

ISSUE NO. 7



THE BLUE UMBRELLA

collective



THE BLUE UMBRELLA COLLECTIVE

ISSUE NO. 7
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OUR NAME

BLUE:

blue is the color of trust. it is sincere, reliable and tranquil. blue reduces stress and creates a sense of calmness, it enhances communication and conveys wisdom.

UMBRELLA:

the umbrella is all encompassing, it is a protecting force, an enveloping shelter. the umbrella is something that covers many different elements, concepts, and subjects. it is an all inclusive agent offering sanctuary for those impacted.

COLLECTIVE:

a cooperative enterprise, an aggregate with a unified goal. people acting with combined efforts towards a shared end point. a group coming together where individuals have a unique elements to contribute.

collective credo

* WE SPREAD KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE,
AND EXPERTISE

* WE ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING
INFORMATION MORE ACCESSIBLE

* WE ARE A COMMUNITY THAT CELEBRATES
THE HIGHS AND SUPPORTS THE LOWS

* WE OFFER SOLIDARITY ON THE JOURNEY
OF EMBRACING DIFFERENT

* WE PLEDGE TO PROMOTE ACCEPTANCE
AND AWARENESS

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publishers note

Full Circle... About 5 years ago, A Walk on Water held an event in Montauk, NY, I got to see first hand how surf therapy touched the lives of so many of my clients and their families.

Fast forward to Austin, TX where a few months ago I came across a gentleman wearing an AWOW t-shirt in a bagel shop (sorry, Charlie, I know I scared you with my enthusiasm). This sparked me to contact Sean Swentek from AWOW and discuss the possibility of an interview for all you fabulous readers.

Our phone call was great and Sean's passion (as well as the passion of the rest of the AWOW team and volunteers) really comes across on the pages. Make sure you check out the video on page 27!

This September I will attend A Walk on Water's event in Montauk, NY for the second time, and I could not be more stoked!

-Loni



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What's in the bag

EI EDITION
(EARLY INTERVENTION)



BY: NICOLE SANDERS
EARLY INTERVENTION THERAPY SERVICES



I work as an in-home developmental therapist for children ages birth to three years old. I service a lower income population therefore I try to keep my toys both age appropriate and affordable for families. A lot of the items found in my bag are everyday items you can find in your household or items that cost less than ten dollars from the dollar tree. My personal favorites are bubbles and cups! These are three must have items in my therapy bag!



BUBBLES



Bubbles can incorporate a variety of developmental areas, from prompting for speech and sounds, to pointing for fine motor, to following one step directions for cognition. The best thing about bubbles is it keeps kids engaged and they are only 99 cents!

PLASTIC CUPS

Plastic cups are an easy find in most households (or even toilet paper rolls!). They can be used for stacking and building, imaginative and pretend play, sensory integration, and putting small objects in and out.



PUZZLES



If you have a little extra to spend on toys then I always like to have a puzzle or two in my bag. It can be used for colors, shapes, sounds, and pretend play. Puzzles are a great way to work on cognitive skills (depending on the age!).



HICKIES

TIPS & *with* TRICKS

COR is an ABA and Autism Service provider in NY, NJ & MO. They offer ABA, parent training, early intervention (ei), multidiscipline training, center-based programming, and these fantastic videos!



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SUBSCRIBE TO THESE ACCOUNTS AND GET TO KNOW THESE
AWESOME PEOPLE!

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@PINKPUZZLEPIECES

Meet The Fosters! Mom, Dad, and dog raising little women in Huntsville, AL. Charlie and Olivia are identical twins with Rett Syndrome and they recently welcomed adorable baby sister Madeline. Their day to day is shared through little squares, and these girls are strong, bright, beautiful and so inspirational. Charlie and Livy light up your screen with melting smiles and the most adorable glasses ever seen while Mom helps you crack a smile with her sense of humor and fabulous captions.

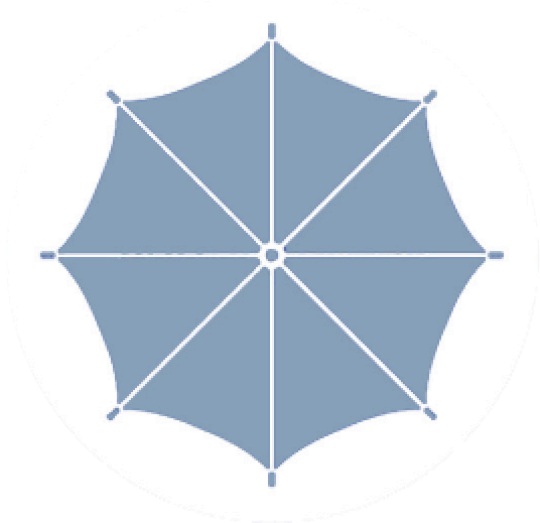
NOAH'S DAD

Noah's dad has created something special for Down Syndrome Awareness, a thriving blog and social network. They share pictures, videos, and facts that tell their story. Click on over to the blog where a video is posted daily and their mission is to give the world a window into the life of a family raising a child with Down Syndrome, exchange inaccurate information with truth, and provide hope and encouragement to parents who have received a Down Syndrome diagnosis. Mission accomplished gents!

facebook



blogger



BLUE UMBRELLA COLLECTIVE

Did you know we've started a blog??? While we are in our infant stages on the blog front, we wanted to let you, our valued readers, know that twice a month we will be posting a piece reviewing an item or recommending our top picks in certain categories. We hope to highlight products that will make your life easier and support your little on their developmental and educational journey. Head on over to our site and leave a comment to let us know you were there!

SPILL THE OT

This podcast is a judgement-free zone to spill all of the tea about OT, PT, and SLP. They talk to REAL therapists out in the field to learn about the ups, downs, and everything in between. They explore different avenues within Occupational Therapy and alternative careers. No topics are off limits! Let's chat salary, medicare, students loans, the good, the bad, all things therapy! Be sure to check out the diagnoses series!!!

podcast



pinterest



TEACHER TRAP

Kady Dupre: teacher, blogger, education nerd. Kady's Pinterest account is a teacher's dream, with 59 boards on everything you could possibly need for Elementary Ed. Kady belongs to some group boards with other teacher blogger, CTR - Classroom Tested Resources and these things are treasure troves! Kady has 8 different boards on class party ideas, so head on over, find a great classroom management strategy and start planning that reward party!

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and approaches to
support the littles in
your life!



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social skills GROUPS!



STRATEGIZING TO BECOME SOCIALLY SUCCESSFUL

BY: DR. CHRISNA PERRY
COMPREHENSIVE LEARNING SERVICE



Although it occurred many years ago, I can remember the day as if it were yesterday...the day I had my influential light-bulb moment.

