

## CASD CHAT E-Newsletter

### Autism Acceptance in Action: Advocacy to Expand

#### Access

What does autism acceptance mean to you? April is Autism Acceptance Month and a great time to think about this question. To me, autism acceptance means changing society to have everything autistic people need to succeed. It means changing the way people think about autism and including autistic people in all parts of our communities.

If you want to help achieve these goals, there are important advocacy efforts you can participate in to increase autism acceptance. First, in local places like your school, community organizations, or religious groups, advocacy can include changing the way you talk about autism and how you do activities so that all autistic people can participate. You can also talk to leaders in your city, county, or state to recommend different laws. The [Autistic Self-Advocacy Network](#) is a great resource to learn about laws that are important to autistic people and how you can support them.

As a service provider, I focus on evaluations and services for autistic children and their families. Unfortunately, it is hard for autistic people to get all the services and supports they need. Autistic children also work with many different systems and it is very hard for families to coordinate everything. At Children's National Hospital, the [Child Health Advocacy Institute](#) (CHAI) is dedicated to improving systems and policy so that all children can get the care they need. As a result, the CHAI helped create the [DC Autism Collaborative \(DC-AC\)](#) in 2020 to improve communication across different systems involved in autism services.

The goal of this group is to increase access to diagnosis, treatment, and coordinated care in early childhood. It is particularly focused on equity because children of color and families experiencing poverty face extra challenges in navigating autism care. [Many different organizations](#) that serve children with autism are involved, including healthcare providers (such as Children's National), health insurance groups, legal and advocacy organizations, governmental agencies, education systems, and community

organizations.

We have [created resources](#) in English, Spanish, and Amharic. We are also working on discussions about updating insurance practices, understanding how many children in the District have autism, sharing information about autism, and developing new educational materials.

[Click here](#) for some of our family resources:

- What to do if you suspect your child has autism
- What to do while waiting for an evaluation
- Coming soon! An early childhood transition roadmap

We have resources for professionals too:

- A guide to existing services to help clarify available options
- Best practices in developmental monitoring, screening, and evaluation
- An overview of autism-related processes at Medicaid managed care organizations (MCOs)

The DC-AC is excited to share these resources and work with families and autistic individuals to figure out where to go next. I encourage you to share this information with as many people as you can! If you have questions about the DC-AC, please email me at [CMHcore@childrensnational.org](mailto:CMHcore@childrensnational.org). Happy Autism Acceptance Month!

*This article was developed by Sheina Godovich, Ph.D., CASD Postdoctoral Fellow, Leandra Godoy, Ph.D., CASD Psychologist, and Serene Habayeb, Ph.D., CASD Psychologist, and with the assistance of Andrea Lopez, B.S., CASD research assistant and Laura Campos, B.A., CASD research assistant.*

*Scroll down for a list of resources (including tools you can download), announcements of community programs, and research opportunities. Our goal is to help families and providers so please use the QR code at the end of the CHAT to give us feedback.*

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**Profiles Celebrating Neurodiversity**



## Tony DeBlois

Tony DeBlois (born 1974) is an award-winning blind musician and pianist born with autism. Despite being born with physical and developmental challenges, Tony continues to surpass the expectations of others. Tony started to play piano at the age of two and went on to graduate from Berklee College of Music with honors. He specializes in jazz, but can play just about any other type of music as well. Tony plays 20 musical instruments, has held concerts worldwide, and also has his own band, Goodnuf. He can play about 8,000 pieces from memory.

Click below for more information

- [Tony DeBlois Website](#)
- [The Extraordinary Journey of Musical Savant Tony DeBlois](#)

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## 2023 Calendar of Events

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### **Free Parent Support Group**

**Where:** Virtual

**When:** Every Monday at 1 PM EST

Dr. Dan Shapiro, friend of CASD, will be offering a free parent support group, every Monday at 1 PM EST. To register, [click here](#).

Dr. Shapiro is offering new courses for parents of different age groups on a wide

range of topics. Choose the topics that interest you. Real-life challenges. Real-life solutions.. To learn more about these courses, visit [parent-child excursions](http://www.parentchildjourney.com/): More information on various programs can be found on his website: <http://www.parentchildjourney.com/>

## Participate in Research

### **Unstuck & On Target High School Project**

There is an exciting new research project from Children's National Hospital and we are looking to partner with local high schools in the DC Metro area!

