

Horizons Newsletter

Spring 2017

www.autism-mi.org

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Autism Society
of
Michigan



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What Are the Best Sports for Kids with Autism?

These Sports Offer Great Benefits for Kids with Autism

Lisa Jo Rudy

What's the best sport for a child with autism? As with every child, the best sport is the one your child enjoys and excels at. That said, though, autism does impair social and communication skills and may have a negative impact on gross motor coordination. That means "typical" team sports such as soccer, basketball and hockey may be particularly tough. Individual sports, however, may be just the ticket.

Autism and Swimming:

Swimming is a wonderful sport for most people, including children with autism. Kids who have a tough time with ball-handling skills can do well with basic strokes and typical water play. What's more, there is no reason why a kid with autism can't take part in a swim team especially since swim team members compete individually.

Autism and Horseback Riding:

Horseback riding is pricey. That aside, though, it's a terrific sport for kids with autism. In fact, many autistic kids ride horses as a therapeutic activity (as such it's termed "hippotherapy"). It's not unusual for autistic kids to find it easier to communicate with animals than with people -- an many autistic children excel at horsemanship.

Autism and Track and Field:

Strangely, Americans teach their youngest children to play complex team sports like soccer while only high schoolers seem to compete in running and jumping! For kids with autism, track and field may be a terrific outlet. Track events require fewer non-verbal communication skills than most team sports, yet kids who excel at track are valued team members.

Autism and Bowling:

Even though it's loud, bowling seems to be a natural sport for many kids with autism. Perhaps it's the repetition -- bowl twice, sit down. Or maybe it's the satisfaction of seeing the pins come crashing down. Whatever the reasons, bowling is a great sport for social events that include kids on the autism spectrum.

Autism and Hiking:

For many people with autism, the peace and quiet of the natural world is a great stress reliever. Hiking, which can be an individual or group activity, is an easy way to get exercise and enjoy nature without the pressure of intense social communication. Fishing is another sport that may be of interest to an autistic individual who enjoys the natural world.

Autism and Biking:

Bike riding can be tough for kids with autism, since balance may not come naturally. Once the basic skills are mastered, though, cycling can be a wonderful way to enjoy the outdoors. Like most of the sports described above, cycling can be enjoyed alone or in a group, just for fun or competitively. If your child enjoys the idea of biking and does well with training wheels, but finds a two-wheeler tricky, you may want to consider an adult trike, a tandem, or just sticking with the training wheels.

Autism and Martial Arts:

The martial arts -- karate, judo, taekwondo, aikido, and more -- combine the elements of predictability and structure with the challenges of physical interaction with other people. For many kids with autism, the martial arts are a wonderful way to build physical skills along with self-esteem.

Autism and Just-for-Fun-and-Exercise Sports:

If you're hoping to get your child with autism involved with team sports, a good way to get started is by playing together just for fun. Whether you're shooting baskets, tossing the ball back and forth, or learning to skate, you'll be building both physical and social skills if you do it together. In the long run, it's experiences like shooting hoops with dad (even when the hoop is lowered) that help build parent-child connections.

If you're just concerned with getting your child to exercise, here are a few options to consider:

- Gamify exercise with video systems like Wii and Kinect, which encourage players to move their bodies and learn new skills at home, without the pressure of being observed or encouraged to "join in."
- Consider classes (either general interest or autism-specific) in yoga, dance, or other types of movement.
- Create activities, such as obstacle courses or local "fun runs" that you and your child can do together.

Reprinted from: www.verywell.com

The Autism Society of Michigan Annual 5k Run



Making Human Connections

For Autism Acceptance

Saturday, April 29th

Where: Hawk Island Park

1601 E. Cavanagh, Lansing, MI

Registration/Sign-In: 8:00 a.m.

5k Run Starts at: 9:00 a.m.

\$20.00 Adult

\$10.00 Person with ASD (coupon code=**Discount**)

\$10.00 Child-age 6-17 yrs. (coupon code=**Child**)

\$10 Student (coupon code=**Student**)

Children 5 and under Free

*Waivers must be signed by all participants prior to race

Register online at: <https://runsignup.com/Race/MI/Lansing/ASM5kforAutismAcceptance>

You may also register by calling or sending an email to:



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Results: The 5k Run will be professionally chip timed by Michigan Running Foundation, Inc.
& results will be posted of Playmakers website

All proceeds and donations will go to ASM and will remain in Michigan to provide services and support to our community.

