

PERSPECTIVES



Genesee Intermediate School District

Compiled By: Becky Downing,
Teacher Consultant for
Autism Spectrum Disorders
Editor: Patti Dombrowski



January/February
2005

Inside this issue:

Autism Research	2
CompuThera	3
Protecting Aspies	3-5
Make & Take Workshop	5
Websites	6
Autism Statistics	6
Do you have artwork?	6
Conferences	7
Quote for the Day	7
Autism Support Group	8

Dealing With Crushes

The transition from childhood to adolescence can include new situations that you have never experienced before. Among these situations, is having a crush on someone, or liking someone of the opposite gender in a romantic way.

It is difficult to describe what it feels like when you like someone this way, but you will notice that you may feel a bit different. For one thing, you may feel unusually excited when you are around him or her. It is okay to feel this way. This is completely normal. You may begin to your heart start beating more faster than usual, and you feel more nervous when you are around this person.

If other people know that you may have a crush on a particular person, don't be surprised if they tease you. If you do find that other people are teasing you, they are not insults. In other words, the people who may be teasing you, are not making fun of you. They are teasing you in a *friendly* way. So don't feel insulted if this is happening. The other people are just having fun. For example consider the following situation:

On Monday, you realize that you like this girl/guy. On Tuesday, your buddies suspect you may like that person. On Wednesday they may say to you "Hey _____ (whatever your name is) dreaming about you and _____ (whoever you like), eh?" (Don't expect anything like this to happen in any particular time frame. I just used Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday as examples).

If something like this happens, just smile and say something like, "maybe" or "I don't know" or don't say anything and only smile.

Another important thing to keep in mind when you like someone is this: don't assume that the person who you like, feels the same way about you. Most of the time, they won't. That goes *everyone*, people both with and without AS. Bottom line, don't expect anything to come out it.

Dealing with crushes is a life skill, and like anything will improve with more experience. Just remember that it's okay to feel excited. People may tease you and you should not be offended. And the person you like, may or may not like you the same way.

reprinted
<http://www.aspergerteens.com/>

Unique Training Program Improves Autism Research UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute receives \$1.5 million to train young scientists

In what is anticipated to be one of the more innovative projects of its kind in the nation, researchers at the UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute are beginning a new program designed to improve autism research by bringing together a variety of scientific disciplines to cross-train behavioral and biological research scientists in the complexities of autism research.

Thanks to a \$1.5 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, the UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute has launched a five-year program that exposes new, postdoctoral scientists to a wide range of expertise and research in neurodevelopmental disorders. While the institute has always taken a broad approach to the analysis and treatment of autism -- combining everything from biology and human behavior to neurochemistry and immunology -- officials have long wanted to expand that work.

"What's really exciting about this project is that we will be training and creating a new type of scientist for autism research," said Sally J. Rogers, professor of psychiatry and behavioral science at the UC Davis School of Medicine and the programs director.

"Knowing a textbook description of the disorder, having laboratory expertise, or having clinical experiences working with children with autism -- none of these is enough to significantly move the science forward. This training program gives us opportunities to pool our expertise and create a new wave of talented experts for autism research in an area of study might be best termed 'clinical neurodevelopmental neuroscience.'"

Rogers said the new program allows young scientists with backgrounds in either behavioral or biological science to develop a specialized knowledge in particular areas of the disorder, while also being comfortable and knowledgeable in other aspects of autism such as genetics, epidemiology, human development, animal behavior and neuroanatomy.

The new program pairs faculty members from different disciplines with postdoctoral students during the course of a two-year training period. The trainees will develop an expertise in relevant areas of neuroscience such as magnetic resonance imaging and histological studies of the autistic brain, while at the same time also gaining an understanding about the behavioral side of autism, which is crucial for designing studies and conducting autism research in a sensitive manner.

UC Davis experts point out that studying autism also opens the way for understanding a much wider area of human development and developmental disabilities. Because autism touches most aspects of growth and learning, when the behaviors involved in autism are studied, researchers also discover a great deal about communication skills, social abilities, motor development and cognitive capacities -- all of which can be applied to research in other childhood disorders as well into studies regarding typical child development.

