

ASLC NEWS



"Bringing the pieces together."

Our Mission

The Mission of the Autism Society of Larimer County is to serve as a resource for individuals and families affected by autism spectrum disorder by providing information, advocacy, public awareness activities and promoting the development of services and resources.

Our Board

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For more information contact:

Autism Society of Larimer County

Phone: 970-377-9640

Email: aslc@autismlarimer.org

Website:

www.autismlarimer.org

Autismlarimer.org

The Autism Society of Larimer County is proud to present to the community and the world wide web our updated website. The journey has just begun to provide a cohesive and concise web page to meet the needs of those searching for answers, directions and support.

We would like to give thanks to Ann Hienke for all her time, creativity and effort she spent on rebuilding and rewriting the website from the ground up. She was instrumental in negotiating free web hosting from FRII (Front Range Internet, Inc)

too. From the foundation that Ann built, John McGinley was able to build the site up to what we

valuable resources to our families and community.

The updated site has many great new features such as downloadable resources, a daily updated autism event community calendar and so much more. We will continue to expand and expound on the ASLC web page and your input, suggestions and comments on site content is greatly appreciated.

If you have not visited our new site please do so and leave a comment on our blog page. www.autismlarimer.org

We are here to grow for you!



Check us out at www.autismlarimer.org

have today. It is because of volunteers like Ann and John that the ASLC is able to continue growing and providing

An Easy Way to Help



You Search or Shop...
We Give!

What if the ASLC earned a penny every time you searched the Internet? Or how about if a percentage of every purchase you made online went to support our cause? Well, now it can!

GoodSearch.com is a new Yahoo-powered search engine that donates half its advertising revenue, about a penny

per search, to the charities its users designate. Use it just as you would any search engine, get quality search results from Yahoo, and watch the donations add up!

GoodShop.com is a new online shopping mall which donates up to 37 percent of each purchase to your favorite cause! Hundreds of great stores in-

cluding Amazon, Target, Gap, Best Buy, ebay, Macy's and Barnes & Noble have teamed up with GoodShop and every time you place an order, you'll be supporting your favorite cause.

Just go to www.goodsearch.com and be sure to enter *Autism Society of Larimer County* as the charity you want to support. And, be sure to **spread the word!**

Journaling Your Way Through Stress: Finding Answers Within Yourself

By Robert Naseef, Ph.D.

Support groups don't seem to work for me. I do get something out of them when I'm there, but day in and day out, sometimes it feels like more than I can bear. Is there anything else that I can try? This is a question I commonly hear from parents of children with special needs. Often we are told to take one day at a time, and that is a helpful concept when we are trying not to be overwhelmed about the future. But what can you do when one day is just too long and too hard? Try reaching for a pen and paper. Keeping a diary, or "journaling," can be an extremely effective tool for discovering our innermost thoughts and releasing tensions. Setting aside 10-15 minutes to put your thoughts into words may just help to reduce your stress or get its physical symptoms under control.

Many people believe that it is easier to hold in their feelings, but nothing could be further from the truth. In ancient Greece, Hippocrates, the father of medicine, stressed that emotional factors could be a contributing cause in disease as well as a factor in recovery. In more recent times, research psychologist James Pennebaker and others have found a mountain of evidence that demonstrates that disclosing our pain when we're suffering through a major upheaval can greatly improve our physical and mental health. Conversely, holding it in can lead to recurrent health problems as serious as colds, flu, high blood pressure, ulcers, and even cancer.

Having a child with a disability certainly qualifies as a "major upheaval." The inhibition of our upsetting thoughts and feelings is physical work, the burden of which can lead to long-term health problems. People who can open up in a group generally report that they enjoy it and learn from it. In addition, their health notably improves - which incidentally provides the scientific basis for the rapid increase of self-help groups for all sorts of problems. But one size does not fit all. Not everyone can open up in a group, and even

for those who get great benefit, the group isn't always there at the time you may need comfort and support.