I was working as the Director of Student Support at a private school in Chicago, when I realized that many of the students on my caseload with diagnoses of ADHD, anxiety disorder, sensory integration disorder and spectrum disorder, shared a common challenge.

Regardless of their diagnosis, their challenge involved their difficulty with regulating their emotions and behaviors during the school day.

As one can imagine, this dysregulation not only impeded their ability to be academically successful, but to be socially successful as well.

On a weekly basis, there were many

blow ups during small group activities and countless arguments on the playlot during recess, which often left my students ostracized.

As I attempted to put outside supports in place for these children, what became obvious was that while it was pretty simple to find outside resources to support their areas of academic deficit ranging from reading, writing and math, the case wasn't the same for their social challenges.

It was downright impossible to find support to help them become socially successful.

All I wanted was for these children, was to be capable inside the classroom AND on the playground; to be able to engage in a way with peers to make friends and keep them.

Years later, when I began my private practice, Comprehensive Learning Service in Chicago's Hyde Park community, I knew that my office had to have learning disabilities specialists for academic remediation, speech and language pathologists for private language therapy, and licensed therapists for individual and group therapy; however, I was most eager to offer social skills groups for children who were having a difficult time socially.

As a result, during the first summer of CLS's summer programming, I was beyond excited and proud to offer a new program, Social Skills Superstars- "Social Thinking and Strategies for Social Success", and we have been going strong ever since with year round groups!

Social skills groups are intended to be a safe space for children to learn essential skills that are needed to be socially successful through direct and indirect instruction.

Children who anger easily, have a low frustration tolerance, exhibit low impulse control, and present as socially withdrawn are children who benefit greatly from these groups.

As you can imagine, group composition is tricky in that you want groups to be small enough so that individual needs are met, but large enough so that children may have the opportunity to learn and practice these skills with peers.

For this reason, my magic number for groups is 6 children for the maximum, and 3 is the minimum.

Many of the children in my group typically have a cognitive ability in the average to above average range. Therefore, they can simply memorize and repeat verbatim important social skills such as the importance of "looking at the speaker" or "not interrupting others".

However, it's very likely that they don't understand WHY these skills are important and why we must use them to be socially successful!

For this reason, Social Skills Superstars does not simply focus on explicitly taught social skills, but helping children gain metacognitive awareness around why we do what we do!

In simplest terms, I often say that my goal is to help children understand how their behaviors impact others and how their behaviors make others feel about them.

For each 8 week session that runs throughout the year (Fall-Summer), children engage on a journey towards social and emotional growth.

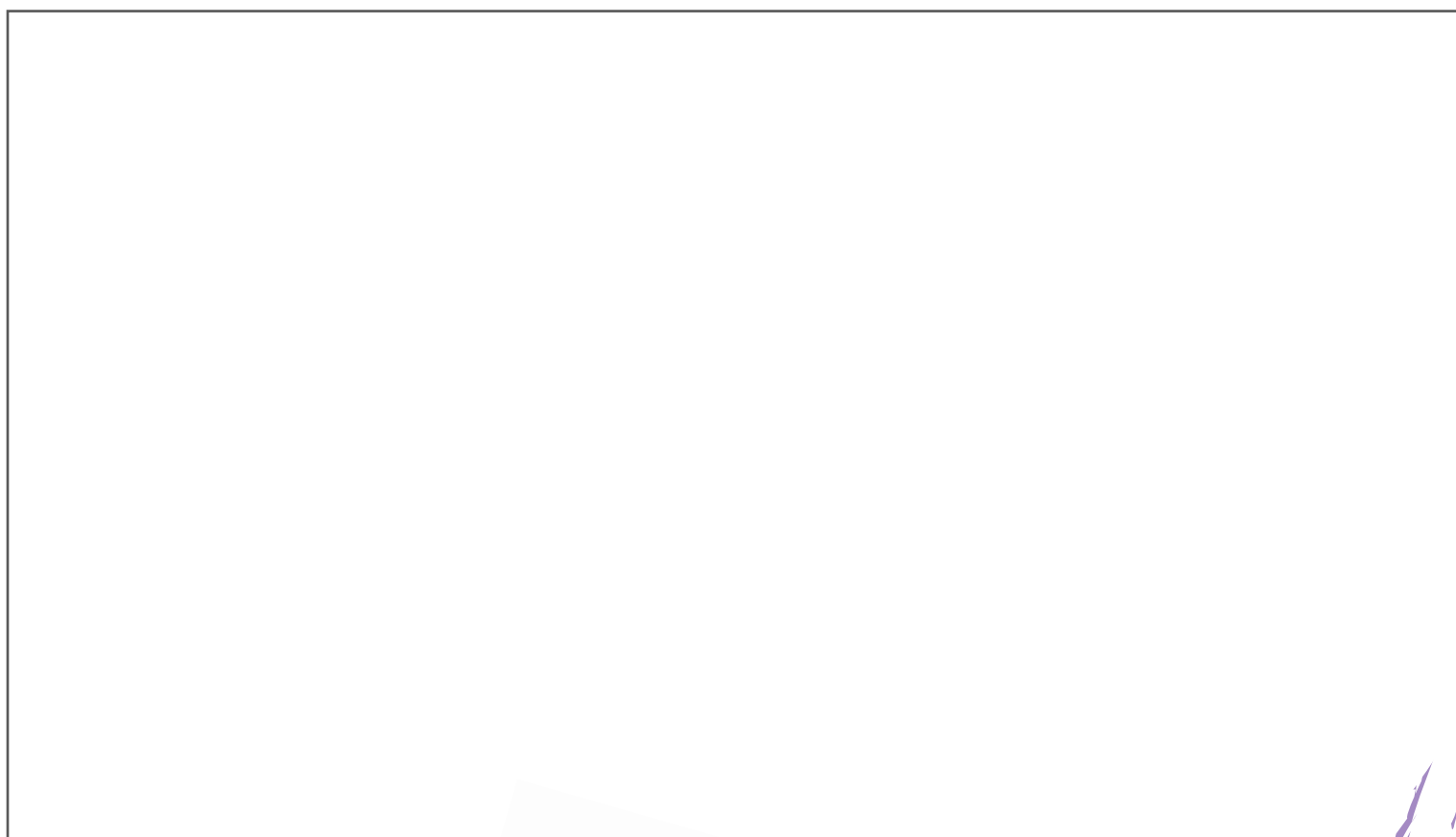
Through the context of children's literature, direct instruction, role playing and play, children have the opportunity to improve their social thinking skills,

emotional awareness, and peer interaction skills in a nurturing and creative environment.

