



"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

ASLC NEWS

ASLC Birthday Club Celebration



and converse with friends. With the generous donation from Domino's Pizza the kids and families were treated to a pizza feast. Cakes were made with specific dietary consideration and were provided by Jessica Gipson (the mother of Tavian who decorates cakes as one of her many



The Autism Society of Larimer County and our local Pump It Up partnered together to bring the community the first ever autism birthday party. This party provided a safe and understanding environment for our kids to be kids. On October 12, over twenty kids gathered together with their families to celebrate the combined birthdays of Gavin, Laura, Anthony, Tavian, Camden and Daniel. Kids of all ages enjoyed ...



Bouncing ...Sliding ... Climbing and ...Tumbling on Pump It Up's giant inflatable

Colorado Eagles, Red Robin, and Andrea McGinley.



Did you miss the fun? Would you like your child with autism to receive a birthday party invitation? Please give contact information when you register your child and we will send a personal invitation to attend that party. If your child has a birthday that falls within the quarter of the party, s/he will be one of the children who will be celebrated. Just let us know when you register. Siblings are welcome too. Our next party



play areas. The biggest hit was the new rock climbing wall where many of the kids conquered their fears. Parents were able to meet other parents

event will be held Sunday, February 22, 2009. Call or email today to reserve a spot! 970-377-9640/ aslc@autismlarimer.org

Helping Your Child With Autism Get a Good Night's Sleep

During the first few months of life, babies ease into a normal cycle of sleep and wakefulness. They gradually reduce the number of daytime naps and start sleeping for longer periods of time at night. But some children continue to have difficulty falling asleep or sleeping through the night, and the problem can persist long after children start school.

Sleep disorders may be even more common in children with autism. Researchers estimate that between 40% and 80% of children with autism have difficulty sleeping. The biggest sleep problems among these children include:

- difficulty falling asleep
- inconsistent sleep routines
- restlessness or poor sleep quality
- waking early

A lack of a good night's sleep can affect not only the child, but everyone in his or her family. If you're bleary-eyed from night after night of waking up with your child, there are a number of lifestyle interventions and sleep aids that can help.

What causes sleep disorders in children with autism?

Researchers don't know for sure why autistic children have problems with sleep, but they have several theories. The first has to do with social cues. People know when it's time to go to sleep at night thanks to the normal cycles of light and dark and the body's circadian rhythms. But they also use social cues. For example, children may see their siblings getting ready for bed. Children with autism, who often have difficulty communicating, may misinterpret or fail to understand these cues.

Another theory has to do with the hormone melatonin, which normally helps regulate sleep-wake cycles. To make melatonin, the body needs an amino acid called tryptophan, which research has found to be either higher or lower than normal in children with autism. Typically, melatonin levels rise in response to darkness (at night) and dip during the daylight hours. Studies have shown that some children with autism don't release melatonin at the correct times of day. Instead, they have high levels of melatonin during the daytime and lower levels

at night.

Another reason children with autism may have trouble falling asleep or awoken in the middle of the night could be an increased sensitivity to outside stimuli, such



O sleep! O gentle sleep! / Nature's soft nurse, how have I frightened thee / That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down / And steep my senses in forgetfulness?

—William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part II*

as touch or sound. While most kids continue to sleep soundly while their mother opens the bedroom door or tucks in the covers, a child with autism might wake up abruptly.

Anxiety is another possible condition that could adversely affect sleep. Children with autism tend to test higher than other children for anxiety.

What kind of effects do sleep problems have?

Not getting a good night's sleep can have a serious impact on a child's life. Research has shown that, in children with autism, there is a connection between lack of sleep and the following characteristics:

- aggression
- depression
- hyperactivity
- increased behavioral problems
- irritability
- poor learning and cognitive performance

But your child isn't the only person affected. If he or she isn't sleeping, there's a good chance you aren't either. One study shows that the parents of autistic children sleep less, have poorer sleep quality, and wake up earlier than parents of non-autistic children.

How do I know whether my child has a sleep disorder?

Every child needs a slightly different amount of sleep. In general, these are the amounts of sleep children require, by age:

- Ages 1-3: 12-14 hours of sleep per day
- Ages 3-6: 10-12 hours of sleep per day
- Ages 7-12: 10-11 hours of sleep per day

If your child regularly has difficulty falling asleep or wakes up repeatedly throughout the night, it might be a sign of a sleep problem. To know for sure, make an appointment with your child's pediatrician. The doctor may refer you to a sleep specialist.

It can help to keep a sleep diary for a week to track how much and when your child is sleeping. You can share this diary with your child's doctor and any specialist involved in treatment.

How can I help my child sleep better?