New research into language and movement disorders, fragile X, Down and Williams syndromes, has been enhanced by the progress in autism studies. Creating broad, interdisciplinary training for the study and treatment of autism could have benefits for a number of neurodevelopmental disorders, as well as improve knowledge about more typical human development.

Researchers at the M.I.N.D. Institute say the great advantage of an interdisciplinary team approach lies in its ability to address a complex disorder like autism at many levels simultaneously. They say finding a cause or a cure demands a variety of vantage points, from the molecular to the behavioral. With the new training program in place, the next generation of autism researchers is expected to move much farther and faster by being able to communicate with each other through the core concepts and language of several major scientific disciplines.

Reprinted from
<http://www.autismtoday.com/>



CompuThera

Does your child seem bothered by people yet is fascinated with video animations and computer? This means that carefully designed software can be the motivator for having him or her learn basic skills for reading and language. *CompuThera* has been created with these children in mind.

CompuThera offers a seven-step gradual discrete approach for teaching reading. It has been designed for children having trouble learning by observation alone. It is aimed at visual learners and children whom traditional classic educational methods cannot motivate. Children with Autism fit this category; that is why *CompuThera* will benefit them most.



Targeting both receptive and expressive cognitive skills, the *CompuThera* treatment plan builds on mastered items to progress through the program using simple drills, eventually leading to reading simple sentences.

The ability to read often triggers in autistic children the conceptual leap leading in breakthrough in communication.

Reprinted from
<http://www.computhera.com/>

Protecting Aspies from Danger A Five-Point Survival Guide

Liane Holliday Willey, Ed.D.

IT WILL NOT TAKE a team of experts to tell anyone caring for an Aspie (a person with Asperger syndrome) that the area of pragmatics is fraught with perils. Hidden subtext, innuendos, sarcasm, masked insincerity and out and out lies, enter the Aspie mind along the same pathway that truth, honesty and good intentions do. This puts the Aspie in an extremely vulnerable position. Many caregivers openly discuss the bullying, teasing, and loneliness that misunderstood communications can lead to, but few discuss the really dangerous scenarios that can lie in wait for the unsuspecting Aspie. Truth be told, I would rather not discuss the really tough stuff either, but I am adamant in the belief that if we fail to discuss the darker side that can accompany Asperger syndrome (AS), we will never be able to help those Aspies affected by the toughest aspects of AS enjoy life to the fullest. Worse yet, I realize that if we let the had go unchecked. It may well do irreversible—even fatal—harm.

It is a sad reality that physical and sexual assault, date rape, emotional abuse, and accidental exposure to the worst types of people and places, traverse many adult Aspies memory banks. It has been my personal experience to have had people I trusted as my friends encourage me to steal, take very dangerous, illegal drugs, cheat and lie. Unknowingly, until it was often too late, I have been led to bad parts of bad towns where had people have jumped out of hiding to make my nightmares come to life. I have been scarred physically and emotionally. Sometimes, I cannot believe my memories are based in such realities. Always, I am surprised that I have survived my experiences as well as I have, and survival is very much the aim of this article.

What allows is a basic outline—a survival guide—around which should be built a personalized program for each individual Aspie, bearing in mind that each Aspie will come forth with various sets of tolerances,

(Continued on page 4)

understandings, and expectations.

1. Gather your research and gather your facts. Seek the advice of the various professionals in the field who know exactly what kinds of trouble the unsuspecting Aspie can get into. One of the best experts on this subject is Dennis Debbaudt (See article and contact information in this issue). He is the author of *Autism, Advocates and Law Enforcement Professionals: Recognizing and Reducing Risk Situations for People with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. In addition to Debbaudt's book, I strongly suggest that you look to the Internet for more information, as much on this subject is still very new and not at all widely dispersed among the more traditional sources.

