

# ParentMap

'cause parenting is a trip!

EVERY CHILD ISSUE

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newsletter inside



Seattle Children's  
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# WEEKNIGHT MINESTRONE

This simple one-pot meal is the sort of basic-but-beloved recipe that can be a family lifesaver almost every week, because it's easy to tailor based on what you have on hand or need to use up quickly. PCC Chef Jackie Freeman works with 11-year-old Ryan, who's enrolled in the YMCA Actively Changing Together! program, to select and prepare healthy ingredients. **Find the video and recipe at [pccnaturalmarkets.com/healthykids](http://pccnaturalmarkets.com/healthykids).**



**healthy  
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watch the  
video

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EVERY CHILD ISSUE

# Ground to grow on



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Super subscriptions and gifts that help kids give back

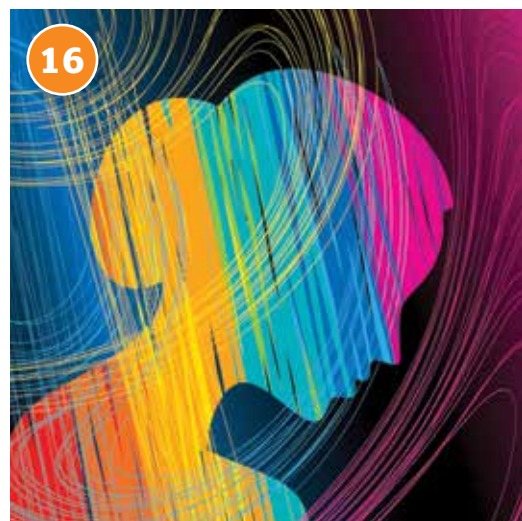
#### • A long way from Dewey: Why your kids need the new-media librarians

#### • Click here if sorry: Are empathy apps OK?

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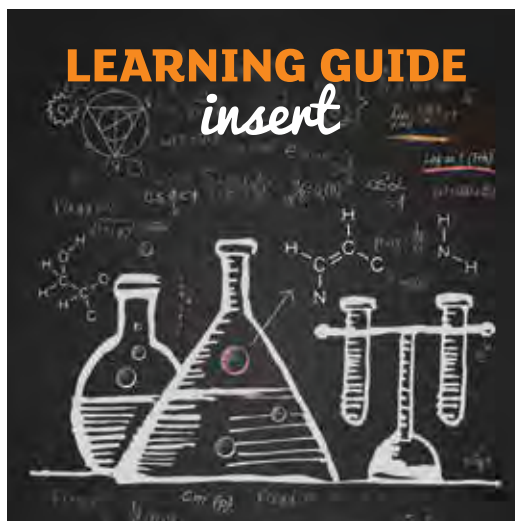
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# ★ navigate great stuff daily! ParentMap.com

## Money matters

Learn how you can create and utilize an allowance program that not only doles out money but also teaches kids how to budget and manage their funds responsibly: [parentmap.com/allowancetips](http://parentmap.com/allowancetips). Plus our financial expert walks you through sound college-savings advice, including how you should respond to the recent Washington GET program challenges: [parentmap.com/GETadvice](http://parentmap.com/GETadvice).



## Soccer Dad

Goaaaa! Our Soccer Dad columnist continues his musing on the season from the coach sidelines: [parentmap.com/soccerdad](http://parentmap.com/soccerdad).



## Diagnosis disparity

Research shows a disturbing trend in the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): children of color experience higher rates of delayed diagnosis, or inaccurate diagnosis, compared to Caucasian kids. Learn more about cognitive bias and what parents and providers can do: [parentmap.com/ASDdiagnosis](http://parentmap.com/ASDdiagnosis).



## Explore Ed Expo!

We graduate fresh education content every week to our interactive Education Expo portal, which includes a searchable schools database plus new stories on finding the right preschool, managing high-school pressure, how and when to hire a tutor, make-ahead meals for busy families and much more: [parentmap.com/education](http://parentmap.com/education).



## Pumpkin play + coolest costumes

We have the region's most comprehensive guide to pumpkin patches, from small and sweet to big and bodacious (plus all the cute farm animals, disorienting mazes and spooktastic fun you could want): [parentmap.com/pumpkinpatches](http://parentmap.com/pumpkinpatches). Plus find creative and adorable new costume ideas for the year's hottest themes, including Star Wars, Minecraft, Minions and more! [parentmap.com/newcostumes](http://parentmap.com/newcostumes)

## Fall frolic!

Time to get into a fall state of mind. We have everything you need to celebrate and decorate, including fall fireplace mantles, cozy blankets, comfy indoor forts, rustic front door and porch decor, and pressed-leaf crafts for kids: [parentmap.com/holidays](http://parentmap.com/holidays).



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PUBLISHER/EDITOR Alayne Sulkin

### EDITORIAL

EXECUTIVE EDITOR Natalie Singer-Velush

OUT + ABOUT EDITOR Elisa Murray

CALENDAR EDITOR Nancy Chaney

PROOFREADER Sunny Parsons

### CONTRIBUTORS

Nancy Schatz Alton, Will Austin,  
Lauren Braden, Deanna Duff,  
Malia Jacobson, Kristen Russell

### PARENTMAP.COM

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER Julian Haight

SOCIAL MEDIA + DIGITAL PRODUCTS MANAGER  
Rory Graves

EMAIL PROGRAM MANAGER Brenda Gage

PUBLISHING ASSISTANT Nicole Persun

### ADVERTISING SALES + PARTNERSHIPS

Ida Wicklund

Dani Carbary

AD OPERATIONS MANAGER Elisa Taylor

SALES + MARKETING SUPPORT MANAGER  
Jessica Collet

### MARKETING/EVENTS

EVENT OPERATIONS Tara Buchan

EVENT + MARKETING COORDINATOR  
Mallory Dehbod

### ART + PRODUCTION

DESIGN + PRODUCTION, PRINT  
Emily Johnson

DESIGN + PRODUCTION, PRINT + DIGITAL  
Amy Chinn

### ADMINISTRATION

BUSINESS MANAGER Sonja Hanson

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Angela Goodwin

ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT Lorraine Otani

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### ADVERTISING INFORMATION

206-709-9026 or [advertising@parentmap.com](mailto:advertising@parentmap.com)  
Fax 206-709-9031

CALENDAR SUBMISSIONS

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EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS

[editor@parentmap.com](mailto:editor@parentmap.com)

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**Exploring Your Atypical Learner**



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LECTURE 7 - 9 p.m.  
**Master the Power of ADHD** lecture with  
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dear reader

## Opening our hearts to support all parents

**“Science can tell us how life began, but it can never tell us what life is for.”**

— Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, emeritus chief rabbi of the United  
Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

**A**s I write this we are in the 10 days between Rosh HaShanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (day of confession and atonement).

In the Jewish tradition, God is said to be close to us in these 10 days when we ask to be written in the book of life. At this moment, we reflect most deeply on our lives. What have I achieved? What did I do wrong? How can I put it right? What am I here to do?

There is a golden thread magically woven through our October special needs issue. It's not the words that describe myriad institutions, research advancements or advocacy for children and families with special needs. The magic is the humans: their hearts, vision and action. Forget whether you believe in any superior powers; there are countless examples of *people* who have God-like behaviors. Devoted parents who navigate challenges beyond your imagination; strangers whose life purpose translates into extraordinary efforts to improve the lives of others. Read about all these people who embody the best spirit of our human condition and you will be uplifted.

Seattle Children's PlayGarden, once a vision of speech pathologist Liz Bullard (“Ground to grow on,” p. 31), gives access to the glorious outdoors to families far and wide, providing therapeutic and adventurous outdoor play for all. Two years ago, Suzanne Gwynn (“Someone you should know,” p. 50) founded Ladybug House. Each of us can help her realize her vision of a freestanding palliative care home for children in Seattle, offering respite and renewal to families in need.

If you are a parent of children with special needs, you undoubtedly experience the highest levels of stress. Each of us tends to put our children's needs before our own (“What about *your* special needs?” p. 16). We are a community of parents that needs to support each other in finding the ways to have compassion for ourselves first. Honor and accept your humanness. Dr. Kristin Neff, an expert on self-compassion, shares wise words: “Things will not always go the way you want them to. You will encounter frustrations and no doubt losses will occur. We all will make mistakes and bump up against our own limitations. But, this is the human condition, a reality shared by all of us. The more we open our hearts to this reality instead of constantly fighting against it, the more we will be able to feel compassion for ourselves and all of our fellow humans in the experience of life.”

Parents, caregivers, siblings, social workers, gardeners and therapists show love that engages with the world, trying — one act at a time, one day at a time, one life at a time — to make life a little less cruel, a little more human and humane.

*Shalom*

**Exploring Your  
Atypical Learner**  
**Dr. Ned Hallowell**  
Wednesday, Oct. 14



**The Spiritual Child**  
**Dr. Lisa Miller**  
Monday, Oct. 19  
and Tuesday, Oct. 20

[parentmap.com/lectures](http://parentmap.com/lectures)



# PUMPKIN BASH

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# BRAIN FUEL

parent news, snack-sized

## Deep six

Hey, Supermom, get some sleep! Researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, have found that people who sleep six hours or less per night are four times more likely to catch a cold once exposed to the virus! The study, published in *Sleep*, finds that lack of sleep is more important than any other factor in predicting whether you catch a cold — including stress level, education, income and even smoking.

## Nit-picking

Lousy news: Head lice are apparently mutating to develop resistance to common treatments. These treatments (including RID) often contain an insecticide called permethrin, which works by killing the lice and their eggs. But now, the little dudes have started morphing their nervous systems, so they're no longer sensitive to the chemical. There are other treatments available, including natural and prescription options, but still, it's a head-scratcher.



## Zeroing in

From Dec. 2–4, child-development experts, practitioners and educators from all over will gather in Seattle for Zero to Three, a conference aimed at connecting science, policy and practice. Those working with infants and toddlers in early childhood education, early intervention, mental health, Head Start, child welfare, parent education and pediatrics can attend sessions on serving vulnerable infants and toddlers, the newest brain research, signs of emerging autism during infant feeding, trauma-focused psychotherapy and much more. Education

credits are available; learn more at: [zerotothree.org](http://zerotothree.org) (click on National Training Institute at bottom of page).



## Food for thought

In other news from school, it looks like shrinking lunch periods are leading to less healthy meals. A new study in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* finds that kids who have 20 minutes or less to eat lunch rarely finish their meal and may make unhealthier food choices. For instance, rushed kids are less likely to choose fruit options, and tend to pick at a few things, but finish nothing. There are no federal guidelines on length of lunch breaks — and often kids chew up time waiting in the lunch line.

And speaking of fast food, it looks like eating junk can actually make you dumber. Researchers in Australia have shown for the first time that the part of the brain used for learning and memory — the hippocampus — is smaller in people who eat more unhealthy foods, such as sweet drinks, salty snacks and processed meats. So lay off the Lay's!



## Tricky treats

To protect your children's health, here are the things you should steal first from their trick-or-treat booty bags: Mr. Goodbar, Snickers, Mounds and Baby Ruth. The reason? They're ranked the worst by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics because of superscary saturated fat and sugar loads. Best sweets to leave for the kiddies? Fat-free delights such as Jolly Rancher hard candies, Pixy Stix, Blow Pops and candy corn, which has only 140 calories and 32 grams of sugar for 19 pieces (!). You can find loads of healthy Halloween ideas at Eat Right ([eatright.org](http://eatright.org)). Also, learn how to turn unwanted candy into amazing science experiments: [parentmap.com/candyexperiments](http://parentmap.com/candyexperiments).



## MS and breastfeeding

Women with multiple sclerosis (MS) are likely to experience a relapse after giving birth. Now, a study in *JAMA Neurology* suggests that moms who have MS may actually get a brief reprieve from the disease if they breastfeed exclusively during the first two months after birth. Researchers found that only 24 percent of breastfeeding mothers suffered a relapse within the first six months after giving birth, in contrast with 38 percent of mothers who either did not breastfeed or did so only partially. ■

— Kristen Russell



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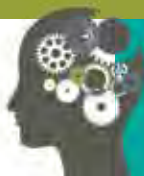
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# 'It's only ADHD'

And other stupid things people say

By Heather LeRoss

I like to believe I am a “people” person, one of those women who gets along with just about everyone. I can handle myself in everything from small talk with the neighbors to deep conversations with longtime friends to understanding when I just need to be a listener. But there is one situation where I am truly at a loss for words and often have to pinch myself back into reality, because my mind has gone to a very dark place where I envision punching, smacking and overall head-bashing the person before me. When I hear, “Well, your son only has ADHD. It's not like he is dying,” I become that seriously scary mom whom no one wants to encounter. And I find it is getting worse as I get older.

Unless you have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or love someone with ADHD, I'd like to politely ask that you zip it when you find yourself in a discussion about it. Unless you watch someone you love struggle, every single day, to figure out how they fit into this crazy world we live in, unless you live with the “never-ending-ness” of ADHD (the movement, singing, messes, missed assignments and appointments, etc.), it would be best for you to just nod. If you must speak, try something like “I can't imagine.”

People never cease to surprise me with their rudeness (or as they call it, their “wisdom”). I understand many of these people “think” they are helping, providing some golden nugget of information or insight I have missed. They might believe in their heart of hearts that this is the answer to my problems. Let me assure you, I have thought of it. I have most likely tried it (maybe even more than once); I have read about it, talked about it, researched it and lived it.

I'll be OK if I never hear any of the following “helpful” suggestions/comments/insights:

## 1. Are you sure it's ADHD and not just him trying to manipulate you?

Hear me: *Yes, I am sure!* I have had him tested by a neuropsychiatrist — 12 hours of testing



over 10 weeks. I have seen him struggle in school to sit still, to focus, to remember his homework (or pencils, or laptop, etc.). I have seen him go into his room with the sincere intention to clean it, only to come out thrilled that he has found a host of long-lost toys — an hour later. I have seen people repeatedly ask him to stop singing/humming/moving/tapping, only to watch him look at them confused and say, “Stop what?” It's real, people. Don't second-guess it.

**2. He's out of control.** You just need to (insert inane suggestion here). This is a favorite! The inane suggestions usually come in the form of:

- Punish him more.
- Create a schedule and post it.
- Ignore the “bad” behavior.
- Get him into therapy.

Punishments don't work with ADHD. My son's brain lights up like it's Christmas, whether the stimulus is good or bad, so getting mad and punishing him are received as a reward in his brain. A schedule cracks me up. Hello? I now have to remind him all the time to read the schedule! Which most likely has moved to the corkboard in his room and is covered in pinholes from the “stickpin Minecraft creeper” he created. Ignoring him is like trying to ignore the urge

to go to the bathroom. You can only ignore it for so long before something must be done. Therapy — check. He's in it, done it, and yes, I do think this helps, but it will not “cure” his ADHD.

