



Ability Society

March

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### Dear Parent

We have completed our bullying module. It was a great turn out for children to learn about bullying and learn how to describe their feelings when they are being bullied. We will continue to support children and families with anti-bully handouts available on the parent bulletin board. Again, I want to THANK every parent who participated and brought in snack for us every week. We had a great time having parents involved in every activity and you guys are **EXCELLENT** role models!

Our upcoming module is daily living skills. It is a fun and important module for children. Children will learn how to be more independent through a lot of fun and interactive games. Most importantly, we will be focusing on dressing, daily routines and community involvement.

A highlight of this month is that we will be going to the library for a story time and a tour. We will also be combining our Wednesday and Thursday class together during that day. It will be a great opportunity for all of the children to meet new friends and work on their social skills.

### Upcoming Event

- |                         |                           |   |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| • This month            | • April                   | • May                                   |
| Daily Living Skills     | Feeling Good              | Safety Module                           |
| March 17 & 18           | Module                    |   |
| Visiting Library        | <b>*Chris's Birthday*</b> | <b>*Sajjan &amp; Nouman's Birthday*</b> |
| <b>*Kim's Birthday*</b> |                           |   |



## Daily Living Skills

When establishing educational goals for low functioning autistic children's programs, it is important to remember that few have achieved the same level of self-reliance as their peers due to deficits in both social and language skills. Consequently self help skills must be taught, in order for them to become less reliant on others and more integrated into society. Open communication between school personnel and the child's parents is essential to ensure continuity and success from one environment to another. Many autistic children's levels of functioning vary from day to day, primarily due to the amount of difficulty experienced while trying to overcome both internal and external factors from their environment.

Teaching these skills must begin with tasks that are small and relatively quick to carry out, as attending skills will be minimal. Instructions should be short and direct, with immediate positive reinforcement given to the child after each successful attempt. At the onset, it may be necessary for the assistant to actually place the object in the child's hands and guide them through each step of the task using a hand-over-hand manual method of instruction. Before teaching a particular skill, it is particularly helpful to do a task analysis, in other words, write down and number all steps involved from the onset to completion of a given task. The assistant should endeavor to use key words and phrases while children use specific items or perform a task. Accompanying photographs for activities may be laminated and placed nearby, or compiled in a photo album labeled with a short phrase.

### EATING

Many autistic child prefer times of constant running or darting, which directly interferes with sitting at a table during mealtimes. Food preferences are often limited to salty, spicy or crunchy finger foods and snack items. By the time these children attend a school program, their parents have already experienced extremely frustrating mealtimes in attempts to have their child participate in the usual manner, and decided to search out less stressful alternatives. These may include the child receiving a bag of chips or a juice box to consume as they run about, or sit in a corner or under a table while rocking from side to side. Due to autistic children's strong resistance to change, behaviors are often more difficult to shape into safe and socially acceptable forms, however with a great deal of patience and time, these are attainable. Sitting behaviors can be reinforced throughout each day if children are required to complete their favorite activity while sitting at a child sized table beside the assistant. When establishing daily schedules there should be considerable gaps between set snacks or mealtimes. If the autistic child becomes either over or under stimulated due to the presence and noise levels of others, it may be necessary to have the child eat their snack in a quieter, calmer setting. If the child is not distracted by these factors, it is an excellent time to reinforce social skills as they sit among their peers.

Children should be encouraged to assist in setting the table with a bowl, spoon and glass and assisted to pour cold beverages or put food in their bowl. A clear glass is often easier for the child to make the association between cause and effect while pouring or drinking. If the child eats only dry crunchy foods, the use of a spoon can be incorporated if the food is broken into small bite sized pieces as it is placed in the bowl. Associated skills such as cleaning up, sweeping the floor or wiping the table should also be taught. When placing each item on the table, the assistant may choose to name each item.



