

Horizons Newsletter

Summer 2017

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of
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Possible Traveling Challenges for Your Child When Planning Your Vacation

Summer is the time for planning your vacation! Many of us look forward to our family vacation all year. But vacations can be a source of anxiety for children on the spectrum due to the changes in schedule and routine, new sensory inputs (lights, sounds, smells, etc.), the amount of downtime, etc. Take the time to plan out your vacation for your child with autism so everyone in the family has fun and as stress-free as possible time.

If you are flying:

- Can your child wait in line (possibly for an extended amount of time)?
- Does your child wait their turn appropriately?
- How will they tolerate the security scanners?
- Will they endure being separated from their belongings (i.e. at security, checking bags, etc.)?
- Can they tolerate waiting in the terminal if flights are delayed?
- Does your child have activities with which to engage on the plane?
- Is your child toilet-trained or will you have to schedule bathroom breaks at the airport and on the airplane?
- Is your child independent enough in the restroom to manage using the small facilities on the plane?
- What is your behavior plan if a challenging behavior occurs while on the aircraft?

If you are driving:

- Does your child have engaging activities with which to engage in the car?
- Is your child toilet-trained or will you have to schedule bathroom breaks along the way?
- Is your child familiar with and independent with using public restrooms?
- What is your behavior plan if a challenging behavior occurs in the car?

Possible challenges or new behaviors required at your vacation spot:

- If you are going to an amusement park, how does your child tolerate rides? Will they ride and if so, with whom? If not, what will they do instead? With whom will they wait?
- Is your child prone to elopement or wandering? What is your plan for eliminating this safety risk while on vacation? Does your child have a medical autism bracelet with contact information? Will you activate GPS tracking devices?
- Can your child swim? If they cannot swim, do they have proper swimming safety gear? Does your child understand water safety rules such as not swimming at night, swimming with an adult present, etc.?
- If you are skiing, does your child know how? Will he participate or will someone sit with him at the lodge? What will he do if he does not ski?
- If you are planning your vacation in a cool location, does your child tolerate cold-weather gear?
- If you are camping, is your child able to relieve himself outdoors? Does your child know to stay away from dangerous animals she may encounter in nature such as snakes? Will your child tolerate sleeping in a tent versus a bed?
- For children who often engage with electronics at home, what will your child engage with instead while camping?
- Does your child know not to eat berries or other food-like items found in nature? Will she tolerate wearing bug spray?
- How does your child occupy their downtime? Are they able to choose appropriate independent leisure activities or will you have to prepare those in advance?

Strategies for Preparing Your Child for Vacation

Vacations are an excellent opportunity to expose your child to new experiences and to teach your child new skills! If you want to give your child a new experience and teach a new behavior while on vacation, such as water skiing, boogie boarding, snorkeling, etc. think about how you can expose your child to these behaviors and teach some of the required behaviors ahead of time. This is going to help when planning your vacation and make for a much smoother time while you are on vacation.

Video Models

A few months ahead, if possible, show your child videos of someone water skiing and discuss how they are doing it. Video family members who are practicing and explaining the skills. Video your child practicing the skills and watch them together to discuss. Show videos or pictures of your hotel, the rides you anticipate riding at the amusement park, the restaurant you plan on visiting, etc. The more exposure to the places and sights they will see on vacation, the better.

Social Stories

Write a social story about what they should anticipate on the vacation. These stories can be drafted in the first or the third person. The story should show visually in pictures as well as describe the sights and experiences they will encounter on the trip. If possible, use actual pictures of the locations you will be visiting. Carol Gray's *The New Social Stories Book* is an excellent resource for learning how to write social stories. She even includes many sample stories that you can copy and use for your child.

Practice, Practice, Practice!

Practice appropriate behaviors at home if possible. Buy a snorkel and have your child practice at a pool or in the bathtub. Take your child to the store and have them practice waiting in line. For complicated or new behaviors, you may have to shape the behavior far in advance. For example, if waiting in line is tough for your child, you may start with waiting in line appropriately for 30 seconds and systematically build up to longer amounts of time. For a child that will not tolerate wearing a wetsuit, you may have to shape wearing the wetsuit for a short amount of time at first until they can wear it for longer and longer amounts of time.