## 3. You just need to let him fail. Then he'll wake up.

Ahhhh, the “let 'em fail” suggestion is a classic. What people don't understand is that in his eyes, he is not failing. His

world is not built upon the same foundation as mine. Failure to him would be not being able to get his Lego set built correctly; not being able to draw Godzilla perfectly. School is not a failure, it is simply something he is not good at, does not like and really doesn't care that much about. Messy room? Everything is exactly where he left it, and he can find most things. The things he can't — eh, he'll find them later. Getting someplace on time: If he's late, it's OK, because whatever caused him to be late was the important thing. If where he was going was the important thing, he'd be there on time. ADHD-land is a different world with a different time frame and a different view of failure. I choose to help him more than I do my younger son, in the hopes that repetition, the good feelings that come with getting good grades, and the ease that comes with having things in their place might one day (possibly) sink in and feel better than the chaos he lives in now. But who knows....

So in closing on this, I only ask that people think before they speak. As I say to my ADHD son all the time, “Just because it's in your head, doesn't mean it needs to be said.” ■

*Heather is mom to two boys and stepmom to another. She's on a mission to help her son with ADHD find his way in this world while keeping his sense of humor and ensuring her youngest doesn't get lost in the shadow of ADHD. She remains sane with chocolate and the unwavering support of her husband.*

## Learning library

### 7 new books about special needs and learning differences to help parents

By Nancy Schatz Alton

**A**s a parent of a daughter with learning differences, I often have a hard time looking at the big picture. I see what's right in front of me: a girl who struggles with speech, reading, math, writing and complex physical skills such as jumping rope. But if I step back, I see that we live in a lucky time: Resources are all around my family. Lately, I've been stepping back by diving into books. Away from the constant flash of the Internet's latest news, books offer parents (and sometimes kids) who are navigating learning differences and special needs a deep well of information, resources and support.

This curated roundup gathers new titles in the special needs/atypical learner category.



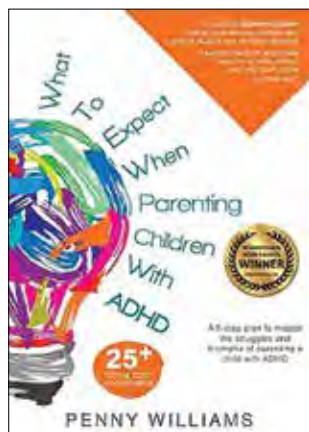
**Thinking Differently: An Inspiring Guide for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities** by David Flink.

This book's author is cofounder of Eye to Eye, a national mentoring organization that pairs young people with learning differences with mentors who share that experience. Flink also has dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and he shares much personally attained knowledge, such as this statement: "Perhaps the most important shift that happened at Brown [University] was that I finally believed

I was smart." Better yet, the book is full of helpful information for parents and educators. Maybe you haven't done any testing for differences yet; read the chapter that covers this topic. Or maybe your teen is pondering college; *Thinking Differently* covers that, too.

**What to Expect When Parenting Children with ADHD: A 9-step Plan to Master the Struggles and Triumphs of Parenting a Child with ADHD** by Penny Williams.

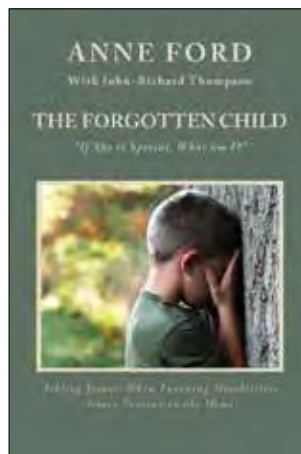
This author has already penned an award-winning memoir about parenting a child with ADHD (*Boy Without Instructions*). Now she turns her trial-by-fire experience into practical advice. This workbook-style guide starts with a chapter titled "Get Over It," which gives parents space to both freak out and focus on the positive. This book is both compassionate and thorough, with clever, fun pictures and workbook pages that really focus on seeing and helping the child. Some of them are just waiting for a photocopy machine, such as the morning routine checklist, complete with a space for a child's name and a smiley face.



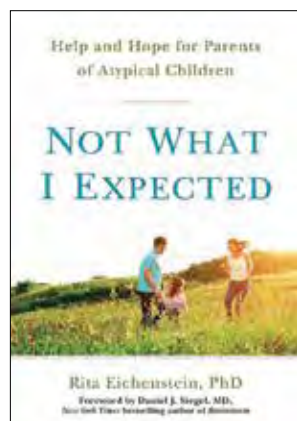
**Fish in a Tree** by Lynda Mullaly Hunt. I read this chapter book out loud to my daughter. It's about a sixth-grader named Ally who thinks she's stupid because she can't read. Her new teacher uncovers Ally's dyslexia while pointing out her numerous gifts. There's a fantastically mean girl named Shay, unconventional students who befriend Ally and an older brother who doesn't realize that he also has dyslexia. On our last night of reading the book, I cried while Ally learned about famous

people with dyslexia. My daughter asked me why I was crying, and I told her I was thinking about how hard it was for her to learn to read. "Do you remember that?" I asked. And she said no, not really. For this conversation and others we had — not just about dyslexia, but many topics including bullying and why kids are mean — I'm glad we read this book together.

**The Forgotten Child, "If She Is Special, What Am I?": Sibling Issues: When Learning Disabilities Cause Tension in the Home**

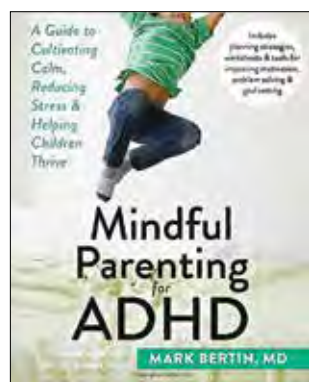


by Anne Ford. This book contains a vast array of stories about families and how they balance attention between their child with learning issues and their child (or children) without learning issues. The writing and compelling scenes pull the reader in. By filling the book with so many different tales, Ford creates many access points for parents who all have different stories of their own. If you're looking for guidance on how to deal with difficult sibling relationships, this book is for you.



**Not What I Expected: Help and Hope for Parents of Atypical Children** by Rita Eichenstein, Ph.D. The author walks parents through the five stages of grief over having an atypical learner: denial; anger and blame; bargaining and seeking solutions; depression; and active acceptance. Eichenstein pulls examples from her practice as a psychologist specializing in pediatric neuropsychological assessments. These stories illuminate the journey's struggles — whether your child has just been diagnosed or is years beyond initial diagnosis. Eichenstein gives parents concrete

steps to help themselves and their children. For example, the guidelines to keep anger at bay may sound simple, but are worthy of writing on the kitchen whiteboard: Eat a high-protein breakfast; notice how caffeine affects you; love the body you're in but keep moving; and get enough sleep.



**Mindful Parenting for ADHD: A Guide to Cultivating Calm, Reducing Stress & Helping Children Thrive** by Mark Bertin, M.D. Bertin, an ADHD and mindfulness expert, helps parents cultivate perseverance, flexibility and an ability to find joy by teaching them how to practice mindfulness. He also gives the reader a broad understanding of ADHD. Along the way, he guides parents in creating an action plan for helping both their child and themselves. Anyone who likes the workbook model will

appreciate the layout of this book, which includes plenty of exercises, grids to fill in and checklists to put action plans into action.



**8 Keys to Parenting Children with ADHD** by Cindy Goldrich, Ed.M., ACAC. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a certified ADHD coach at your house? Author Cindy Goldrich teaches us what she has learned as a life coach about the research, science and most effective treatment plans for working with people with executive function disorders. This book is like the perfect readable house guest for parents of children with ADHD, showing the hosts the eight steps to "parent the child you have," as Goldrich writes in the introduction. ■

Nancy Schatz Alton is the co-author of two holistic health-care guides, *The Healthy Back Book* and *The Healthy Knees Book*. When she's not meeting deadlines or teaching writing, she writes poetry and essays and works on her memoir about her daughter's learning journey. She lives in Seattle with her husband, a teen, a tween and two Havanese dogs. Find her blog at [withinthewords.com](http://withinthewords.com).



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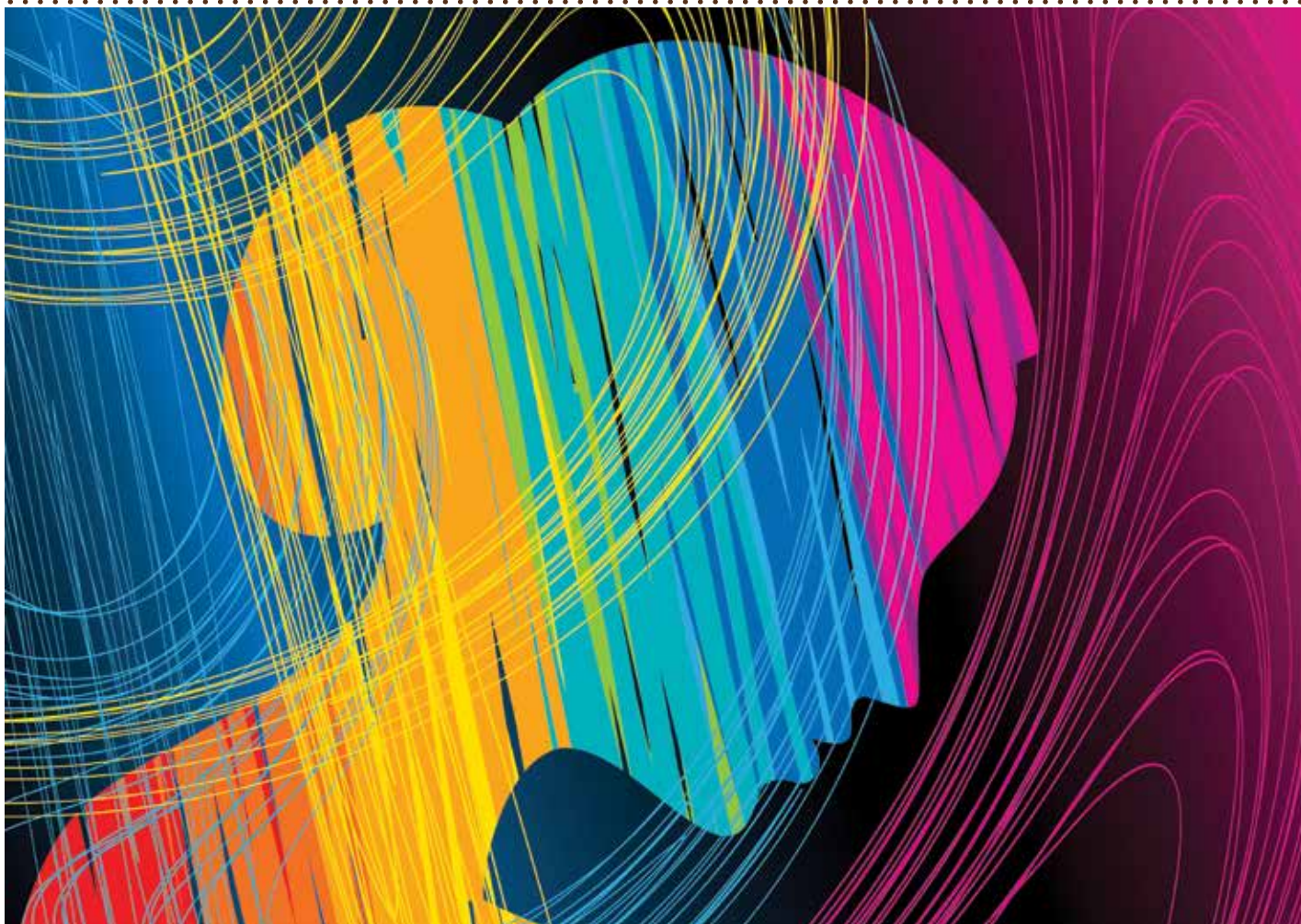
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# What about *your* special needs?

5 acts of self-care for parents of children with special needs

BY NANCY SCHATZ ALTON

**W**hen my daughter was diagnosed with developmental delays, I fell backward into grief, even as I furiously crossed off action items on a to-do list that rarely included self-care. My seemingly unstoppable tears provided me with something I desperately needed, though: Because it's hard to talk to learning specialists while sobbing, I carved out time to write my way out of my grief avalanche. Taking the time and space to process my own emotions ultimately helped me summon the strength I needed to help my daughter on her own journey.

Five years past that first diagnosis, being a parent of a child whose different learning needs

often take extra attention and parenting fuel has taught me that caring for myself must be no. 1 on my to-do list.

Although the term “special needs” refers to a broad category of developmental and learning needs and issues, there is an inherent commonality: Parents of children with such needs experience extra stress.

“Research has shown that parents of children with developmental, medical or behavioral needs often experience high levels of stress related to raising their child with special needs,” says Mandi Silverman, Psy.D., a clinical psychologist at the ADHD and Disruptive Behavior Disorders Center at the Child Mind Institute in New York City. That

additional psychological and physical stress can extend to the whole family, Silverman says.

While it might seem obvious that self-care is essential — all we need to do is think of the airline adage to put on our own oxygen mask first — many parents, in fact, put themselves last until their health becomes impossible to ignore.

Often there is finally a moment when parents realize putting themselves last isn't going to work. “I wasn't parenting the way I wanted to parent, and I had to learn that I have the right and responsibility to love and take care of myself first,” says Seattleite Heidi Stuber, a single mom of a 10-year-old boy with high-functioning autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Writer and life coach Heather Plett believes all parenting necessitates caring for your primary vehicle: yourself. "If you don't want to find yourself stranded and broken down at the side of the road on one of the most challenging journeys of your life, you'd better take good care of yourself," says Plett, who wrote a blog on self-care that has been read by a half million people.

Just as every child with special needs is different, every parent has their own route to self-care. Still, there are road maps to this destination. Here are five strategies that can be used as a guide to caring for yourself well enough to parent a child who needs you to be as calm as you can be.

### 1 Daily 'me' time: 15–30 minutes

"Carve out even just 15 minutes every day or so to do something that is relaxing. Whether it's reading a magazine, having a cup of favorite coffee [or] tea or talking on the phone to a friend, it's super important that parents have a 'me moment' in order to recharge, reset and rally for the next challenges," Silverman says.

Although this sounds simple, many parents of children with special needs are constantly on duty. On the days Stuber doesn't have a babysitter scheduled or her son doesn't have school or camp, she calls one of two families who welcome her son for playdates, which she must attend, too. This time with her son's friend's parents gives her one version of "me" time.

