.Y. Project go to www.playproject.org

Linda White
Dickinson Mental Health Center
Autism Project Coordinator
P.L.A.Y. Consultant

Possibilities Autism Center is a program of Dickinson Mental Health Center, Inc (DMHC) located in Ridgway, PA. It was established in January 2010 in order to provide diagnostic and treatment services to children and families living with the symptoms of autism spectrum disorder in the following region of Northwestern Pennsylvania: the counties of Elk, Cameron, McKean, Potter, Jefferson, and Clearfield. Specialized services include psychological diagnostic services, behavioral treatments, occupational therapy services, speech pathology services and The P.L.A.Y. Project. For information about the P.L.A.Y. Project contact Linda White, P.L.A.Y. Consultant, at 814.772.2005 x 6 or visit our website www.dmhcc.org

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Applause, applause.

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the Advisory Board on Autism
& Related Disorders.***



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- Actively involves parents and other caregivers
- Is confidential

Early Intervention in Pennsylvania is a system of services & supports designed to help families with children who have or who are at risk of developmental delays. In Allegheny County, coordination of services for children between ages birth to 3 years is provided by The Alliance for Infants and Toddlers, Inc.

**Contact The Alliance to make
an appointment:**

412.885.6000

www.afti.org

The ECLIPSE Model

It is an exciting time in the understanding and the treatment of individuals with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). For many years, families, caregivers, clinicians and educators have worked to remediate the issues that are problematic for individuals with autism while enhancing their great, positive attributes found in their special interests and perspectives. Many times, interventions deal with situation-specific skill building, but rarely are able to change patterns of thinking and responding over time and situations. As cognitive approach, the ECLIPSE Model addresses global skills development that will directly impact overall functioning.

THE BASICS

The ECLIPSE Model provides a variety of activities that target global skills development. Typical sessions are done in a group format, but activities can be used for individual lessons as well. Parents, teachers, social skills groups and counselors can easily implement the lessons all of which have instructions, visuals, and ways to collect data. Individuals that best benefit from the program are typically diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome or PDD-NOS who have conversational skills. In a school or social group setting, the individuals would need the tolerance and the ability to work in small groups and have emerging introspective skills. However, most lessons in the ECLIPSE Model can be modified for more challenged and/or less verbal individuals. The ultimate goal of the model is for individuals with ASD to have a better understanding of themselves and be able to advocate for their wants, needs and desires. One key component is learning to self-monitor their behavior and progress working toward

their goals.

THE SESSION

Group ECLIPSE lessons start with a *Reality Check* where individuals discuss current events or share about their special interest to encourage open communication and share ideas. Some time is spent working on their *Independence Journals* where the individual writes down anything they are proud of accomplishing or have learned to do more independently. These journals are often designed or decorated by the individuals and are utilized to promote self recognition of working toward or doing daily living skills independently. During a typical session, one global skills activity is completed as a small group. During this closing, students do a *Self Awareness Builder* sharing what they have learned or how the lesson will be incorporated into their daily lives.

There are visual supports included with the Model including goal trackers, regulation charts (3 or 5 point scale) and *Strategic Bombs*. *Strategic Bombs* are used to help students who have difficulty “getting stuck” (Perseveration Station), have a difficult time understanding the perspective of others (Perspective Pickle) or that logic, often coming across as bossy or arrogant, is inappropriately used to solve or avoid their problems (Smart Card). A variety of data sheets are available for use. All materials are able to be reproduced.

TARGETED GLOBAL SKILLS

Specific global skills that are addressed through the ECLIPSE Model are attribution, executive functioning skills, sensory awareness and self regulation which are typically impaired with individuals with autism. These global skills

enable an individual to see the world as a hopeful place in which to grow, be able to problem solve, to understand their sensory regulation systems and develop self regulation skills that are necessary for change, improved functioning and, hopefully, improve overall quality of life.