In partnership with educators, autistic youth, and their families, autism experts from Children's National Hospital have developed an upward extension of the school-based *Unstuck and On Target!* curriculum for **diploma-track, autistic high**

Unstuck & On Target: High School Curriculum
<b>Understanding Your Thinking Style &amp; Getting What You Need</b>
Flexible Thinking, Self-Advocacy, Neurodiversity, Managing Mismatches
<b>Tools to Keep You On Target</b>
Time Management, Handling Stress, Motivation, Reminder Systems
<b>Tools for Working With Others</b>
Relationship Builders, How & When to Compromise
<b>Planning Your Goal and Putting Your Plan Into Action</b>
SMART Goal Setting, Seeing the Big Picture & Important Details, Recognizing Planning Dangers, Making & Trying Out Your Plan A/B/C

**school students needing executive function and socio-emotional support.** This research-based curriculum is designed to be taught at school and targets transition-readiness skills such as self-advocacy, flexible problem-solving, time management, and independent goal-setting and planning skills.

We have received funding from the National Institutes of Mental Health to evaluate the (free) curriculum on a larger scale, and **we are looking for schools to partner with.** Once we receive approval from the school district, we will provide participating schools with free training, materials, and ongoing support for school staff to teach *Unstuck* at local schools.

If you are a teacher or parent and are interested in hearing more about how to bring Unstuck to your high school or school district, please contact Julianna McKenna at [jmmckenna@childrensnational.org](mailto:jmmckenna@childrensnational.org).

### Praise from Parents & Teens



### **RDoC Executive Function Research Project**

Georgetown University Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory and Children's National Hospital are studying executive function skills like attention,

memory, and learning using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Using MRI technology, we expect to pinpoint the parts of the brain that are responsible for these cognitive functions and hope to determine the potential of using MRI as a tool to help clinicians personalize treatment. We are recruiting 8-13 year olds with a clinical psychological diagnosis (of any kind), no genetic conditions, no metal in their bodies, and no neurological conditions.

If you are interested, please contact  
Laura Campos:

- Phone: 301-765-5478
- Email: [lcampos@cnmc.org](mailto:lcampos@cnmc.org)



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### **ASD Research Study**

George Washington University and George Mason University are study brain development in autism. As part of the study, participants play child-friendly computer games while we track their gaze and brain function. Families can early up to \$90 for participating.



We are recruiting 5-17 year olds with an autism diagnosis.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Chelsea Armour:

- Email: [aarmour@childrensnational.org](mailto:aarmour@childrensnational.org) or [andilab@email.gwu.edu](mailto:andilab@email.gwu.edu)

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## **New Featured Resource**

### **Ivymount Outreach Resource Guide**

[Ivymount Community Outreach](#) partners with service providers to bring families a helpful one-stop spot for information. The Outreach Resource Guide 2023 is an online tool with information on 70 plus diverse organizations that provide specialized services. The Guide includes provider descriptions and links that help you easily navigate to meaningful supports.

[Click here](#) to view the Ivymount Outreach Resource Guide

A resource for **TEACHERS!**

- Free, asynchronous, online educator training
- First 600 to finish get 3.5 free CE credits!

Unstuck Elementary is a Tier 2 executive functioning curriculum

- Planning
- Transitioning
- Following directions

[Click here](#)

"One student had three meltdowns per day, and Unstuck reduced her outbursts to two a quarter."

A resource for **PARENTS!**

Free, online supports for preventing overload, compromising and staying motivated

Created by parents, educators, and experts

- 15 3-5 min videos
- 5 also in Spanish
- Tip sheets

[Click here](#)

"The videos made me feel less alone...and hopeful that there are more things I can try to help [my child]."