Plett recommends starting with a few simple pauses. "Imagine pauses as gas station fill-ups on your parenting road trip. Take a detour

through the park on your drive home. Pick up a book while supper is cooking. Pour a glass of wine once the kids are in bed. Take a bubble bath when everyone is otherwise engaged. Or simply stop what you're doing for a mindful minute and look around you and notice color, shapes, beauty, sound, etc. These intentional short pauses will begin to replenish your energy," she says.

### 2 Embrace movement: Exercise works

"With exercise, you cross a lot of bases: It's good for your body, you improve your mood, your cognitive efficiency increases, your sense of well-being increases, and you feel more in charge of yourself. I tell my clients to put a pair of sneakers in their car and after dropping your child at therapy, go on a walk, says Rita Eichenstein, Ph.D., author of *Not What I Expected: Help and Hope for Families of Atypical Children*.

Leslie Rorty, a Seattle parent of a 17-year-old with global developmental delays, became a master swimmer before her son's birth. "I had respite care, a supportive husband and three other children who have always been very good with him, but I needed to make sure I was strong, because parenting him is physical. Luckily, I had swimming to call on," Rorty says.

Parent Jacque Dietrichson recalls her decision to become a runner. Three of her four children have autism. Her husband's schedule as a firefighter (on duty for 24 hours at a time) and her Virginia locale, far from supportive Washington, D.C., family and friends, did not help matters. When her children were all 7 and younger (they are now in their teens),

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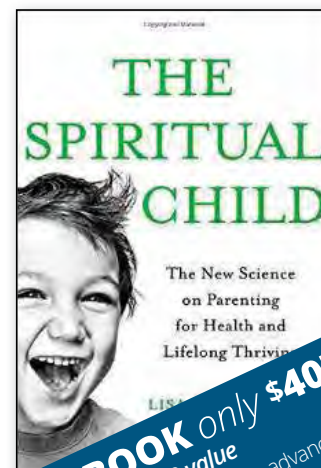
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## What about *your* special needs?

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she received a flyer in the mail about a Disney half-marathon. "I started on a treadmill, working my way to running behind a double stroller when the older two were in school. Soon, I saw how much of a better mom I was when I had that stress relief," Dietrichson says. She's run two full- and six or seven half-marathons, and added weight lifting and triathlons to her list of activities.

### 3 Find your tribe

When you have a child with special needs, says Eichenstein, "you might no longer feel comfortable in social relationships you used to love. My advice is to find a meaningful group of friends that can support you where you are at now."

Seattleite Jen Maher, who has an 11-year-old son with autism, found a good friend through her involvement with Seattle Children's Autism Center Guild. "We both have boys that are tough. I take her boy to spend the night, and she takes mine. It was really rough those first few years, but time and support from friends in the same boat as you helps," Maher says.

Rorty found a supportive group of friends when her son attended preschool at the Boyer Children's Clinic. "We meet and discuss our lives maybe four

times a year now [that their kids are older]. And whenever one of us has a question or need, we email and help each other out," she says.

Seattle-area parent Rachel Katz Cary, whose 10-year-old son has ADHD and is a twice-exceptional student, believes community holds us up like the "light as a feather, stiff as a board" slumber party game. "If every friend puts two fingers underneath the person, everyone can lift that person up. Having everyone lift what they can sure takes the pressure off of parenting a high-needs kid," she says. To that end, she has hosted Friday-night community dinners that have helped support, maintain and nourish community.

While we all wish friendships would randomly show up, being intentional is often necessary. "One of the things I've learned about finding my tribe is that the more authentic I am, the more I attract authentic friendships,"

Plett says. "Find places where people are talking about things that matter to you and open up about something close to your heart. If people don't respond, they're probably not your tribe. Don't take it personally. It's probably their own fear of vulnerability and has nothing to do with you."

Always try again, Plett says. "Sometimes it takes a few false starts before you find the right friend."

*I needed to make sure I was strong, because parenting him is physical.*

### 4 Time away

Jorja White says there is no quiet place in her house as long as her daughter Mari-Helen is awake. While Mari-Helen, 15, has never been given a specific diagnosis, her cognitive abilities place her around age 2 or 3. "I need to have a life and I'm incredibly independent. Having a supportive spouse means I can travel, and that's been important for me as a parent. My tendency is to always meet the needs of others first, but time away allows me to meet my needs so I don't fall apart," says White, who lives in Birmingham.

For caregivers, respite care is sometimes what it takes to get time away. Locally, some parents can receive respite care through the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. King County also offers Mental Health Wraparound Services for any child up to age 21 experiencing a severe emotional and/or behavioral disturbance. This coordinated planning process assists families in creating an individualized care plan that allows respite time for parents. A Seattle-area nonprofit called Caregifted grants vacations to people who have spent 10 or more years caring for a family member full-time.

Life coach Annie Fitzgerald, who has a 15-year-old daughter with severe anxiety and chronic pain disease, believes vacations are vital. "I say this under the guise of privilege, but to achieve wellness, you need to go away until you miss your kid, and then you need to stay two days longer," says Fitzgerald, who lives in Seattle. >>

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**CHALK IT UP:** Choose an assortment of pumpkins of different sizes, and cover each with two coats of chalkboard paint (find it at a craft or hardware store). Then hand everyone colored chalk and let them go to town. Bonus: Draw, erase, redo, erase, draw again!

**GLOW ALL NIGHT:** Forget candles. Get yourself a few bottles of glow-in-the-dark puff paint and create geometric or Jack-O-Lantern designs right on your uncarved pumpkin. Tip: Make sure pumpkin surface is dry, and try drawing your design or pattern on the pumpkin first in pencil.

**PLATE UP:** Forget the pumpkin altogether. Paper plates make great first pumpkin canvases.



Begin with white plates on the backside. Paint orange using washable paint. Add sparkles, eyes, nose, toothy grin. Using black construction paper, fashion a pointy hat and attach with stapler (let the adult do that task). Boo-tastic! Tip: Try

making a whole spooky string of pumpkin plate faces and attach them in a garland to drape across a mantle, front door or porch.

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## What about *your* special needs?

continued from page 19

### 5 Acceptance

Parents often talk about coming to a place of acceptance with their child's diagnosis. "With autism, it doesn't really end when they get out of school. Even though my three children are pretty high-functioning, I don't know the future. I have tried every therapy and every diet, and none of them were the salvation. I've been a Christian all my life and it was a struggle to let go of [the idea of fixing my children], but I have let go," Dietrichson says. "My job is to help them function in this world, helping my square pegs fit into round holes."

Some parents turn to therapy to help find acceptance or to help ease depression and anxiety. "We are designed to be verbal communication machines, and talk therapy works," Eichenstein says.

White says her level of acceptance definitely

depends on the day's mood, but she also sees parenting Mari-Helen as part of her spiritual journey. "I embrace the Buddhist idea of not viewing suffering or difficulties as abnormal. When I think of the fact that Mari-Helen is always going to be the way she is now, it takes my breath away, so I try to live in the present, not focus on the long haul. I know it's just a matter of she's mine and I'm hers, and we will figure it out."

Of course, it's precisely because parenting children who have special needs is a long journey that Silverman recommends reevaluating self-care tactics once every season. "It's important for parents to periodically take a self-assessment and ask themselves what they need, what aren't they getting, what are they currently appreciative of, and who they need to talk to in order to get more answers. As time goes on, our needs and strength change," she says.

Or, as Stuber says, "When I'm at the end of my rope, it's time to build more rope."

I've learned to sit down at my writing desk and type away until my frustration or grief has waned. I text friends until I find support. Sometimes I listen to my meditation app (aptly called *headspace.com*). And if all else fails, my legs haven't failed me yet: I walk or bike my way to a place where I can breathe deeply again. Five years in is long enough to know that taking care of me matters. ■

*Nancy Schatz Alton is the co-author of two holistic health-care guides, The Healthy Back Book and The Healthy Knees Book. When she's not meeting deadlines or teaching writing, she writes poetry and essays and works on her memoir about her daughter's learning journey. She lives in Seattle with her husband, a teen, a tween and two Havanese dogs. Find her blog at withinthewords.com.*

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# Q&A

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## Academics vs. emotional health

**Q:** Schools and society overemphasize academic achievement. How can I, as a parent, not stress or feel pressured into the same values? How can I let my kids grow into who they are and achieve a balance of both personal and academic growth?

**A:** As parents, we are always barely five minutes ahead of the next thing. Our parents just read Dr. Spock for advice; we are constantly bombarded with many different experts with many different opinions.

As a parent myself, as well as a doctor who works in adolescent medicine, I believe we need to teach our children and adolescents three things: how to fall asleep; how to eat well and exercise; and how to look in the mirror and say, "I love what I see." We spend so much time worrying if our children's paths lead to the right future that we forget our most important lesson: loving yourself so that your kids can love themselves. If you fear overemphasizing academic achievement, demonstrate your own version of a balanced life, say, one that contains work (achievement) and play.

A recent *Time* magazine article titled "In Praise of the Ordinary Child" by Jeffrey Kluger highlighted the work of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. One of its pilot programs is being tested in Bellevue and Seattle, with the goal of teaching students and teachers how to recognize, understand, label, express and regulate (RULER) emotions. The premise is this: Aim to teach your children how to regulate their emotions and then you can have conversations about what they think about academic achievement. If they can understand their emotions and inner drives, they can work toward their own goals, on their own terms.

Here's an example from my own life. My son, Jupiter, has been saying good-bye to friends before leaving for college. He was crying as he came into my room last night and said, "This is really hard. I'm not going to see these people for quite a while. What do I do with this?"

I said, "I think you just feel it for a while, experience it and then the next feeling comes." And I started to cry, too. Then the dog started licking us, and we laughed. Finally, we talked about what was next, and my son said, 'I guess we go to bed because we will feel better tomorrow.' This is what RULER is trying to teach students. School may teach our children how to learn, but we are teaching them how to live well-adjusted lives, which includes feeling their feelings and then moving onto the next feeling. And I believe what we model at home is louder than society's ideas on academic expectations.



*Cora Collette Breuner, M.D., MPH, is member of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and the Orthopedics and Sports Medicine Department at Seattle Children's Hospital. She is the chair of the Committee on Adolescence for the American Academy of Pediatrics, the current director of the Adolescent Eating Disorder Clinic, and the director of the Adolescent Biofeedback Clinic, as well as a professor at the University of Washington School of Medicine.*

## Friends for the shy introvert

**Q:** If my child is happy without close friends, should I force social interactions outside of school and regular activities, or just let them be? How do I help my introverted, elementary-age child make friends?

**A:** Isn't it wonderful how children come to this world with such varied personalities and strengths? Some children weave a web of friends as soon as they can smile, while other children don't easily form strong connections to peers. Every individual style brings diversity to the rainbow of human personalities. An important task of development is learning about one's own strengths and weaknesses. This helps us find a path that feels right across a lifetime.

That said, just because a child has some areas that aren't as natural, doesn't mean it's wise to wholly avoid those areas. Resilience comes from knowing you will be OK even if an environment doesn't play to your biggest strengths. I love the quote "Prepare the child for the path, not the path for the child."

Efforts that help an introverted child's eyes become more open to the social world are helpful. Every evening, a parent may casually inquire about whom the child played with at recess or did anybody do anything funny in class today, etc. These conversations can help shift the child's focus toward social dynamics as long as the conversations are a low-key part of family interactions.

Consider finding social activities that suit your child's temperament. You may have thought your child would love playing on a soccer team, but an afterschool Lego program or drama class may be a better fit. These activities provide a chance to gain confidence in group environments, too.

A one-on-one playdate also is a reasonable choice. Many parents whose children struggle socially prefer to initially host playdates. At the child's own home, a parent can provide structure (a shared baking activity or an art project), if needed, and offer support or redirection if their child seems to be losing steam. Keep playdates short, to start. One hour is a good duration, especially after the school day.

If being comfortable with peers is a real struggle, consider talking to the school counselor. Some counselors host a "lunch bunch" or other get-together groups with children practicing peer interactions in a supportive environment with in-the-moment coaching. Teachers can also be a resource and may place your child with peers who might be good at welcoming a shier individual. There are also counselor-led social-skills groups in the area, and Seattle Children's Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine Department periodically offers the Making Friends Social Skills Group.



*Dr. Rebecca Barclay is a child and adolescent psychiatrist and associate director of the Partnership Access Line at Seattle Children's Hospital.*

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# Adaptive functioning in autism

*When setting the table is much more than a chore*

By Deanna Duff

**F**or Ellen Geib, family meals are a reminder that life's smallest tasks can also be its biggest triumphs. Her younger brother is severely autistic. At 8 years old, he began learning to set the table one utensil and cup at a time. Now 20, he does it daily without prompting.

"Adaptive functioning skills — daily activities such as brushing your teeth, unloading the dishwasher, setting a table, treating a minor cut — are what everyone needs for successful living," says Geib, a third-year clinical psychology graduate student at Seattle Pacific University who is focusing on autism research.

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are developmental disorders that impact behavioral, cognitive, communication and social skills. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in 68 children has been diagnosed with ASD in the U.S.

"It can be easy to focus on academic performance and improving language and communication. There can even be great success in those areas with the promise of going onto college and getting a job," says Gary Stobbe, director of Seattle Children's Adult Autism Transitional Services.

"What is sometimes left behind are the important elements of adaptive skills, which are also needed for some sense of independence," Stobbe says. "It's amazing how learning even one basic skill can make a dramatic change in an individual's life."

## From language to meals

Adaptive functioning encompasses communication and social skills in addition to goal-oriented tasks such as cooking, cleaning or riding a bus. However, impaired adaptive skills are not necessarily indicative of intellectual deficits.

"Intelligence is often separate from learning basic life skills," Stobbe says. "It can be like a genius who doesn't know to open an umbrella in the rain."

According to a 2012 study by UCLA and the Children's National Medical Center, early childhood language skills are a better predictor of increased adaptive abilities as an adult.

"Language is often a struggle for kids with



autism. The hypothesis is that helping them gain language abilities earlier in life may help with both communication itself and have a spillover effect of improved [adaptive] skills like making a meal. It's an exciting area of intervention," Geib says.

According to Stobbe, such language skills are more than teaching the alphabet. It includes subtle communication cues, which are crucial in navigating adaptive functioning situations. For example, a raised eyebrow might signify surprise or excitement.

"Typically developing children often learn by what almost seems like osmosis. It's a lot through observation or they're shown an activity and it becomes innate," Stobbe says. "Social rules and indicators we take for granted don't come naturally for those with autism. They need to be explicitly taught."

For Geib's brother, mastering skills such as setting the table fostered a sense of confidence. He now helps sort clothes at Goodwill and folds towels at a local hotel.

"It's often on parents' minds about how they can help their child through the day safely and successfully," Geib says. "Adaptive skills are not necessarily at the core symptoms of autism, but they are important in moving toward independence."

