

IN TOUCH

OFFICIAL VOICE OF AUTISM CONNECT



What's Inside



*Meet aaaaaMazi...ng Micah! –
“Please be patient with my limited vocabulary”*

Letter from the Editor

Event of the year... details inside!

*Word from our experts –
Helping Parents of Kids with Autism Handle the
Unique Challenges of the Holiday Season*

You an Au –ti –some P.A.R.E.N.T!

AUTISM CONNECT- UNLOCKING GREATNESS



Who are we:

Autism Connect is a specialised learning centre for children on the Autism Spectrum. Based in Mitchell's Plain the organisation aims to bridge the gap for families not able to afford one on one therapy , but whose children are still awaiting placement in Autism specific schools/ units. Our aim is to ensure our children are accepted and not declined placement at Autism specific schools.

Why we exist:

To make specialised Autism care accessible to low and middle income families.

How we do it:

We base our intervention strategies on the philosophy of TEACHH (Treatment and Education of Auditory and communication – Handicapped children) established by Eric Schopler in 1964.

Working from the premise that people with Autism are predominantly visual learners , intervention strategies are based around physical and visual structure , schedules , work systems and task organisation, concepts, sensory processing , change and relating to others. Whereas some interventions focus on addressing areas of weakness, the TEACHH approach works with existing strengths and emerging skill areas.



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AUTISM CONNECT
Unlocking Greatness Since 2012



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Word from the Editor



Hello Friends!

Welcome to the second edition of In Touch Magazine and the last installment for the year.

Autism Connect has been a hive of activity in recent weeks and we are delighted to be able to share these developments with you - read all about it in the coming pages!

As I look back through the past year, it's full of challenges and successes, happy times and frustrating times. However, there are so many people who supported us through the year I thought that I needed to take some time to thank them, right here!

Donavan Crowie - you have been instrumental in gearing our classrooms! You are an asset to Vera School and a hero to Autism Connect!

Athol, Taryn & Roscoe Williams continue Doing Great Things! Your contribution and on-going support has made an indelible mark in all our lives - welcome to the AC family! Check out www.DoingGreatThings.co.za and

www.taurusschoolsolutions.co.za for more info.

Board members - Thank you to infinity and beyond! I can't imagine a better group of people to work with. We may be small, but we are mighty.

Tammy & Tyler my precious angels - Thank you for your unconditional love and patience and for allowing mom to carry the AC torch with pride!

Enough of the sentimental chatter... You know what they say, it's not how we start but how we finish and we intend to finish strong!

We will be hosting our annual Gala Benefit Dinner on the 30 November 2013 - be sure to diarise! We will be on a bit of a hiatus for the festive season, but with that said we will be back with a vengeance in 2014.

Be safe...
Happy Reading!
Nicky

Contact:
info@autismconnect.org.za



The signs of Autism..



original artwork provided by



Follow us on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/AutismConnectMP>

AUTISM CONNECT

PRESENTS:

Gala Benefit Dinner

Date - 30 November 2013

Time - 19:30

Venue - TSIBA CAMPUS: Auditorium

Mupine - 307 Forest Drive Ext. Pinelands 7405, Cape Town

Theme - Bling

Love Gift - R200.00 per person

Dress Code - Formal

RSVP - 31 October 2013 to info@autismconnect.org.za

This prestigious evening will give you a platform to dress to the nines by embrace our Bling theme!

CONNECT with new friends and dance like no one is watching! Great food, Great Music and Great Company will be the order of the evening! Attendees will also be able to support Autism Connect and our learners through our charity auction on the evening.

AUTISM CONNECT

Gala Benefit Dinner

30 NOVEMBER 2013!

THIS EVENT IS ONE NOT TO BE MISSED!



Kids Xmas Party
13th December
e-mail
info@autismconnect.org
if you would like to get involved

Para Outing 17 Sep 2013



Parama Day 12 September 2013

LOVE is contagious

The instant I laid eyes on you
Two weeks old and gorgeous
Sound asleep in your car seat
With a bib that read "feed & water regularly"
I recognised love



As you grew, when you didn't make eye-contact
I held your little face between my hands
Looked into your eyes
Planted wild kisses on your cheeks
And spoke "I love you's"
Till you pushed me away

I determined to be the metaphoric bulldozer
Breaking through the invisible walls
You found yourself boxed into

You hold an exceptional place in my heart
Not because the world labels you as "special"
But because my love for you
Is.....



Unrestricted
Unconditional
Infectious

Maybe we all suffer from some type of infirmity
That questions the way we love others
Based on what the world views as "normal"
But I tell you that love is contagious
It will leap walls and cross barriers, unrelenting
Even when you were unable to speak words
Love carried every conversation
Straight from my heart to yours!

To my "Mikey Boy" love you forever from your
"Canna"

Airing My Autism Laundry

How parents can turn over a new leaf in the New Year!

