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GOLDEN STATE COMPASS

Empowering Caregivers and Families of People with Autism

JUNE 2024 | VOL 1

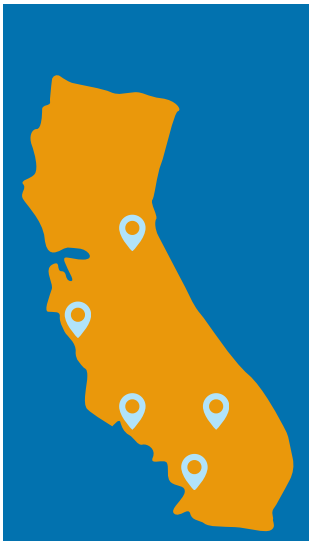


WELCOME ABOARD OUR CALIFORNIA EXPEDITION!

This summer we invite you to join us on an adventure filled with resources, tips, and inspiration tailored to enhance your autism journey. Throughout the pages of this newsletter, you will discover a wealth of information designed to uplift and empower you and your family.

As we journey together through these pages, know that you are not alone. We are here to guide you, support you, and celebrate your victories, big and small. Whether you're seeking practical advice, tips, or simply a moment of respite, this newsletter is your compass, guiding you towards a brighter, more hopeful future. So, let's embark on this expedition together, embracing the warmth of the California sun and the boundless possibilities that lie ahead. Together we can create a brighter, more equitable future for all.

Thank you for entrusting us with a part of your journey. We are honored to be by your side as you navigate the extraordinary adventure of caregiving.



SETTING THE COURSE

PREPARING FOR SAFARI ADVENTURE



KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE THIS SUMMER

Summer is here, and it's time for your child to have fun in the sun! But as a parent of a child with Autism, you know that safety is always a top priority. That's why we've put together some summer safety tips to help you keep your child safe and healthy during the summer months. If some of these preventative measures are hard for your child (e.g., refuse to drink water or put on sunscreen), start small and then build up over time. For example, start by putting a little bit of sunscreen on one area and then gradually work each day to add a little bit more if your child tolerates it.

Sun Protection

Shielding your child from the sun is vital. Ensure they wear protective clothing, hats, and sunscreen to prevent sunburn and other skin problems, especially as children with Autism may struggle to communicate discomfort—practice hat-wearing to boost tolerance if necessary.

Hydration

Dehydration is a significant concern during the summer months, especially for children with Autism who may have difficulty communicating their thirst. Encourage your child to drink plenty of water and other hydrating fluids, especially during outdoor activities.

Water Safety

Children with Autism may be drawn to water but not understand its dangers. Always supervise your child near water, whether a pool, beach, or lake. Ensure your child wears a life jacket when playing in or near water.

Insect Bites

Insect bites can cause discomfort, irritation, and allergic reactions. To prevent bites, use insect repellent and ensure that your child wears protective clothing, especially during outdoor activities.

Firework Safety

Fireworks can be a fun way to celebrate summer holidays but can also be dangerous. Children with Autism may be more sensitive to loud noises and bright lights. Consider noise-canceling headphones for comfort and safety.

Food Safety

Keep food safety in mind for outdoor gatherings to prevent food borne illness.

Heat Stroke

Watch out for heatstoke, especially for children with Autism who may have difficulty communicating their discomfort. Ensure your child takes frequent breaks and stays in the shade during outdoor activities.

PREPARING FOR SAFARI ADVENTURE



10 ADDITIONAL TIPS TO KEEP YOUR CHILD WITH AUTISM SAFE AND HAPPY THIS SUMMER

Create a Routine
Children with Autism thrive on routine and structure, so create a daily schedule that includes regular mealtimes, rest breaks, and outdoor activities.

Prepare for Changes in Routine
If your child is attending a summer camp or program, prepare them for the difference in routine by visiting the location beforehand, discussing the schedule, and practicing the activities they will be doing.



Provide a Safe Space
Create a quiet, calm space where your child can retreat when overwhelmed or overstimulated.

Use Social Stories
Social stories involve a description of an upcoming task or activity with photos. They can help your child understand.