Each session is designed to allow for individualized student learning and social strategy practice and support that can be transferred to the classroom and beyond; ultimately improving your child's social,

emotional and academic success.

One of the best parts of my work with social skills groups is when I get to see genuine friendships form organically within group and continue long after groups have ended!



click to watch

mosaic
WEIGHTED BLANKETS

The Inside Scoop

A Walk On Water



SEAN SWEN TEK
A WALK ON WATER



WE ARE SURF THERAPY



CC: Give us a quick overview of what AWOW is...

AWOW: A Walk on Water is a 501c3 non-profit, we offer surf therapy to children with special needs or disabilities.

We actually like to say we offer surf therapy to families of children with special needs or disabilities because we have a big focus on inclusivity on

a very family-friendly atmosphere and creating an event that services the entire family unit, not just the child with special needs.

Some of the things that make AWOW unique in our space of surf therapy is that the siblings, the neurotypical siblings, are invited to surf alongside their sibling with special needs so they are able to experience

a shared success and stoke together, and enjoy a moment together where they can bond over a shared activity which they often don't get to do in their day to day lives, because quite often they're in different schools and different programs, we like to give them an opportunity to do something together and have a shared success

that way.

We also realize it's incredibly difficult for parents to raise a child with special needs so we have things like a masseuse on the beach for the parents, we offer gourmet coffee, we have healthy breakfast, lunch, snacks, and drinks.

We really like to say that a day with AWOW is really a full day of respite for the entire family.



Families are invited to attend for the entire day from 8-4 there are a variety of other activities for the children to participate in alongside our volunteers including live music with singing along, playing instruments, and bongos and such.

We have an art station where children can paint on their own stretched canvas and take it home and hang it on the wall.

We offer games, toys, and all different things for the children to do, we have yoga, etc. It's a full day at

the beach for the family, full of fun, rejuvenation, and joy.

CC: *What is your background, how did it morph into AWOW?*

AWOW: I started in the non-profit space 20yrs ago, it was 1999, I was working at a restaurant and my boss said: "Hey, you should come volunteer with me at the Special Olympics."

I immediately fell in love with it. A few years in I was invited to join the games management team and help put on the events.

When they launched snowboarding in 2002, I was one of the few guys who didn't ski and was a snowboarder, and they asked me to help with developing and launching the program, and so I ran that for a number of years in SoCal.

During that time I had a friend who introduced me to Surfer's Healing which offers surf therapy



for children on the Autism Spectrum.



I was even more taken aback by what they were doing and the power and the transformation that occurred at the beach that I witnessed.

Special Olympics is amazing, I continue to volunteer with them to this day, but there was something different that was happening at the beach and in the water with Surfer's Healing.

I was watching children who were incredibly upset or angry, or lashing out, crying, screaming, punching, and they would finally get them into the water and when they came back in from surfing they were literally transformed to the point where you wouldn't even think it was the same child.

That was really incredible to me and it made me want to learn more and understand more about surf therapy and what it was

doing and how it worked.

Through volunteering with Surfer's Healing I met Pat Notaro, and a bunch of us decided in 2012 to create A Walk On Water, which for us was an extension of what Surfer's Healing was doing but to a broader audience.

We wanted to make it non-discriminatory and completely open to any child of any disability or special needs.

We launched in 2012 we were very small, we took probably 10 kids surfing that first year, and this year we plan to reach over 1,500 athletes.

The growth has been pretty enormous over the last 7.5 years and it's been a blessing to positively impact so many lives.



CC: If a child is coming to surf, what does the day look like for them?

AWOW: We invite families to attend for the whole day so they really get a com-

plete experience.

Each child's parents sign them up for a specific surf time we have 4 1hr blocks of surf therapy where around 18 to 20 kids participate for that hour where they're 1:1 with a surf instructor they can generally surf for the whole hour if they want or if the water's too cold, or if they're not enjoying it as much some kids will cut it a little shorter.

We really want to offer the child as much surf therapy that day as they would like.

We give them the opportunity to surf again later in the day after all the kids have gone at least once. Many kids will take advantage of that multiple times.

We have kids get in and out of the water 5, 6, 7 times a day because they fall in love with it.

As they're waiting for the surf time or just hanging out at the beach, we offer all those other activities for them.

You'll see the kids coming together to play, whether it's soccer, paddleball, painting, or doing yoga, or playing the bongos, and singing their favorite Disney songs, there are just tons of activities for them to do.

One of the other unique things we do is that we really encourage youth volunteerism.



So we have what we call the "Grom Squad" which are young volunteers, they wear these really cute pink rash guards so they're easy to identify.

These kids love to play with the athletes and the attendees.

There's this beautiful thing that happens when you bring kids together.

Kids are blind to things like disability as long as you don't teach them to think of people differently.

They just see each other as kids who want to play in the sand and water and have fun together.

It's really a beautiful thing to see the barriers break down and kids just be kids and rejoice in the power of play and activity.



CC: *Where do your events take place?*

AWOW: We are based in Southern California, our office is in Venice, which is a part of Los Angeles.

We have events up and down the California coast, as far north as Pacifica and Santa Cruz, and as far south as San Diego.

Although, at our big annual fundraiser we announced that we're really excited to be traveling to Baja, California Mexico at the end of this year for the first time, down in Cabo Surf Hotel. So we're really excited about that.

Five years ago we branched out to the East Coast and launched an East Coast chapter based out of Montauk, New York.

We had a lot of connections and relationships in the community and that has been an amazing event for five years now.

A couple of years ago we extended down to Spring Lake, NJ and Virgin-

ia Beach.

We continue to look for new opportunities to grow on the east coast as well.

Last year we came to Austin, TX for the first time that surf therapy has ever been done in the US on a man-made wave.

That was a really exciting moment for all of us to see that you don't have to necessarily have the ocean to provide surf therapy.

Even though the ocean is incredible and powerful and this natural real organic life-changing body of water.

We were always interested to know if there was an opportunity to bring surf therapy to those families who weren't lucky enough to live near an ocean.



Wave pools hopefully will provide that opportunity to where families and children with special needs who may not have access to the beach have an op-

portunity to experience surf therapy.

The one thing I'll mention is, yeah we've had growth over the years, but it has been very incremental and very measured.

We have a huge focus on maintaining the values and the mission that we started out at day one with



and we don't ever want to grow too big too quickly.

We have a strong focus on maintaining the experience for the kids, that's why our events are capped at a certain number of attendees. We don't want to lose the magic of the 1:1 relationships that happen.

Before we grow into any new community we do a ton of outreach. We really believe that the communities that we're in should feel like they own the event and that AWOW is just a vehicle to deliver it.