Sleep medications are used only as a last resort with children. There are a number of lifestyle changes and natural sleep aids that can improve sleep time and quality in kids with autism:

- Avoid giving your child stimulants such as caffeine and sugar before bed.
- Establish a nighttime routine: give your child a bath, read a story, and put him or her to bed at the same time every night.

- Help your child relax before bed by reading a book, giving a gentle back [massage](#), or turning on soft music.

Avoid television, video games, and other stimulating activities just before bedtime.

- To prevent sensory distractions during the night, put heavy curtains on your child's windows to block out the light, install thick carpeting, and make sure the door doesn't creak.
- Ask your pediatrician about giving your child melatonin just before bedtime. This [dietary supplement](#) is often used as a sleep aid to help people get over jet lag. It may help normalize sleep-wake cycles in autistic children who have sleeping issues, and research done so far finds that it's safe and effective.

Try bright-light therapy. Exposing the child to periods of bright light in the morning may help regulate the body's release of melatonin.

The Larimer County Special Needs Registry



Special Needs Registry

www.larimer.org/apps/specialneeds

The Larimer County Special Needs Registry is a database containing information about individuals in Larimer County with special needs who may require assistance in the event of a disaster. The information may also be used to assist emergency personnel and volunteers in providing assistance. Participation in the Special Needs Registry is voluntary.

You may register at www.larimer.org/apps/specialneeds/.

You must use the on-line application. If you do not have computer access, or you need assistance completing the application, call United Way 2-1-1 by dialing 2-1-1 or 970-407-7066.

Mom's Time Out!

Yeah, It is our turn again!

Join us

Sunday, November 9th

from 4-6 pm

at

Timeless Creations and The Creative Underground

1636 S College Avenue

Project: Altered Canvas

Fee: \$20.00

Cost include all project materials, finger foods and beverages.

Plan on having a great time and releasing some of your creative power on an exciting new project. We will learn techniques on altering a standard canvas into a work of art.

Call to reserve your spot.

970-377-9640

or email at aslc@autismlarimer.org

SEE YOU THERE!

Holiday Letter: Understanding Autism

Written by Viki Satkiewicz Gayhardt; originally printed on Sunday, November 28, 1999

Below is a holiday letter which explains the holiday experience from the view of someone who has autism. Aspects of the letter may apply to people across the autism spectrum such as PDD (pervasive developmental disorder) and aspergers syndrome.

I understand that we will be visiting each other for the holidays this year! Sometimes these visits can be very hard for me, but here is some information that might help our visit to be more successful.

As you probably know, I am challenged by a hidden disability called autism or what some people refer to as a pervasive developmental disorder (PDD). Autism/PDD is a neurodevelopmental disorder which makes it hard for me to understand the environment around me. I have barriers in my brain that you can't see but which make it difficult for me to adapt to my surroundings. Sometimes I may seem rude and abrupt, but it is only because I have to try so hard to understand people and at the same time, make myself understood. people with autism have different abilities: some may not speak, some write beautiful poetry, others are whizzes in math (Albert Einstein was thought to be autistic), or have difficulty making friends. we are all different and need various degrees of support. Sometimes when I am touched unexpectedly, it might feel painful and make me want to run away. I get easily frustrated, too. Being with lots of other people is like standing next to a moving freight train and trying to decide how and when to jump aboard. I feel frightened and confused a lot of the time, like you would if you landed on an alien planet and didn't understand how the inhabitants communicated. This is why I need to have things the same as much as possible. Once I learn how things happen, I can get by ok. But if something, anything changes, then I have to relearn the situation all over again! It is very hard. When you try to talk to me, I often can't understand what you say because there is a lot of distraction around. I have to concentrate very hard to hear and understand one thing at a time. You might think I am ignoring you--I am not. Rather, I am hearing everything and not knowing what is most important to respond to. Holidays are exceptionally hard because there are so many different people, places and things going on that are out of my ordinary realm. This may be fun and adventurous for most people, but for me, it's very hard work and can be extremely stressful. I often have to get away from all

the commotion to calm down. It would be great if you had a private place set up to where I could retreat. If I can not sit at the meal table, do not think I am misbehaved or that my parents have no control over me. Sitting in one place for even 5 minutes is often impossible for me. I feel so antsy and overwhelmed by all the smells, sounds, and people--I just have to get up and move about.

Please Don't hold up your meal for me--go on without me and my parent's will handle the



Holidays are exceptionally hard because there are so many different people, places and things going on that are out of my ordinary realm.

situation the best way they know.

Eating in general is hard for me. If you understand that autism is a sensory processing disorder, it's no wonder eating is a problem! Think of all the senses involved with eating: sight, smell, taste, touch AND all the complicated mechanics that are involved with chewing and swallowing that a lot of people with autism have trouble with. I am not being picky--I literally cannot eat certain foods as my sensory system and/or oral motor coordination are impaired.