Visuals are Invaluable

As we know, most individuals on the spectrum are visual learners. When planning your vacation, create visuals that will help your child understand the schedule and expectations along the way. For example, if you know you will spend one evening at a fancy restaurant, create a visual of the appropriate behaviors you expect (i.e. sit appropriately, inside voice, etc.). These visuals can have pictures as well as words, depending on your child. "First, Then" visuals can be invaluable when teaching kids to wait for a highly preferred item or activity. Create a visual that says "First, wait in line, Then, ride the roller coaster." Make a visual schedule that shows the sequence of events for the day so your child is not caught off guard by the change in their routine. If your child does not do well with downtime, create activity schedules ahead of time and bring them along to help keep your child engaged. Keep some blank index cards in your bag so that in a pinch, you can pull one out and create a quick visual if needed.

Reinforcement is Key!

Remember, whenever teaching a new behavior, reinforcement of the appropriate behavior is essential! Reinforcement can include praise, social interaction (i.e. high fives, fist bumps, etc.), activities, and edibles. Create token systems ahead of time for those behaviors you know may be challenging for your child. Waiting in line hard for her? Create a token board with the expectations at the top and an appropriate amount of symbolic spaces for her to earn tokens while waiting in line at airport security. Reinforce appropriate waiting behavior with praise and a token every few minutes to keep her motivation high to continue engaging in the appropriate behavior. Again, index cards in your bag can save you in a pinch if you need a token board STAT!

Family vacations create memorable experiences for everyone in your family. Vacations also help your family unwind and relax. For kids on the spectrum, without proper planning, vacations can be just the opposite. Take the time to plan your vacation well in advance, asking yourself some of the questions mentioned here. Create visuals, practice new behaviors and create reinforcement systems. With proper planning your vacation can be relaxing and enjoyable for the whole family!

Tips for Preventing the Summer Slide



Studies show that children who do not read or have access to books during the summer lose up to 2 months of reading performance. Those losses accumulate during the elementary school years so that by the time a child enters middle school he/she may be 2 1/2 years behind! All children, whether from low, middle or upper income families, may fall victim to the "summer slide" if not provided with summer reading opportunities. So how do we prevent the summer slide-or even accelerate reading growth? Here are a few ideas:

- 1** Visit your local library! Help your child find "right fit" books. Right fit books are books that are of high interest to your child and are not beyond their reading level. You can use the five finger test to determine if the book is too difficult for your child. Open the book to a page with many words. Have your child begin reading the text. Hold up a finger for each word he/she does not know. If you have 4 or 5 fingers up, the text may be too difficult for your child to read independently. Feel free to still check out the book! It just may be a book you want to read with your child.
- 2** Be sure your child reads at least 20 minutes a day. According to research, a child who reads only 1 minute a day outside of school will learn 8,000 words by the end of sixth grade where a student who reads 20 minutes outside of school will learn 1,800,000 words! That's huge! If reading isn't one of your child's top priorities, you may need to set up an incentive program.
- 3** Set a good example. When your child sees you reading and enjoying a book or a newspaper article, you are sending a message that reading is important and valuable.
- 4** Read to your child. When you read to your child, he/she hears the rhythm of language. Be sure to read with expression! Changing your voice for different characters and increasing your volume during exciting parts are only a few ways to keep children engaged.
- 5** Read with your child –explore different types of reading such as poetry. For our little ones, poetry is a great way to improve phonemic awareness skills as poetry often incorporates rhyme. For our older children, poetry is a means of improving fluency.
- 6** Read for different purposes. Reading directions for a recipe or directions for assembling a toy are fun ways of incorporating reading into everyday activities.
- 7** Play games with words. Commercial games such as Apples to Apples improves vocabulary. You can easily turn a game of hopscotch or 4 square into a game that incorporates learning letters or sight words. Be sure to check out the "8 Super Summer Sight Word Activities" on the Make, Take & Teach blog.
- 8** If you have access to an iPad, there are tons of interactive books and apps that address phonics and early reading skills. There are also many websites that offer free reading related games.