Plan Sensory-Friendly Activities
Consider sensory-friendly activities, such as swimming, hiking, or art projects, that your child may enjoy.



Stay Calm
When the weather is hot, plan indoor activities, such as visiting a museum or library, to avoid overheating.

Prepare Social Skills
Use the summer months to practice social skills, such as sharing and taking turns, with other children at the park or playground.

Get to Know Your Local Responders
Children may have difficulty understanding social cues and become overwhelmed or anxious in unexpected situations. Consider participating in local community safety fairs where there is an opportunity to meet law enforcement- police, firefighters, and emergency responders.



Consider Behavioral Health Treatment
Ask your provider if your child would benefit from additional summer services.

Use Visual Supports
Visual supports, such as picture schedules or social stories, can help your child understand expectations and reduce anxiety.

Take Care of Yourself
Remember to take care of yourself too! Take breaks, seek support, and practice self-care to help you stay healthy and happy this summer.





TIPS TO FOSTER INDEPENDENCE FOR YOUR LOVED ONES

Karen Nohelty, M.Ed., BCBA

As children grow, they can do more and more skills independently. As this does not necessarily come naturally for children with developmental disabilities, caregivers often need to focus on fostering this independence. An increased ability to care for their own needs (e.g., dressing, personal hygiene) may result in increased confidence and self-esteem for children. For families, it can lead to a more balanced distribution of responsibilities and a sense of accomplishment in seeing their children thrive. Each step towards independence not only builds competence but also can prepare the child for the future.

General Strategies for Fostering Independence

Establishing Routines
Consistent routines provide structure and predictability, making it easier for children to understand and follow daily tasks. Step-by-step instructions within these routines can help children know what to expect and how to perform each task.

Positive Reinforcement
Using praise and rewards to recognize independent actions can encourage children to repeat these behaviors. Positive reinforcement can be a powerful motivator, helping children feel proud of their achievements.

Modeling
Demonstrating tasks provides a clear visual guide for children to follow. By watching others, children can learn the necessary steps and gain confidence in their ability to perform the task themselves.

Breaking Down Tasks
Dividing complex tasks into smaller, manageable steps makes them less overwhelming. This approach can help children focus on one step at a time, gradually building their ability to complete the entire task independently.

Providing Choices
Allowing children to make choices fosters a sense of control and autonomy. Whether it's selecting their clothing or deciding the order of tasks, giving choices can empower children and make them more engaged in the activity.

TRAILBLAZERS

TIPS TO FOSTER INDEPENDENCE FOR YOUR LOVED ONES

Karen Nohelty, M.Ed., BCBA



Adapting Strategies for Different Needs

Adapting for Physical Differences
· Modify materials to make the task easier, such as providing easy to pull on clothing or an easy to grip toothbrush.
· Create accessible environments by ensuring items are reachable without assistance.
· With the child's agreement, use hand-over-hand guidance to provide physical assistance.

Adapting for Cognitive Differences
· Use visual supports, such as picture schedules and checklists, to guide tasks.
· Provide simplified, concrete instructions to make tasks more understandable.
· Incorporate technology, like apps that guide daily routines or timers.

Adapting for Sensory Sensitivities
· Create sensory-friendly environments with reduced noise and controlled lighting.
· Offer sensory breaks and materials, including noise-canceling headphones and fidget toys.

Adapting for Communication Differences
· Use alternative communication methods like devices and pictures.
· Accept and encourage the preferred communication modality of the child, which may include a point or gesture, while supporting teaching of more advanced communication.
· Provide clear and consistent verbal instructions.

Practical Tips for Specific Routines

Brushing Teeth, Handwashing, and Other Hygiene Tasks
· Use visuals to outline each step.
· Make routines fun and engaging with songs or games.
· Provide choices, such as selecting a favorite toothpaste.

Dressing
· Allow sufficient time for children to dress independently, avoiding rushed mornings.
· Offer adaptive clothing options to make dressing easier (e.g., Velcro shoes, shirts with larger buttons).
· Provide choices in clothing and be flexible with their selections, even if they don't match perfectly.