Don't be disappointed If mommy hasn't dressed me in starch and bows. it's because she knows how much stiff and frilly clothes can drive me buggy! I have to feel comfortable in my clothes or I will just be miserable! Temple Grandin, a very smart adult with autism, has taught people that when she had to wear stiff petticoats as a child, she felt like her skin was being rubbed with sandpaper. I often feel the same way in dressy clothes.

When I go to someone else's house, I may appear bossy and controlling. In a sense, I am being controlling because that is how I try to fit into the world around me (which is so hard to figure out!) Things have to be done in a way I am familiar with or else I might get confused and frustrated. It doesn't mean you have to change the way you are doing things--just

please be patient with me and understanding of how I have to cope...mom and dad have no control over how my autism makes me feel inside. People with autism often have little things that they do to help themselves feel more comfortable. The grown ups call it "Self regulation," or "stimming". I might rock, hum, flick my fingers in my face, flap my arms or any number of different things. I am not trying to be disruptive or weird. Again, I am doing what I have to do for my brain to adapt to your world. Sometimes I cannot stop myself from talking, singing, or partaking in an activity. The grown ups call this "perseverating" which is kinda like self regulation or stimming. I do this only because I have found something to occupy myself that makes me feel comfortable, and I don't want to come out of that comfortable place and join your hard-to-figure-out-world. Perseverative behaviors are good to a certain degree because they help me calm down. Please be respectful to my mom and dad if they let me "stim" for awhile as they know me best and what helps to calm me.

Remember that my mom and dad have to watch me much more closely than the average child. This is for my own safety, preservation of your possessions, and to facilitate my integration with you tippies (what we autistics fondly call you neurotypical folk!) It hurts My parents' feelings to be criticized for being over protective or condemned for not watching me close enough. They are human and have been given an assignment intended for saints. My parents are good people and need your support. Holidays are filled with sights, Sounds, and smells. The average household is turned into a busy, frantic, festive place. Remember that this may be fun for you tippies but it's very hard work for me to conform. If I fall apart or act out in a way that you consider socially inappropriate, please remember that I don't possess the neurological system that is required to follow tippy rules.

I am a unique person--an interesting person. I will find my place at this celebration that is comfortable for us all as long as you'll try to view the world through my eyes!

Click Here



- [Ask an Aspie](http://www.oddsandfriends.typepad.com/) is a site created by and for adults and teens with Asperger Syndrome. Included are hints and tips for parents of "aspies," and answers to such questions as "why are Aspies such picky eaters?" and "why won't my son stop talking about maps?" Whether you're on the spectrum yourself, or love someone with an autism spectrum diagnosis, you're likely to find useful information and ideas on this site. You may even decide to join the online community! www.oddsandfriends.typepad.com/

- [Free Pecs!](http://www.dotolearn.com/) This is a great site enabling you to clip and paste a variety of pecs. The website is filled with lots of information too. The black and white pecs are free, and you can do 1 inch, or 2 inch pecs or coloring pages. www.dotolearn.com/

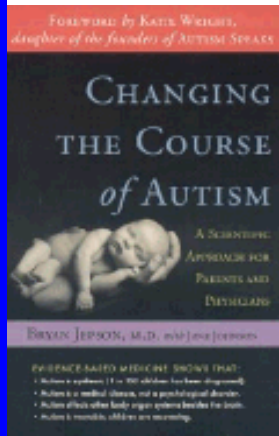
Got a great site to share? Email it to asl@autismclarimer and we will post it here.

Special Needs Book Club

November Book Selection

Changing the Course of Autism: A Scientific Approach for Parents and Physicians

by Bryan Jepson, Katie Wright, and Jane Johnson



This book shows that autism can be treated by reducing the neurological inflammation that is part of the disease process, rather than simply masking the symptoms with drugs like Ritalin and Prozac. The authors have seen autistic behaviors improve dramatically or disappear completely with appropriate medical treatment. The book reviews the medical literature regarding the biological nature of the disease, including the potential connection between vaccines and autism. The foreword is by Katie Wright, whose parents--Bob and Suzanne Wright--founded Autism Speaks.

Join us

Sunday, November 30th

Reader's Cove at 1001 E. Harmony Road

Contact Phyllis Zimmerman at asl@autismclarimer.org for more information.

Books are now on sale at Reader's Cove at a 20% book club discount. Inquire at the register.

“Changing the Course of Autism has the potential to revolutionize the way autism is perceived and managed”

Events & Announcements

Parent Education Workshops

Does your child have difficulty managing his daily schedule? Do you have trouble communicating with your child?
Does your child have trouble completing daily living skills? Do you need additional social skills training tips?