2. Combine what you have learned with what you already know about your Aspie to develop a straightforward set of rules and guidelines, and help the Aspie to learn and accurately apply them. Be

Aspies will always be better off with more, rather than less information...

direct and crystal clear in all of your discussions and lessons so as to keep the Aspie's thoughts going in strong and positive directions. This will ensure that the discussion stays as helpful as possible. While it is important to ask the Aspie for his or her own ideas on the subject, it is more important to make sure that the ideas presented are solid and certain ways to keep the Aspie safe and that they are understood by him or her. Do not worry about being politically correct at this point. Later, discussions regarding human compassion and the like can and should occur. But, for purposes of this survival guide, it is essential to be very direct and explicit. I once welcomed a poorly kept man into my home on the politically correct grounds that I was simply doing the right thing in helping someone who was homeless. I realize now that that experience could have cost me my life.

3. Test your Aspie to be certain s/he knows how to cope with any harmful situation.

- ◇ Role-play various scenarios to gauge how well the Aspie understands them.
- ◇ First screen and then watch videos that highlight scenarios that place characters in vulnerable situations. (Then quiz the Aspie to determine when (or if) s/he knew trouble was ensuing; if that realization came too late; if s/he knew how to handle or avoid the situation, etc. Provide clear and direct input to ensure understanding.
- ◇ Provide as close to a real-life illustrations as possible by taking the Aspie to the kinds of places s/he should avoid completely. For example, you could take him or her to a derelict part of town and point out the obvious and not so obvious signs that this area might well spell trouble, and that it is to be avoided. Most importantly, *take precautions that this is done in a safe and responsible manner.*

4. Provide the Aspie with the training and equipment s/he needs to stay safe. Courses in self-defense, the use of pepper spray or other self-defense items, a cell phone emergency plan and the like, can be worth more than their weight in gold. Ensure that these things are accompanied by explicit information regarding where, when, and how to use them.

5. Identify a few safe people and a few safe places that the Aspie knows s/he can rely on in case of an emergency, or in the even that s/he is feeling the least bit nervous

about any situation. In the event of an emergency, make sure you are prepared to call in appropriate empathetic and understanding resources to help the Aspie cope with the worst-case scenarios that can occur in these kinds of situations. In fact, it would be a good idea to establish a solid, friendly bond with a legal counselor, fire fighter, policeman, and/or advocate from the human resources or counseling department at the Aspie's place of employment or school. Make sure the Aspie keeps the names and numbers of these people in his or her wallet at all times, and reassure him or her

Relationships with those who can advocate on our behalf are essential relationship...

(Continued from page 4)

that these are the people s/he can and should rely on in case of any emergency. Finally, don't forget to encourage the Aspie to keep in touch with and show appreciation for these people in the form of thoughtful gestures such as small gifts or thank you notes now and then.

As I write this article, I am called upon to realize that all the knowledge I have at my disposal today still does not keep me totally free from potentially unsafe situations. Even now, I occasionally wander to places I should not be, and meet with people who could lead me into harm's way. Perhaps this is why my

Even now, I occasionally wander to places I should not be, and meet with people who could lead me into harm's way.

eighty-year-old father and my husband call me several times a day when I am traveling, simply to remind me about the kinds of dangers to look out for, what and who to avoid, and how to identify safe situations in places that are unfamiliar to me. Does this make me weak or stupid—unable or enabled? Not at all. It makes me stronger and happier to know there are people in this world who care for and about me. It brings me relief to know that I can rely on their insight, especially when I am overwhelmed with sensory explosions and new situations.

When I feel especially safe these days, I allow myself to look back on my past traumas, and for a few moments I allow myself to think about how different it might have been if those who supported me—and of course I myself—had been educated regarding the kinds of information included within this article. If only we had known then what we know now—that Aspies will always be better off with more, rather than less information; that direct and explicit example and language will do us more good than vague references to things only hinted at; that it is absolutely imperative that Aspies learn how to protect themselves in the face of danger; and, that relationships with those who can advocate on our behalf are *essential* relationships that should be cultivated, cherished and relied upon. If only we knew then...

It makes me stronger and happier to know there are people in this world who care for and about me.

