

# FOCUS ON Autism

SPRING 2007

For more information about the services at the Fay J. Lindner Center for Autism and Developmental Disorders, visit us online at [www.northshorelij.com/autism](http://www.northshorelij.com/autism), or to make an appointment, please call us at (516) 802-8600. The Fay J. Lindner Center for Autism is a member of the Greater New York Autism Research Center of Excellence.

## Activities of Daily Living Workshop

By Eric Diamond, M.S.Ed, BCBA

Throughout my career I have always placed an emphasis on the importance of independent living skills or Activities of Daily Living (ADLs).

Many individuals with autism spectrum disorders present significant deficits in activities of daily living. I have found that many adults lack skills they should have learned as children, and that children may not be learning important "future independence" skills because it is sometimes easier for others to do things for them, or caregivers and teachers are not sure how to teach the skills despite valiant effort and energy to do so.

- I have come across individuals that are considered "high-functioning," yet they cannot dress themselves or feed themselves appropriately.
- I have worked with individuals who may thrive academically, but when they are at home they sleep with their mom and dad despite being 11 years old.

I have stressed to parents of children in the early intervention programs that I have supervised, the importance of their little ones learning as many ADL skills as possible while they are young.

Through direct treatment, education and through empowering parents, I have given them not only the knowledge but also the skills and confidence to teach their children.

Whether an individual is a toddler or a grown adult, there are certain skills one

must acquire to live a functional life as independently as possible. For the most part, parents spend the most time with their children regardless of the number of hours they spend in therapy or at school. Unfortunately, many therapists or schools do not provide instruction in developing ADLs until children are much older. At that point, these skills become more challenging to teach.

I embrace a philosophy that by empowering parents with the skills to teach their children (regardless of age) activities of daily living, parents can be assured that their child will have a more functional, independent life that helps to develop their sense of self and self-esteem.

When the Center for Autism decided that we would be developing summer workshops, I thought it would be fantastic to conduct trainings for parents.

The calls did not stop...

- "I want to learn how to teach my daughter how to dress herself!"
- "I want to learn how to teach my son how to bathe himself!"
- "Will you be teaching how to play independently?"
- "Will I be able to teach my daughter what to do with downtime?"
- "How do I teach my child to try new foods?"
- How about: shoe tying, sleeping, making the bed, doing chores?

YES, YES, YES!  
We will cover it all!



How do I teach my child to try new foods?

By providing foundational skills and principles, parents will learn to teach their children whatever it is they deem a priority. Parents have been learning how to develop task analysis based on skills that they have deemed a priority for their children to learn. For some this has included getting dressed and hand-washing, while others have learned to put together a complete written activity schedule that they use to guide their children through daily routines. Each parent is learning some of the basic principles of behavior analysis and how to use such principles to guide their children's acquisition.

### ➔ Contact Us

We hope to provide additional daily living workshops in the future. If interested, please contact Eric Diamond at the Center for Autism at (516) 802-8600.

# Coming on Board at the Fay J. Lindner Center for Autism

By Halley Ceglia, MSW, Staff Social Worker

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new social worker at the Fay J. Lindner Center for Autism. I began work in January 2007, and it has been a wonderful and energetic start to the new year for me and the center as a whole, as we are working together as a team to create many new and exciting programs and services. I look forward to being in touch with the autism community, and I hope to hear from you about services and programming that you and your family might be interested in.

I grew up not too far from the Autism Center in a small town on the North Shore of Long Island. I ventured to Connecticut to pursue a bachelor's degree in sociology and women's studies at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Conn. I was a member of the equestrian team, and as part of that I had the opportunity to work with children with developmental disabilities. As a junior in college, I worked with a 6-year-old boy with autism. Each week, when I arrived at his home, he would greet me at the door. I very much looked forward to that moment, and on my last day he said "Ms. Halley, look at me?" Our goal for one year was for him to acknowledge others and invite them to join his experience, and on this day when we said goodbye, he did. It was then that I felt I could make a difference in the lives of children, given how they make such a difference in my life.