*New issues emerge  
at different ages.*

*Life skills change,  
and sometimes  
refreshers are needed.*

## Teachable moments

Tucker Jack has a full schedule. The 23-year-old attends weekly music, art and cooking classes at the Alyssa Burnett Adult Life Center. Opened in April 2014, the Bothell center serves individuals 18 years and older with ASD and other developmental disabilities.

"Tucker had a lot of anger issues dealing with [ASD] during puberty. He's calmer now. He gets up in the morning and loves to get dressed on his own. He shows me his artwork, makes toast with jam, feeds himself and is more amenable to instruction," says Tucker Jack's father, Kim Jack.

A weekly schedule of 25 classes ranges from gardening to fitness. Independent living instruction focuses on adaptive functioning skills, such as shopping, cooking, money management,

job preparation, etiquette and more. Teaching is tailored to meet the special needs of students.

"Kids [with ASD] need more structure and repetition. It requires a longer period of time than it does for someone with typical development," says Bev Wilson, professor of clinical psychology and director of Seattle Pacific University's Initiative for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Whether in a classroom or at home, mentors and teachers should break lessons into the smallest chunks possible. If setting a table, start by demonstrating the placement of just one utensil and help the student master that before adding another component. Always be explicit with instructions.

"Most people would say you put the peanut

butter on the bread if they were explaining how to make a sandwich. To someone with autism, that would mean actually putting the jar of peanut butter on top of the bread. You have to break down each and every step and then repeat," says Tammy Mitchell, program manager at the Alyssa Burnett center.

Many classes at Alyssa Burnett include visual cues in addition to oral prompts. Skills should build progressively. Level-one cooking focuses on basics, such as cleaning a counter and using a microwave. For students who reach level three, lessons include meat handling and cutting techniques.

"New issues emerge at different ages. Life skills change, and sometimes refreshers are needed, too," Stobbe says.

The Alyssa Burnett center boasts an 85 percent retention rate, with most students returning to take new or more advanced classes. According to Mitchell, both youths with ASD and their families recognize that "consistency and practice are the only ways to continue to progress."

"You realize that your kid can do a lot more than maybe you thought. There are things I can teach him to do. Alyssa Burnett was the catalyst for setting the tone for learning skills that can be introduced at home," says Kim Jack. "It gives me so much hope for [my son's] future." ■

*Deanna Duff is a Seattle-based freelance writer who contributes to a variety of regional and national publications.*



"Thanks so much for having Emma over to play tomorrow. I need to **just ASK** — do you keep a gun in the house?"

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## PICKS



International Ballet Theatre's *Dracula*, Oct. 30–Nov. 1



Día de Muertos, Oct. 31



Seattle Children's Festival, Oct. 11



Cedar River Salmon Journey, October weekends



Dr. Ned Hallowell on "Mastering the Power of ADHD," Oct. 14

## We're Growing ALONG WITH THE Eastside



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4

**BrickCon 2015.** It's a Lego convention; go crazy in the building zone and marvel at cool creations. Saturday–Sunday, Oct. 3–4. \$10; ages 4 and under free. Seattle Center Exhibition Hall. [brickcon.org](http://brickcon.org)  
**Cedar River Salmon Journey.** Learn from naturalists in four locations as you watch the incredible trip made by spawning salmon. 11 a.m.–4 p.m., Saturdays–Sundays, Oct. 3–25. **FREE.** Renton Library, Cedar River Park, Cavanaugh Pond and Landsburg Park. [seattleaquarium.org/salmon-journey](http://seattleaquarium.org/salmon-journey)

5

**Bob's Corn Maze and Pumpkin Patch.** Try the challenging maze plowed into a 10-acre corn field. Kiddie maze and pumpkin patch, too. Daily through Oct. 31. Free entry, maze \$6–\$8; ages 4 and under free; pumpkins for purchase. Bob's Corn and Pumpkin Farm, Snohomish. [bobscorn.com](http://bobscorn.com)  
**Let's Play: Little Red Hen.** Enjoy an excitement-filled, 30-minute show, just the right length for young attention spans. Oct. 5, 9, 10; 10:30 a.m. \$5. Ages 0–5 with caregiver. Olympia Family Theater, Olympia. [olyft.org](http://olyft.org)

6

**Craven Farm Corn Maze.** Allow at least 90 minutes to find your way into and out of this 15-acre, Alice-in-Pumpkinland-themed maze. Daily through Oct. 31. \$6; ages 2 and under free. Craven Farm, Snohomish. [cravenfarm.com](http://cravenfarm.com)  
**Story Time at Mockingbird Books.** Stop by this almost-everyday story session to hear old favorites and new picks. Monday–Saturday, 11 a.m. **FREE.** Ages 0–6 with caregiver. Mockingbird Books, Seattle. [mockingbirdbooksgl.com](http://mockingbirdbooksgl.com) **ONGOING EVENT**

11

**Seattle Children's Festival.** "Celebrating Our Big Neighborhood" is the theme of this second annual multi-cultural family fest showcasing an array of music, dance and activities, presented by Northwest Folklife. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. **FREE.** Seattle Center. [nwfolklife.org](http://nwfolklife.org)  
**Caspar Babypants.** Gold Creek Community Church invites everyone to rock out to the groovy tunes of favorite local kindie crooner. 12:30 p.m. **FREE.** Brightwater Center, Woodinville. [goldcreek.org/woodinville](http://goldcreek.org/woodinville)

12

**Toddler Time at the Aquarium.** Make a fish-print painting and engage in other marine-themed activities. Oct. 12, 13, 25, 26, 27; 9:30 a.m.–noon. Included with admission. Ages 0–5 with caregiver. Seattle Aquarium, Seattle. [seattleaquarium.org](http://seattleaquarium.org)  
**Foster's Produce Farm and Corn Maze.** Explore the Wizard of Oz-themed corn maze and pick a pumpkin; extra activities on weekends. Daily, Oct. 1–31. \$6 maze; ages 3 and under free; pumpkins for purchase. Arlington. [fosterscornmaze.com](http://fosterscornmaze.com)

13

**Thomasson Family Farm Corn Maze.** Can you find your way through the maze? Plus, get wild in the Kids' Corral activity area. Daily, Oct. 1–31. \$2.50–\$12; pumpkins for purchase. Thomasson Family Farm, Enumachew. [thomassonfamilyfarm.com](http://thomassonfamilyfarm.com)  
**Art AIDS America.** First-of-its-kind exhibition explores the influence of AIDS on American art over the last 30 years. Daily except Monday from Oct. 3. Included in admission. Tacoma Art Museum. [tacomaartmuseum.org](http://tacomaartmuseum.org)

18

**Zoo Boo.** Wear your costume and watch the zoo's animal residents devour their pumpkin treats. Saturday–Sunday, Oct. 17–18, 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Included with admission; \$3 discount for those in costume. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Tacoma. [pdza.org](http://pdza.org)  
**Little Red.** StoryBook Theater applies its hilarious twists to the tale of a girl, a granny, a hunter and a wolf. Saturday–Sunday, Oct. 18–Nov. 22. \$11. Ages 3 and up. Venues in Renton, Everett, Shoreline, Kirkland and Seattle. [storybooktheater.org](http://storybooktheater.org)

19

**The Spiritual Child: What Science Says About Spirituality and Parenting Kids Who Thrive with Lisa Miller, Ph.D.** ParentMap welcomes author and clinical psychologist Miller who shares her research and practical advice on developing and encouraging children's well-being through spirituality. Monday, Oct. 19, 7–9 p.m., Temple de Hirsch Sinai, Seattle; and Tuesday, Oct. 20, 7–9 p.m., Annie Wright Schools, Tacoma. \$25–\$30. [parentmap.com/miller](http://parentmap.com/miller)

20

**Trinity Tree Farm Pumpkin Patch.** Hop on for a hay ride and pick your pumpkin; train ride and pumpkin sling shot for a fee. Daily, Oct. 8–31. Free entry; pumpkins for purchase. Issaquah. [trinitytreefarm.com](http://trinitytreefarm.com)  
**Lego and Building Madness.** Gather and build with like-minded Lego enthusiasts. Tuesdays, 4–5 p.m., Milton Edgewood Branch, and 4–5:30 p.m., DuPont Branch; check online for more days and branches. Pierce County Library. [piercecounitylibrary.org](http://piercecounitylibrary.org) **ONGOING EVENT**

25

**Alice in Wonderland.** Follow Alice on her musical adventures into a wacky fantasy world. Saturday–Sunday, Oct. 24–Nov. 1. \$12–\$15. All ages. Tacoma Musical Playhouse. [tmp.org](http://tmp.org)  
**Halloween Train.** Dress in your costume, sip some cider and hop aboard for a vintage steam train ride. Oct. 24, 25, 31; multiple departures. \$12–\$20; ages 2 and under free, discount for those in costume. Northwest Railway Museum, Snoqualmie. [trainmuseum.org](http://trainmuseum.org)

26

**Top Ten Toys Story Time.** As if you need another reason to visit this Shangri-La of toy stores. Mondays, 11 a.m. **FREE.** Top Ten Toys, Seattle. [toptentoys.com](http://toptentoys.com) **ONGOING EVENT**  
**Halloween Spooktacular.** Conduct science experiments in the spooky, kooky lab, create eerie art, and marvel at magician AlakaSam. 5–8 p.m. \$10–\$12; preregistration recommended. KidsQuest Children's Museum, Bellevue. [kidsquestmuseum.org](http://kidsquestmuseum.org)

27

**Trick-or-Treat Tales.** Little ones show off costumes, hear Halloween stories, and trick or treat around the library. 10:30 a.m. **FREE;** pre-register. Ages 0–5 with families. King County Library System, Black Diamond Branch. [kcls.org](http://kcls.org)  
**PEPS Lecture: The Science of How Young Children Learn.** UW I-LABS speaker discusses children's early relationships and their role in learning and development. 6:30 p.m. \$15 per couple or pay-what-you-can. Caregivers of ages 0–5. Verity Credit Union, Seattle. [peps.org](http://peps.org)

# Good Growing

A Seattle Children's Publication | Fall 2015

## What Does It Mean to Be a Good Digital Citizen?

Today, social media is used by almost everyone, and is a big part of most tweens' and teens' lives. So parenting now involves not only teaching our kids to be good citizens in the real world, but online, too. This means going beyond the basics of setting limits, enforcing rules and monitoring our kids' use.

Common Sense Media ([commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org)) is a nonprofit that offers ratings, reviews and other tools to help families navigate the online world.



According to this organization, good digital citizens make safe, smart and ethical choices. They strive to respect themselves and others, protect the privacy of themselves and others, stand up to cyber-bullying, report any suspicious or dangerous activity, and balance their screen time with other non-digital activities.

Wendy Sue Swanson is a Seattle Children's pediatrician, a family health advocate, a mom and a social media whiz. She's

known as "Seattle Mama Doc" in her blog and on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. She reminds us that "Social media is not all bad for kids and families, but it's not all good either. It's a powerful way to connect to others and stay informed about our world. But it can also cause kids to feel excluded—and may even challenge their self-esteem at times."

Dr. Swanson says parents must understand the social media tools their kids are using, talk with them about what they like and don't like about it, set clear rules, and "unplug" as a family whenever possible. Since kids of all ages have a hard time setting limits for themselves, many families ban phones at the table and set a daily digital curfew—a time after which there are no smart phones or screen time allowed.

Today's kids are often much more tech-savvy than their parents. But they are naive about the world, and they still need our guidance! So revisit the golden rule with your kids: treat others the way you want to be treated. On social media and when texting, never say anything hurtful, or that you wouldn't say in person, or that you don't want repeated. Don't post comments, photos or videos you might want to take back someday—because they'll be out there forever. In the real world and online, treat yourself and others with respect, kindness and compassion.

### TO LEARN MORE:

Visit [www.commonsensemedia.org/educators/posters](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/educators/posters) for ideas for talking with your child.

### 38th Annual Festival of Trees

Sunday, Nov. 22 from 1 to 4 p.m.

The Fairmont Olympic Hotel

411 University Street, Seattle

Mark the beginning of the holiday season by viewing a display of designer Christmas trees. Each tree is dedicated to a courageous Seattle Children's Hospital patient. Guests enjoy the lighting of the Fairmont Olympic's grand lobby tree, live musical entertainment, a holiday boutique and pictures with Santa.



### TO LEARN MORE:

For more information and to view and bid on the trees, please visit [www.seattlefestivaloftrees.com](http://www.seattlefestivaloftrees.com).



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## Walking and Biking to School

Kids who walk or bike to school are more alert and ready to learn. Parents who join their kids improve their own health, too. Your location or work schedule can make this a challenge, but give it a try if you can. Doing so even once a week is a good start. Some neighborhoods have “walking school buses” and “bike trains,” where kids and parents follow a set route to school. Walkers and riders join the group along the way;

after school the route is reversed and kids leave the group when it reaches their home. If you must drive your child to school, park a few blocks away and walk together from there. Bonus: you’ll avoid the hassle of the school’s drop-off line, and you can talk while you walk.

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### TO LEARN MORE:

Visit [www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org).

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## What Are Clinical Trials and Who Volunteers for Them?

A clinical trial is a type of research study that tests how well a medical treatment works on people. Seattle Children’s conducts clinical trials to better understand children’s health and to learn about new medicines and treatments that may help kids today and in the future.

In some studies, the goal is to learn if a new treatment works, and if it’s safe. In others, a new treatment is directly compared to an existing one, to see if the new treatment works better. Clinical trials are used to test treatments for life-threatening diseases like cancer and cystic fibrosis, and they’re also used to help children with many other

conditions ranging from anxiety to food allergies.

Who participates in these studies at Seattle Children’s? Often, healthy children and their families simply want to help others by contributing to medical knowledge. Sometimes, study participants have an illness for which there’s no effective treatment, and they are hopeful the new treatment will help them. This is the case with young leukemia patients whose lives have been saved by groundbreaking T-cell therapies at Seattle Children’s.

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### TO LEARN MORE:

[www.seattlechildrens.org/research](http://www.seattlechildrens.org/research).



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## Help Your Little One Learn to Talk

Before babies can talk, they communicate by crying, looking and gesturing. They can even learn to use sign language several months before they can say words.

It’s easy to help your child build their language skills as you go about your daily routine. Avoid screen time and instead enjoy time reading, talking and singing with your baby.

Your toddler will quickly learn the magic of words: when they try to use the right words, they get what they want faster!



So if they point or babble, delay your response for several seconds, then give them what they want and clearly say the name of the item. However, when your child says the word—for example “baah” to mean “ball”—give them what they want right away, then say the word with great enthusiasm: “Ball!” (Helpful older siblings may need to be reminded not to speak for their little brother or sister, as doing so can delay the toddler’s speech.)