We don't ever want to feel like invaders in a town or imposters, we really love

to activate the local community and businesses so that it's really owned by them and it really feels like a local event everywhere that we go.

CC: *What types of skills are targeted for the surfers with special needs?*

AWOW: We're lucky in that we have a number of volunteers who are occupational therapists, behavioral therapists, or clinicians of some manner, and it's really been an interesting development over the years as we've realized that so much of what happens at the beach is natural and organic, but we can encourage and help develop the growth of these kids by really focusing on those things that these therapists naturally do.



Encouraging the interaction of the athletes with their fellow peers and volunteers and adults. Helping them get comfortable with eye contact and con-

versation.



A lot of the athletes might be nonverbal but there are other ways to speak.

There are cues and things that we're helping them try to develop, there's not an abject focus on speech therapy or anything like that, but we feel naturally through activities we provide at the events that we're helping these kids develop life skills that they'll need to be successful in the future.

As we grow and develop more in our programming, we do have a focus on getting more intentional around those other therapeutic elements.

Having a behavioral therapist and speech therapist and such, and making sure those people are there every event and providing some sort of direct therapeutic service I think could be a really nice adjunct to what we do in the water.

CC: *What is your why? What drives you to do this work?*

AWOW: People have asked me before, "Do you have a child with special needs? What's your reason for doing this?" And I don't, but I was always a little bit of an underdog growing up, a little bit of an odd kid, really quiet, very smart, skipped a few grades and graduated school early, always a little bit of a nerd and an outsider.



So I've always had a soft spot for the underdog and for kids who might be a little different or just feel a little different, and so for me, I get great reward from giving people, especially children, access to the things that everyone else has or takes for granted.

I think that's my why, trying to level the playing field and allow for every child to have a chance to play, and a chance to surf, and a chance to just be

with their peers, and other kids like them or unlike them.

To me, I grew up playing a lot of sports and I think sport is an incredibly important part of a child's life and development, so I love to help enable that anyway I can.



CC: *What is your favorite part of your job?*

AWOW: Getting to meet new families and have them experience A Walk On Water Surf Therapy day for the first time, because that's really the most powerful moment.

When you have a family who comes in with some trepidation, some fear, they're unsure about handing their kid over to some tattooed, burly-looking surfer guy who they have just met that day.

Their child has maybe never even been in the ocean, or at the beach and it's a huge step and a leap of faith for them to take

to trust us to do what we are trained and proficient in doing, but for them, it's such a scary thing.

I'm so amazed always when parents are so good at not transferring that fear onto their child and preventing their child from experiencing something that is really transcendent and life-changing and transformative for them.

So for me, it's being able to meet these families and see the change that transpires not just in their athlete, but in their lives as well.

When you get those stories after the event from parents who are like "We've done every type of therapy in the world for our child and that was, by far, the most transformative day we've ever experienced in our child's life."

I love hearing from parents who say my child went on to have the greatest week at school, their interactions with peers



was so much better, and they performed better in school, they slept better, all these other additional benefits that happen outside of the event that are super powerful.



CC: *What is your favorite quote?*

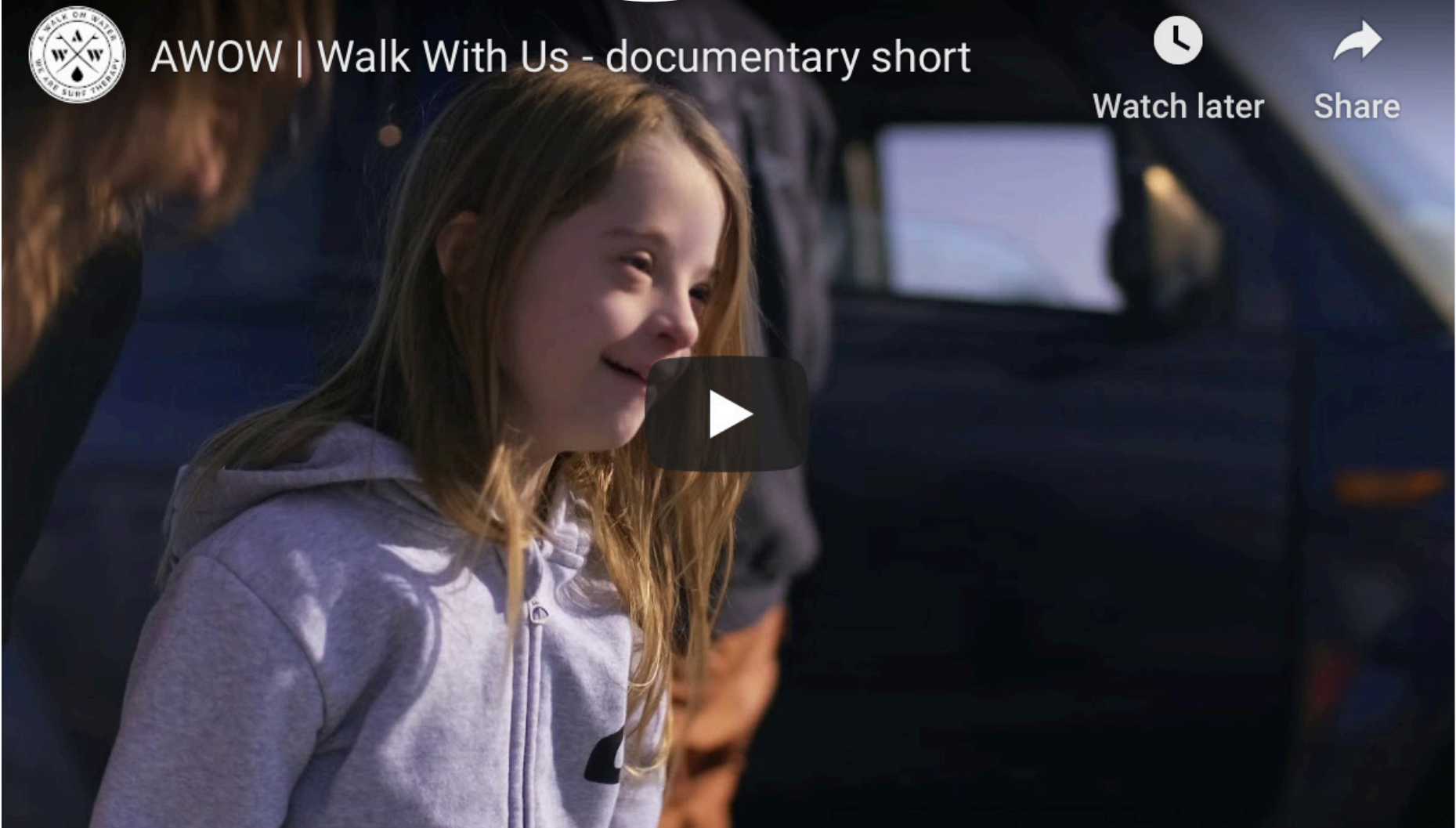
AWOW: Asoep said, "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." I really love that because, even outside my philanthropic work, I try to live my life by being good to other people.

