

Autism Parenting Magazine

Issue 46

**10 WAYS TO HELP
KIDS INCREASE
COMMUNICATION**

**HELP YOUR CHILD
LEARN FLEXIBLE
THINKING**

**SENSORY BASED
INTERVENTION
CAN CHANGE
YOUR CHILD'S
LIFE**

**MAKING THE TRUE
AUTISM AWARENESS
CONNECTION**

THE TIME FOR ACCEPTANCE

Editor's Letter

Dear Readers,

springtime

noun spring-time \ˈsprɪŋ-ˌtɪm\

Definition according to Merriam-Webster:

1: the season of spring

2: youth

3: an early or flourishing stage of development

The word 'springtime' invokes so many positive and symbolic images — it's a time when the earth re-awakens from the perils of winter and bursts with new life. It's a season for rejuvenation — a time for transformation filled with optimism, innovative projects and renewed dreams.

What better time than April to promote autism awareness? It's inspirational to think of the number of families celebrating National Autism Awareness Month together as well as the upcoming eighth annual World Autism Awareness Day to be held April 2nd.

Springtime can be also defined as a flourishing stage of development, much like the countless fundraising and awareness-raising events planned around the world. It's exciting to see all the options available to families, from fundraising walks and festivals to sensory friendly movies and theater productions. With tens of millions of people diagnosed with autism worldwide, the need for autism acceptance, inclusion and appreciation is so crucial.

Perhaps one of the most important outcomes of all these amazing autism awareness events is the opportunity for autism acceptance. As they say, knowledge is power, and the more people who are aware in our communities of autism, the more likely people on the spectrum will be able to thrive.

In an effort to find new ways to celebrate, we reached out to social skills advisor Lisa Timms who has provided us with excellent advice on how to include children in raising autism awareness. Take a look at her piece, *Autism Awareness - Easy Ways to Help Your Child Make a True Connection*, where you will learn about her latest idea: an Autism Friendship Day. We know forging friendships in the community is so important — imagine the possibilities!

We are also happy to connect with blogger and mom Wendy Woerner who has partnered with fellow autism parents for the month of April to provide a daily resource for families. Learn how you can easily access the daily words of encouragement in Wendy's piece called *Amazing Mom Creates Ways to Support ASD Families in Need of Advice*.

We invite you to also take a look at a very special piece called *Why Autism Awareness? Because No One Gains from Silence* written by Robyn Coupe. This mom to three children lovingly shares her journey from hiding her son's autism from strang-



ers to recognizing the long term benefits of educating and spreading awareness.

One of our many objectives here at *Autism Parenting Magazine* is to continually provide expert advice from our team of respected professionals on autism and offer solutions for families. Our aim is to focus on the latest developments, treatments and news stories.

This month, we are happy to highlight excellent ways to make a difference in your child's educational experience. In the article *Great Ways to Increase Your Child's Success in the Classroom*, Board Certified Behavior Analyst Holly Moses shares outstanding ways to increase and decrease stimulation in the classroom. Holly's ideas are sure to change the way you look at your child's sensory needs.

Another vital component to the educational experience is the development of a comprehensive Individualized Education Program (IEP) designed to meet a child's individual needs. If you are interested in developing a stronger IEP for your child, be sure to read former special education teacher Angela Conrad's piece called *If You Want More for Your Child - Fight for a Strong IEP* as she explains the need for parents to play a vital part in their child's education team.

Another important aspect of learning is embedding sensory activities into everyday life. Take a look at *Simple Ways Sensory Based Intervention Can Change Your Child's Life* written by professionals Oren Steinberg and Amy Owens as they explain excellent ways you can use daily routines to bring about change.

This issue is packed full of articles covering a multitude of subjects — from flexible thinking and meditation to teaching self care and communication strategies — there is something for everyone.

Wishing our readers a happy spring filled with acceptance, optimism and renewed dreams.

Kind regards,

Amy KD Tobik
Editor-in-Chief

Disclaimer:

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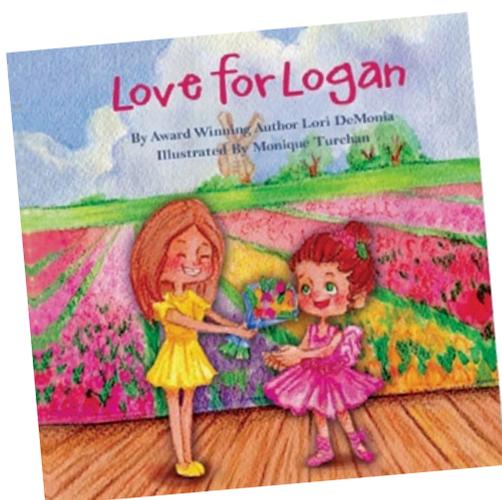
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AUTISM AWARENESS

Easy Ways to Help Your Child Make a True Connection

By Lisa TIMMS, MS Special Education



April is Autism Awareness Month and there are always a variety of different events happening to raise awareness. We have “Light it up Blue” on April 2nd where businesses light up blue for awareness. We have a multitude of walks, runs, and sporting events that are all being held to raise awareness.

All of these things are absolutely wonderful and they do raise awareness and funding for autism.

What if this year we not only raised awareness but also developed lasting relationships that could carry on all year long and possibly even longer? What if we scheduled an Autism Friendship Day?

Autism Friendship Day

What is Autism Friendship Day, you may ask? Children both on and off the spectrum could meet at

a park or event. There would be same aged peers there for the children on the spectrum to meet. Their peers could sign up to be a “buddy” (along the lines of big brothers/big sisters) but specifically for children on the spectrum. The “buddy” could then spend time with the child on the spectrum weekly and help them navigate through life. The “buddy” would also learn about their new friend and this could help with compassion amongst their peers. It would be important that the “buddy” have similar interests as the child.

This could be a day which children on the spectrum could share their feelings about being on the spectrum. They could celebrate their uniqueness and what makes them special — possibly put a little paper together about how they feel, discuss their sensory issues, discuss their interests, discuss their struggles and successes. If the child doesn’t want to share, the parent/guardian can share for them or there could be a wall of notes written by the children for others to read. This could take place at a community center, at a scheduled event, maybe even at your child’s school.

It is wonderful to raise awareness to autism among the adult community but the children are the ones going through school where they may or may not be accepted. I have had the pleasure of working with a multitude of children on varying levels of the spectrum and each and every one of them were brilliant in their own way and taught me something. I understand some parents don’t want their child “singled out” for “being different” but our differences are exactly what make us unique. If other children understood the daily struggles a child on the spectrum goes through they may just be a bit more understanding when that child “shuts down” in class or has a “melt down.” The child could share their knowledge with the class about their interests. As we know, when a child on the spectrum fixates on something they become an expert on the topic. I have learned so much from my students! If the child attains a “buddy” think of how positive this could be! Someone for them to talk to about the “unwritten rules” of school and society. It’s great if they can talk to a parent, but let’s face it, times have changed and parents may not know exactly how things are working these days.

So this year don’t only raise awareness, help your child make a true connection!

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Lisa Timms has a Master of Science Degree from the University of Scranton. She is the author of “60 Social Situations and Discussion Starters” published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. You can find her book online at <http://www.jkp.com/catalogue/book/9781849058629>. She is also the creator of The Timms Social Skills Program. A live, fun, interactive, peer-to-peer online social skills program which is offered nationally for students ages 6-18 with Autism, Aspergers, ADHD and/or related disabilities or atypical students who may be struggling with their problem solving and/or social skills.



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Founder/Director Lisa Timms MS Special Education,
Check out Lisa’s article in this month’s issue