Attribution skills align a person's perception of their environment, and how they perceive their role in life situations. People's attributional styles are patterns of seeing the world as stable or always changing, internal or external to the person and whether a situation is controllable or uncontrollable. Having a realistic view of the situation helps the individual make better decisions and will help them reframe their problems to avoid behavioral issues. Examples of misattribution include the student who gets mad at his teacher because it is raining outside or the child who tantrums with their parent because they had a rough day at school or the individual who won't ask for help because everyone is “mean and out to get them” often guiding them the wrong way when dealing with everyday problems.

Executive functioning enhancement activities address flexibility and shift, problem solving, theory of mind and hidden curriculum activities. Activities can be adapted to include special interests or specific individual situations. The students practice and discuss ways to generate multiple solutions to problems, weigh the solutions and make safe and more effective choices with life's daily stresses. Hidden curriculum items are unwritten rules of social behavior that typically need direct instruction for individuals with ASD. Examples of flexibility issues

The ECLIPSE Model - Continued

include those individuals who will tantrum when their bus route is changed due to construction or if there is a snow delay and their schedule at school is changed. Theory of Mind and Hidden Curriculum skills are utilized during all of our interactions with others. Activities in ECLIPSE include items such as "What would happen if I didn't know that...", Uncovering All the Facts, Becoming a Hidden Curriculum Detective and Keeping a Hidden Curriculum Diary.

Self regulation helps the individual monitor their emotions and matching their emotion to suit the situation which will help to reduce behavioral difficulties. The ECLIPSE Model includes visual use of a 3 or 5 point scale to regulate and modulate emotions throughout their day. The group will often share their experiences with upsetting situations (or overstimulating situations) and provide each other with strategies to deal with common issues. Activities include Keeping Track of Yourself (learning to use modulation chart), Balancing Situations and Strategies and Checking Your Pulse.

Sensory awareness allows students to explore all sensory modalities while working on tolerance, making choices and helping the individual identify their own sensory needs and possible adaptations that they may need in a vocational settings, community placements or for post secondary education to be more successful. Activities include Senses to the Rescue, Touch Testing and Sensory Treasure Hunt.

OUTCOMES

For educational settings and clinical settings, there are outcomes measures that can be utilized to monitor progress with targeted skills development. Internal to ECLIPSE are data trackers noting

both inappropriate and proactive behaviors, as well as, goal trackers that are individualized. The use of the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Functioning or BRIEF (Gioia, Isquith, Guy, & Kenworthy, 2000), the Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition or BASC-2 (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004) and the Children's Attributional Style Questionnaire or CASQ (Kaslow, Tanenbaum, Seligman, Abramson, & Alloy, 1995) are discussed in the ECLIPSE book and can be used as pre and post assessment measures to monitor progress.

CONCLUSION

Being in the initial pilot research program, The NHS Autism Schools have implemented the ECLIPSE Model for students with Asperger Syndrome and PDD-NOS students for the past 4 years with great success. Since this approach provides an overarching framework for social problem solving, students work through real-life situations, reducing the need for staged generalization and making activities meaningful to the individual. Since the individuals are active in their goal choices, The ECLIPSE Model helps foster motivation, independence, and self advocacy skills. Students are taught to help make goals for themselves, monitor progress and celebrate their successes! We hope that the students will be able to transition into adulthood with expanded skill sets that can help them prosper and be more independent.

Delilah R. L. Wilcox, MS, BCBA
Clinical Director
NHS Autism School Carlisle

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Presenting an Autism Diagnosis to Your Child

Talking to a child about his or her mental health diagnosis may be stress-inducing for parents and may cause feelings of uncertainty and embarrassment. The child may be confused, and the parent may not know how to adequately address questions from the child. You, as a parent of a child with an autism diagnosis may also grapple with the decision of whether or not to present the diagnosis to your child. Several factors should be considered before talking to your child, including your child's age, developmental level, and social functioning. Children who are too young to understand a basic explanation of strengths and areas of difficulty may not be ready to learn about the diagnosis.