Trying to do small gestures that improve the lives of other people because I think if all of us can focus on being kind and just being more human and realizing that you don't know what the other person is going through, you don't know the steps that they're taking in life, and where they're at, or what's bothering them.

It's amazing how a

small act of gratitude and kindness can change the trajectory of someone's life, and their day, and what they can do and become.

So for me, that's the most important thing, living life in kindness to others.





INTERVENTION TIME 9:00 - 9:45	
Language	Tutoring 3-4pm
Math	Book Science Lab
Science	Worksheet Study
Speech + Study Skills	Lunchtime Tutoring
Language	Tutoring 3-4

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

TEACHING AUTISTIC CHILDREN TO RECOGNISE AND RESPOND TO THEIR EMOTION



BY: STEPH REED
AUTISM SPECTRUM TEACHER



Emotional regulation is a key area of development.

Being able to regulate emotions means being able to effectively identify and respond to an emotional experience.

For children with autism, understanding their emotion and knowing how to appropriately respond to help themselves regulate, can be very challenging. This therefore needs to be a main focus for teachers.

Without being in a calm emotional state, it will be difficult for a child to learn and engage.

Likewise, without having effective regulation strategies in place, emotional states can escalate, for example to being overly anxious, angry or excited.

This is known as a dysregulated state and can lead to 'challenging' behaviour, due to the child not knowing how to effectively regulate their emotion.

I have used different ways of teaching autistic children to recognise their emotion and respond effectively to an emotional experience. Here are some of the more successful strategies.

Labelling Emotion

In order for children to learn and associate the word for an emotion, they need to hear it in context.

Labelling an emotion by telling a child they are for example, "happy", "sad", "scared" or "excited" at the time they are obviously feeling that way, will enable them to learn the correct word for the emotion.

If your child looks scared, tell them they are feeling scared. If they are looking obviously excited, tell them they are really excited!

I use symbols and sign to further enhance what I am saying. For example, I would show the corresponding symbol and then say and sign "(name) is feeling (emotion)".

Sometimes, this wouldn't be appropriate depending on what kind of emotional experience they are dealing with.

The main theme though is to label the emotional language you want the children to learn and understand.

Prompting the Child to Have a Break

A break from a task can give a child time to regulate.

This is a good preventative strategy to avoid a child becoming unsettled perhaps due to taking part in a non favourable activity or requiring them to take part in a task for longer than they can attend and focus.

I would therefore have breaks that were personalised for the children. Some children may require a break more frequently than others.

It is particularly important to prompt a child to have a break if they are beginning to become unsettled or dysregulated.

This will help teach them that they are not able to take part in the task and that they need a break.

Over time, the child may learn to recognise this by themselves and initiate asking for a break.

During a break is a good time to teach calming and relaxing strategies such as breathing activities, using sensory equipment or personalised activities such

as reading or playing with playdough.

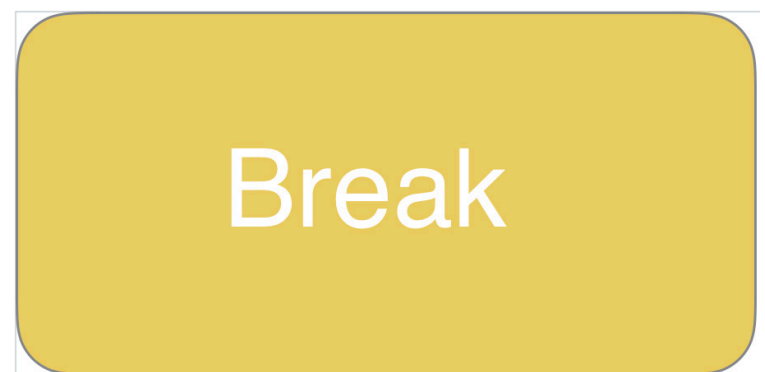
This is therefore enabling the child to regulate and return to the learning in an emotional state where they are able to learn and engage in an activity.

If a child is too excited, angry or upset, they will not be able to learn and engage.

It is important to identify the most suitable place inside or outside for a break, that is safe and calming for the child.

Consistency and familiarity will really help a child to calm when necessary. It may not even be a specific space for a break, but more so a specific calming activity, such as looking at a book or drawing.

Prompting a child to have a break by telling them as well as using a visual support to provide extra cues, will show the child they need to have a break.



Pair Emotion With a Response on a Visual Support

A visual support, pairing an emotion with a regulating activity, will provide a visual cue to support the child.

The photo above shows a visual support, pairing an emotion with 2 choices to give a child a choice of regulating activity.

Some children may require you to guide them to a regulating activity as they may find it difficult to make a choice when they are becoming dysregulated.



Activities Involving Identifying the Emotion of a Familiar Person in Context

The photo below shows an activity where the child looks at one photo and identifies the emotion of the familiar person, by selecting a symbol or saying a sentence.

The photos are more realistic if they are of someone doing something and responding with emotion (i.e. sad because I dropped a cake!) rather than just the face.



THE BLUE UMBRELLA collective



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5 Ways to Completely Change the Quality of Your family time



BY: MEGAN ANDERSON
MOMFIDENCE STARTS HERE



Have you ever looked forward to a specific day so much, because you know that you have awesome quality family time planned? You tell yourself that the trip planned to the zoo, or to the amusement park, a state park etc... is going to be amazing. Amazing. Awesome. Astounding, you name it.

You have painted this whole picture in your head of how cool this day is going to be, as far as family time goes. An all around epic win for the whole family! The kids are going to have so much fun. Your spouse is going to be so proud that you put this perfect day together with no glitches.

The spouse might actually have fun too. The weather is going to be great, you have lunches packed, you have everything you need for this quality family time day to be fun.

And then it happens. You take this pristine painted picture of this day,

and you start to worry about it!! As a mother of small children, you know it has strong potential to turn into a disaster.

You try so hard to quiet that pesky voice in your head. You start to have mom guilt for thinking this way. Being a mother is tough because you know the reality of how your kids are. You know that if they don't get exactly the right amount of sleep, food, etc. they might be challenging to handle at an outing. Then it's the snowball effect from there!