The more words babies

hear, the more words they understand and say as toddlers. Narrate what you see, hear, or are doing. Speak clearly, using short, simple phrases with lots of repetition. When preparing a snack, you might say, “Banana. Peel the banana. Yum yum. Would you like some banana?” Also echo and expand on what your child says, adding one or two words when you respond. If your child says “milk,” respond with “more milk please.” If they say “no want,” respond with “I don’t want it.”

Your little one will be talking in full sentences before you know it. For now, enjoy being their guide for this amazing discovery!

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### TO LEARN MORE:

Visit [www.seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE2036.pdf](http://www.seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE2036.pdf).

# Kid Bits



## Cold and Flu Season

This cold and flu season, protect your family with simple actions and smart habits. Everyone 6 months and older should get the flu vaccine every year. Eat healthy foods, drink lots of water, and get enough sleep and regular exercise so your body is ready to fight off germs. Wash hands often with soap and warm water, rubbing for at least 20 seconds. Since germs often enter our bodies through our eyes, nose and mouth, teach your child not to touch their face unless they've just washed their hands. Avoid people who are sick—and if you do get sick, stay home from work or school. Cough and sneeze into a tissue or the inside of your bent elbow.

### TO LEARN MORE:

Visit [www.seattlechildrens.org/safety-wellness/about-the-flu](http://www.seattlechildrens.org/safety-wellness/about-the-flu).



## Smart On-the-Go Snacks

Healthy snacks are good sources of nutrition for growing kids. They can provide energy and help kids feel their best, especially when eaten on a schedule—like right after school or a sports practice. The best choices are low in sugar, fat and salt. Apples, bananas, oranges, grapes and cheese travel well and are always great choices. Store a stash of snacks that don't require refrigeration in your car or bag: unsweetened dried fruit, whole-grain dry cereal or crackers, veggie chips and raw almonds. Keep your refrigerator stocked with cleaned, cut-up fruits and vegetables in grab-and-go containers. Kids love the fresh crunch of cucumbers, carrots, celery, bell peppers and sugar snap peas.

### TO LEARN MORE:

Visit [www.seattlechildrens.org/goodgrowing](http://www.seattlechildrens.org/goodgrowing).



## Hear the Beep Where You Sleep

Smoke alarms can help keep you safe if a fire starts in your home. About half of home fire deaths happen between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m., when most people are asleep. Be sure you have smoke alarms on every level of your home and in each bedroom—so that even heavy sleepers will be sure to hear it. Test them once a month, and replace the batteries at least once a year. (The change to or from Daylight Savings Time is a good day to do this task.) Replace smoke alarms that are older than 10 years. Make a fire escape plan with two ways out of every room, and then practice it with your family at least twice a year.

### TO LEARN MORE:

Visit [www.nfpa.org/safety-information/fire-prevention-week](http://www.nfpa.org/safety-information/fire-prevention-week).

## Quick Tip

Remember to keep magnets, small batteries and poisons out of the sight and reach of young children.

### Regional Clinics

Find us near you at one of our clinics:

- Bellevue
- Everett
- Federal Way
- Mill Creek
- Olympia
- Tri-Cities
- Wenatchee
- Odessa Brown Children's Clinic

### Main Hospital Numbers

206-987-2000  
866-987-2000 (Toll-free)

### Online Resources

Visit [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org) for the following:

- Child Health Advice
- my Good Growing email newsletter
- Doctor Finder
- Seattle Mama Doc, Teenology 101, Autism and On The Pulse blogs
- Medical condition information
- Safety & wellness information
- Ways to help Seattle Children's
- Research Institute



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[www.youtube.com/seattlechildrens](http://www.youtube.com/seattlechildrens)

Heather Cooper is the Editor of *Good Growing*, which is produced four times a year by the Marketing Communications Department of Seattle Children's. You can find *Good Growing* in the January, April, July and October issues of *ParentMap* and on our website [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org). For permission to reprint articles for non-commercial purposes or to receive *Good Growing* in an alternate format, call 206-987-5323. The inclusion of any resource or website does not imply endorsement. Your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider. © 2015 Seattle Children's, Seattle, Washington.



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# Classes and Events

To register or view more information, please visit [www.seattlechildrens.org/classes](http://www.seattlechildrens.org/classes). A phone number is provided for those without Internet access. No one will be denied admission if unable to pay the full amount. If you need an interpreter, please let staff know when you register, and one will be provided. These classes are popular and often fill up several months in advance, so register early.

## PARENTING CLASSES

### Autism 101

WHEN: Thursday, Oct. 22, 7 to 8:30 p.m.  
FEE: Free  
WHERE: Seattle Children's main campus,  
4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle  
CALL: 206-987-8080

For parents and caregivers of children recently diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder who wish to better understand this disorder.

### Autism 200 Series

FEE: Free  
WHERE: Seattle Children's main campus,  
4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle  
CALL: 206-987-8080

For parents and caregivers of children with autism who wish to better understand this disorder. These classes are also available through Children's video and teleconferencing outreach program in various locations throughout Washington, Alaska, Oregon and Montana.

Autism 210: Myths and Facts —  
Evaluating the Science of Autism  
WHEN: Thursday, Oct. 15, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Autism 211: "If I Had Known Then What I Know Now" — A Panel of Parents of Older Children and Young Adults with ASD  
WHEN: Thursday, Nov. 19, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

### Infant Car Seat Class for Parents

WHEN: Saturday, Nov. 7, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.  
FEE: \$45 per family  
WHERE: Odessa Brown Children's Clinic  
2101 East Yesler Way, Seattle  
CALL: 206-987-2226

For new and expectant parents and infant caregivers. Come learn from child passenger safety experts how to properly restrain your baby's car seat, how to select the safest car seat, and how to safely secure your baby in the car seat.

### Heartsaver First Aid, CPR and AED

WHEN: Sunday, Nov. 22, 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
FEE: \$60  
WHERE: Seattle Children's main campus  
4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle  
CALL: 206-987-9879

For parents and caregivers. Topics include how to treat bleeding, sprains, broken bones, shock and other first-aid emergencies. Also includes infant, child and adult CPR and AED use.

## PRETEEN AND TEEN CLASSES

### Better Babysitters

WHEN: Sunday, Oct. 25, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
WHERE: Overlake Medical Center,  
1035 116th Ave. NE, Bellevue

WHEN: Saturday, Nov. 7, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
WHERE: Pavilion for Women & Children,  
900 Pacific Ave., Everett

WHEN: Saturday, Dec. 5, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
WHERE: Seattle Children's admin. building,  
6901 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle

View more dates online  
FEE: \$40 per person  
CALL: 206-987-9878 for all locations

For youth, ages 11 to 14. Topics for responsible babysitting include basic child development, infant care and safety, handling emergencies, age-appropriate toys, business hints and parent expectations.

### CPR and First Aid for Babysitters

WHEN: Saturday, Dec. 5, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
FEE: \$60 per person  
WHERE: Seattle Children's main campus  
4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle  
CALL: 206-987-9878

For youth, ages 11 to 15. Topics include pediatric CPR, treatment for choking, and first-aid skills. Students receive 2-year American Heart Association completion card.

### For Boys Only

WHEN: Mondays, Oct. 26 & Nov. 2, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.  
WHERE: Seattle Children's main campus  
4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle

### For Girls Only

WHEN: Tuesdays, Oct. 20 & 27,  
6:30 to 8:30pm  
WHERE: Overlake Medical Center  
1035 116th Ave NE, Bellevue

WHEN: Mondays, Nov. 30 & Dec. 7, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.  
WHERE: Seattle Children's main campus  
4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle

View more dates and locations online  
FEE: \$70 per parent/child pair;  
\$50 per extra child  
CALL: 206-789-2306

These two-night, two-part classes use an informal and engaging format to present and discuss the issues most on the minds of pre-teens ages 10 to 12 as they begin adolescence; conversations about body changes, sex, and other growing up stuff. Content outlines and short videos available at [www.greatconversations.com](http://www.greatconversations.com).

3  
locations

## EVENTS

### Bike Helmet Fitting and Giveaway

WHEN: Saturday, Oct. 10, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
FEE: Free  
WHERE: Snohomish Kohl's  
2909 Bickford Ave, Snohomish  
CALL: 206-987-1569

Come get your child properly fit for a new bike helmet. Kids must be 1 to 18 and present to receive a helmet. First come, first served. No appointments needed. Learn more at [www.MakeSureTheHelmetFits.org](http://www.MakeSureTheHelmetFits.org).

### Lock Box and Trigger Lock Giveaway

WHEN: Saturday, Oct. 17, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
FEE: Free  
WHERE: Bass Pro Shops,  
7905 S. Hosmer Street, Tacoma

Come learn about the importance of safe gun storage and get a free lock box or trigger lock, with hands-on training on proper use. Supplies are limited. First come, first served. One free lock box or trigger lock per person (maximum two items per household). Must be present to receive free item. Recipient must be 18 or older.

### Car Seat Check

WHEN: Saturday, Oct. 24, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
FEE: Free  
WHERE: Seattle Children's main campus,  
4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle  
CALL: 206-987-5999

Come learn how to safely secure your child in the car. Child passenger safety experts will check your child in a car seat, booster seat or the seat belt and answer any questions you may have. First come, first served. No appointments needed.

### Winter Sport Helmet Fitting and Giveaway

WHEN: Sunday, Dec. 13, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
FEE: Free  
WHERE: Seattle Children's Bellevue Clinic  
1500 116th Ave NE, Bellevue  
CALL: 206-987-1569

Come get your child properly fit for a new ski helmet. Kids must be 4 to 18 and present to receive a helmet. First come, first served. No appointments needed. Learn more at [www.MakeSureTheHelmetFits.org](http://www.MakeSureTheHelmetFits.org).

2  
locations



**Seattle Children's**  
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## WEDNESDAY

## THURSDAY

## FRIDAY

## SATURDAY



NINA SUBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

**Lisa Miller, Ph.D., "The Spiritual Child,"**  
Oct. 19 and 20

7

**Tacoma Resident Free Day at PDZA.** City of Tacoma dwellers enjoy free admission to the zoo and aquarium. Oct. 7, 27; 9:30 a.m.–4 p.m. **FREE** for Tacoma residents with proper I.D. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Tacoma. [pdza.org](http://pdza.org)  
**Toddler Tales & Trails.** Kids and caregivers enjoy story time and a short hike that's perfect for tots. 10–11 a.m. \$2. Ages 2–5 with caregiver. Seward Park Audubon Center, Seattle. [sewardpark.audubon.org](http://sewardpark.audubon.org)

14

**Exploring Your Atypical Learner Resource Fair and 'Master the Power of ADHD' Lecture with Dr. Ned Hallowell.** Join ParentMap and dive into resources to support children with learning differences, followed by a talk by Hallowell on brain science and current research surrounding ADHD/ADD. Resource fair; 5–7 p.m. **FREE**; RSVP. Lecture, 7–9 p.m. \$25–\$30. University of Washington Husky Union Building, Seattle. [parentmap.com/hallowell](http://parentmap.com/hallowell)

21

**Do You Know Bruce? Breaking Barriers.** The Wing unveils the further exploration of Bruce Lee and his role in the film industry. Daily except Monday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. from Oct. 3. Included with admission. Wing Luke Museum, Seattle. [wingluke.org](http://wingluke.org)  
**Open Play at Let's Play.** Stop in for free play, inflatables, fun and games. Wednesdays, 3–5 p.m.; Fridays, 9:30–noon. \$7; discount for siblings. Ages 0–6. Let's Play Sammamish. [letsplaysammamish.com](http://letsplaysammamish.com)  
**ONGOING EVENT**

28

**Little Book Worms.** Stop by for stories, songs and a special treat. Wednesdays, 11 a.m.–noon. **FREE.** Ages 0–5 with caregiver. The Shops at the Bravern, Bellevue. [thebravern.com](http://thebravern.com) **ONGOING EVENT**  
**Spirit Week at CMT.** Come play and show your Halloween dress-up creativity around a theme each day. Tuesday–Saturday, Oct. 27–31, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Pay-as-you-will admission. Ages 1–6 with families. Children's Museum of Tacoma. [playtacoma.org](http://playtacoma.org)

1

**Built to Amaze.** Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey present humans and animals performing eye-popping circus stunts and tricks. Oct. 1–4. \$22–\$72; discounted children's tickets for select shows. All ages. Xfinity Arena, Everett. [xfinityarenaeverett.com](http://xfinityarenaeverett.com)  
**Late Play Date.** Hurry up and finish homework, then head to the museum for fall season crafts, activities and fun. 6–8 p.m. **FREE.** Ages 3–12 with families. White River Valley Museum, Auburn. [wrvmuseum.org](http://wrvmuseum.org)

8

**Dr. Maze's Farm.** Visit the farmyard and wend your way through the sunflower-corn-field maze; pumpkins for purchase and \$2 hayrides on weekends. Daily through Oct. 31. \$6–\$9. Dr. Maze's Farm, Redmond. [drmazesfarm.com](http://drmazesfarm.com)  
**Seattle Sings Choral Festival.** A who's who of Northwest choral groups performs in the acoustic splendor of Saint Mark's. Thursday–Saturday, Oct. 8–10. **FREE.** Saint Mark's Cathedral, Seattle. [seattlesings.org](http://seattlesings.org)

15

**Elephant & Piggie's 'We Are in a Play!'** Mo Willems' beloved characters sing, celebrate friendship and generally revel in their moment in the spotlight. Oct. 8–Nov. 29. \$29 and up. Ages 4 and up. Seattle's Children's Theatre. [sct.org](http://sct.org)  
**Swan Lake.** The Russian Grand Ballet showcases its star dancers in a performance of the beloved Tchaikovsky ballet. 7 p.m. \$29–\$85. Ages 5 and up. Pantages Theater, Tacoma. [broadwaycenter.org](http://broadwaycenter.org)

22

**Tugboat Story Time.** Get your sea legs on and board a tugboat for stories of the sea. Second and fourth Thursdays of the month, 11 a.m.–noon. **FREE.** Ages 2–5 with caregiver. Center for Wooden Boats, Seattle. [cwb.org](http://cwb.org) **ONGOING EVENT**  
**Thursday Night Football.** Cheer for our hometown Hawks battling the 49ers (boooo) and enjoy face-painting and snacks; bring your own non-meat dinner. 5 p.m. **FREE.** Stroum Jewish Community Center, Mercer Island. [sjcc.org](http://sjcc.org)

29

**Family Nature Class.** Explore with learning stations and a trail walk. Wednesday–Saturday, 9:30–11:30 a.m. (plus Fridays, 1–3 p.m. for ages 4–8). \$18 per adult/child pair; preregister. Ages 2–5 with caregiver. Washington Park Arboretum, Seattle. [depts.washington.edu/uwbw](http://depts.washington.edu/uwbw) **ONGOING EVENT**  
**Lil' Diggers Playtime.** Giant indoor sandbox for tots. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 9:30–11 a.m. or 11:30 a.m.–1 p.m. \$7. Ages 5 and under. Sandbox Sports, Seattle. [sandboxsports.net](http://sandboxsports.net) **ONGOING EVENT**