According to Pennebaker in *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Confiding in Others* (New York: Avon, 1990), writing about our inner turmoil can also be therapeutic. Writing helps us to organize and understand our thoughts and feelings. Keeping a journal that we write in with some regularity can thus be extremely helpful for our physical and emotional well-being. By translating the feelings about the events into words, we can gain perspective and understanding about ourselves and what has happened. When we confront upsetting circumstances by talking or in writing, we are often relieved to discover or rediscover that we are not alone, and this helps us gain insight. We can see ourselves as just ordinary people who happen to be going through a difficult ordeal, and this may be a great consolation.

On a practical note, don't let journaling become a stressor in itself. Writing as a method of emotional release should be done when you feel the urge. It can be daily, weekly, monthly, or just when you feel like it. One technique is to try writing in response to a question. Here's a few to get you started:

1. What's been really hard about being a mother or a father today?
2. What have I learned from this?
3. What moment gave me pleasure or satisfaction?
4. What contributions have I made to my child and my family today?
5. How do I feel about my life in general?

Another way to approach this is to complete a sentence stem. Here are a few that I use in the workshops I present:

1. The best thing about my child is...
2. The worst thing about my child is...
3. A feeling or thought that I am embarrassed about is...
4. Something that made me proud lately happened when...
5. The worst thing about my spouse is...
6. The best thing about my spouse is...
7. The nicest thing someone said to me lately was...
8. I hope that...

9. I grieve about my dream that will never be...

10. I dream a new dream that...

11. My child has taught me that...

12. I am becoming a better person because...

Try to just let it flow. What comes out may surprise or enlighten you. Often in a conversation, the flow of the interaction will unleash thoughts we never knew we had. Writing expressively can do the same thing. Thoughts and feelings will emerge from your inner self. The important thing is to look for meaning and growth. Merely writing about the same painful things over and over will not bring healing. Focus on thought as well as emotion in order to tap into your inner healing power. Keep track of your growth or change as you write about your experiences. Searching for new realizations and understandings will keep you on a path of healing.

Web sites about journaling can help you get started. Journaling Your Life, for example, offers writing techniques and tips. Check this out at <http://h.arce.tripod.com/journalingyourlife/>. If you don't take to journaling, or if you tend to get more upset instead of less, then try another approach: go to a support group, talk to a fellow parent or close friend, read a good book on the subject, or seek assistance.

Sometimes a mental health professional (a social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist) or a member of the clergy can be helpful to you in understanding your needs. Some people are reluctant to take this step, but when it becomes hard to function from day to day, this kind of help may be in order. Just as you would consult a specialist for your child if necessary, do likewise for yourself. It is intelligent and wise to acknowledge your own needs as well as your child's.

You deserve it!

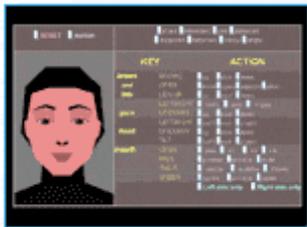
Understanding Emotions



The Feelings Game

Four graduated lessons for learning about emotions. Start with matching faces to words and end with matching faces and situations to feelings.

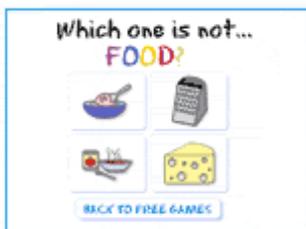
www.do2learn.com/games/feelingsgame/index.htm



Face Reading

Adjust separate parts of a face to represent common emotions.

www.do2learn.com/games/facialexpressions/index.htm



What's Different?

Pick which object does not fit. Images from our Make-A-Schedule program.

www.do2learn.com/games/whatsdifferent/

More great games at
Do2learn.com

High Emotion and Autism

The myth says that people with autism are unable to read others' emotions... unable to empathize...and often have limited emotions of their own. Yet many people on the autism spectrum are not only empathetic and emotionally responsive, but seem MORE emotional than their typically developing peers. They may respond more intensely to others' feelings -- crying when others cry, for example. They may need more hugs and loving reassurance. They may even empathize more fully, asking and really listening for answers to why another person is sad, upset, or angry.