In May of 2002, following graduation, I returned home to Long Island. I took one year off from school and worked as a service coordinator at Nassau AHRC. I worked with 25 adults with developmental and physical disabilities. I applied to social work programs, based on my desire to engage in advocacy. I realized that advocacy was essential for families in daily living, programming, services, future planning, making choices and many other facets of life. Altogether, self-determination for the individuals that I worked with was paramount, and society overall has tended to discount their abilities to acquire and utilize such a skill as self-determination. I was accepted



*Halley Ceglia, MSW, Staff Social Worker*

into the School of Social Welfare at Stony Brook University and the School of Social Work at New York University.

In September of 2003, I started school at Stony Brook University. The program provided me with a two-year education focusing on the role, expectations, and societal views of social work and people as a whole. I continued to work at Nassau AHRC part-time during the two years. I was an intern at Sagamore Children's Psychiatric Center, working as a psychiatric court liaison with Suffolk County Courts the first year, and as a school social work intern in Massapequa schools through Y.E.S. Community Counseling Center for the second year. These two experiences assisted in my development as a social worker today, especially in regards to the contact I had with professionals and clients.

I graduated with my master's degree in May 2005 and was accepted as a clinical social work fellow at Yale University's Child Study Center in New Haven, Conn. At Yale, I worked with 38 children/adolescents and their families per week in clinical therapeutic sessions. I maintained weekly contact with a multidisciplinary team and worked in three inner city public schools.

Living in New Haven was my first exposure to diversity and cultural issues. I learned a lot about myself, my background and that

of others. I worked with 12 fellows, all social workers and all from different backgrounds, ages and experiences. The Yale Child Study Center services clients from primarily low income neighborhoods, where families are struggling to make ends meet. The clinic serves children/adolescents with mental health issues, and it was a daily struggle for all of the families that we saw. Along with mental health disorders, many children and adolescents were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders and other physical/developmental disabilities. In April 2006, I was asked to provide therapy to a female teen with social anxiety, a long history of truant behavior at school and a real distinct admiration for characters from certain stories focusing on a created lifestyle. Within several sessions, the diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome was explored and finally formulated. It was through this therapeutic relationship my future career path was shaped again.

It was exciting to imagine a career focused on advocacy specializing in developmental disabilities. When I finished my fellowship, I was thrilled to learn that the Center for Autism at NSLIJ was hiring a social worker. My searching has truly paid off and now I am here, at the Center, developing the following programs and services:

- Groups
- Camp programs
- Service Coordination
- Peer Mentor Trainings and Group Support

## **Contact Us**

Please contact me anytime at **(516) 802-8600** to discuss our range of programs, services opportunities for volunteering (both youth and adults), and education and training. The team approach at the Fay J. Lindner Center for Autism is cohesive, collaborative, energetic, inspirational and dedicated to future planning for the children, adolescents, adults, families and communities that we serve; I am very happy to be "on board"!

# Why I Do What I Do

By Eric Diamond, MS.Ed, BCBA

## “Why do we do what we do?”

This is a question that first arose for me at an early age when I recall a boy, my brother, no longer playing or talking to me. He has autism spectrum disorder.

My deeply ingrained passion for working with developmentally disabled individuals was sparked early through my life experiences and fueled by my professional ones.

When I started working in the field over a decade ago, I began working in a group home for adults who were Willowbrook survivors. Their need for adaptive living skills was evident. This became a focus of mine, which I maintain to this day. I have taught in some of the top schools on Long Island for individuals with autism. I operated a private consulting practice and designed and implemented early intervention programs for newly diagnosed infants and toddlers. I have toilet trained an 18-month-old as well as a 47-year-old person. I always instill the importance of independence into all my clients and their families.

When lecturing or training on the behavior one might encounter with individuals with developmental disabilities, the key idea I try and teach people is that one should not consider a behavior good or bad. One needs



If you ever think that something occurs out of nowhere or for no justifiable reason, look in the mirror and ask yourself, “Why do I do what I do?”

to ask, “Why do they do what they do?” It is most important to realize that people do what they do because it works. There is a pay off! Everything has a function and a reason. My philosophy maintains that it is never the fault of the student. There is no such thing as a lazy student. The onus for treating any behavior falls on the educator, and it is our job to figure out how a child learns.