Sibling 1 feeds off of sibling 2. Then mom goes from Mary Poppins to a scene from Jurassic Park. Then the husband gets mad simply because mom is mad. Ah, yes, now that's the familiar day we know!

PLAN AHEAD

Planning helps on the financial end of things as well. When you plan, you are spending less money because you are not walking throughout the store making impulse purchases. Impulsive buying can come from last minute packing and preparing.

Sometimes that can create stress from your planned outing, because you are thinking about how much money you just spent, and you didn't even leave yet. Spending less money because you planned is a great milestone in families! That only helps with easy solutions to manage your family's finances.

Plan out what you need at the grocery store for that day and then go shop. Already have the address of where you are going, and have it ready to go on your onstar or maps. Plan what you and the kids are going to wear, according to the weather and whatever else. This alleviates some chaos in the house.

This also means planning during the week what all you need to get done with other responsibilities, so that you have the family time day all to yourself. Hit up the gym the night before so you don't have to go that day. If you are a working mom, and do some work from home, get it done before the family time. I know, easier said than done!

PREPARE FOR QUALITY FAMILY TIME DAYS

This goes hand in hand with planning. What is the difference? Planning is planning out what all you need for the day. Preparing, is implementing it. Do yourself a favor and become an organized person, if you aren't already!

4 This will relieve so much pressure for yourself. Pack the brown bags the night before, lay out everyone's outfits, already have the cooler sitting by the door, already have a bag of ice for the cooler on hand, gas in the car etc.

Ah, breath of fresh air that all you have to do in the morning, is get everyone dressed and fed. This will create such great family time for all of you because you are much more relaxed! This is also good practice for how to create me time when you are a busy mom!

LET GO OF CONTROL

3 Most of us moms know our kids inside and out, and it's our instinct to control situations so that the kids are the most comfortable. Good job mama, that is a great quality to have.

On the flip side, we need to curb that on family time days. My husband is constantly telling me to stop over analyzing everything and relax. I always think its a bad time to go to the park, or a bad time to go to a restaurant because our toddler isn't in a good mood. He always tells me to relax and it will be fine. Boy is he right! It is always fine!

It's me that is infringing on the quality of our family time, because our toddler usually ends up being ok. No hissy fits or anything. So, lesson learned for me. Let go of controlling everything and have fun during your family time!

LAUGH IT OFF

2 This is directly related to letting go of control. There are definitely times when you try to go to do something fun and nice as a family, and the kids are just not having it!

Instead of feeling upset that its not the kind of family time you had painted in your mind, embrace it. There are times my husband and I just bust

out laughing because the situation is so ridiculous. Have fun with the trying times too!

DEEPLY ENGAGE YOURSELF

This is the number 1 important aspect to completely change the quality of family time that you have. When you are together as a family, make a strong effort to deeply engage yourself.

1 Activate all of your senses. Take note of the smell of the fresh air blowing through the air. Smell the popcorn at the amusement park, or smell the kettlecorn at the country fair. Share these thoughts with your family too. Its great quality conversation.

Share with the kids how it feels when the breeze washes off of the lake and onto their soft face. Ask tour husband if he knows how to skip a rock and if he can show you. These moments are priceless and you can treasure them forever.

These moments create strength in your family all the way down to the core. Keep building on these experiences and create quality family time. If you keep implementing these steps, your family time will unquestionably be of quality.



How Do You Know? App

If you're an SLP and do not have this app, stop right now and click the title above!

How Do You Know? was created by SLP Lynn Epstein. The features of the app are clearly designed by someone who knows what they are doing.

This app shows the learner a picture and asks an initial question, the app then follows up with How Do You Know?

The learner is prompted to use what they see to help support their initial decision.

This is such a fantastic app because it goes beyond the general question. A learner may have mastered labeling emotions, but have they identified what brought them to the conclusion? It targets inferencing.

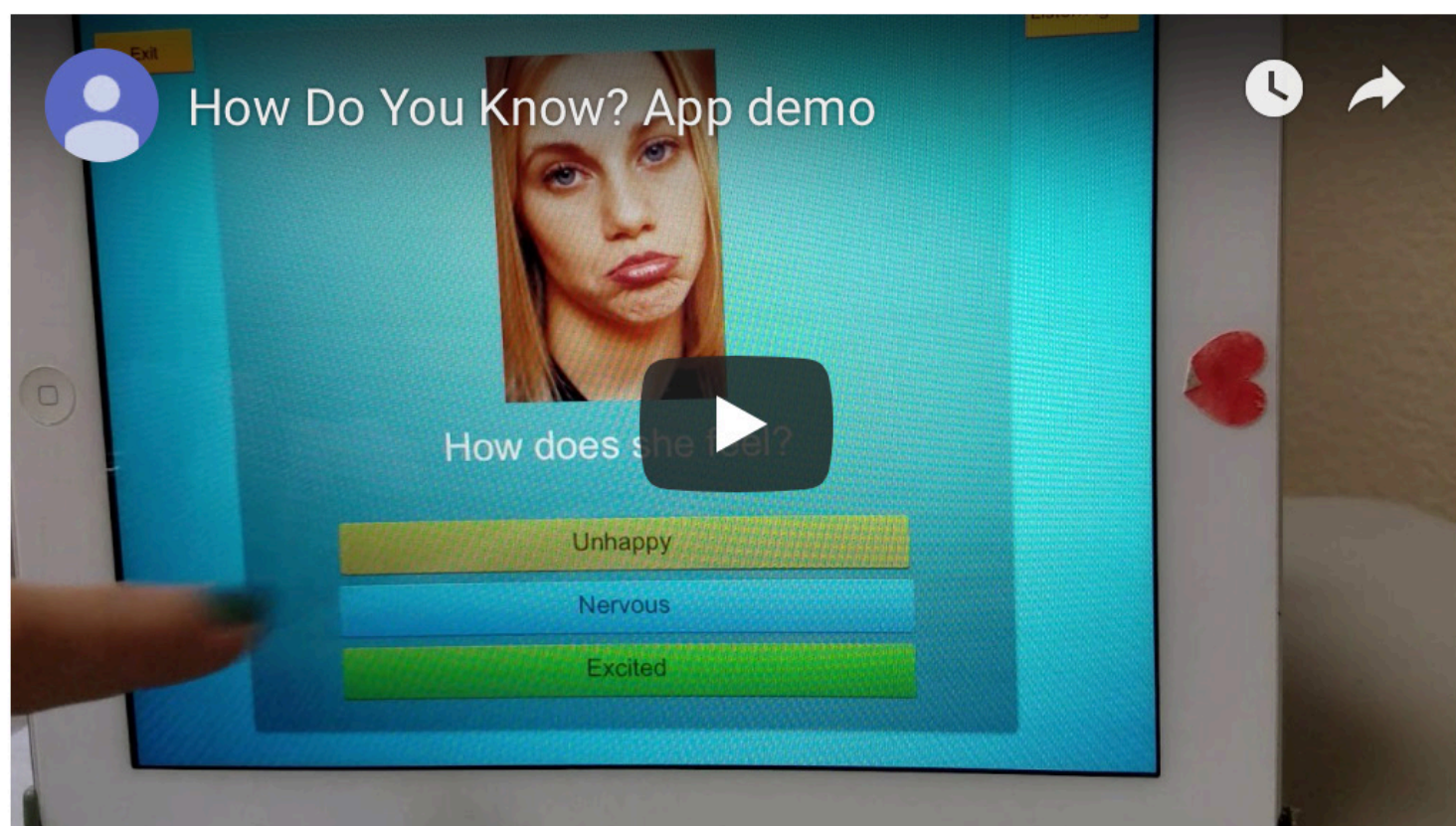
This is the step missing in so many games and apps out there, the How Do You Know? app specif-