TITLE: Exploring Depression and Beating the Blues: A CBT Self-Help Guide to Understanding and Coping with Depression in Asperger's Syndrome (ASD-Level 1)

AUTHORS: Attwood, Tony and Garnett, Michelle

SUBJECT AREA: Autism Spectrum Disorders-Cognitive Behavior Therapy

PUBLISHER: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

PUBLICATION DATE: 2016

NUMBER OF PAGES: 270

In among all of the difficulties people with milder forms of ASD depression has to be the very worst; in fact, the suicide rate among adults with ASD is about 30%! This is much too high and more needs to be done to help adults affected by ASD to learn to be more proactive and to nip depression in the bud.

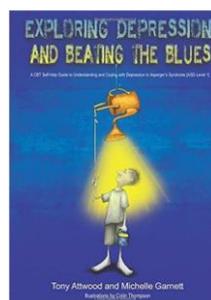
Tony Attwood, a psychologist who is with the Minds and Hearts Clinic in Brisbane, Australia and his colleague, Michelle Garnett, developed a nifty Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) program called "Exploring Depression" that can also be done by the individual at home.

The book starts out by describing depression and how it interacts with ASD to make life so miserable. Characteristics such as catastrophic thinking, overgeneralizing, discounting any positive news or developments, and always feeling inadequate and near constant anxiety all form a noxious brew that's hard to get rid of. The authors describe the characteristics of Asperger Syndrome as well, including the positive qualities, such as focus on a special interest, a strong sense of justice, reliability and punctuality, creative and divergent approaches to problems and creativity in general.

The program is divided into stages which must be done in the right sequence in order for the person to truly benefit. Stage 1 is devoted to exploring one's qualities and abilities, Stage 2 is an introduction to depression and Stage 3 presents tools for dealing with depression. Subsequent stages present specific tools including using art and other creative pursuits and tools for physical activity, as studies are now finding a strong correlation between exercise and a healthy brain. The Thinking Tools help reframe one's mindset which is often skewed toward the overly negative and catastrophic thinking followed by Relaxation Tools and a Safety Plan for when the person is truly feeling suicidal and wants to end it all.

Each chapter has a set of exercises that the reader fills out. It is illustrated with charming drawings by Colin Thompson; these drawings add a light touch to an otherwise very serious topic and makes the workbook more enjoyable for the teenager or the young adult to use.

The last part of the book asks the reader to imagine a brighter, happier future which can go a long way to making one feel better about life. The reader can learn to think in such a way as to understand that bad things don't last forever, moving away that heavy stone of depression and clearing a path for a better and more balanced life. The authors are strong believers in Cognitive Behavior Therapy and so am I. In milder forms of depression, it is found to be the most effective tool around, but in more severe forms a combination of CBT and medications is often recommended. I highly recommend this workbook.





Spring Flower Garden Pudding Cups

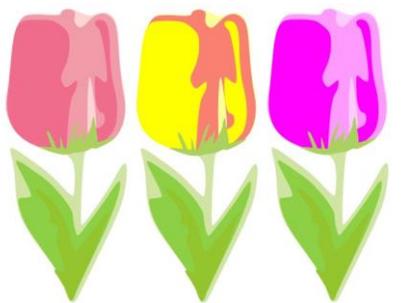
- 1 6-pack Super Snack Pack Pudding Cups, any flavor
- mini marshmallows
- large marshmallows
- about 1 TBSP melted white chocolate, to use as an adhesive
- Colored sugar sprinkles- yellow, pink, green, etc.
- round lollipops (Dum Dums)
- round candies for flower decoration
- Watermelon Airheads candy- to use as leaves (optional- these were fun but once you put the flower in the pudding cup, you can't really see them.)
- 1 cup sweetened flake coconut + 5-6 drops of green food coloring

Melt chocolate and unwrap lollipops. Lay out a piece of wax paper where you'll lay your flowers while they dry. Toss 1 cup of sweetened flake coconut with several drops of green food coloring. Mix until coconut is green. Set aside.

To make the flowers with the large petals, you'll use the large marshmallows. Sprinkle colored sugar onto a plate. Using kitchen shears, cut marshmallows length-wise into 4 slices. Dip the sticky part of each slice into the colored sugar, coating both sides if necessary. Use the melted chocolate to stick the petals around the lollipop. I found it was easier to dab a bit of chocolate on the narrow side of the petal marshmallow, then arrange the petals on the wax paper and set the lollipop on top, so that it's in contact with all of the petals. Let sit until dry, which is in about 10 minutes or less. Once dry, turn over- whatever side was the cleanest I used as the front. Dab the round sprinkles in a little chocolate and arrange on the front of the flower as you'd like.

To make the flowers with the small petals, use the mini marshmallows. Cut each marshmallow diagonally, then dip the sticky part into the colored sugar. Dip the narrow end of the marshmallow into the chocolate and arrange in a circle face down on the wax paper. (See green lollipop pic below.) Place the lollipop directly in the center, making sure each petal comes in contact with the lollipop. Let dry and decide which side you'd like to have as the front. Use the chocolate to arrange more candies on the front. Let dry fully before arranging in the pudding cups.