2

**Sankai Juku.** Japanese dance theater dance group called "original and startling" by *The New York Times*, performs a North American premiere. Thursday–Saturday, Oct. 1–3, 8 p.m. \$50–\$55; student discounts and TeenTix available. Meany Hall, Seattle. [uworldseries.org](http://uworldseries.org)  
**FREE First Friday Night at Hands On Children's Museum.** It's Safety and Preparedness night at the museum with free play. 5–9 p.m. **FREE.** Ages 0–10 with families. Hands On Children's Museum, Olympia. [hocm.org](http://hocm.org)

9

**SIFF Crash Kids Filmmaking Workshop.** Kids work together to go from concept to actual movie in one day, with professional guidance. 9 a.m.–5 p.m. \$50; preregister. SIFF Film Center, Seattle. [siff.net](http://siff.net)  
**St. Demetrios Greek Festival.** Partake in the best of Greek culture with music and dance, children's games and delicious food. Friday–Sunday, Oct. 9–11. **FREE**; food for purchase. St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, Seattle. [seattlegreekfestival.com](http://seattlegreekfestival.com)

16

**Camp Korey Fall Festival.** Hay rides, pick-your-pumpkin, animals and other farm fun, plus yummy food for purchase. Friday–Sunday, Oct. 16–18, 10 a.m.–4 p.m. **FREE.** All ages. Carnation Farm, Carnation. [campkorey.org](http://campkorey.org)  
**Hula Babies.** This active class combines baby-wearing and the pleasing movements of hula. Fridays, 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. \$15 drop-in. Babies with caregiver. Village Green Yoga, Issaquah. [ahonuworl dof hula.com](http://ahonuworl dof hula.com)

23

**Hoot 'n' Howl.** Take an evening tram tour to see what the park's animals are up to at night, plus wear your costume for trick-or-treating. Friday–Saturday, Oct. 23–24, 6–10 p.m. \$7.50–\$13.50; ages 2 and under free. Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, Eatonville. [nwtrek.org](http://nwtrek.org)  
**Hamlin Halloween Haunt.** Don your costume and come for spooky stories around the camp fire, plus a hay ride and games. 6–8:30 p.m. **FREE.** Hamlin Park, Shoreline. [shorelinewa.gov](http://shorelinewa.gov)

30

**Fright Fest.** Ride the rides in a new, spooky light, enter the haunted houses (if you dare) or stick to Booville. Friday–Sunday, Oct. 2–31 (closed Oct. 4). \$10–\$28; kids in costume free on Halloween. Wild Waves, Federal Way. [wildwaves.com](http://wildwaves.com)  
**Dracula.** International Ballet Theatre presents this dark and dramatic love story while showcasing wide-ranging dance styles, from classical ballet to folk to tap. Friday–Sunday, Oct. 30–Nov. 1. \$25–\$45. Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue. [ibtbellevue.org](http://ibtbellevue.org)

3

**Issaquah Salmon Days.** Honor our region's flagship fish at this festival with a parade, food and arts and super-cool Field of Fun for kids. Saturday–Sunday, Oct. 3–4. **FREE.** Veterans' Memorial Park and other venues, Issaquah. [salmondays.org](http://salmondays.org)  
**Fishermen's Fall Festival.** Toy boat-building, taiko drumming, fun spectator opportunities such as a lutefisk-eating contest and more. 11 a.m.–6 p.m. **FREE.** Fishermen's Terminal, Seattle. [fishermensfallfestival.org](http://fishermensfallfestival.org)

10

**Kelsey Creek Farm Fair.** Annual fall farm fun, with animals, crafts, hay rides, pumpkins and more. 11 a.m.–4 p.m. **FREE**; some activities have fee. All ages. Kelsey Creek Farm Park, Bellevue. [bellevuewa.gov](http://bellevuewa.gov)  
**Fire Day at MOHAI.** Seattle Fire Department helps tots learn fire safety; kids try on firefighter gear, do crafts and more. 10 a.m.–2 p.m. **FREE.** Museum of History & Industry, Seattle. [mohai.org](http://mohai.org)

17

**Mast Center Discovery Days.** Visit Highline College's marine science center to touch sea creatures in the touch tanks and marvel at the gray whale skeleton. Saturdays, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. **FREE.** Mast Center, Des Moines. [mast.highline.edu](http://mast.highline.edu) **ONGOING EVENT**  
**Tacoma Nature Center Night Walk.** Venture out in the dark to search for and learn about animals active at night. 7:30–9 p.m. \$6; preregister. Ages 7 and up. Tacoma. [tacomanaturecenter.org](http://tacomanaturecenter.org)

24

**Community Chamber Concert.** Seattle Symphony musicians play for all. 2 p.m. **FREE.** Rainier Valley Cultural Center, Seattle. [seattlesymphony.org](http://seattlesymphony.org)  
**21 Acres Farm Walk.** Guided tour of a farm and market working to advance sustainable agriculture. 11 a.m. **FREE.** All ages. 21 Acres Farm, Woodinville. [21acres.org](http://21acres.org)  
**Jubilee Farm Pumpkin Weekend.** Hay maze, wagon rides, music, pumpkin patch and more. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Carnation. [pccfarmlandtrust.org](http://pccfarmlandtrust.org)

31

**Día de Muertos.** Celebrate the art, spirituality and traditions of Mexican culture while remembering the lives of departed loved ones. Saturday–Sunday, Oct. 31–Nov. 1. **FREE.** Seattle Center. [seattlecenter.com/festival/](http://seattlecenter.com/festival/)  
**Hilloween.** Neighborhood Halloween fest features a carnival, trick-or-treating along Broadway, and a free slice of pizza for kiddies in costume. Noon–7 p.m. **FREE.** All ages. Cal Anderson Park, Seattle. [caphilloween.com](http://caphilloween.com)



# Ground to grow on

Nature therapy at  
Seattle Children's PlayGarden

By Lauren Braden

**Adventure  
for all:  
Find travel tips  
for special-needs  
families:  
[parentmap.com  
/special-travel](http://parentmap.com/special-travel)**

**A**s Adana Protonentis watched her son Langston gradually lose his speech and eye contact at age 2, she did what any parent of a child diagnosed with regressive autism would do. She sought urgent support in many areas, from early-intervention therapies to developmental preschool. Some techniques helped and others stalled, but the magic happened in just one place — the great outdoors.

“It was like he was unlocked when he was outside,” explained Protonentis. “Inside he was quiet, but outside at the park, he would babble.” So his speech therapist suggested moving the sessions outside to a park. “In six months, Langston was speaking whole sentences.”

Now, Protonentis sees the benefit of nature-based play for kids with special needs every day in her work as administrator at Seattle Children’s PlayGarden, a nationally acclaimed play space that has pioneered therapeutic play in the outdoors.

The seeds for the PlayGarden were planted in 2002, when speech pathologist Liz Bullard learned of a new outdoor facility for children at New York University’s Rusk Institute for Rehabilitation Medicine that challenged traditional strategies by taking its therapy outdoors. Bullard

dreamed of building such a space in Seattle, one that would be accessible to kids of all abilities, incorporating unstructured play in nature to facilitate physical, social and cognitive development. She raised private funds to turn her dream into reality, incorporated the PlayGarden as a nonprofit and signed a lease in 2004 to create the space on an undeveloped acre of land adjacent to Colman Playfield in Seattle’s Rainier Valley. With Bullard serving as executive director, the PlayGarden opened its gates for its first season of inclusive summer camp in 2006.

### Accessible swings: Just the beginning

I opened those same gates recently when I stopped at the PlayGarden to explore its facilities and naturescapes with my son Isaac, who is on the autism spectrum. I was careful to set the latch firmly behind me as we entered. The secure, outdoor environment is a key feature of the PlayGarden, so that children, especially those with a tendency to wander, can feel free to explore without restraint and stay safe at the same time.

On the day that we visited, after ogling the already mammoth-size pumpkins and towering sunflowers in the organic veggie garden, Isaac



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*This month, we have pumpkins for both adults and kids! Wander through a pumpkin patch of thousands of hand-blown, one-of-a-kind glass pumpkins at Northwest Arts Center on Saturday, October 3, from 9am-4pm. Admission is free and pumpkins range from \$35 and up. Call 425-452-4106 for info.*

*The following weekend brings the annual Kelsey Creek Farm Fair, where kids can choose and decorate their very own pumpkin. Tons of entertainment, tractor-pulled wagon rides, and more await you on Saturday, October 10 from 11am-4pm! No entrance fee, but cost varies by activity. No pets, please. Call 425-452-7688 for info.*

**To plan your next Bellevue adventure, visit:  
[Bellevuewa.gov/parks.htm](http://Bellevuewa.gov/parks.htm)**



**Bellevue Parks &  
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WASHINGTON

## Ground to grow on

continued from page 31

made a beeline for the adaptable playground equipment and chose to settle into a large yellow support swing, designed for kids who need extra physical or motor support. Many Seattle playgrounds have these yellow swing sets, but unfortunately, that's often where inclusion and accessibility end. At the PlayGarden, it's only the beginning.

The range of opportunities for kids of all abilities to explore, take risks, play and be creative is extraordinary. Anchoring the site is a multihued, spongy volcano known as Mt. Jordan, the summit accessible by both foot and wheel.

A water rill flows down one side of the peak, feeding a wheelchair-accessible splash table. A musical art sculpture — created by celebrated artist Trimpin — doubles as a fence so it can be played from both sides. Beside the modern, grass-roofed Garden House, an assortment of ducks, geese and chickens occupy a large coop (the fluffy rabbits make good snuggling companions for a child in need of sensory comfort). Down a shady path is the garden's Wild Zone, where huge conifers, switchback trails and a wheelchair-accessible tree fort/pirate ship promote even more adventurous play.



**Kids of all abilities can dig in to the PlayGarden's unique play equipment and wild spaces**

Hungry? Pop a juicy strawberry or crunchy pea in your mouth. At the PlayGarden, foraging is encouraged, all plants are edible or nontoxic and whimsy is part of the design: Parked in a sun-dappled corner, for example, is an old red pickup truck whose front engine and flatbed have been upcycled into edible berry planters.

In the indoor kitchen, kids can safely explore the connection between garden and table; the cooktop stays cool in case of contact with small fingers.

## 'Overcoming challenges together'

Each component of the PlayGarden's natural landscape "rooms," play structures and indoor facilities are designed for kids with special needs in mind, including physical disabilities, vision and hearing impairments, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cerebral palsy and Down syndrome. Paved pathways and accessible ramps connect each area, allowing children to move freely around the garden spaces.

Interactive art is sprinkled throughout the PlayGarden, fostering imaginative, shared play. This was a key part of the design team's vision, a collaboration that included therapeutic gardening expert Daniel Winterbottom and sustainable-garden designer Wendy Welch. We spotted bright green shrubs carved into the shapes of dinosaurs, a sculpted pig waiting for a head pat and an ivy topiary in the shape of a necktie-wearing man riding a bicycle.

"Look at this silly guy!" Isaac happily yelled during our visit, gesturing to come and share in his experience.

As for impact? The PlayGarden and its founder have won acclaim and awards. (Most recently, Bullard was awarded a 2015 Great American Gardeners Award from the American Horticultural Society.) But more importantly, stories of how it's changed lives are all over Seattle. >>



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Seattle Children's Museum  
 Event Hours: 4pm-8pm  
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## Ground to grow on

*continued from page 33*

Just one example: Back in 2006 when the PlayGarden launched its inaugural summer camp for kids with disabilities, a 4-year-old boy with autism named Maxwell\* strolled through the gates with his mother beside him. He was a bundle of anxiety. A few days later, Maxwell was drawing and painting, and then playing in the mud and digging for earthworms. He returned the next summer, and every summer after that. He now spends two weeks each summer as a junior camp counselor at the PlayGarden, honing leadership skills he didn't even know he had.

"I like working with the younger kids and feeling like I'm making a difference in their lives," said Maxwell, now age 13. "The people there just really want to help kids. It's a great place to overcome challenges together." ■

*Lauren Braden is a Pacific Northwest writer who focuses on recreation and local travel. She blogs at [nwtripfinder.com](http://nwtripfinder.com).*

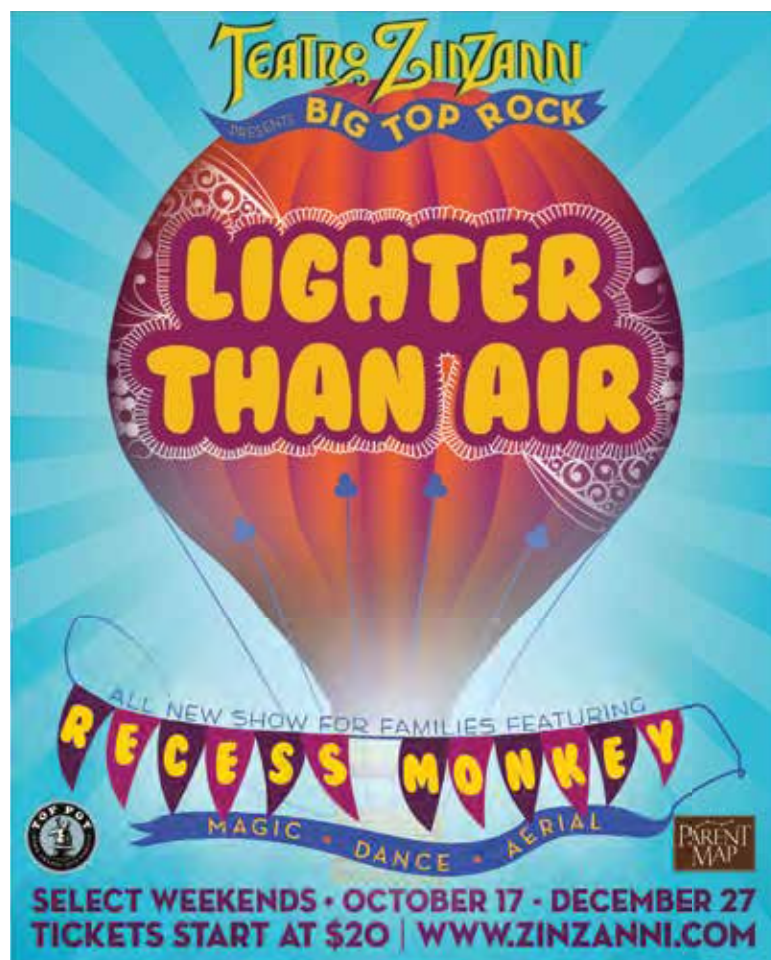
\*Maxwell's name has been changed to protect his identity.