Rest and Relaxation
· Encourage independence during downtime by identifying activities they do without help.
· Prior to starting downtime, make sure items that may be distracting are put away, like toys or games that require assistance.

Eating Meals or Snacks
· Provide choices in meals and snacks to involve children in decision-making.
· Use items to make eating easier, like adaptive utensils, suction bowls, and spill-proof cups.
· Focus on the process rather than the mess, understanding that neatness may take time to develop.



Fostering independence in children with developmental disabilities is much like embarking on a forest exploration. It requires patience, consistency, and encouragement, just as a journey through the woods demands a steady pace and a positive spirit. Start with small steps, akin to navigating the first trails, and celebrate each milestone, like discovering a hidden glade or a majestic tree. Mistakes and setbacks are part of the adventure, much like stumbling over roots or getting momentarily lost; they are opportunities to learn and grow stronger. Focus on the positives and keep moving forward. By supporting your child's independence, you're helping them build a solid foundation for a confident and capable future.

CLIMBING CALIFORNIA'S MOUNTAINS







Just as climbers face rugged terrain, unpredictable weather, and daunting heights, children with autism encounter obstacles such as navigating social cues, understanding emotions, and forming connections with others. Each step forward requires determination, courage, and resilience.

HOW SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING CAN HELP CHILDREN, TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH AUTISM

Iris Chiang, M.Ed., BCBA

We all need to be able to socialize to be successful in life — to accomplish day-to-day activities of living, maintain a job, create friendships and intimate relationships, and build a family, if we choose to pursue one. These are core values of being happy for many people. They require a level of interaction and understanding between people.

But socializing can be challenging. It's particularly tough for those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) because some of the emotional and intellectual deficits typically associated with autism can make social interaction difficult.

Fortunately, those with autism can get help learning and developing social skills. The benefits are immediate and long-lasting: not just improved daily functioning but higher enjoyment and satisfaction, with lower incidence of isolation, depression and suicide.

Challenging Behaviors that Social Skills Training Can Address

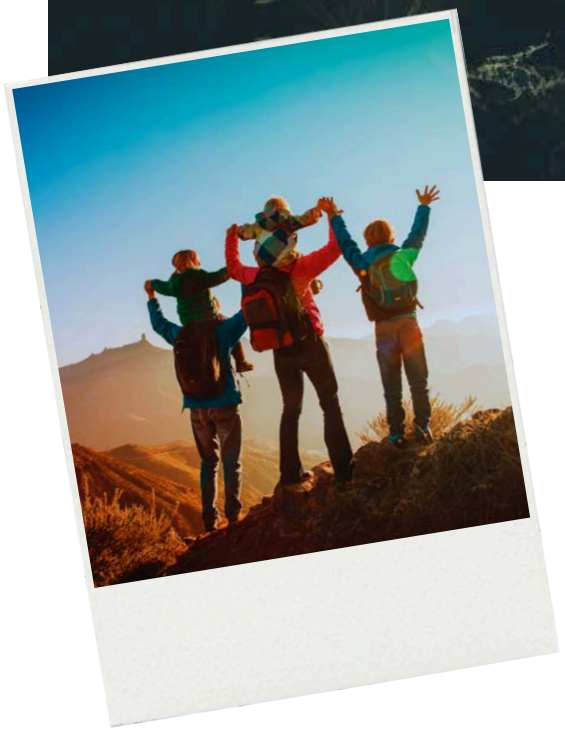
Social skills training can help individuals with autism who:

- Avoid other people and prefer to hang out by themselves
- Prefer to be with adults, or with people who are younger
- Have a difficult time making eye contact with others
- Won't engage in conversation with other people, or walk away from people who try to engage them
- Get aggressive (loud, physical or violent) when approached by other people
- Have a hard time sharing their stuff, who dominate conversation, who don't follow rules of sportsmanship, or who are overly bossy
- Have boundary issues — they get too close to other people or avoid closeness with others
- Are too accommodating and may be taken advantage of, such as by peers who ask them to do their homework or give them their lunch money

If your child has ASD and demonstrates some or all of these behaviors, they could likely benefit from social skills training.