Reprint from: <http://butterwithasideofbread.com/2015/03/spring-flower-garden-pudding-cups-snackpackmixins/>



WEBSITE REVIEW: Respectfully Connected

<http://www.respectfullyconnected.com>

By: Anne Carpenter

Sometimes, one finds something really nifty by accident or by pure “dumb luck” or good old fashioned serendipity and my discovery of respectfullyconnected.com was just that. This is a blog written by a group of women, some of whom are on the autism spectrum, who are parents that don’t subscribe to the current mindset of early diagnosis, early intervention and trying one treatment or therapy after another, in hopes of “curing” or at least alleviating their child’s autism-related difficulties. Instead, they have jumped aboard, full throttle, into a philosophy of acceptance and of embracing neurodiversity in all of its wonder and complexity. Some of them hail from Australia which seems to have a more actively progressive autism movement as opposed to the US.

This site covers a broad range of topics with the focus being on neurodiversity and finding kinder, less punitive ways to help their children to navigate a complex, unfriendly world. This includes accepting the child for who he is not for who he could be, creating environments that accommodate one’s sensory and communication challenges, homeschooling rather than forcing children with ASD into a harsh, fluorescent lit world. The overall point of this site is to decry the “ableism” so prevalent in our society-the push, push, push to “fix,” to “cure,” to find a solution to autism where there isn’t one right now or there may never be one. It is better for folks with ASD to be their true selves and to lend their unique perspectives on the world to the society at large.

The authors promote “unschooling” whenever possible and neurodiversity is the watchword here. There is even one angry rant against what is seen as a condescending attitude toward people with a disability such as saying that one is an “inspiration,” and that we must use “People First” language, etc. These are truisms that I subscribed to but I understand her anger and it is well-taken as we may need to rethink and maybe even redo our approach to people with disabilities, especially Autism Spectrum Disorders.

I was especially touched by one post about how to approach a brand-new diagnosis of autism in one’s child; that nothing changes in everyday life, yet so much does change. This site may really make some people angry and upset about having old shibboleths about disability overturned and raked over the coals but in order for real change to occur it is sometimes, if not often necessary to upset the apple cart and start anew.



Autism Awareness Month Suggestions

by

ASM's Past Board President:

Kathy Johnson

- 1. Raise awareness about autism through social media.** Post links to educational autism websites on your Facebook page, tweet an autism fact on Twitter, or write a blog entry about your family or professional experience.
- 2. Organize an autism awareness campaign at your school or workplace.** Make a poster, send an email, or host a brown bag lunch to talk about your knowledge of/experience with autism.
- 3. Thank the teachers or therapists who have made a difference in the life of a child with ASD.** Let them know how much they mean to you. If you are a professional working with a child with ASD, know that you are truly appreciated!
- 4. Make a donation.** Monetary contributions can help to support local autism organization operations or a program at your school. Donations can help fund a social skills group, send a teacher to an educational conference, or purchase materials for a classroom. Have a knack for event planning? Organize a fundraiser like a race, resource fair, or cocktail party. Funds donated to the Autism Society of Michigan help us connect individuals with ASD and their families to resources in their community.
- 5. Wear an autism awareness ribbon or pin.** When someone asks you about it, use it to educate them about ASD.
- 7. Learn something new about autism.** Visit ASM's website, www.autism-mi.org or our Facebook page to learn more about Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- 8. Read a book related to autism.** Whether you prefer novels or something more instructive, there are plenty to choose from. ASM recommends "Thinking in Pictures" by Temple Grandin, and/or "Look Me in the Eye" by John Elder Robinson. Call our office, 517-882-2800, for other book recommendations. Our Information and Referral Specialist, Anne Carpenter would be happy to assist you.
- 9. Attend an autism awareness event in the community.** The Autism Society of Michigan's Run for Autism Acceptance will be held on Saturday, April 29th at Hawk Island Park in Lansing. To register, visit our website, www.autism-mi.org or register online at <https://runsignup.com/Race/MI/Lansing/ASM5kforAutismAcceptance>
- 10. Spend time with a friend or family member who has autism.** Visit a park, play a game, go to a movie, just hang out and have fun!

April is Autism Awareness Month

Special Thanks To:

In Dedication of Enrique Galvan, Jr.

Chad Harnish

In Friendship of Mr. & Mrs. George Miller:

Judi Pressick

In Honor of Kristi & Caleb Mier:

Barbara Mier

In Honor of Natalie Barranca's 30th birthday:

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In Memory of Clay M. Wyckoff-Miller:

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