

CARD Staff

David O. Childers Jr., M.D.
Chief of Neurodevelopmental Pediatrics
& Executive Director of FDLRS

Jeannie M. Potthast, M.B.A.
Associate Director - CARD/FDLRS-MDC

Karen Mullin
Office Manager II

Brett Walden, MPH
Education/Training Specialist III

Chanel Baldwin-Stinson, M.Ed.
Education/Training Specialist III

Bernardo Cuadra, B.A., CWCN
Clinician

Amy Lane
Education/Training Specialist III

Rina Park, M.Ed.
Clinician

Latoya Odom, SSP, B.A.
Administrative Support Assistant

Jennifer O'Brien, M.A., CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist

Sarah Falls, M.S., CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist

Staci Routman
School Psychologist

Elan Santiago, LMHC
Counselor

Maria J. Robles, Ed.S.
School Psychologist

Emily Perry, LCSW
Clinical Social Worker

Alana Leath, M.A.
Administrative Specialist

Tyler Rounds, B.S.
Administrative Assistant

Anthony R. Rhodes, M.S.
IT Expert

The UF-JAX CARD program provides support and assistance with the goal of optimizing the potential of people with autism spectrum disorders and related disabilities. Services are provided at no cost. The UF-JAX CARD program provides services to Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, and St. Johns counties.

Adventures in Exceptional Travel: Navigating the World with Special Needs Sidekicks!

By *Gwenivere Mauro, M.Ed.*

As the weather warms up and travel opportunities increase, planning vacations can come with challenges based on the unique abilities of every child! Whether it's navigating unfamiliar environments or ensuring access to necessary accommodations, careful preparation is key to a successful and enjoyable vacation. Here are some essential tips for jet-setting parents traveling with special needs children this season.

- **Plan ahead:** Research destinations that cater to individuals with special needs. Look for places that offer accessible facilities, sensory-friendly environments, and inclusive activities. Many attractions provide accommodations such as priority access, quiet spaces, and sensory-friendly shows.
- **Create a visual support:** Children with special needs often thrive on routine and predictability. Before your trip, create a visual schedule outlining the day's activities. Use pictures, symbols, or written descriptions to help your child understand what to expect, reducing anxiety, and uncertainty.
- **Prepare for Transitions:** Traveling involves transitions that can be

Continued on pg.2

Upcoming Events

Oct 3 Fall Family Fun Festival

Oct 11 Connecting the Dots Conference 2024

Dec 13 Seasons of Hope Dinner Event

Join the CARD Weekly Update Email Newsletter.
To sign up please email Anthony.Rhodes@jax.ufl.edu.

CARD's Mission

To educate and empower individuals and families throughout the lifespan by providing support, assistance, and awareness within the community; with the goal of optimizing the potential of all individuals with autism and related disabilities.

challenging for children with special needs. Prepare your child for changes in routine, such as airport security, boarding transportation, or switching hotels. Use social stories or role-playing to familiarize them with these processes in advance.



- **Pack Essentials items:** Be sure to pack all necessary medications, medical supplies, comfort items, and any assistive devices your child may need. Consider carrying a sensory toolkit containing items like noise-canceling headphones, fidget toys, or weighted blankets to help your child regulate sensory input.
- **Stay Flexible:** Despite careful planning, unexpected situations may arise during your trip. Stay flexible and adaptable, and be prepared to adjust your plans as needed. Allow for downtime and breaks to prevent sensory overload and meltdowns.
- **Seek Support:** Don't hesitate to reach out for support if you need it. Connect with other parents of children with special needs for advice and encouragement. Consider joining online forums or support groups dedicated to special needs travel to exchange tips and recommendations. Consider setting up an airport tour with agencies that offer this resource.
- **Utilize Airline Resources:** If you encounter any disability-related concerns regarding airline accommodations or services, request a discussion with the airline's Complaint Resolution Official (CRO) or a supervisor. The CRO specializes in matters concerning disabilities during air travel and has the authority to address complaints on behalf of the airline. Learn more about airline CROs at: <https://www.transportation.gov/individuals/aviation-consumer-protection/what-do-if-you-have-problem>
- **Consider Visual Indicators:** Certain disabilities, conditions, or chronic illnesses may not be readily apparent to others. The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower promotes inclusivity, acceptance, and understanding. The Sunflower lanyard signals that individuals may require additional assistance, understanding, or simply more time. Many travel-heavy areas, such as airports, provide travelers with lanyards to signify that extra support may be needed. Learn more about The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower initiative at: <https://hdsunflower.com/us/>
- **Focus on Enjoyment:** Above all, prioritize enjoyment and relaxation for your family. Celebrate each milestone and accomplishment, no matter how small, and savor the special moments together as a family.