A New Year. A time to start over, re-evaluate, and re-prioritize our lives. And of course to do that, we must make lists of goals. Why do we put this kind of pressure on ourselves? Aren't the holidays a test in sanity already? And that's before we set ourselves up to fail by January 3rd. But since Socrates said no life should go unexamined, I guess there's no better time for me to think about resolutions I can really keep. At least until March.

- I will not spend countless hours agonizing with guilt over all of the things I should have done for my child. Instead, I will devote that time to agonizing over my child's future.
- I will not take my child's Ritalin
- I will count chasing my galloping child down the street as exercise.
- I will stop using my child with autism as a scapegoat to my boss for missing so much work. Instead, I will make up stories about my other children.
- I will remind myself that one day my child's actions that may horrify me now will make me a fortune when I write my book.
- I will simply agree with my child's logic that french fries/potato chips and noodles are vegetables.

- I will visit my family & friends this festive season as it's the reason for the season and they will embrace my Autistic Child...
- Don't be a panic mechanic this silly season, but take everything in your stride!
- You an Au- ti-some parent don't let anyone tell you otherwise!
- I will continue to run this race with endurance and spread the good news that Autism can be treated and that my child is destined for GREATNESS!



You know you're an autism parent when your child eats a new food and you facebook it, call your parents, and text all your friends to celebrate!



someecards
USER CARD

Stimming and Autism

There are many things we do to stimulate or calm our senses. We rock babies to soothe them and we sing or hum to ourselves in the shower, we fan ourselves to cool off when we are hot, and we hug and kiss others to give and receive comfort. When we want to increase or arouse our senses we often run or engage in some form of physical activity or exercise, or we may turn the music on loud to get in a party mood and dance. Most of these repetitive behaviors are seen as appropriate if carried out at the proper time and in the proper place. Unfortunately these activities can be embarrassing and even stigmatizing because our culture does not yet understand Autism. Many individuals who are not touched by Autism, and even some of those who are, fear anything that is odd, different or left or right of the so-called norm. The hope is that tolerance and better understanding will come but what is a parent to do in the meantime?

Then there is the term 'stimming', often associated with Autism, which conjures up a more negative image

1. **Conduct a detailed review.** When solving any problem, it is important to begin with a thorough assessment of your child's behaviors. Is there a behaviour that interferes with daily living such as his ability to pay attention? Are there any behaviors that negatively impact her social life? Are any of these behaviors obsessive? Do they have a negative impact on my child?
2. **Seek to understand the function of these behaviors.** It is important to remember that most of these are unconscious and they occur involuntarily to some degree, especially in the beginning. However, once a child realizes the rush or relief it brings to her senses it then becomes more intentional and easily gets reinforced into a habit. As long as it is deemed appropriate it can become a functional way to self-regulate one's sensory experience but if it is seen as dysfunctional and not channeled in the right way it can easily spiral out of control.
3. **Gather information.** If your child is verbal don't be afraid to engage him in conversation about his repetitive behaviors. If your child stares excessively at an object, consider asking him, "Are you trying to do something with your eyes? Tell me what you see." If he is able to verbalize an answer you will have gathered extremely useful information to address the behaviour with.
4. **Make lists.** Most of these behaviors are functional – serve a purpose for meeting a sensory need – but they may not necessarily be appropriate. Make a list categorizing the

behavior(s) as functional and appropriate vs. functional and inappropriate then you can create a plan to address them.

5. **Focus on the positives first.** Concentrating on appropriate behaviors and explaining the function they serve and why they are acceptable can reinforce more of the same. "I like the way your hands are being quiet. It makes it easier for you to pay attention to what is going on around you." Then the focus can turn to redirecting the inappropriate behaviors and substituting them with more suitable outlets.
6. **Create a calm environment.** It is well known that children with ASD often engage in 'stimming' when they are stressed or as a means to manage emotions such as fear, anger and anxiety. Therefore maintaining an atmosphere that is as tranquil, predictable and appealing to her senses as possible will prevent many of these behaviors from occurring.
7. **Be an early bird.** Catch any behaviour that is less than acceptable when it first begins to repeat itself. Don't comment or draw attention to the behaviour. Use your detective powers to surmise what purpose the behaviour may be serving and then calmly redirect your child to another more acceptable activity that will still provide similar sensory relief.
8. **Schedule 'stim' time to teach appropriate time and place.** No one can stop a behaviour cold turkey, especially if it has been meeting a physical, psychological or sensory need and there is nothing to replace it with. Schedule times and places throughout your child's day when she knows she will be able to engage in the behaviour you are trying to modify. Think of it as a gradual weaning process – as you decrease exposure to the negative stimuli you slowly increase exposure to the more positive substitute.
9. **Change your vocabulary.** Just because someone else may refer to certain behaviors your child exhibits as 'stimming' it doesn't mean you have to use the term yourself. We all have habits, mannerisms, and idiosyncrasies that we engage in. I challenge you to think outside the box and create your own term, something more positive to describe your child's repetitive behaviors.
10. **Use distraction.** When you notice your child beginning to engage in a repetitive behaviour give your child something to do or start a conversation. When we are bored, we all default into behaviors that we are not even

conscious of doing. So just in case the trigger is boredom, get your child physically active – engage her in exercise or some other activity she can choose from. Sometimes just asking, "What are you thinking about?" will be enough to distract her and stop the behaviour.