ically targets this to help the learner truly understand and generalize the knowledge.

You can control the settings for each user, this includes questions and answers being read, and reinforcing sounds to encourage the learner.

You can also toggle on and off a Let's Talk About It button where the answers are removed and you and the learner can discuss the photo. The amount of categories included will blow your mind!

And, as any SLP will tell you, playing a game is great, but having a game that will give you a detailed report at the end is priceless!



“

My daughter is a severe picker. What are some strategies we can try?

-Michaela S.

COLLECTIVE COLLOQUY



melissa dunne

BOARD CERTIFIED BEHAVIOR ANALYST

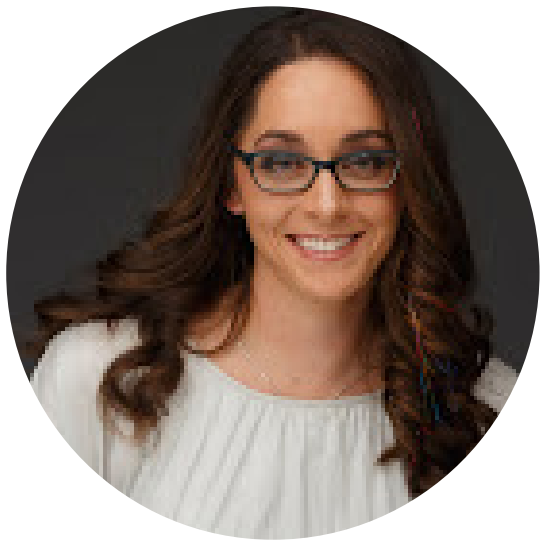
In ABA, we operate within the framework that every behavior has a function (AKA the “why”) and once we determine what the function is, we can develop a corresponding behavior plan. For a behavior like skin-picking, we would first look at ruling out any potential medical causes, such as chronic dry skin, by seeking a medical evaluation from the proper professional. If there is no discernible medical cause, we collect more information, such as: what’s happening before the behavior, what’s happening after, how often, intensity, and what interventions have been tried before. Some general strategies that may be appropriate could include using differential reinforcement in one of three ways-

1) DRI: differential reinforcement for behaviors that are physically Incompatible with the target behavior(e.g., reinforcement for a behavior that can’t be done at the same time as skin-picking, like using the hands to write/play a video game/anything)

2) DRA: differential reinforcement for Alternative behavior (e.g., applying lotion to dry skin instead of picking it)

3) DRO: differential reinforcement for Other behavior (essentially this means that as long as the person does not engage in skin picking for the set duration, reinforcement will be delivered. The duration criteria will depend on the baseline data and will increase as the person makes progress.)

In addition to differential reinforcement procedures, teaching function-based replacement behaviors may be used. If skin-picking is done for attention, appropriate ways of getting attention could be taught. If it’s done to escape an aversive situation, asking for a break might be taught. If it’s done to access tangibles, functional communication training may be taught. We would also look at relevant antecedent manipulations that could decrease the likelihood of the behavior occurring, such as making sure skin stays moisturized/nails and cuticles stay trimmed and nicely maintained. If positive reinforcement strategies have been exhausted/if the skin-picking is so severe as to necessitate more restrictive measures, then punishment procedures such as a response cost may be effective. In extreme cases, the use of gloves/Posey mitts may be needed to prevent the skin-picking. Skin-picking can have serious medical consequences, so I’d recommend reaching out to a BCBA with relevant experience to work with you and your daughter.



karen dobyns

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Strategies need to be customized based on her age, reasons behind the picking, and where/what she is picking. If related to obsessive-compulsive disorder or anxiety, cognitive-behavioral therapy would help in changing thought patterns. If she is seeking intense stimulation, she may benefit from sensory strategies such as increased exercise, popping bubble wrap, etc. See her pediatrician for referrals to specialists in this area, and consider a support group. There is a great foundation for body-focused repetitive behaviors, with specific treatment guidelines available at bfrb.org. It's a difficult journey, so practice compassion for the challenges you both are going through.

melanie manipod henrich

LICENSED MARRIAGE & FAMILY THERAPIST



You and your daughter are not alone in the struggle to break this behavioral pattern. Thankfully, there are helpful strategies to replace picking behaviors with safer and more appropriate methods of coping. Team up with your daughter to pay attention to what happens right before she has the urge to pick, while picking, and immediately afterwards. Briefly write down any situations, feelings, and outcomes that occur. This helps you identify the function or reason for the behavior. Often times, picking behavior is triggered by feeling anxiety or stress that's alleviated by picking at something. Try these strategies upon the first sign of having an urge to pick or when catching herself unconsciously picking. Strategies are categorized based on the function of behavior:

Sensory Stimulation: If your daughter finds relief in the way it feels to pick, then use techniques that activate her mind-body connection such as safely snapping a rubber band or hair tie around her wrist, popping bubble wrap, or using fidget cubes and spinners.

Connection & Belonging: If your daughter picks to get attention from you or others around her, then give her attention when she is NOT picking. Praising and acknowledging the behavior you want to see more of, results in decreasing the target behavior of concern. Additionally, encourage your daughter to use her words to connect with you or call a close friend to talk about her thoughts and feelings in that moment.

Obtain: If the picking behavior results in access to certain tangible objects or activities, then reverse the reinforcement by providing access to incentives when she decreases the frequency of picking behaviors. Consider using a behavior chart to track progress and achievements.

Control & Predictability: If your daughter picks when she doesn't get her way, which ultimately results in getting her way due to parent guilt and sympathy, then give her choices and other opportunities to feel a sense of autonomy and involvement.