CLIMBING CALIFORNIA'S MOUNTAINS





BENEFITS OF PARENT AND CAREGIVER TRAINING

Our Parent & Caregiver Training focuses on enhancing skills and techniques that can improve functional communication and decrease problem behaviors in individuals with autism and similar disorders. This training also provides valuable information, tips and techniques that can help parents and others better navigate the challenges that come with being a parent or caregiver of a child with special needs.

Offered in an individual or group setting in one of our behavioral health treatment centers or via telehealth, or offered individually to parents and caregivers in our center or at home, this training provides an opportunity for parents and caregivers to learn and practice effective methods that can be used outside of sessions and outside a clinical setting. Bringing parents together as a group creates a support system and can help parents connect with others facing similar challenges.

Benefits of Parent & Caregiver Training

- Tailored Approaches: Caregiver training focuses on individualized support for each child, ensuring interventions match their unique strengths and challenges.
- Improved Coping Strategies: Caregivers gain practical tools to manage challenging behaviors, reducing stress and promoting a harmonious home environment.
- Early Intervention: Training stresses the importance of identifying developmental delays early, leading to better outcomes for children with autism.
- Support Networks: Training provides opportunities for connecting with others facing similar challenges, offering emotional support and valuable resources.

Like climbers tackling rugged terrain, individuals with autism face challenges navigating social interactions, yet with guidance and support, they can conquer these obstacles. Just as California's mountains offer breathtaking vistas at their summits, social skills, parent and caregiver training open doors to meaningful connections and opportunities for personal development. Let us embrace this journey together, fostering an environment of understanding, empowerment, and inclusion, where every individual with autism can thrive.

CALIFORNIA SUN, SENSORY FUN

As the summer sun begins to cast its glow across the landscape of California, families are eagerly preparing for outdoor adventures. For caregivers of individuals with autism, however, planning summer activities involves careful consideration of sensory sensitivities and unique needs. Fortunately, California offers a treasure trove of sensory-friendly activities that cater to diverse interests and preferences, ensuring that everyone can join in the fun. Here are some sensory-friendly summer adventures to consider, along with tips on how to make the most of each experience:





BEACH DAY BLISS

California's stunning coastline provides the perfect backdrop for a sensory-friendly beach day. Choose a quieter beach with soft sand and gentle waves to minimize sensory overload. Bring along sensory-friendly beach toys like squishy sand molds, textured balls, and portable shade tents for comfort. Encourage exploration of the beach environment through activities like shell collecting, sandcastle building, and kite flying.



NATURE TRAIL TREASURES

Take advantage of California's scenic hiking trails to immerse in the beauty of nature while engaging in sensory-friendly activities. Opt for trails with manageable terrain and shaded areas to provide a comfortable hiking experience. Encourage sensory exploration by identifying different textures, scents, and sounds along the trail. Bring along a nature journal to document observations and create sensory-rich experiences like leaf rubbing or bird watching.



PICNIC IN THE PARK

Savor the simple joys of a leisurely picnic in one of California's many picturesque parks. Pack a basket full of your favorite snacks and treats, spread out a blanket in the shade of a towering oak tree, and enjoy a delicious meal surrounded by nature's beauty. Park picnics offer a chance to relax, recharge, and connect with loved ones in the great outdoors.



ARTISTIC ADVENTURES

Tap into creativity with sensory-friendly art activities that inspire self-expression and imagination. Set up an outdoor art station in your backyard or local park, equipped with a variety of sensory-friendly art supplies like clay, paint, and natural materials. Encourage sensory exploration through tactile art experiences like finger painting, sensory bins filled with colored rice or sand, and nature-inspired crafts using leaves, flowers, and twigs.