Regardless if one has personal or professional involvement, or has aspirations of working with developmentally disabled individuals, it is important to embed the following:

If you ever think that something occurs out of nowhere or for no justifiable reason, look in the mirror and ask yourself, “Why do I do what I do?”

*Eric Diamond, MS.Ed, BCBA, is the senior educational consultation specialist for the Fay J. Lindner Center for Autism and Related Disorders. He has provided therapeutic services for individuals with autistic spectrum disorders for over 10 years. He received his MS.Ed. in special education with a specialization from Long Island University's C.A.S.E. program and is a board-certified behavior analyst. His clinical interests center around the treatment of challenging behaviors, effective teaching strategies, and inclusion, and most important, teaching independence/adaptive living skills to the individual and addressing the needs of families of individuals with autism and developmental disorders. He provides consultation services for individual families and school districts in addition to conducting workshops for parents and professionals in the New York metropolitan area.*

## “Growing Up on the Autism Spectrum”

### Programming for Youth and Adults, Parents, Professionals and Educators

Sexuality education for youth, adolescents and adults with autism spectrum disorders is critical, yet there are very few clinical and educational programs that address issues related to forming relationships, sexuality and sexual education. To understand sexual development, the emergence of sexual behavior problems and how best to protect and educate about sexuality, professionals need to work closely with parents and develop and evaluate services best suited for families' needs. We are pleased to announce a new clinical and educational program at the Center for Autism that focuses on the needs of individuals growing up, or who have grown up, with ASD, their families and the professionals who work with them.

Our GROWING UP program includes the following clinical and educational services led by our licensed psychologist:

- Individualized sexuality assessments for youth and adults to guide programming and goal setting
- Free parent education and skill building groups for parents of youth ages 13-18
- “Guys Growing Up” group for high-functioning teen guys ages 15-18
- “Girls Growing Up” group for high-functioning teen girls ages 15-18
- Individual/group dating and relationship skills for young adults
- Pre-menstruation preparation group for parents

- Assistance in developing a plan for sexual learning
- Assistance in creating a teaching team
- Assistance with IEP goal development
- Suggestions for resources and teaching materials
- Community and school-based workshops and trainings (1-hour to multi-day) on all topics related to sexuality, puberty and growing up
- Consultation to residential and group home programs

#### ➔ Contact Us

If you are interested in any of our “growing up” programs, please contact Shana Nichols, Ph.D., psychologist at **(516) 802-8600**.

# More Than Words: A Hanen Program for Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Research has shown that children who present developmental delays in speech and language resulting from a primary diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (including the subtype of PDD), benefit greatly from the introduction to therapeutic services (e.g. ABA, speech and language therapy, social skills training, etc.), especially at an early age. In order to generalize therapy treatments and newly learned or developing communicative skills, parent involvement is necessary. Parents have proven to be the clinician's best resource of pertinent information, as primary advocates for their child's needs and excellent record keepers of their child's development and progress. For these reasons, among countless others, parents should play an active role in their child's attainment of communication goals.

The Hanen program, "More Than Words," for parents of children with autism spectrum disorders, was designed to:

- Empower parents/caregivers
- Provide parents with specific strategies on how to bolster language comprehension
- Improve the expressive skills of their child (non-verbal and verbal)
- Incorporate predictability and repetition in combination with pictures and written words in their child's play and activities of daily living

The program also targets the development of appropriate play skills, as well as teaching the purpose of non-preferred behaviors and subsequent replacement with desirable behaviors. This program is intended for parents of children with autism under the age of 6 years who are experiencing difficulties in social interaction and communication, and can be readily combined with other forms of direct therapy applied to the child. The Hanen Center requires that a Hanen-certified speech-language pathologist who has completed the necessary requirements and training programs, present and lead this 11-week program. Currently, there are four speech-language pathologists certified to present this workshop in the state of New York.



Through the course of an 11-session, weekly 2 ½ hour training, led by a certified Hanen speech-language pathologist, the participants will:

- Learn specific strategies in order to help facilitate communication between themselves and their children during weekly trainings through participation in activities, discussions, exercises and videotaped feedback.
- Learn to create language plans/goals customized to the stage of communication their child is currently in, thereby creating language learning experiences throughout the day during daily activities such as mealtime, bedtime, playtime, etc.
- Share experiences and successful techniques with other parents of the group.