## TOILETING

Many autistic children remain incontinent for years despite much patience and persistence by parents and assistants. Within school environments children must be taught tasks associated with bathroom routines, such as appropriately entering and exiting the bathroom, sitting unassisted on the toilet, voiding and wiping. Other associated skills such as flushing the toilet, dressing and proper hand washing must also be taught. Daily toilet routines should be scheduled shortly after snacks, lunch, running or outdoor activities for a higher probability for success. All successful attempts should be immediately rewarded with verbal praise. Complex tasks such as tearing the toilet paper from the roll require the ability to grasp and release, finger dexterity and motor control. Entering and exiting must be carried out quickly to eliminate undesired fixations like repeatedly flushing the toilet or playing with the water in the toilet bowl.

## DRESSING

The majority of dressing routines are usually carried out in the home, however tasks such as putting on a coat, shoes, socks, boots, mitts, or toque should be taught within a school program. The child usually requires assistance with zippers, buttons, snaps, laces and buckles. Autistic children may insist on wearing inappropriate clothing for weather conditions or overlook finishing touches during dressing routines.

When trying to determine which skill to teach first, closely observe the child to see what items they remove on their own. It is easier for children to take things off than to recall the steps needed for putting them on. Many autistic children learn more readily by sensing how things feel, rather than by being told or shown. At first the child's fingers may feel limp as the assistant uses the hand-over-hand method of taking them through all steps of the task. When the assistant begins to feel slight tension in the child's hands, prompting is reduced to pointing or verbally cuing the child to initiate and carry out the task. Strategies which require the child to complete the final step of a process first are referred to as backwards or reverse chaining procedures.

Items of clothing which are slightly oversized with large buttons, zippers and snaps are much easier for the young child to conquer. Velcro or elastic waistbands should be used as much as possible, since small belt buckles and jean buttons are very difficult for most low-functioning autistic children. Since autistic children usually experience difficulties with points of reference such as back/front, left/right, up/down or copying the actions of others, it often helps if the assistant stands directly behind the child and reaches forward over their shoulders or waist to guide them through the steps using the hand-over hand method.





**Shamrock Toasties**

Recipe Ingredient

Green Pepper

English Muffin

Cheddar Cheese

1. To make one, slice a green pepper crosswise near the pointed end to get a small, three-lobed shamrock shape. (If your pepper has four lobes, you've got a lucky clover instead.) Cut a small slice for a stem.
2. Toast half an English muffin, then top it with a slice of cheddar and the pepper shamrock. Place the muffin on a tray, then broil it in a toaster oven until the cheese is melted.

# The Family & Community Resource Centre



**March 2, 2009**

A cognitive Behavioral Approach in Dealing with Headaches in Children and teens

6:25 PM—8:00 PM

Alberta Children Hospital— B2200

**March 5, 2009**

Family Support for Children with Disabilities

11:44 AM—1:30 PM

**March 16, 2009**

Parenting Inattentive/Hyperactive Children and Youth

6:25 PM—8:00 PM

Signal Hill Library

**March 17, 2009**

Parenting and Anxious Children and Youth

6:25 PM—8:00 PM

Learning Village Collaborative— Cappy Smart (CLV)

**For more information or register, please go to [www.fcrc.sacyhn.ca](http://www.fcrc.sacyhn.ca)**



# March 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 Futureways 600—800 (Rod)	5 Futureways 600—800 <u>Lyse Session</u>	6	7
8	9	10	11 Futureways 600—800 (Bonnie)	12 Futureways 600—800 (Linda)	13	14
15	16	17	18 Futureways 600—800 (Fatima)	19 Futureways 600—800 (olga)	20	21
22	23	24	25 Library Visit 630	26 Combine with Wed.	27	28

## Reminder to Parents

- March 25  
Library Tour  
6:30 PM  
1530 Northmount Dr NW  
Wednesday and Thursday will be  
combine
- Please sign in your child every  
workshop, attendance will be  
taken.
- Toys from home should stay  
home or in their lockers.
- Bring snack if your child has  
allergy.

**Please contact Hilda if you  
are not attending  
workshop**

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