Perhaps the myth of emotional coldness comes from the early days of autism, when the term meant "profoundly withdrawn." Today, though, it seems far from the mark. Here is a dialogue that might answer some of your own questions about your child's high emotions.

Question:

My son is seven years old and has been diagnosed with mild autism. He is very emotional and so sensitive at times that he cries over anything going wrong or not working out or not remembering. So much so that when he has these spells in class now they have to pull him away from what he is doing so he can calm down. Do you have any recommendations as to what I can do to help him? He is very hard on himself when he gets answers wrong or does things incorrectly, yet we always encourage him.

Answer: From Dr. Robert Naseef: Sometimes "mild" autism is anything but. It can be extremely challenging especially for children (like your son) and their parents. None of us wants to see our child in pain when something is not working out. Many if not most children who are diagnosed on the autism spectrum have difficulty regulating their emotions and maintaining a calm state. Given his diagnosis, your son is typical.

Children with special needs, such as autism, go through the same stages and challenges as typical children, but it usually takes them longer to get through them. They get stuck in all the cracks and corners of everyday life, and they need more help to learn how to deal with the upsets of everyday life. Parents, too, get upset and there are certainly more upsets and they are far more intense when a child has autism.

The good news is that this can change and you can help. First of all, remind your son and yourself that when he cries it is caused by a feeling and that will pass like a dark cloud. The sun will come out again even though it feels like the sky is falling. Help your son to learn to take a few slow deep breaths when he first begins to feel upset. Practice this regularly when he is not upset. Do it with him. Let him know that all of us, children and adults, get upset and have to learn how to calm ourselves.

What his teachers are doing is helping him to focus on something else by removing him from the scene of the upset. In the long run, the goal can be for him to learn this cognitive-behavioral technique by gently moving his mind to something else. Certainly keep encouraging him, for you are on the right track.

Robert Naseef, Ph.D. is the co-editor of "Voices from the Spectrum: Parents, Grandparents, Siblings, People With Autism, and Professionals Share Their Wisdom" (2006). On the web at www.alternativechoices.com.

April Is Autism Awareness Month

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In honor of Autism Awareness Month the ASLC will be hosting it's 2nd annual awareness week. Starting April 19th through the 24th there will plenty of opportunities to join a variety of events.



SPIN-A-THON

On **Sunday, April 19th** we are excited to present to you an opportunity to torch hundreds of calories while raising funds and awareness for the cause.

Become Fit and the ASLC has partnered to bring you a **4 hour Spin-a-thon!** Regardless of your fitness level you can become a "Spin Captain" and recruit a team of 8 people to collect pledges or be an individual spinner for this exciting 4 hour event. The event is divided into 8 - 30 min sessions. One bike is allotted to each team with time on the team bike divided among team riders. Each team is encouraged to raise a team minimum to participate. For more information go to www.autismclarimer.org

Help Beat Autism

Wednesday, April 22



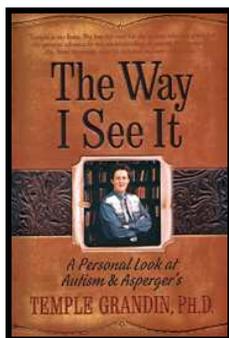
Join the Fort Collins African Drum and Dance for a family friendly night of entertainment at the Island Grill in Fort Collins. The evening will be filled with drumming, dancing and good food.

Time:

6:00 pm

Place:

Island Grill 2601 S Lemay Ave # 12



An Evening with Dr. Temple Grandin

Tuesday, April 21 you will not want to miss a wonderful evening with world famous author speaker and autism advocate Dr. Temple Grandin. Dr. Grandin will get down to the REAL issues of autism,

the ones parents, teachers, and individuals on the spectrum face every day. Temple will offer helpful do's and don'ts, practical strategies, and try-it-now tips, all based on her "insider" perspective and a great deal of research. In addition to Dr. Temple's presentation the ASLC will be holding a silent auction with lots of great community donated items. The event will take place at the Hilton Garden Inn in Fort Collins with doors opening at 6:30 for silent auction bidding. Coming from out of town? Plan on staying the night at the Hilton Garden Inn for a reduced block rate for the event. For hotel reservation please call 970-225-2908. Event cost is \$5.00 at the door.