Have a happy and healthy summer! Be sure to read, read and read some more! Not only can we prevent the summer slide, we can accelerate reading growth.



For more teaching ideas and activities be sure to visit our blog! www.blog.maketaketeach.com

TITLE: An Adult with An Autism Diagnosis: A Guide for the Newly Diagnosed

AUTHOR: Gillan Drew

SUBJECT AREA: Autism-Adulthood-Diagnosis

PUBLISHER: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

PUBLICATION DATE: 2017

NUMBER OF PAGES: 175

More and more adults who were never diagnosed with ASD are now discovering it and are being left to wonder “What’s next?” With the lack of supports and the dearth of research on how ASD affects adults, it is understandable that a newly diagnosed adult would feel confounded. A writer named Gillan Drew, who was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, attempts to throw us a life raft in the form of a new book, An Adult with an Autism Diagnosis: A Guide for the Newly Diagnosed.

I was absolutely amazed at how comprehensive, yet how concise and easy to understand this little gem was! The author leaves no stone unturned here; From Part I, Autism-The Basics to Part II: Autism in Everyday Life. The author describes how his life is colored by autism and the myriad ways it affects him and others on the spectrum. Discussion includes whom to disclose one’s ASD to, getting stuck on one thing, learning how manage and regulate strong emotions, and how to navigate social situations.

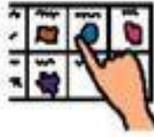
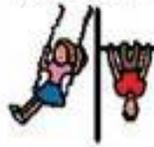
Strategies are offered such as giving oneself a “timeout” when things get too stressful, learning how to find an alternative or Plan B if something goes wrong, and finding help and support with enough persistence. Each chapter goes into detail but is also easy to understand; the strategies are both clever and practical.

The author was forced to be resourceful due to his late diagnosis and the added stresses of being married and having a child. He describes what he himself has done to cope with autism’s difficulties, yet he managed to succeed and build a life for himself, his wife who has ASD and their child. Some important areas that others are reluctant to discuss such as romantic relationships and sexuality are covered here and the advice and information come from a man who is married rather than a psychologist sitting in his ivory tower in an office. The advice is practical, down-to-earth and makes so much sense! For example, he advises the reader to plan ahead and that one must be prepared to be flexible as much of life seems to be Plan B!

The advice is infused with warmth and compassion as he has been there before and knows how hard it can be. What I liked about the book was the use of unorthodox ways of coping such as using stock phrases in social situations where one would feel stuck and making a fast getaway from a difficult situation so that a major faux pas can be avoided. The ideas are brilliant and can be used anytime and I have not seen a book like this! Where was this when I was diagnosed at the ripe old age of 30??



Sample Summer Schedule

<p>good morning</p> 	<p>wake up</p> 	<p>use bathroom</p> 	<p>breakfast</p> 	<p>get dressed</p> 	<p>sun screen</p> 
<p>morning AM</p> 	<p>review schedule</p> 	<p>beach</p> 	<p>swim</p> 	<p>walk</p> 	<p>go to store</p> 
<p>afternoon PM</p> 	<p>lunch</p> 	<p>quiet time</p> 	<p>snack</p> 	<p>play outside</p> 	<p>dinner</p> 
<p>good night</p> 	<p>bathe</p> 	<p>brush teeth</p> 	<p>pyjamas</p> 	<p>story</p> 	<p>sleep</p> 

Easy Flag Fruit Dessert



Ingredients:

5-6 cups of red fresh fruit. (I used cherries, strawberries and raspberries)

2 cups of blueberries

3 cups of yogurt or white chocolate covered pretzels

Directions:

Wash fresh fruit and dry. Lay out fruit and pretzels to represent the flag stripes on a rectangular platter, and place a small bowl of blueberries on the top left.



Reprinted from: www.familyfreshmeals.com

**With Much Appreciation to:
ASM's 5k Run Participants, Volunteers and
Michigan Running Foundation
for making our annual 5k a success on April 29th, 2017**



Special Thanks To:

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