



CASD CHAT E-Newsletter

Seleccione Aquí para Leer el CASD Chat en Español

Helping Autistic Teens Learn about Puberty and Health

As families with autistic teens, we know there are special challenges when they become teenagers. This time in their lives is filled with big changes, like going through puberty and figuring out who they are. But there's a big problem: many schools don't have the right kind of classes to help teens with autism learn about these changes. Only a few schools teach students who are on Individualized Education Plans what doctors recommend about growing up and staying healthy. It's important for these teens to learn about things like having healthy relationships, understanding consent, and exploring their own feelings about who they are. If they don't learn about these things, they might feel lost or confused during puberty. They might not know how to express themselves or make their own choices, which is important for feeling good about themselves.



We offer a few tips for parents to help guide your autistic teens through these changes and we also share additional information about puberty and health with autistic teens:

- 1. Start Conversations Early:** Talk about puberty and health before the changes start. This helps your teen know what to expect and feel less anxious.
- 2. Use Clear and Simple Language:** Explain things in a way that your teen can understand. Avoid using too many complicated words, instead use terms that their doctor would use.
- 3. Be Open and Patient:** Let your teen know it's okay to ask questions and be ready to answer them honestly, even if they're tough.
- 4. Create a Safe Space:** Make sure your teen feels comfortable and safe talking about sensitive topics with you.

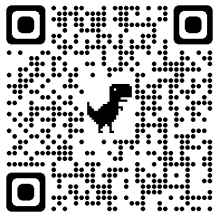
- 5. Use Visual Aids:** Pictures, books, and videos can be really helpful for explaining things to your teen.
- 6. Respect Their Privacy:** As your teen grows, they might want more privacy. It's important to respect this.

We are conducting a research study on how an online educational toolkit might address this problem. We partnered with a team of people at Vanderbilt University who made special learning tools just for teens with autism. These tools will teach them step-by-step about growing up and staying healthy. They're made to be easy to understand for all different kinds of learners. We also want parents and guardians to be involved because when families learn together, it helps everyone do better. We think the toolkit is really good, but we are conducting the study to get feedback from families.

We're asking families with autistic teens aged 14 to 19 to join our study. By being part of this, you're not just helping us with our research; you're also getting new ways to talk about these important topics with your teen and for your teen to talk about these topics with trusted individuals. Together, we can make sure that every teen gets the chance to learn about their body, feelings, and health in a way that's right for them.



If you want more information or to join our exciting study, please contact Jenny Mai Phan at jmphan@childrensnational.org.



If you have feedback or suggestions, please scan the QR code or [CLICK HERE](#) to complete the survey! Thank you!

This article was developed by Jenny Phan, Ph.D, and with the assistance of CASD research coordinators, Andrea Lopez, B.S., Laura Campos, B.A., and Hannah Behar, B.S.

Neurodiversity Spotlight

Morgan Harper Nichols

Morgan Harper Nichols is an artist and creative media specialist from the Atlanta, Georgia area. Her work focuses on creative and interactive storytelling experiences through art and digital media.

For Morgan, art is a form of communication. At age

30, Morgan found out she was autistic, and age 31, she received a diagnosis of autism, ADHD, and SPD (sensory processing disorder).



In the years leading up to her diagnosis, Morgan lived with many autistic traits and made art, music, and poetry about her struggles, even before she had a name for them.

This practice has turned into several books, including the WSJ Bestseller "All Along You Were Blooming" and her app, "Storyteller". Morgan is also the Vice President of the Board of Directors of the mental health organization TWLOHA.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Morgan!

Click [here](#) to learn more about her app!



2024 Calendar of Events

Special Needs Undergraduate Swim Lessons (SNUGS)

SNUGS at Georgetown University is a student organization offering free, one-on-one swim lessons to children with disabilities in the Washington, D.C. community, but families do not need to live in DC. Additional information is available [here](#).

Interested participants can contact the current SNUGS student president, Makenzie Thomas with questions at mst82@georgetown.edu.

Parent/Child Journey

Dr. Shapiro is offering new courses for parents of different age groupson 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 website: <http://www.parentchildjourney.com/>

Winter 2024 In-Person Event:

- When: Feb 1 - April 4. ten consecutive Thursday nights, 7:30-8:30PM
 - Where: In-person at St. Columba's Episcopal Church Conference room #212 - 4201 Albemarle St, NW Washington, DC 20016
 - With: Dan Shapiro, MD
 - Cost: \$200 (one fee for all ten session and complete video course material)
 - Class Size: maximum 25 participants
-

Ivymount Outreach Resource Fair

Register: Click [HERE](#) to learn more. More information will be provided soon.

Location: Ivymount Campus, 11614 Seven Locks Road, Rockville, MD

Date & Time: Sunday, March 3, 12 pm - 3 pm

Ivymount will be hosting the 11th annual Outreach Resource Fair. Both exhibitors and attendees are welcomed.

Questions? Email outreach@ivymount.org

Ivymount Spring Educational & Therapeutic Programs

Register: Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the educational and therapeutic programs

Ivymount's individual and group programs are designed for Neurodivergent individuals and their families and are provided by our expert teachers and therapists. With defined goals and objectives, Ivymount provides Unstuck & On Target! executive function groups, Applied Unstuck executive function groups, Self-Advocacy Programs, Friendship and Conversation Programs, and Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Tutoring across various ages.