Lyric Cinema Café Movie Night



The ASLC and The Lyric Cinema Café are proud to present the 2009 X-DANCE Film Festival best biography winner "**Clay Marzo: Just Add Water**". "Just Add Water" is an action-packed surf film that tells Clay Marzo's inspirational story about the gifts and challenges of living with Asperger's syndrome. Take a visually stunning and emotionally powerful journey through his life.

See Clay literally come alive in the ocean as he destroys the waves of Tahiti, Fiji, Hawaii, France, Spain and Australia with his wildly creative surfing. You'll also experience inspiring testimonials about his incredible talent from the most legendary surfers in the world. The story also showcases an awareness-raising glimpse into his life and mind as he comes to understand both the gifts and challenges of living with Asperger's.

Inspirational awareness film for all teens especially on the spectrum!

Date: Thursday April 23

Show Time: To be determined

Location: Lyric Cinema Café 300 E. Mountain Ave, FC

Events & Announcements

ASLC Family/Community Support Group

Every first Monday of the month
6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Where: Respite Care Inc. 6203 S. Lemay Avenue,

Contact: aslc@autismlarimer.org

Free Child Care available through Respite Care Inc. Reservation required. Call 207-9343 email Lynn@respitcareinc.org

A-Team-Thompson Autism/Asperger's

Parent/Community Group Meeting

Meets every second Monday of the month
6:30 – 8:30 pm

Where: Thompson Administration Building, 800 South Taft, Room 128

Contact: Margi Scoufis 613-6771

scoufism@thompson.k12.co.us

Respitivity Nights

6:00-10:00 p.m.

February 28, 2009

April 11, 2009

May date to be announced

A Collaborative effort with the Foothills Gateway Family Support Services Program and Respite Care, Inc.

WHAT: A night of FREE childcare for children (through age 21) enrolled in the *Family Support Services Program at Foothills Gateway. (or on the waiting list for the Family Support Services Program), and their siblings.

WHEN: February 28, 2009
April 11, 2009 6:00-10:00p.m.
May date to be announced

WHERE: Respite Care, Inc.
6203 South Lemay Ft. Collins, CO

HOW: Please call Leann Massey at 207-9435 Limited number of spaces available at Respite Care, Inc.
~ first come first served.

Contact Foothills Gateway for more information about the Family Support Services Program.

Larimer County Transition Series

Come to one or all! For special needs students, ages 14 and older and their families! Professionals are welcome as well

Sponsored by: Poudre School District, Thompson School District, Front Range Community College, Foothills Gateway

6:00 – 8:00 p.m. At Front Range

Community College in the Longs Peak Student Center
Light refreshments will be provided, donations accepted

All dates will allow for lengthy Q&A sessions

- January 22, 2009: Transition Panel
- February 19, 2009: Legal Night
- March 26, 2009: *Social Security Information Workshop*
- April 30, 2009: *Employment School to Work Alliance Program*

Visit our events calendar on line there are many workshops and events listed there. Events are added almost daily so go to www.autismlarimer.org and click on calendar to stay completely up to date.

Special Thanks

The ASLC would like to thank John and Stacey Knuckey for their financial support and commitment in helping increasing awareness and services in Larimer county through the combined United Way Federal Campaign payroll deduction program.

Thank for your support!

The ASLC is grateful to Dr. Temple Grandin who has graciously donated over \$500.00 worth of books and media material to the ASLC Lending Library. We will be posted new titles soon.

To check out books go to www.autismlarimer.org and click on "About ASLC" then click on ASLC Lending Library