## visit playgarden

Seattle Children's PlayGarden is a public park that is open from sunrise to sundown, where kids of all abilities are welcome to explore.

Beyond the public hours, it runs a growing variety of programs, including a preschool, camps and classes (this fall, offerings include an "Art with Ms. Arni" class and "Experience Music" class). Scholarships are available, and no one is turned away because of financial restrictions.

**1745 24th Avenue S., Seattle**  
**206-325-5576**  
**[childrensplaygarden.org](http://childrensplaygarden.org)**



## Halloween Spooktacular

Spooky Science, Eerie Art, a Creepy Cakewalk and the Magician AlakaSam!

**Monday, October 26th, 5-8pm**



**[www.kidsquestmuseum.org](http://www.kidsquestmuseum.org)**

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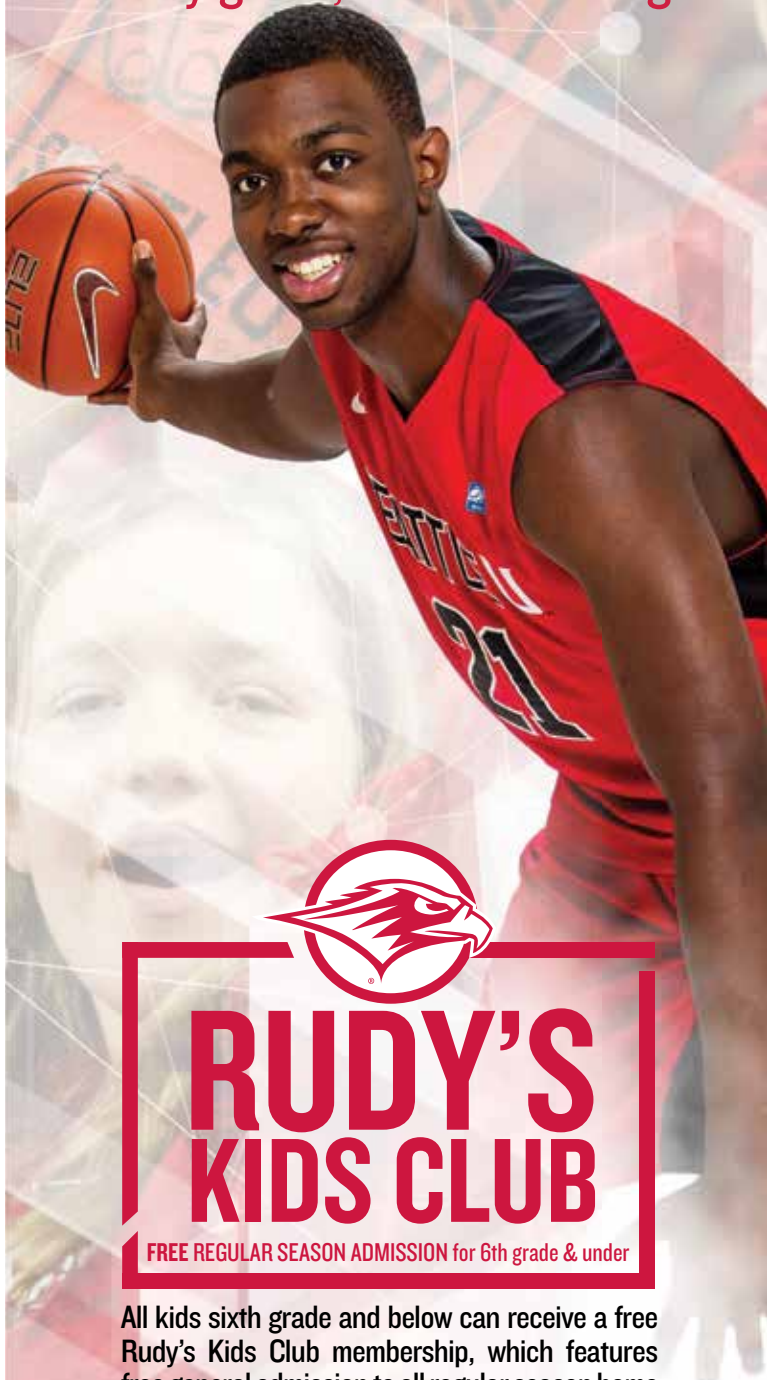
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# Super-special outings

## Innovative programs for children with special needs

Many museums, libraries, parks and other destinations are adding programs and hours to serve children with special needs. Here are a few; find more at [parentmap.com/special](http://parentmap.com/special).

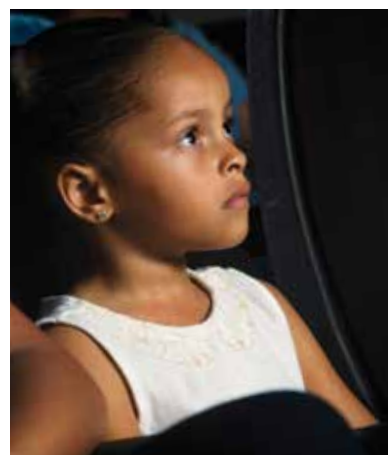
By Lauren Braden



PHOTO COURTESY OF SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

### Story times for all

**Seattle Public Library's Ballard Branch** hosts a free **sensory story time** every Saturday at 10:15 a.m., created for kids who have a hard time in large groups, are on the autism spectrum or are sensitive to sensory overload. Plus **Barnes & Noble** in West Seattle recently launched free ASL story times.



### Film fun

**AMC Sensory-friendly Films** partners with the Autism Society to host monthly screenings of kids' movies at four regional locations (Cascade Mall, Kent Station, Lakewood Mall and Woodinville).



### Learning to fly

**Wings for Autism**, a partnership between The Arc of King County, the Port of Seattle, Alaska Airlines and the Transportation Security Administration, is a twice-yearly program at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The highly successful event — it fills up quickly — helps kids with sensory issues feel secure in air travel by letting them practice each step. The next event will take place in early 2016; sign up for updates at [arcofkingcounty.org/wingsforautism](http://arcofkingcounty.org/wingsforautism).



### Special museum hours

The **Children's Museum of Tacoma** hosts **Tuesday Play Days** (every Tuesday from 10–11:30 a.m.) and a free monthly evening program (second Thursday of every month) for families with children who have special needs.

Every second Saturday of the month, **Pacific Science Center** opens its doors for **Autism Early Open** (8–10 a.m.), a free-admission program for kids on the autism spectrum.

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# Clean plate, clean slate

*Is 'eating clean' a game changer for neurocognitive disorders?*

By Malia Jacobson

**J**odi Cohen's second son was an energetic, happy preschooler, most of the time. But the mom of two from Seattle worried about his erratic behavior, shaky focus and "Jekyll and Hyde" mood swings. "I have an older son who is free from any issues with impulse control and focus, so I felt something wasn't right," she says.

Cohen tried parenting classes without results. Then a friend mentioned changing his diet. Out of options, she took the suggestion, nixing corn, soy and dairy — so-called inflammatory foods believed to contribute to learning and behavior problems in children — from the family menu. Her "eat clean" efforts paid off. "Right away, he was a calm, sweet kid."

Cohen never looked back. She was so impressed with the changes to her son's learning and behavior that she permanently changed her family's diet and went on to earn a degree in nutritional therapy.

This type of elimination diet (removing foods that may be problematic for a child) and intensive nutritional therapy are wildly popular with parents of children dealing with issues that range from mild problems with focusing to serious neurological disorders. According to the *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, at least one-third of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have used complementary treatments, including dietary supplements and elimination diets.

Proponents of this type of therapy point to life-changing results. "I won't say I can cure every child [with a neurological disorder]," says Deborah Z. Bain, M.D., of Healthy Kids Pediatrics in Frisco, Texas. But parents report that diet changes are game changers, she says. "They tell me, 'He's making eye contact, he's speaking, he's a new person.'"

## Treatment or cure?

Despite the wide use of special diets for kids with neurocognitive disorders, doctors, dieticians, researchers and parents are split on the issue.



Sandra Kimmet, a mom of four from Dryad, Washington, is a doubter. She wanted to find a "miracle cure" for 7-year-old Jasper's sensory processing disorder and 5-year-old Tabitha's childhood apraxia of speech, a motor speech disorder. But a gluten-free, sugar-free diet didn't yield results. She credits her children's progress to intensive therapy rather than dietary changes. "I so wish there was a miracle diet," she says. "I'd be all over it!"

"Parents shouldn't think of food as a cure, but rather as one tool they can use to help their child," says pediatric neuropsychologist Daniela Ferdico, Psy.D., who founded Bellevue's Cogwheel Clinic for Neurodevelopment in 2015 as a hub of comprehensive care for children on the autism spectrum.

*Nutrients don't  
work in isolation  
... and each  
child's nutritional  
blueprint is unique.*

Cogwheel offers psychology and therapies — occupational, speech and others — along with nutritional counseling, something Ferdico sees as an essential piece of the puzzle for children with neurodevelopmental disorders.

She makes a distinction between treatment and cure: A cure is a one-time solution, whereas treatments are ongoing. Like speech, occupational and behavioral therapies, nutritional therapy is usually ongoing and works best when it's just one component of a more comprehensive plan, she says.

Nutritional therapy won't cure autism, Ferdico notes. But it can form the foundation for an effective treatment plan by reducing a child's level of

gastrointestinal pain and distress, enabling him to be more receptive to other therapies. Nutritional therapy does this by stabilizing blood sugar to ward off mood swings and meltdowns that make day-to-day life difficult, and supplying the body with the protein and nutrients required for cognition, she says.

## Pinpoint the plate

Nutritional therapy sometimes involves an elimination diet wherein certain foods are eliminated and then gradually reintroduced to help pinpoint food sensitivities. Researchers have long theorized that foods containing gluten, soy and casein, a protein in milk, may irritate the intestines of sensitive children with autism, contributing to a "leaky gut" that

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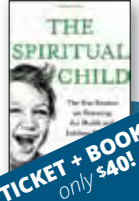
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## Clean plate, clean slate

continued from page 39

leaches inflammatory proteins throughout the body, impacting behavior, mood and learning. A small Danish study found that inattention and hyperactivity abated for children ages 4–10 after 12 months on a gluten-free, casein-free diet, but the gains seemed to plateau when the same kids were tested after 24 months on the diet.

Gluten and casein are potentially problematic because when sensitive individuals can't properly digest the foods that contain these substances, a buildup of internal inflammation results. This contributes to mental fog, inattentiveness, unresponsive behavior and continued carbohydrate cravings, says Bain. "It's a feed-forward cycle, where the child eats more and more unhealthful foods and less and less of the nutrients he needs to grow and thrive."

But aside from the Danish study, evidence on the impact of gluten-free diets is limited. Evidence on the negative impact of food dyes, a common food additive thought to be especially harmful to children with learning disorders, is more robust (artificial food dyes have been linked to behavior problems in children for decades), and new studies are currently under way.

Because elimination diets can get complicated quickly, parents who want to try one should seek out the help of a nutrition expert. Parents shouldn't simply yank nutrient-dense foods such as grains and cheese from a child's plate without consulting their pediatrician and a dietician, says registered dietician Kathleen Putnam, M.S., owner of Seattle's NutritionWorks counseling service. One problem: Removing potentially problematic foods is only part of the picture; those calories need to be replaced with something else, and that something may not be any better than the foods that were eliminated.

Popular elimination diets such as GAPS (Gut and Psychology Syndrome) are gaining ground as a means to treat learning and neurodevelopmental disorders, but the protocol — sticking to a simple diet of mostly meat, fish, eggs, meat stock and fermented foods — can seem daunting to the average busy parent and difficult to maintain over the long term.

Plus, eliminating entire food groups can introduce nutrient deficiencies, complicating an already complex situation, Putnam says. "Nutrition that's limited can contribute to problematic development, both cognitive and behavioral. Children with ADHD are often treated with medications that significantly lower the appetite, which is a major concern for growing children."

Though gluten-free and casein-free diets are still under scientific study, they can be worth trying, with professional guidance, Putnam says. And removing most junky refined carbs — bread made from highly refined flour, most crackers and cookies — is probably a safe, healthy step for most children.

Replacing refined sugar with fruit-sweetened foods is another change that some parents find worthwhile, says Katie Hurley, LCSW, author of *The Happy Kid Handbook: How to Raise*

*Joyful Children in a Stressful World*. Although a Korean study found no relationship between sugar intake and the development of ADHD in children, some parents report that removing sweets calms kids down. Whether you're a believer in elimination diets or a skeptic, eating less junk food never hurt anyone, right?

### Nutrition addition

Once you've removed potential problems from your child's diet, you're not done: Now, under the guidance of your child's health care provider, you may need to add or supplement nutrients to replace those you've removed, or ones your child was missing before you started. Supplementation can benefit some kids on the autism spectrum; a 2005 study found sleep and digestion improved in autistic children taking a multivitamin supplement.

Magnesium, B vitamins, zinc, omega-3 fatty acids and probiotics are often used and recommended, but parents shouldn't supplement without consulting a nutritionist or dietician, Bain says, because taking too much of one nutrient can impact others. (For example, excess magnesium can lead to diarrhea, which could reduce absorption of other vital nutrients.) "Nutrients don't work in isolation," she notes, and each child's nutritional blueprint is unique.

Another wrinkle: Children with neurological

disorders often have sensitive stomachs — those with autism can be prone to gastrointestinal distress and constipation — and they can be intensely picky eaters, Hurley says. In other words, you can't simply tell a child to eat a banana or a plate of spinach and expect it to happen. That makes solving nutritional challenges a two-steps-forward,

one-step-back dance for many families, and is why vitamin supplements are sometimes needed, at least at first.

Nutritional therapy for spectrum disorders doesn't have to complicate families' lives or promote expensive fad diets, says Ferdico. It's simply one facet of a comprehensive, whole-child care plan. "If a child has stomach pain and isn't digesting food properly or is so picky that they're not getting what they need, it's going to affect cognition and behavior," Ferdico says. "If you try other therapies without also looking at nutrition, you're not using all the tools you can use. And we owe it to these kids to use every tool we have." ■

*Malia Jacobson is a health and parenting journalist from Tacoma.*

### where to start

A **pediatrician** or **naturopathic physician** can order a simple blood test to check for nutritional deficiencies such as low iron, zinc or magnesium. Parents who suspect food sensitivity in their child can ask a **pediatric nutritionist** or **naturopathic physician** about immunoglobulin G (IgG) food allergy testing. This blood test can identify food sensitivities to pinpoint the best dietary candidates for elimination from your child's plate.