11. **Be realistic.** There are some behaviors that may be defined as 'stimming' that your child may need to keep as a way to cope with daily life. It is unrealistic to expect to completely eradicate all of her repetitive actions. There is no need to take these activities away from her as this can create even more anxiety. What IS realistic to expect is to be able to modify and or shift them into more appropriate and acceptable forms of behaviour as time goes on.
12. **Count your blessings and focus on the positive.** Take ample time to dwell on all the things your child can do well and the baby steps towards progress he is making. Keeping a journal is a wonderful way to maintain your attention towards the positive. Once the good is documented it takes on a life of its own and becomes much more difficult to dismiss.

<http://parentcoachingforautism.com/2012/05/manage-your-asd-childs-repetitive-behaviors/>

Autism and Stimming

The Definition of Stim

The word stim is short for self-stimulation. It is associated most commonly with autism. Some neurologist's call it "autistic stereopathy." It is also sometimes called "stereotypy."

Why does an autistic engage in this behavior?

1. Stimming can help BLOCK out excess sensory input.
2. Stimming helps provide EXTRA sensory input when needed.
3. Management of emotions - positive & negative EMOTIONS may trigger a burst of stimming.
4. SOME stims serve the purpose of soothing or comforting





AUTISM 911

This list is not exhaustive and is open for correction and/or addition. Please mail info to info@autismconnect.org.za

Support and Counselling

Autism Western Cape -021 685 9581

Diagnosis:

Red Cross Children's Hospital

Phone: 021 658 5005

Paediatric Neurologist

Adri Van de Walt - 021 930 0250

Schools & Learning Centres:

Beacon School - 021 371 7665

Vera School - 021 696 2844

Cheri Botha - 021 948 9134

Alpha School = 021 447 1212

Chamelzon Inclusive School - 021 696-5888

Speech Therapist:

Erika Du Plessis - duplessis.erika@gmail.com

Occupational Therapist:

Chris Marie- chrismarie.smuts@gmail.com

Nutritional Consultant:

Michelle Lewis -079 622 4088 email -perezlc01@gmail.com

Audiologist:

Debbie Leigh Schalker - 021 683 1393

Integrative Medical Doctors:

Dr Louise Lindenburg - 021 914 1640

Dr Emdin - 021 696 2957

Other Helpful Contact

Planet Kids Play Centre
and Party Venue - 021 788 3070

Bizzy Bodies - 021 702 0505

Little Creek Spur - Tokai

Green point urban park

Helpful website and blogs:

www.aut2know.co.za

www.autismspeaks.co.za

**AUTISM CONNECT
NEEDS YOU!**



**VOLUNTEER YOUR
SKILLS**

Word from our experts:

Helping Parents of Kids with Autism Handle the Unique Challenges of the Holiday Season

The holiday season is a joyful time, but as we all know, it can also be incredibly stressful. Nobody appreciates this more than the parents and families of children with autism, who already face unique challenges.

The following are tips provided by medical experts, educators and families of kids with autism. Several of the professionals and parents are available to discuss these and other ideas for making the holidays more fun for everyone involved:

- Plan ahead whenever possible. Compile a list of activities that can help your child fill his or her time wherever you go.
- If you are going to visit family or friends, make sure there is a quiet, calm place for retreat.
- Engage kids with autism in repetitive activities such as stringing popcorn for trimming the tree.
- Practice unwrapping gifts ahead of time, which will help a child with autism learn the understanding and the meaning of gifts.
- Take toys and other gifts out of the box before

wrapping them. It is more fun and less frustrating if a child with autism can open the gift and play with it immediately.

- Try to relax and have a good time. If you are tense your child may sense that something isn't right.
- Get a list of gift ideas for relatives from your child's teacher and therapists.
- Don't shield your child from the extended family. Family members need to understand the challenges you face.
- Take pictures when you and your child trim the tree, visit relatives, open gifts, etc. Make a book about your holiday by gluing the pictures onto construction paper, writing a short sentence under each picture, and stapling the pages together. When someone asks your child a question regarding the holidays, your child can use the book as a visual cue to help tell about the things he or she did.

To advertise in this Magazine contact us via mail at info@autismconnect.org.za

Vacancies:

Applications are now open for two educators ,

A **Speech language and Occupational therapists** in the field of Autism at the Autism Connect Learning Centre from January 2014. We cater for learners between the ages of 3 to 9 years of age with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Autism Connect is based in Westridge- Mitchell's Plain Cape Town. The successful candidate would require knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorders and working with learners on the spectrum.

Completed Community Service therapists are welcome to apply.

Please contact us if you feel that you would be suitable.

Email or call Nicolette Ripepi on 0792260063 or info@autismconnect.org.za