Bio

Liane Holliday Willey, Ed.D. specializes in the fields of psycholinguistics and learning style differences. She was diagnosed with residual Asperger syndrome in 1999, which is proof that the right intervention and support can lead an Aspie to near-neurotypical status if that is indeed, what the Aspie wants. In her case, Liane is as near-neurotypical as she is willing to be. Liane is the author of *Pretending to be Normal: Living with Asperger's Syndrome*, and *Asperger Syndrome in the Family: Redefining Normal*. She is the editor of the *Asperger Syndrome in Adolescents: Living with the Ups, the Downs and Things in Between*. All of Liane's books were published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London-Philadelphia. Liane is also the Senior Editor of the *Autism Spectrum Quarterly*. A strong advocate for the AS community, Liane serves on the boards of several AS organizations, and is also a popular speaker at conferences. For more information on Liane, including how to contact her, go to her website: www.aspie.com

reprinted from
Autism Spectrum Quarterly
Summer 2004

**Oakland Schools Department of Special Education Regional System Support has
Autism Spectrum Disorder Awareness Kit Make and Take Workshops**

This workshop will introduce an easy-to-use comprehensive kit for increasing awareness of ASD for preschoolers, K-12, post-secondary students, & adults. There are scripted modules. For more info call Sally Brannon at 248-209-2556.

Websites for Information on Autism Spectrum Disorders

- 📖 Autism Society of America: www.autism-society.org
- 📖 Autism Society of Michigan: www.autism-mi.org
- 📖 ASA Oakland County Chapter: www.asaoakland.org
- 📖 Dr. Tony Attwood: www.tonyattwood.com
- 📖 On-line Asperger's Information and Support-OASIS: www.aspergersyndrome.org
- 📖 The Center for the Study of Autism: www.autism.org
- 📖 The Gray Center: www.TheGrayCenter.org
- 📖 Liane Holliday-Willey: www.ASPIE.com
- 📖 Future Horizons: www.futurehorizons-autism.com
- 📖 Free pictures for visual schedules, etc.: www.usevisualstrategies.com
- 📖 Picture Exchange Communication System: www.pecs.com
- 📖 TEACCH: www.teacch.com
- 📖 Theory of Mind: www.autism-resources.com
- 📖 Sensory Integration: www.autism-resources.com
- 📖 Sibling Issues: www.angelfire.com/bc/autism/index.html
- 📖 Gluten-Casein Free Diet: www.gfcdiet.com
- 📖 Mayer-Johnson, Inc.: www.mayer-johnson.com
- 📖 Free Pictures and Computer Games: <http://do2learn.com>
- 📖 www.autismtoday.com

- ♦ Many companies are now donating a portion of their profits to The Autism Society of America (ASA).
- ♦ Magnet America sells Autism Awareness Puzzle Ribbon Care Magnets at 1-877-887-0905 or www.magnetamerica.com
- ♦ Sign up for ASA-NET, which is ASA's free e-newsletter, at www.autism-society.org
- ♦ Autism Spectrum Disorders DVD Workshops are the second Tuesday of every month from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. These workshops are free and can be seen in the following districts' GenNet rooms: Bendle, Clio, Fenton, GISD SESC-N, Goodrich, Lake Fenton, LakeVille, & Swartz Creek. Flyers are distributed prior to each workshop. If you need more information, please contact Patti Dombrowski at 591-4877 or Becky Downing at 591-4868.