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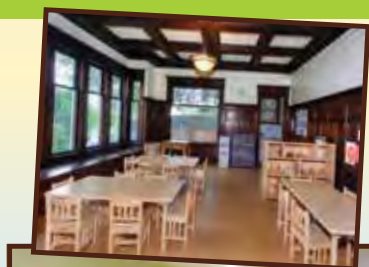
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# The anxiety monster

*Wrangling strategies to help kids feel less worried*

By Nancy Schatz Alton

**V**eronica Smith-Casem says her 11-year-old son, who has dysgraphia, dyscalculia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), has always been a cautious child, but anxiety became an issue when he started refusing to go to school. When she looked into his eyes, she saw that he was really frightened.

A recent study from researchers at the University of Washington (UW) highlights the fact that children with learning disabilities may also be prone to anxiety. "We saw [in brain scans] that children with learning differences have connections to the limbic system, or social-emotional brain, that kids without learning differences [the control group] did not have. The limbic system contains the amygdala, which is the part of brain involved with fear and anxiety. These kids are scared," says Virginia Berninger, the study's lead author and a professor of educational psychology at the UW College of Education.

These brain scans reinforce what many parents already know. "Kids with [learning differences] have all of the same worries that other kids have. But they have additional worries, too, worries that result from their ongoing learning struggles that other students will never experience," says Kenneth Schuster, Psy.D., a clinical neuropsychologist at the Learning and Development Center at the Child Mind Institute in New York City.

## Clinging, crying, avoidance

If you're wondering whether your child with learning differences is having anxiety issues, Tamar Chansky, Ph.D., author of *Freeing Your Child from Anxiety*, explains how symptoms manifest at different ages.

"Younger kids may just not be able to put into words what's happening. You may see more clinging and crying behavior or difficulty separating from you or difficulty at bedtime. As kids become older, generally what you will see is avoidance. They'll want to stay home sick on the day they have a presentation or camping trip," Chansky says. "Kids can get angry and frustrated when they want to do the things that they are



perceiving as impossible and they don't know who to get mad at, so they'll get mad at you."

Anxious kids anticipate a high-risk, threatening situation that someone else might perceive as a more neutral situation, Chansky says. "The thing I'm always saying to my patients is that we need to think twice. Anxiety is the first thought: It jumps in and gets there first. But we have to teach our kids to think once with their worry brain and once with their fact-guy brain."

## Finding help

For parents, addressing anxiety on top of the work they are already doing to help with learning issues can feel overwhelming. Luckily, not only is anxiety a highly treatable disorder, but we live in a place where treatment is close at hand. Smith-Casem's son has participated in Seattle Children's Taking Action Against Anxiety classes, which meet for nine sessions. Parents attend simultaneous sessions, titled "Helping Your Anxious Child."

Smith-Casem says the classes gave the whole family a common language to use while talking about anxiety. The program is based on cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) interventions for anxiety, which research has shown to be very effective.

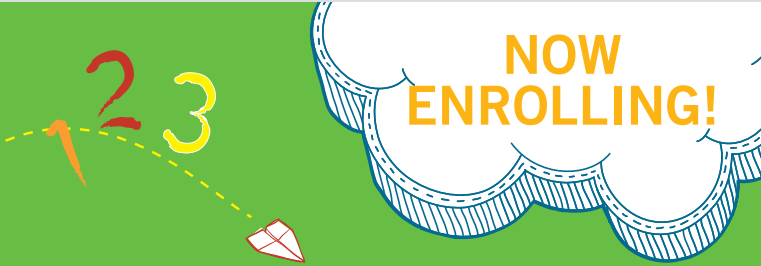
Parent Kelly Warner-King says seeing a therapist

*I'm the boss  
of this anxiety,  
it's not the  
boss of me.*

has been very empowering for her 16-year-old son, who has dyslexia and mild ADHD. "My son likes that therapy gives him tools to deal with his issues that he can use in his everyday life," she says.

Find a CBT therapist by asking for a referral from your child's doctor or searching the Anxiety and Depression Association of America website ([adaa.org](http://adaa.org)). Of course, the times we live in mean immediate help is also a click or a read away. Helpful websites include The Child Anxiety Network ([www.childanxiety.net](http://www.childanxiety.net)), the Child Mind Institute ([childmind.org](http://childmind.org)) and GoZen ([gozen.com](http://gozen.com)). Parents can also teach their children how to work through their anxiety using the following books:

- *Helping Your Anxious Child* by Ronald Rapee et al.
- *Freeing Your Child from Anxiety* by Tamar Chansky
- *What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety* by Dawn Huebner and Bonnie Matthews >>



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## The anxiety monster

continued from page 41

No matter what route a parent chooses to take to help their child, experts say there is a right way to walk a child through their anxiety every time it appears. Chansky recommends these steps:

- **Breathe:** Teach kids how to breathe deeply when they aren't anxious, and during an episode, breathe deeply with them.
- **Empathize:** "I know worry always bugs you when you have to give a presentation."
- **Ask:** "What is worry telling you about that situation?"
- **Think twice:** Use fact-guy brain to answer: "What do you think will really happen? What do you want to have happen?" Make a plan together to help make that happen.

### Ongoing support

Parents can also address anxiety through their child's individualized education program (IEP) or an accommodations plan at school.

"Have their therapist participate in the IEP meeting and talk about what anxiety looks like for the child. Ask the child to pick a safe person in the school building they can go to when their anxiety is ramping up. That safe person also checks in with the child on a regular basis and encourages them to use their coping mechanisms to deal with their anxiety," says Warner-King, who is the director of Synapse Learning Solutions, which matches students with learning resources.

For kids, learning how to deal with anxiety is much like learning how to deal with learning differences. "As kids grow up with learning

differences, they get clear that who they are is separate from the way they learn. The good thing about making worry just one voice in your brain is that you know when worry is really bugging you, it's worry that's a bad guy, not you," Chansky says.

Smith-Casem is slowly teaching her son this idea. "I tell him, 'You get to choose what to do with your worries; you don't have to listen to your worry brain.'" In other words, she says, "I'm the boss of this anxiety, it's not the boss of me." ■

*Nancy Schatz Alton is the co-author of two holistic health-care guides, The Healthy Back Book and The Healthy Knees Book. When she's not meeting deadlines or teaching writing, she writes poetry and essays and works on her memoir about her daughter's learning journey.*

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# Finding clarity

## Spotting vision problems in kids with special needs

By Jennifer Johnson

**A**s a baby, Ethan Floyd was wobbly. He was diagnosed with sensory processing disorder at 18 months and autism at 2 years old. Later, he would be diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and anxiety. As part of his care, Ethan regularly saw Dr. Nancy Torgerson O.D., FCOVD, a local developmental optometrist. Dr. Torgerson kept track of Ethan's visual development, so when his wobbliness became more troublesome around kindergarten, they were ready with a plan of treatment.

Parents of children with autism might be surprised to learn that there is a link between many of their children's baffling symptoms and the eyes. But behaviors such as walking on their toes, wiggling their fingers, or an inability to follow directions can sometimes be caused by lack of development in the visual system. Researchers have found that children with autism and ADHD have much higher rates of strabismus (crossed eyes), convergence insufficiency (trouble turning inward to focus on a near object) and other visual deficits than the average population. Children with other developmental challenges such as cerebral palsy, anxiety disorders and Down syndrome can also often benefit from vision therapy.

### What to look for

Melvin Kaplan, O.D., has been researching the connection between vision and autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities. His book *Seeing Through New Eyes: Changing the Lives of Children with Autism, Asperger Syndrome, and Other Developmental Disabilities* contains intriguing and promising stories of children who have been helped by this research. He explains that neurological differences in the brains of some children make it challenging for them to understand what they see. This can lead to social difficulties, language delays and problems with motor skills.

Because as much as 80 percent of the information we get from our environment is visual, severe deficits in visual processing can cause children to develop coping mechanisms that



might seem bizarre or troubling. "Symptoms are not problems, but rather a patient's solution to a problem," Kaplan says.

One of the first symptoms parents of children with autism might notice is an inability to make eye contact with caregivers, Torgerson says. Some parents also notice that children's eyes wander inward or outward. Because of this, children might experience problems walking up or down stairs, hiking in the forest in dappled light, or may be clumsy in general.

As a result of vision problems, a child might tilt her head to read, complain of dizziness, avoid near tasks or complain of dizziness or motion sickness. Even toe-walking can sometimes be a symptom of a visual difficulty.

### Turning to therapies

Developmental optometrists have a range of options to help children improve their visual processing. Many children find relief by wearing special glasses with lenses in the shape of a prism, for example. Other interventions include wearing a patch, working on near work with one eye at a

*Vision therapy works synergistically with other therapies to reduce confusion and anxiety, and increase confidence and independence.*

time, practicing gross and fine motor skills, practicing changing between near and far vision, and strengthening hand-eye coordination. Therapists aim to make the activities fun for young kids.

When Ethan Floyd tried lenses on for the first time, "He was in shock," his mother, Crystal Floyd, remembers. For the first time, Ethan could make sense of the three-dimensional world. Suddenly he could follow directions with more than two steps, and many of his motor skills began to improve. He wore the glasses from the time he rose until he went to bed for about a year; they were one important piece of a custom therapy program that involved weekly office visits and home exercises.

Vision therapy did not cure Ethan of his autism or ADHD. But for many children, it works synergistically with other therapies to reduce confusion and anxiety, and increase confidence and independence. "I see vision therapy as a really important piece," Torgerson says, "whether I'm working with a neuropsychologist, psychologist, speech and language [therapist], [occupational therapist/physical therapist]. We're not the be-all, end-all, but it's a piece of the puzzle that's not really looked at beyond 20/20." ■

*Jennifer Johnson looks for any excuse to escape into nature with her children. She blogs about hiking with children at [thehikermama.com](http://thehikermama.com).*

## symptoms

Parents should look for the following symptoms in their children, which might be a sign of a visual-processing problem:

- Covering one eye
- Watery eyes while doing near work
- Squinting
- Trouble with stairs
- Trouble walking on uneven ground
- Complaining of vertigo, dizziness or nausea
- Tilting the head to one side, or other abnormal postures
- Problems with handwriting
- Wiggling fingers in front of the face
- Pinching or slapping themselves or pulling their own hair
- Rocking back and forth
- Not being able to grasp or throw objects
- Motion sickness
- Headaches
- Spilling things or other clumsiness
- Walking on toes
- Enjoying sports except for those with small, fast balls
- Difficulty concentrating or hyperactivity
- Needing to touch walls or everything in a room



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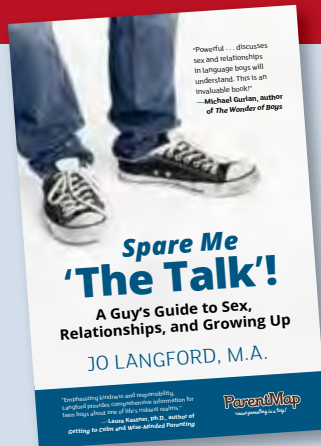
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— Kelly Knox



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## Suzanne Gwynn

By Natalie Singer-Velush • Photograph by Will Austin

Suzanne Gwynn is a longtime critical care nurse specializing in bone-marrow transplant, hematology/oncology and hospice care. She's worked with Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, Seattle Children's Hospital, Providence Hospice and Swedish Medical Center, and is also mom to two grown children and two grandchildren. Two years ago, Gwynn founded **LADYBUG HOUSE** ([ladybughouse.org](http://ladybughouse.org)), a project to create a freestanding, community-based palliative-care home in Seattle. When built, the nonprofit center will offer respite and renewal to families and their children with life-limiting illnesses. Medical professionals will be available from the point of diagnosis through recovery or bereavement, and a palliative-care team will support the family as a child's condition progresses.

### How did this idea get started?

I've been a nurse 31 years. I'm Canadian, and I moved here in 1993 and in 1996, I started at Swedish Hospital. People come from all over the world for bone marrow transplants, and what I saw happening is that people get these transplants and so often they are too sick to return home. They are isolated from their families and support networks for long periods of time. Or, once they passed, there was no grieving or mourning process, because there was no place to grieve, for the loved ones. People started telling me, "We could really use some kind of a place, a rest house, a place for a break and support."

When the program moved to Seattle Children's, it became the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, and we still got people from all around the country: Washington, Idaho, Montana and Alaska, California, Texas. People would be staying in campers, in cars in the parking lot. We do have Ronald McDonald House for families, but it's not a place where the patient can come out and where you would want to treat them. I had heard in 1985 that the very first pediatric hospice was built in the U.K., Helen House, and now they are all over there. There are only two in our country. I felt someone else should do this, and finally in 2013, I put pen to paper.

### How will children and families benefit?

People don't realize that over 56,000 children die in this country every year, and that 43 children are diagnosed every day with cancer. Ladybug House won't be just for cancer, it will be for all children with all life-limiting illnesses. This already exists for adults: If your mother was sick, she could go to skilled nursing care and then she could go home; if she was dying and didn't want to be in the hospital, she has the option of a family hospice. Children don't have that option. From the hospital they go home, and their parents do their pain management, give them their IV fluids, give them their medications, suctioning, oxygen, plus doing the laundry and driving the other kids to soccer. And if and when it comes time, families want to be together and don't want [the sick person] to die in the hospital, but there's no other option. The symptom management gets so out of control, they can't handle it.

### So this would provide skilled nursing right there in the hospice facility, where the family of the sick person would be welcome?

Social workers, medical directors, child life [specialists], chaplains — there would be a multidisciplinary team not only for the child, but for the entire family. The goal is a 25,000-square-foot home with 12 rooms, hopefully eight of them would be family suites, and the four other rooms would be for respite. So if a family wanted to get away for a weekend, or they needed a breather, they could leave their child here, knowing she was going to get good care. We'll have a kennel in the back, for families with pets. Nurses won't have to sneak puppies in like they do at hospitals.

### Where are you with getting support?

We are an unproven model here in the states. I work full time, so that's challenging. But we have had some amazing letters and responses of support. We have volunteers — grant writing, newsletter, fundraisers. We've had community donations. In March, we held our first fundraiser and raised around \$11,000. Soon after, there were amazing companies that hosted events to raise money and/or awareness. We've built a team, are getting the Ladybug House name out there and are preparing for potential legislative advocacy to initiate pediatric hospice policy, all while navigating through our first audit. And, we were selected as a quarterfinalist in Social Venture Partners' Fast Pitch competition!

### Why should people lend their support right now?

It's not a sexy topic. We're dealing with death, and we're a death-phobic society. We have to let people know that this isn't just about dying. It's about quality of life and celebrating everyone. It's about us saying to enough people: You may not need this, you may not have children, and you may never need it. But if you did, wouldn't you want it to exist? ■



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\*Special needs children up to 10 years old during low sensory hours