Presented by: Nancy Cason, Psy. D.
Claire Dumke, Psy. D
Michelle Kerska, MSW, BCBA

- Toilet Training: November 5th
- Managing Transitions: November 6th
- Alternative Communication Strategies: November 12th
- Daily Organization and Scheduling: November 13th
- Puberty: November 18th
- Building Social Skills (ages 4-7): November 19th
- Building Social Skills (age 8-12): November 20th
- Daily Living Skills (age 4-7): December 3rd
- Daily Living Skills (ages 8-12): December 4th
- Safety Skills: December 10th
- Reducing Tantrum Behavior (age 3-5): December 11th
- Reducing Tantrum Behavior (age 8-15): December 17th
- Use of Visual Schedule: December 18th

All Workshops will take place from 10:00 am—12:00 pm

Place: East Jewell Ave., Suite 805, Denver, CO, 80222

Cost: \$50.00 per session

Contact: Michelle Kerska, 303-648-5834 or mkerska@yahoo.com

Autism Groups

Various Groups for Children and Adolescents with Asperger's and High Functioning Autism

Cost: \$45.00 per session. \$180.00 deposit required at the beginning of first session. Clients must be assessed for eligibility of group. Cost of assessment in \$45.00 For more information please contact: Dr. nancy Cason at 303-935-5307 or Dr. Clair Dumke at 720-238-7383 or cdumke@autismdiagnosic.com

What: Coping Skills and Anger Management boys, ages 8-12

When: Group begins November 13 th and continues for 8 weeks

Time: Every Thursday from 5:00—6:15 pm

What: Coping Skills and Anger Management boys, ages 13-16

When: Group begins November 11th and continues for 8 weeks

Time: Every Tuesday from 4:30—5:45 pm

What: Friendship and Social Skills Groups for Boys, ages 8-13

When: Group begins November 12th and continues for 8 weeks

Time: Every Wednesday from 4:30—5:45 pm

What: Friendship and Social Skills Groups for Boys, ages 14-18

When: Group begins November 12th and continues for 8 weeks

Time: Every Wednesday from 5:30—6:45 pm

Events & Announcements

Continued . . .

Mom's Time out

Project: Altered Canvas
Fee: \$20.00
Cost includes all project materials, finger foods and beverages
When: Sunday, November 9th from 4-6 pm
Where: Timeless Creations and The Creative Underground
1636 S College Avenue
Contact: aslc@autismlarimer.org to reserve a spot

A-Team-Thompson Autism/Asperger's Parent/Community Group Meeting

Topic: Respite Care Center of Fort Collins
When: November 10, 6:30 –8:30 pm
Where: Thompson Administration Building, 800 South Taft, Room 128
Contact: Margi Scoufis 613-6771
scoufism@thompson.k12.co.us

Special Needs Book Club

When: Sunday, November 30th, 2:00 pm
Where: Reader's Cove at 1001 E. Harmony Rd
Book Discussion: Changing The Course of Autism
by Bryan Jepson M.D.

ASLC Family Support Group

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

When: December 8, 6:30 to 8:30 pm
Topic: Autism 101 ABC's of Autism
Speaker: Catherine Bladow
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.

Board Positions Available

The Autism Society of Larimer County is looking for compassionate, dedicated, self – motivated individuals to serve on the ASLC board. If you have a heart and desire to work for the autism community in a volunteer capacity, please consider on of the following positions; Vice President, Directory, Fundraising Committee, or Volunteer Committee. The ASLC is committed 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. We need your assistance in fulfilling that commitment. Please contact the ASLC at aslc@autismlarimer.org for more information.

Current Programs and Accomplishments

- *IEP Advocacy*
- *Information and referral service*
- *Family Outreach/Support Group*
- *Social Skill Partnership with CSU*
- *Lending Library*
- *Special Needs Book Club*
- *Community Education*
- *Legislative and system change support*
- *Father's Support Group*
- *Autism Birthday Club*
- *Mom's Time Out*

Helping Your Child With Autism Get a Good Night's Sleep

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In extreme cases you may want to ask your doctor about Clonidin.

Clonidine is actually a medication for hypertension (high blood pressure). However, it has the side effect of causing drowsiness. It is routinely prescribed for sleep problems with autistic children. I have not used prescription sleep aids for my son, so I do not know how of their safety, side effects, or successes. Please read the links below and speak to your pediatrician or neurologist for more information regarding the use of clonidine to aid in sleep disturbances.

- www.specialkidstoday.com/experts/answers/24.htm
- www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1548248?dopt=Abstract

For more information on sleep go to

http://www.genovadiagnostics.com/index.php?option=com_gpanel&Itemid=2&nav=test