Questions? Email outreach@ivymount.org

Partners in Policymaking

Where: In Person & Virtual Events

When: January 2024 - September 2024

Take your advocacy to new heights through Partners in Policymaking®! Maryland's year-long program prepares adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), parents, and family members of children and adults with IDD to be effective advocates at the local, state, and federal levels. Through 12 sessions, Partners in Policymaking® participants will learn about

systems change: creating, working towards, and achieving a vision of shared values about people with disabilities. Partners graduates often become lifelong and long-term agents of change in the community. Partners in Policymaking® is free for participants due to the incredible financial support of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, with each spot in the program valued at over \$6,000. Applications for the 2023-24 Partners class are now open! Be sure to apply by October 16th at noon to participate in the upcoming class.

To apply and read more, [click here](#).

DC Peer Programs for Neurodivergent Youth & Adults

DC Peers is a community organization that offers social meetups, learning workshops, and a welcoming community to neurodiverse groups of teens and adults. Our neurodiverse staff have a lot of personal and lived experience with autism, ADHD, and other neurological differences, and we understand and embrace neurodivergent ways of being in the world. In our groups, folks can be themselves and connect – outside of clinics and therapeutic settings.

Register [here](#) for the following programs:

- Social Meetups
 - middle school, art, games, dungeons and dragons, teens discord and adult meetups
- Support Groups and Facilitated Discussions
 - Teen and adult neurodiversity, women and non-binary persons support, and parent circle
- Neurodiversity Workshops
- Social Strategies Workshops

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!

Unstuck & On Target: High School Curriculum

Understanding Your Thinking Style & Getting What You Need

Flexible Thinking, Self-Advocacy, Neurodiversity, Managing Mismatches

Tools to Keep You On Target

Time Management, Handling Stress, Motivation, Reminder Systems

Tools for Working With Others

Relationship Builders, How & When to Compromise

Planning Your Goal and Putting Your Plan Into Action

SMART Goal Setting, Seeing the Big Picture & Important Details, Recognizing Planning Dangers, Making & Trying Out Your Plan A/B/C

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 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.

Praise from Parents & Teens



ASD Research Study

Are you and your child interested in learning about the brain? Is your child 7-17 years old? Are they on the Autism Spectrum? The George Washington University and George Mason University team would like to invite you and your children to play child-friendly computer games while tracking their brain function. The team pays \$20/per hour for participation!



Paid Research Study for Kids 7-17. Earn up to \$120 for participation!

Interested? Contact:

- andilab@gwu.edu

Or click [here](#) to visit the website!

Daily Living Skills Study

The purpose of this research study is to gain insight into what daily living skills are important to you, and what is the best way to write questions about daily living skills for a new questionnaire.

We are recruiting 18-30 year olds with an autism diagnosis.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Jamie Kleiner:

- Email: dailylivingskills@chop.edu

PUSHED Study

Are you interested in a puberty and sexual health education program for autistic youth? We are conducting a research study to understand better how autistic youth and their families can learn together about pubertal development and sexual health.

We are inviting families with a child/adolescent diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder or who self-identifies as autistic and who is in the 9th to 12th grades or between 14 and 19 years old.

This is an online study. Families will be asked to complete the online puberty and sexual health toolkit, answer questions about their experience with the toolkit.

Families will be compensated \$100 for their time participating in this study.

Please contact Jenny Phan for more information about the study at (240) 397-8208 or jmphan@childrensnational.org.



ASD Research Study - DSCN Lab

Dr. Elizabeth Redcay at the University of Maryland, College Park and her team are studying behavioral and brain responses in children and adolescents on the autism spectrum during social interactions. Participation involves virtual visits, in-person visits, and longitudinal virtual follow ups over the course of about two years. Families can earn up to \$100 for their time.



We are recruiting 11-14 year olds with an autism diagnosis.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Kayla Pereira:

- Email: marylandbrainstudy@umd.edu



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."**

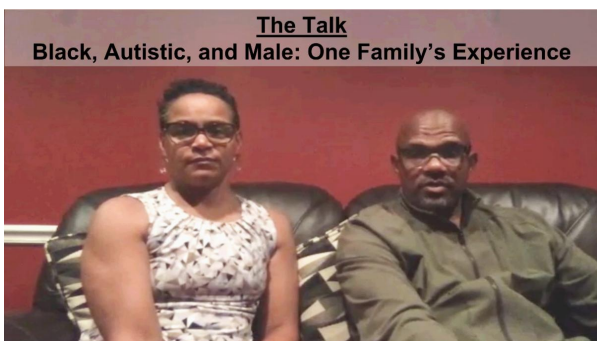
The videos made me feel less alone. --Parent

The strategies were very well explained. --Parent

New Free Videos
UNSTUCK
AND ON TARGET

[Playlist of all videos](#)

[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

Click here for the video

Goode, Director of the National Center for Cultural Competence and Director of the Georgetown University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

Additional Resources

Social Thinking Free Resources

For over 25 years [Social Thinking](#) has been a guiding resource for schools, clinics, and families around the world, and they're here for you, too! Their Free Stuff Portal is filled to the brim with teaching ideas and resources to foster the development of students' social competencies. Discover free support strategies to use with your students, clients and children.

[Click here](#) to view Hundreds of Free Resources

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

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.

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.

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/>

xMinds

A collaborative partnership of parents, educators, and service providers working together to improve the educational experience and outcomes for autistic students in Pre-K–12 education in Montgomery County, MD. Free resources in English and Spanish!

<https://xminds.org/>

MCTransitions

MCTransitions is a grassroots listserve for adults with disabilities, families and professionals advocating for adults with mild to significant disabilities as they transition from school age entitlements in Maryland to young adulthood and beyond. Purpose is to share information, provide each other support, and work to improve services and outcomes for adults with disabilities in the State of Maryland.

<https://groups.io/g/MCTransitions>

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

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](#)

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](#)

Children's National Hospital, Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders | 15245 Shady Grove Road,
Suite 350, Rockville, MD 20850

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