- Develop long-lasting friendships with other group members, which in turn may lead to possible play dates for their children, friendships, parties, etc.

Due to the numerous responses from past newsletters, the series will be offered at a significantly reduced rate of \$800 (as opposed to \$1,400). These workshops will be at the North Shore-LIJ Center for Autism located in Bethpage, N.Y. For those who have inquired about the workshop through the NYS OPTS proposal, you will be notified via phone call once we receive a response. A start date for the OPTS workshops is pending state approval. If anyone is interested in the program and/or attending a workshop, please call Gina-Marie Muscillo, Hanen Certified, MA, SLP-CCC, at the Center for Autism at **(516) 802-8600**.

# The Joy of Giving

In our very fast-paced and sometimes hectic daily life, it is a true joy and inspiration to know there are people in our community who think about the needs of others for no particular reason, other than to share their good fortune and blessings. These people contribute invaluable gifts to our large and more immediate communities.

As you may or may not know, many of our children and teens diagnosed with HFA/AS also require formal social skills training to teach them social conventions and rules that are not considered to be innate or based on intuition. You might also know that social skills training is not always recognized by insurance carriers as an approved service of delivery. Many of our families and teens benefit from such training, and quite often these social skills groups become their “lifeline” and a source of great satisfaction and comfort. Unfortunately, a lack of finances may thwart their continued attendance that is needed for optimal results.

We have experienced such success with our teen girls group and have enjoyed the participation of graduate students and peer mentors from local high schools. We would like to take this opportunity to recognize and extend our deepest thanks and appreciation to several people (anonymous donors included) who donated money toward supporting the group members’ tuition in a very special way. One day, we received a phone call from a parent whose teenage daughters had expressed interest



*Peer mentors at a community outing at TGI Friday's.*

in becoming peer mentors. Their very sensitive and understanding mother spoke of their good fortune and desire to help those who are in need, emotionally and fiscally. She then went on to say that her youngest daughter had raised several hundred dollars at her most recent Bat Mitzvah for the sole purpose of supporting this teen girls group she had heard a buzz about. Can you imagine what a beautiful place our world would be if there were more people who thought like this young lady and her family!

Other donations have included art supplies, etc. Well, both times I had the pleasure of sharing this news with the mothers of our teen girls, there was not a dry eye in the room. Everyone was deeply moved by the actions of our anonymous donor and the Finn family. Their donations enabled our participants to enjoy the benefits of another eight-week cycle of social skills groups at a time when they needed it most. Their experience with our teens and their mothers and gave them the ability to see how their donation of time and money touched the lives of others at this crucial time in our teen girls’ development. From all of us at the Center, our teen girls and their families, and especially Gina-Marie and Shana, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.



## Volunteer Opportunities

Prospective teen and adult volunteers are invited to call and learn more about the exciting volunteer opportunities at the Center for Autism. Please contact Camille Thompson, our Clinical Office Supervisor, for more information.

Telephone: **(516) 802-8611**

Fax: **(516) 802-8655**

Email: [cthompson@nshs.edu](mailto:cthompson@nshs.edu)

### **Contact Us**

If you would like to support any of our group members or services (ranging in age from 5 – 18), please contact Gina-Marie Muscillo or Dr. Shana Nichols to learn more about our programs and how you can help at **(516) 802-8600**.

# Eligibility Evaluations Offered at the Center for Autism and Developmental Disorders




Access to a range of services can prove to be difficult for parents of children of all ages with autism spectrum disorders. Providers of services such as respite, social skills, therapy, behavioral consultation, vocational counseling, etc., often require that recipients meet certain eligibility criteria. Most often, scores on a recent cognitive (IQ) test and an assessment of adaptive functioning are necessary. Agencies may require scores within one to three years depending on an individual's age (shorter time period for younger children). Our eligibility evaluation program entails the following:

- Administration of an age- and developmentally appropriate cognitive assessment
- Administration of the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales – 2nd Edition Caregiver Report Form
- A 30-minute parent feedback session with our psychologist and social worker
- A three-page report including scores from the cognitive and adaptive assessments, and recommendations for follow-up services

If you are interested in receiving an eligibility evaluation, please contact us at **(516) 802-8600**.



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