

## CASD CHAT E-Newsletter

### Coping Activities That Don't Rely on Language For Your Non/Partially Speaking Child

When I was growing up my parents always said that there was nothing harder for them than watching my siblings or me struggle, and often trying to figure out what to say to help us feel better. As an incredibly anxious child, there were many nights when I just couldn't sleep. My mom and I developed our own coping routine where we would curl up on the couch and watch old sitcoms late into the night until I eventually drifted off. One question I often hear from parents when their non or partially-speaking child who is struggling with things like anxiety, frustration, and sadness is how to reach them, talk to them, and help them. It can feel like an impossible task to teach a child coping skill when you can't communicate with them in the way you feel you can communicate best. Take heart from my mom's and my (completely wordless) coping routine, many of the things you can guide your child to do to calm down don't require any words at all!

#### **Incorporate things that are fun but also soothing.**

There are a lot of great toys out there that will naturally guide children toward doing things that will calm their bodies. Some suggestions I use with my patients are:

#### **Pinwheels for deep breathing**

- Deep breathing calms the nervous system, but for a partially speaking child whose skills in imitation are still developing it can be challenging to teach them to do this. Pinwheels are a great way to motivate children to copy a deep breath because there is an immediate reward of the pinwheel spinning.



### Picky pumice

- Many nervous kids will pick and pull at things to keep their fingers busy but this can be hard on skin, hair, and clothes! These picky pumice stones are a way for kids to access this if they've naturally found picking as a coping skill, without shredding their wardrobe or fingernails.



### Playdough, Thera-putty, Squishy Toys

- One of the best ways to learn to regulate emotion is to begin noticing when our muscles are tense and when they're relaxed. This can take some practice as it isn't something everyone pays attention to, but it can be even harder for non or partially speaking kids. When your child plays with a toy that allows them to squeeze and tense their muscles it gives them a chance to notice the difference between tight and relaxed muscles and can promote muscle relaxation.



## **Use temperature and water to help your child calm their nervous system.**

### Ice

- Gently applying ice to your child's pulse points (wrists and neck) can help cool their body and slow their heart rate.

### Human "Dive Response"

- Humans have this cool thing where when we're submerged in water that covers our ears, our body thinks we're diving and slows our heart rate redirecting more blood flow to our hearts and lungs. This can calm the nervous system and dull an intense feeling very effectively. If your child is struggling, a bath or a trip to the pool could help them calm down, or even submerge their face and ears in cool water for a few moments. You can demonstrate this by doing it first and blowing bubbles to engage their attention!



- NOTE: *Always* make sure your child is indicating they are comfortable being underwater/actively approaching water on their own before trying these skills. A surprise dunk or being forced underwater for a child who isn't comfortable being submerged will make emotion dysregulation *much* worse and could be traumatizing.

### **Use sensory soothing.**

- Pay attention to what your child gravitates to when they're left to their own devices. What sensations do they seek out? Putting together a corner in their room or a family area with some of your child's favorite sensory experiences. Examples could include:
  - A lavender-scented beanbag
  - A soft or silk blanket
  - A device with their favorite music or children's musical instruments

It can be heartbreaking to watch your child struggle with an overwhelming emotion. We hope these strategies help you feel like you have a few more tools at your disposal to help your child cope and reengage with their day. And remember, even when you feel helpless, you never know what's going to stick, work, or stay with your child well into their adult years. When I think back to watching Full House in the middle of the night with my mom, I remember the sound of the theme song, the feeling of my mom's shoulder under my head, the smell of my shampoo when my mom moved a piece of hair out of my face—knowing what to say, as it turned out, wasn't very important in those moments after all.

*This article was developed by Ashley Muskett, Ph.D., CASD Clinical Psychologist, and with the assistance of Andrea Lopez, B.S., 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**



## Sienna Castellon

Sienna Castellon is a 21 year-old, award-winning advocate for neurodiversity and is herself neurodiverse. She is autistic, dyslexic, dyspraxic and has ADHD. At the age of 16, she founded the Neurodiversity Celebration Week.

Neurodiversity Celebration Week (March 13-19th, 2023) was founded in 2018 and is a worldwide initiative that challenges stereotypes and misconceptions about neurological differences. It aims to transform how neurodivergent individuals are perceived and supported by providing schools, universities, and organizations with the opportunity to recognize the many talents and advantages of being neurodivergent, while creating more inclusive and equitable cultures that celebrate differences and empower every individual. She also wrote, "The Spectrum Girl's Survival Guide: How to Grow Up Awesome and Autistic" which aims to support autistic teen girls. She has won many international awards for her advocacy, including the 2021 Commonwealth Youth Award and the Campaigner of the Year at the European Diversity Awards. In 2020, Sienna was a finalist for the International Children's Peace Prize.

Click below for more information

- [Sienna Castellon Website](#)
- [Neurodiversity Celebration Week \(March 13-19th, 2023\)](#)
- ["The Spectrum Girl's Survival Guide: How to Grow Up Awesome and Autistic"](#)

## **Rock Autism**

**Where:** Hard Rock Café in Washington, D.C.

**When:** March 3, 2023

Rock Autism is a non-profit organization that strives to “support individuals on the autism spectrum to develop a craft in music, film and the multimedia arts that lead to employment in their given field of interest.” Rock Autism is hosting a national tour this year, which includes a concert at the **Hard Rock Café in Washington, D.C. on March 3, 2023.**

[Click here to purchase tickets](#)

Additionally, Rock Autism is offering volunteer opportunities for students on the spectrum aged 14-26, to shoot pictures and videos at the event. For more information on volunteer opportunities, please feel free to contact Alea Conte, directly at [alea@rockautism.org](mailto:alea@rockautism.org).

[Click here to learn more about Rock Autism](#)

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## **Ivymount Resource Outreach Fair**

**Where:** Ivymount Campus, 11614 Seven Locks Road, Rockville, MD

**When:** Sunday, March 19, 12 pm - 3 pm

Ivymount welcomes the community for in-person connection at our 10th Annual Ivymount Outreach Resource Fair. Ivymount’s Community Outreach and Services brings the expertise of Ivymount School, The Maddux School and Ivymount Endeavors together to meet the needs of our community through educational and recreational programs, special events, workshops, and community connections.

[Click here to learn more](#)

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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](#): More information on various programs can be found on his

## 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)



## **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)

## **Unstuck & On Target Resources**



*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**

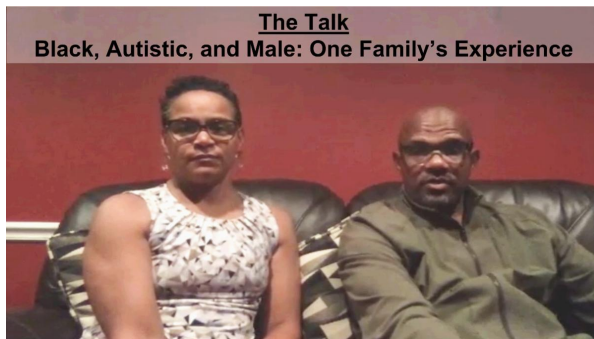
Unstuck Elementary es un plan de estudios de la **función ejecutiva de Tier 2** para estudiantes **neurodivergentes**

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."

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**



**Click here for the video**

**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]."



**Recursos para padres**

**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.



## 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!