360 Behavioral Health understands the importance of creating meaningful summer experiences for our clients. That's why we're dedicated to providing comprehensive respite services designed to support caregivers and enhance the quality of life for individuals with autism. Our team of trained professionals is here to offer personalized support and assistance through our specialized and traditional respite and attendant care. With 360 Behavioral Health by your side, you can enjoy a summer filled with adventure, relaxation, and cherished memories. Let us help you make the most of every moment.
Click here to learn more about the respite services we offer.

CALIFORNIA SUN, SENSORY FUN

Exploring California's Autism-Friendly Destinations



As caregivers, we understand the importance of finding inclusive and accommodating spaces where our loved ones can thrive and feel welcomed. That's why we've compiled a list of top-notch attractions and resources that go above and beyond to ensure a sensory-friendly and enjoyable experience for individuals with autism and their families.

Join us as we embark on a journey to discover these autism-friendly gems scattered across the landscapes of California. Whether you're looking for cultural enrichment, exhilarating thrills, or tranquil escapes, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

1. **Aquarium of the Pacific**
   The Aquarium in Long Beach holds Family Autism Nights on August 11th and October 20th yearly.
   More information can be found here:
   https://www.aquariumofpacific.org/

2. **The Broad Art Museum**
   The Broad offers narratives for visitors with ASD. Tickets are free but a reservation is required.
   More information can be found here:
   https://www.thebroad.org/visit/accessibility

3. **California Great America**
   A popular amusement park that offers thrill rides, family attractions, and live entertainment.
   More information can be found here:
   https://www.cagreatamerica.com/accessibility

4. **Fairmount Carousel Playground**
   A scenic public park situated on Lake Evans.
   More information can be found here:
   https://www.playlsi.com/en/commercial-playground-equipment/playgrounds/fairmount-carousel-playground/

5. **Gilroy Gardens**
   A unique horticultural theme park offering beautiful gardens, landscapes and educational attractions.
   More information can be found here:
   https://www.gilroygardens.org/help/accessibility

6. **Knotts Berry Farm**
   A renowned theme park known for attractions, rides, shows, and its yearly Boysenberry festival.
   More information can be found here:
   https://www.knotts.com/accessibility

7. **Legoland**
   A family-friendly theme park inspired by the popular LEGO toy brand. A certified Autism Center.
   More information can be found here:
   https://california-support.legoland.com/hc/en-us/sections/360000073131-Disabled-Guests

8. **MOXI Wolf Museum of Exploration and Innovation**
   A hands-on science museum offering interactive experiences in science and creativity. Offers a sensory friendly app.
   More information can be found here:
   https://moxi.org/visit/accessibility/

9. **Children's Discovery Museum (San Diego)**
   This museum provides a variety of interactive exhibits and educational programs designed to engage children in learning through play and exploration.
   More information can be found here:
   https://www.sdcdm.org/visit/special-needs

10. **Sea World**
    A marine mammal park, oceanarium and theme park offering marine exhibits, shows and attractions.
    More information can be found here:
    https://seaworld.com/san-diego/park-info/accessibility-guide/

11. **Sesame Place**
    A Certified Autism Center. Guests can enroll in the Rider Accessibility Program for special needs guests and 5 family members to get priority access to select rides.
    More information can be found here:
    https://sesameplace.com/san-diego/help/autism-resources/

12. **Universal Studios Hollywood**
    A world-famous film studio and theme park offering attractions, rides, shows, and experiences.
    More information can be found here:
    https://www.universalstudioshollywood.com/web/en/us/accessibility-information

FINDING PACIFIC PEACE

MANAGING STRESS WITH MINDFULNESS

HELPFUL TIPS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Caroline Hardman, MS, BCBA, Qualified MBSR Instructor



When we become parents, we fall in love with our miraculous little bundle of life. We also find ourselves stressed out with the demands of being a new parent. How we respond is largely a result of how we have previously learned to react to stressful events.

A diagnosis of autism can rock our universe, and our sense of security and freedom. Children with autism and other special needs generally are unable to communicate what they want or need and often struggle with socialization skills, so they have tantrums or engage in unsafe behaviors. Stresses mount as we seek services we need at home and at school, incorporate school meetings into our already busy schedule, juggle necessary doctor appointments and make plans for people to come into our home several times a week.