Avoid & Escape: If the picking behavior gets her out of something she does not want to do, then provide a safe space for open communication to express her voice and choice without fear. If picking is an escape from feeling painful emotions, then validate her feelings and help her identify her support system and strengths. Come up with creative outlets to express her authentic feelings and thoughts such as journaling, art, and music.



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THE *Buzz* ABOUT EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

BY: ALLISON MARK
MIAMI TESTING PSYCHOLOGIST



First of all there is no such thing as executive functioning disorder – individuals can have executive functioning difficulties but it is NOT a disorder. I say this because I have been hearing and seeing people in the community refer to it as a disorder but you will not find it in the diagnostic manual (DSM-V).

OK, so now that we have that cleared up, what is all of this buzz about executive functioning and why is it so important to our discussion about learning, learning differences, and especially attention and hyperactivity issues?

Executive functioning skills include:

- Paying attention
- Organization, planning and prioritizing
- Starting and completing tasks; i.e. remaining focused on tasks until completion
- Cognitive flexibility (being able to switch from one thing to another, or

- one set of rules to another)
- Time and task management
- Managing emotions
- Understanding someone else's point of view
- Self-monitoring

Executive functioning develops in the preschool years and is not fully developed until young adulthood (early 20s).

Who has executive functioning issues?

- Kids with ADHD develop executive functioning more slowly than same age peers

- Kids with learning difficulties that need further evaluation may have these issues
- Folks with brain injuries, Alzheimer's or dementia may also experience these issues

Kids with executive functioning issues will likely have difficulty in school and at home – this is because executive functioning is kind of like the “CEO of our brain.” It is essential for planning and getting things done.

Kids experiencing difficulties with executive functioning have struggles with:

- Prioritizing tasks
- Following directions or sequences of tasks
- Starting or completing tasks
- Strong emotional reactions to changes in rules or routines
- Organizing thoughts
- Keeping track of belongings
- Becoming overly emotional and fixate on things
- Time management

Common issues that co-occur with executive functioning difficulties include:

- ADHD – ADHD is basically a problem of executive functioning because its symptoms include weak executive functioning skills.

- Kids with specific learning differences don't always have problems with executive functioning but it can co-occur and make classroom demands even more difficult.
- Slower processing speed may lead to problems with executive functioning.
- Anxiety and depression are also common issues in kids with executive functioning difficulties, ADHD or learning differences.

Sometimes simple strategies that help kids to organize their homework and backpacks can go a very long way.

Other times, when the child's symptoms are starting to impact academic performance and life at home, an evaluation may be deemed necessary to understand what is going on and how your child can be helped.



Allison Mark, Psy.D., P.A

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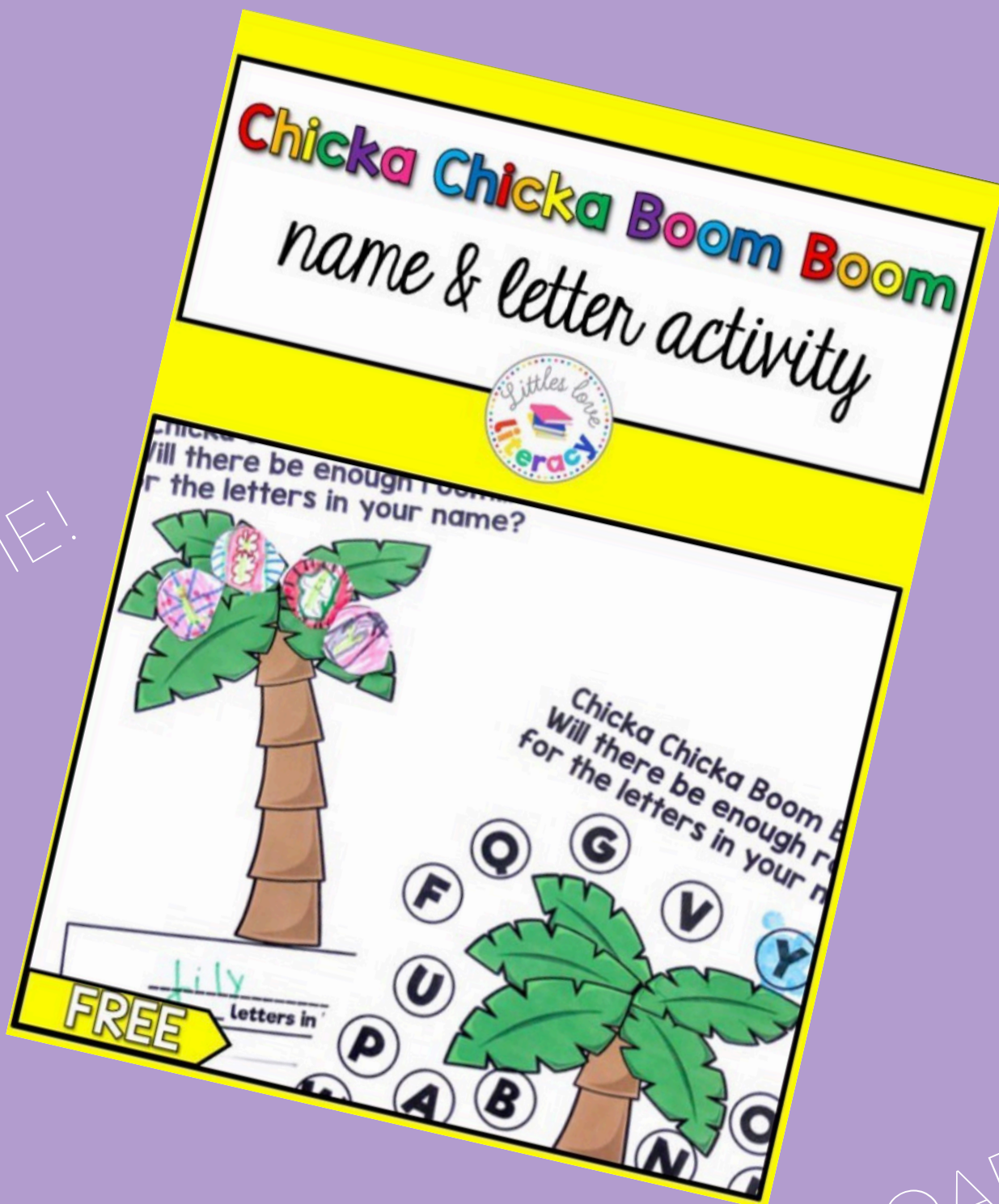
BY: ERIN TALIAFERRO, LITTLES LOVE LITERACY

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