If your child has an understanding of verbal communication and is beginning to voice that he or she does not fit into the peer group, your child may benefit from an explanation of the diagnosis. Presenting the diagnosis to your child gives a name to the symptoms that he or she has been experiencing, promotes self-advocacy, and prevents your child from hearing about the diagnosis from other sources such as peers.

Because it is difficult to know exactly what to say to your child when presenting the diagnosis, it is best that you elicit the expertise of a psychologist who is versed in talking to children with an autism spectrum diagnosis. You and your child's caregivers should be present during the discussion of the diagnosis in order to provide support to your child and to be aware of how to address questions that your child may ask in the future. When addressing your child, it is important to speak at his or her level, not using difficult, unknown, or complex words and phrases. First, it is important to ask your child why he or she is attending the appointment. This tactic gives a frame of reference with which the professional can build upon to present the diagnosis. Should your child not know why he or she is attending the appointment, the professional should let the child know that they will be

discussing your child's strengths and areas of difficulty. It is important to avoid the word "weaknesses," in order to refrain from implying that the symptoms are negative or "bad." Then, in general, the professional should speak in terms of strengths and areas of difficulty. Everyone has assets and areas on which they need to work. Symptoms of autism can be presented in a similar fashion. Your child should be asked about his or her strengths. Listing them in written or picture form would be helpful for your child. Next, your child should be asked to talk about areas of difficulty and write these characteristics in a separate column. You, your child's caregivers, and the professional should help your child to determine specific strengths and areas of difficulty. Additionally, the adults in the room should present their own strengths and areas of difficulty, emphasizing that everyone has talents and struggles.

After talking about strengths and areas of difficulty, the professional may want to talk about stereotypical names for people with particular talents and struggles. For example, your child may know that a "Geek" is really good at school work but may not be particularly adept at making friends. Similarly, a "Jock" is strong in sports but may struggle to complete school work accurately. Additionally, just like these names encompass particular strengths and areas of difficulty, there is a word that explains your child's assets and struggles. This word is Autism. Your child should be asked if he or she has heard the term before in order to dispel any inaccurate and preconceived notions of the disorder. The professional should then reiterate the strengths and difficulties of your child, compiling them into the three main categories of autism, including social skill, communication, and behavioral difficulties. The diagnosis should then be normalized for your child, and it is important to let your child know that there are many children with the same diagnosis. In order to provide support for this idea, you and professional may want to show

your child YouTube videos of children talking about their autism diagnosis.

Although your child may not have any questions during the initial presentation of the diagnosis, other questions may arise following the presentation. You should be prepared to talk to your child how to share the diagnosis with others, when it is appropriate to share the diagnosis with others, and the potential consequences of disclosure. Additionally, you may want to explain to your child why he or she is involved in services, such as wraparound and social skills group. Finally, it is important to help your child to understand that the diagnosis should not be used as an excuse for inappropriate behaviors, but as a tool to obtain the most appropriate services and supports.

Although it may be emotionally taxing and uncomfortable to present an autism diagnosis to your child, it is an important step in helping your child to become a more independent person who is able to engage in self-advocacy. This knowledge will help your child to better understand his or her differences and may help in explaining the importance of the specialized services in place for your child.

Kristie L. Zoller, Psy.D.,
Postdoctoral Fellow
The Watson Institute

Dr. Zoller is a post-doctoral fellow at The Watson Institute, completing a one-year appointment specializing in autism spectrum disorders. Dr. Zoller is currently responsible for providing diagnostic and intervention services to children with autism spectrum and other disorders by conducting diagnostic, psychological and best practice evaluations. Dr. Zoller also provides supervision and consultation services to wraparound service providers and the current pre-doctoral interns. Dr. Zoller received her doctoral degree from The California School of Professional Psychology at Alliant International University in San Diego, CA.

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