Mindfulness is a process by which we shape our view of ourselves and our lives. We do this through formal practices, like yoga and meditation, and informal practices like just being present during everyday tasks.

To be mindful is essentially being aware in the present moment, on purpose, without judgment. Imagine saying, "I will be calm if my child throws a fit at Target" and then being determined to follow through. Setting our intention dramatically increases the likelihood that we'll remain calm. But just being present is not easy; our thoughts tend to be restless and uncontrolled. We tend to make many judgments, too, about ourselves and those around us.

Think of mindfulness as a camera lens: it captures just the moment without judgment or labels. It just sees. And the path to mindfulness, like any other brain training, takes practice. Just as muscles get stronger with exercise, so does the mindful mind.



"It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth – and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up – that we will begin to live each day to the fullest as if it was the only one we had."

FINDING PACIFIC PEACE

There are several exercises that can help us respond with calm and ease to stressful events. Here are three.



Awareness of Breath

For a couple of minutes, with eyes closed, bring your attention to your breath as it comes in and leaves the body, without trying to change it. Notice your breath in the expanding and contracting of the abdomen and hold your attention there. When you notice your mind wandering, kindly usher your awareness back to the breath.



Awareness of Daily Tasks

Think of something that happens every day more than once; something you take for granted, like opening a door. At the moment you touch the doorknob, stop for a moment and be mindful of where you are, how you feel in that moment and where the door will lead you. Instead of automatically going through daily motions, take occasional moments to stop and be aware of what you are doing and the blessings these daily movements mean in your life.



Mindful Listening

Learn to open your ears to sound without being swayed by memories of or preconceived notions about music. Select a piece of music you have never heard. Close your eyes, and if you like, use a pair of headphones. Don't think about the type of music it is, the title or the artist. Just hear it. Become absorbed in the sound. Listen to the contributions of each instrument. Then concentrate on the voice or voices. The idea is to experience listening without making judgements.

This lovely quote by the renowned author Elisabeth Kübler-Ross clarifies the value of mindfulness quite beautifully – "It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth – and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up – that we will begin to live each day to the fullest as if it was the only one we had." Perhaps this "attitude of gratitude" for the everyday moments – mundane, painful, or joyful – are what allow us to appreciate even the most challenging work given to us in this life.

The tranquil waters of California's beaches serve as an analogy for the essential need for mental health and wellness among caregivers of individuals with autism. Just as the gentle rhythm of the waves lulls the mind into a state of calm, caregivers require moments of respite and serenity to navigate the challenges of their journey. 360 Behavioral Health is here to ensure that caregivers have the tools and support they need to navigate their journey with strength, resilience, and compassion. Together, we can weather any storm and find moments of peace amidst the waves.

360 Behavioral Health

SUMMER EVENTS

Join 360 Behavioral Health at our upcoming events happening this summer!

| JUNE

Sports Day
Date: June 21
Address: 801 South Chevy Chase Drive, Suite 102, Glendale, CA 91205

Heat Waves - *(Pizza Party)*
Date: June 21
Address: 16380 Roscoe Blvd, Suite 100 Van Nuys, CA 91406

Summer Movie Night
Date: June 28
Address: 5005 Canyon Crest Dr. Riverside, CA 92507

Summer Fun
Date: June 29
Address: 211 East Ventura Boulevard, Suite 124, Oxnard, CA 93036

| JULY

Water Day
Date: July 13
Address: 4141 State Street, Suite E-12/13 Santa Barbara, CA 93110

| AUGUST

Summer Camp
Date: August 5 - August 9
Address: 4141 State Street, Suite E-12/13 Santa Barbara, CA 93110

Summer Fun Days
Date: August 8 - August 9
Address: 801 South Chevy Chase Drive, Suite 102, Glendale, CA 91205

SUNNY DAYS AHEAD!

Contact Your Clinic Director for More Information



BACK TO SCHOOL EVENT

19 Aug - 23 Aug — Covina Spirit Week!
1342 North Grand Ave, Suite 200, Covina, CA 91724