



AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN PRESENTS

MiNavigator

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Help. Hope. Answers. Today



Join the Virtual Autism Hero Walk!

This year's Autism Hero Walk has gone virtual in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Register your fundraising team today at www.AAoMWalk.com and then join us on our Facebook Group for fun, interactive content that will accomplish three major goals:

1. Celebrate your hero with autism
2. Raise funds to support the work of Autism Alliance of Michigan
3. Spread awareness and education about autism

Earn fundraising incentives including Autism Hero Walk t-shirts, personalized yard signs, super-hero capes and more!

On July 26th, 2020, we will wear our green superhero shirts and walk united, in the safety of our own neighborhoods. This "closing ceremony" will mark the conclusion of an epic six weeks of awareness and unity.

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Practical Tips for Keeping Kids Busy at Home: Art Therapy Perspective

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Art has been used as a form of expression and language for over 40,000 years, dating all the way back to the original cave paintings. Art is often a universal language for people around the world. For those who may have difficulty with communication and expression, art may be a useful tool to use to overcome challenges.

Developmental Progress and Benefits

Children are naturally creative. As parents and caregivers, it is important to provide safe opportunities for children to explore their creativity as it can help foster key developmental progress. Some areas of developmental benefits include:

- Communication and facial recognition
- Imagination and symbolic thoughts
- Sense of self; confidence, emotional regulation
- Fine motor skills

Using Everyday Items for a Multi-sensory Experience

Our homes and yards may be full of items that can be used to foster creativity and development. For example, using sliced vegetable scraps as stamps or painting with ice can be fun and inexpensive ways to provide new creative experiences. Here are some ways to incorporate a multi-sensory creative experience:

- **Smells and tastes**
 - Safe-essential oils, powdered drinks/gelatin and juices all can be used to add in paint and play-dough/slime

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• **Touch and Textures**

- Using warm and cold temperatures, such as a heating pad with rice/beans or dye ice cubes to paint with
- Adding sand to finger-paint, glue with cotton balls and other found objects outside (leaves, sticks)

• **Sounds**

- Playing music has been proven to be beneficial during the creative process
- Ripping paper, shaking liquids or dried beans in cans

• **Sight**

- Play I spy outside and narrate what you see to your children
- Discuss the colors and lines and textures you see
- Use a variety of colors when selecting art materials

When we provide opportunities for children to have a multi-sensory creative experience, we are gradually exposing them to what may be otherwise a difficult experience to process. These experiences help children develop coping skills and self-regulation.

Parent/Caregiver Role in the Creative Process

Having a parent/caregiver join in on art-making while providing guidance can help promote resilience and confidence. If a trusted adult can provide encouragement and praise while a child is exploring new materials, it may help bridge the gap between the anxiety of a new experience and taking the initiative to start creating.

If the goal is to create an “end product” with your child, have only the materials needed out and provide short and precise prompts to help with instructions. Narrate what you and your child are doing.

Example: While you are painting “We are painting. Put the paintbrush in water. Dip in paint. Brushing the paint. You try.” Allow some time to explore each step with your child, they may need to get comfortable with each step prior to moving on. While you narrate what your child is doing remember to praise the steps and exploration. (Some children may need hand-over-hand guidance, but allow your child to try it out on their own first.)

When art is used as a therapeutic tool, it is important to remember that the process of art-making is the therapeutic element, not the product. If your child is creating what appears to be scribbles, or is painting/coloring outside of the lines, hold back on correcting them. Allow them to create for the sake of creating. Trust this process.





Tips and Strategies for Students on the Autism Spectrum

For most children riding the bus to school is a natural part of their everyday life. It is an activity that they usually put little thought into. However, this is not the case for most children on the Autism Spectrum. The noise, confined space, and the constant transitions that occur on a bus ride can be stressful and difficult experience for these children.

This upcoming school year will bring many new and unanticipated changes due to COVID-19. The support your child receives as they transition back to riding the bus will aid in them having a successful school year.

Support Strategies for Riding the Bus:

- **Build Rapport With Their Driver:** On their first few rides on the bus introduce your student to their bus driver and allow for time to build rapport.

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A student's comfortability level with their bus driver will go a long way in making them comfortable on the bus in general. This may serve as a useful tool to share with your child's bus driver: [ALL ABOUT ME](#)

- **Establish Rules and Routines:** Children with ASD thrive off of routine, predictability and structure. Establishing expectations and rules at the beginning sets a student up for success. Keep in mind COVID-19 will likely bring changes from last year's bus ride and these changes will need to be introduced and new routines will need to be established. Communicate this to your student's bus driver so they may up keep these rules and routines in your absence.
- **Anticipate:** Being able to anticipate child's needs is key. Think about the specific changes your student with autism may have on their routine to school. That might be if there is a substitute bus driver, the stopping and starting of the route, or route changes. Ask your student's bus driver to inform you in advance if there will be any changes coming up in their ride so you may prepare your student.
- **Fidget Bag:** ASD children may benefit from items such as, noise canceling headphones, sensory balls, magna doodles, or books on their bus ride. If your child could benefit from these items, be sure to send them onto the bus with them. Or speak with their bus driver about keeping certain items on the bus with the driver for the driver to give out and hold on to.
- **Social Stories:** Utilize social stories when appropriate. Social stories help with understanding social situations, expectations, social cues, new activities, and/or social rules.

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School staff can help in establishing individualized social stories. Here is an example of one: [BUS SAFETY Social narrative](#)

- **Use Visuals:** Visuals allow for children to know what to expect and how long something might take. Visuals make concepts like time and rules more concrete and understandable.

Examples of visuals to use:

- Visual Schedules
 - Timers
 - First, Then Boards
- **Model:** Stay calm and positive before and after pick-up and drop-off, demonstrate the behavior you want to see from your student.
 - **Reinforce:** Praise and acknowledge behaviors you want to see in your child.
 - **Have a Plan:** Establish an emergency and behavioral actions plans with your child's bus driver.

Remember changing behaviors are part of the journey with autism. Your bus driver is now a part of your child's team, and together with other team members you will be able to navigate your child's needs as they may change.

Please reach out to the Autism Alliance of Michigan with any questions or concerns at any time.

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