**¡Feliz Mes de la Herencia Hispana!**

Explora nuestros recursos en Español:

- Videos en Español
- Manual para padres en Español

**Haga clic aquí**

Unstuck Elementary es un plan de estudios de la función ejecutiva de Tier 2 para estudiantes neurodivergentes

A continuación: Todos los videos traducidos al Español Grabación de seminarios web en Español para implementadores

"Un estudiante tuvo tres crisis por día y Unstuck redujo sus arrebatos a dos por trimestre."

**Un recurso para PADRES**

- Apoyos gratuitos en línea para padres de niños con dificultades para manejar las emociones, concentrarse, hacer planes y más

Creado por padres, educadores y expertos.

- 5 videos de 3-5 minutos en español
- Hojas de consejos

**Haga clic aquí**

"Los videos me hicieron sentir menos solo... y con la esperanza de que hay más cosas que puedo intentar para ayudar [a mi hijo]."

The *Unstuck* author team has created short videos to help parents of children with executive functioning difficulties. Please click the playlists below to view the videos in both English and Spanish! **We have added new videos to address feedback from parents. Please click on our playlist to view our new 3-part video series on "troubleshooting."**

[Playlist of all videos](#)



[Recursos para padres](#)



Click here for the video

## **The Talk—Black, Autistic, and Male: One Family's Experience**

We would like to share an interview with a family of a college-bound autistic young adult and an accompanying reflection by Tawara Goode, Director of the National Center for Cultural Competence and Director of the Georgetown University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

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## **Additional Resources**

### **Arc Maryland, "Together We're Better"**

The Arc Maryland, with its statewide partners, provides a school inclusion program called ["Together We're Better" \(TWB\)](#). The objective of the program is to raise awareness of the value and importance of inclusion of students with disabilities. The program involves a 4-way partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, the Maryland Department of Disabilities, and The Arc Maryland. [Visit the website here](#) to see the different components to the program, broken up for elementary, middle, & high school students.

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### **DC Autism Collaborative**

The [DC Autism Collaborative](#) (DC-AC) has developed several resources for parents of young children and professionals (including health providers, early childhood educators, and community leaders) on topics related to autism spectrum disorder (ASD). All materials have been, or are in the processes of being, translated into both Spanish and Amharic. These resources can be downloaded as PDFs, though we encourage you to [visit the website here](#) as we plan to update these regularly.

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### **Pathfinders for Autism**

Pathfinders provides a list of programs for all ages including video group for spouses/partners of adults with Asperger's; Transitioning services and Job skills; Baby and Family Navigator programs, and new this month, Autism from the Autistic Perspective and free Pediatric Occupational Therapy Screening and more!

<https://pathfindersforautism.org/calendar/>

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**20+ free resources available to view anytime, anywhere!**

Enjoy these [information-packed free webinars](#) on your own or make them a powerful group learning event with your colleagues, friends, and family members. Topics include:

- Working/learning in groups
- Face-to-face communication
- Social anxiety
- Executive functions
- Children's stress
- Self-regulation
- Individual webinars on 10 core Social Thinking Vocabulary

Hosted by Social Thinking

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### **Supporting Mental Well-being**

Yetta Myrick, Executive Director/President of [DC Autism Parents \(DCAP\)](#) and CDC's Act Early Ambassador to the District of Columbia has multiple resources to share with families to support mental well-being.

[Tips to Help Parents Keep Calm Every Day](#)

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### **Additional Resources**

#### **Advocacy Resources**

[Autistic Self Advocacy Network-Navigating College: A Handbook on Self Advocacy](#)

#### **Resources on Anti-Racism**

[Spectrum Support's Social Stories on Racism](#)

[ASAN's What is Police Violence?: A Plain Language Booklet](#)

[@TheMorganCruise Worksheets for Black Children](#)

#### **COVID-19 Safety Resources**

[Behavioral Directions LLC's Safety Teaching Protocol](#)

#### **COVID-19 National and Local Government Resources**

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[World Health Organization](#)

[DC Department of Health](#)

[Maryland Department of Health](#)

[Virginia Department of Health](#)

[U.S Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part C](#)

[Dispute Resolution Procedures](#)

[U.S Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part B](#)

[Dispute Resolution Procedures](#)

[Visit Children's National Hospital COVID-19 Resources](#)

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**If you have feedback or suggestions, please scan the QR code and complete the survey!  
Thank you!**