U.S. Autism Population Estimate
 12/10/2004
 8:42 a.m. PST
 (ages 3-22)
182,985

U.S. Annual Economic Cost
\$5,489,558,403

Next Diagnosis
16:37 mins

Reprinted from
www.FightingAutism.org

If you have artwork, poems, writing, quotes, etc. that you would like to put in the newsletter, please contact me or send to: Becky Downing, GISD SESC-N, 2413 W. Maple Ave., Flint, MI 48507-3493
 Phone: 591-4868,
 Fax: 591-4548,
 E-mail: bdowning@geneseeisd.org

Conferences

<u>Date</u>	<u>Title & Location</u>	<u>Speakers</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Contact Info</u>
Jan. 1, 2005 to Feb. 1, 2005	Defeat Autism Now Web Conference	Multiple speakers	unknown	www.autismresearchinstitute.com
Jan. 8, 2005 to Feb. 19, 2005	Teens & Young Adults w/High Functioning Autism & Asperger's Social Event (Games & Refreshments) Troy, Michigan		\$10.00	248-393-3131
Thru Jan. 15, 2005	Autism Today Teleconference	Dr. Temple Grandin Part Two	\$29.97	www.autismtoday.com
	ASM Winter Workshops			www.autism-mi.org 800-223-6722
Feb. 9, 2005	Parapro Training Wayne ISD	Dr. Sally-Burton-Hoyle, Kathy Johnson, Anne Carpenter	vary	ASM 800-223-6822 www.autism-mi.org
Feb. 11, 2005	Social Skills Training for ASD Washtenaw ISD	Judith Coucouvaris	vary	ASM 800-223-6822 www.autism-mi.org
Mar. 1, 2005	Using Augmentative Communication and Assisitive Tech. With ASD	Lynn Sweeney	vary	ASM 800-223-6822 www.autism-mi.org
Mar. 2-4, 2005	Michigan Council for Exceptional Children Grand Rapids	Multiple	vary	www.MichiganCEC.org 616-447-3076
Mar. 4, 2005	A Visual Tool Kit: Schedules, Planners and More Genesee ISD	Not listed	vary	ASM 800-223-6822 www.autism-mi.org
Mar. 10-11, 2005	Putting the Pieces Together Midland County ESC	Multiple	vary	989-631-5892
Mar. 11, 2005	AS and Rage Macomb ISD	Judith Coucouvaris	vary	ASM 800-223-6822 www.autism-mi.org
Mar. 12, 2005	Grandparents Only Brighton Community Center	Dr. Sally Burton-Hoyle, Kathy Johnson, Anne Carpenter	vary	ASM 800-223-6822 www.autism-mi.org
Mar. 15, 2005	Diagnosing and Treatments of ASD Brighton	Dr. Daniel Fields Dr. Susan Frank	vary	ASM 800-223-6822 www.autism-mi.org
Apr. 28, 2005	Building Social Understanding with Children & Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders	Carol Gray	unknown	New England Educational Institute 413-499-1489 Learn@neei.org
Apr. 27, 2005	START Statewide Autism Resources & Training Conference Grand Rapids	Multiple	Register online in Jan. 2005	616-331-6480 Autismed@gvsu.edu
Apr. 15-17, 2005	Defeat Autism Now (DAN) Boston, Massachusetts	Multiple	varies	www.DANconference.com

Quote for the Day

"When is an obsession not an obsession? When it is about football."
from Freaks, Geeks and Asperger Syndrome: A user Guide to adolescence by Luke Jackson

Genesee Intermediate School District
Special Education Services Center
2413 West Maple Avenue
Flint, Michigan 48507-3493

Phone: 810-591-4877
Fax: 810-591-4548



Coming Up: Autism Spectrum Support Group

*Coming Up: Autism Spectrum
Support Group*



Date: Tuesday, February 15, 2005 **Time:** 6:00 p.m.

Place: Genesee Intermediate School District
Special Education Services Center-North, GenNET classroom
5075 Pilgrim Road, Flint 48507

(Pilgrim Road is south off of Maple Avenue, between VanSlyke and Torrey Roads. Parking is located in the front and side of the building. Enter through the front doors.)

Why do some children avoid touching, refuse to wear certain clothes, cover their ears, be picky eaters? Why is he swinging, twirling, jumping or very slow and tires easily. These are symptoms of Sensory Integration Dysfunction.

GISD Occupational Therapist, Jimmy Colley, will help us understand why these behaviors may be occurring.

If you plan to attend or have questions, **PLEASE CALL** Becky Downing at 810-591-4868 and leave your name and phone number.

Hope to see you there!