Traveling requires careful planning and consideration, but with the right preparation, it can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience for the entire family. By anticipating your child's needs, staying organized, utilizing available resources, and being flexible, you can create cherished family memories that will last a lifetime.

Grounding Strategies to Practice Over the Summer

By Elan Santiago, LMHC

Summer is a great chance for families to find extra time to connect and engage in activities. However, summer can also be a time when routines change and new experiences arise. Grounding strategies are a technique used to help individuals focus on the present to reduce distress. Here are a few strategies that may help on those long-distance car rides, restaurant sittings, or everyday changes.

Grounding Strategies:

The 5-4-3-2-1 Technique: This strategy helps children to stay ground through using their senses. Guide the child in:

- Naming 5 things they can see
- Naming 4 things they can touch
- Naming 3 things they can hear
- Naming 2 things they can smell
- Naming 1 thing they can taste

An example may be when out at the beach:



- “I see the waves, seagulls, a dog running around, a sand castle, a shell”
- “I can touch the wet sand, my towel, the water, my beach ball”
- “I can hear the seagulls, people laughing, the waves”
- “I can smell the sunscreen, the snacks”
- “I can taste the salty air on my tongue”

I Spy Game

A person picks an object in sight and says, “I spy with my little eye something that starts with the letter... or something that’s the color...” The other players have to guess what the object is based on the description. It helps a child to utilize their observation and thinking skills while also using their sense of sight to stay grounded.

Grounding objects

When out and about providing your child with a small object to carry with them can be comforting. This could be a smooth stone, a small toy, a piece of cloth. If they feel anxious they can hold or touch the object to help them feel secure. This can aid in using the child’s sense of touch to remain grounded.

Incorporating grounding techniques into your child’s summer activities can help them practice managing their emotions and stay connected to the present. Engaging in these strategies with the child will enhance their “buy in” and assist in a child’s wellbeing over the summer.



Winding Down the School Year

By Amy Lane

Somehow, we're nearly at the end of the 2023-2024 school year. How did that happen? Summer break brings many joys, but also many challenges. Getting a head start on summer plans can help ensure a fun summer with minimal stress and a smooth transition into the next school year.

- Talk to your child's IEP team about Extended School Year (ESY) services. IEP teams are required to consider whether a student might lose skills over the summer. While all kids experience a "summer slide," students with disabilities are at risk of losing more than typically developing kids, and the losses may slow down progress in the following school year. Here is a checklist of criteria

that teams can use to decide if ESY is right for a particular student: ESY Checklist . If you think that your student would benefit from ESY, start that conversation soon.

- Families in which both parents work often scramble for places for their children to go during long summer days. Summer camps fill up quickly, particularly ones that will accept children who have exceptionalities. Keep an eye on our newsletters for links to summer camp lists. JAX4Kids keeps a comprehensive list: JAX4Kids Summer Camps. Bright Feats also maintains a comprehensive resource directory for kids with special needs: Bright Feats.

Continued on next page.

<https://pediatrics.med.jax.ufl.edu/autism/>

- All of us have heard the warning: Drowning is the leading cause of death for kids with autism. There are many programs who teach kids with disabilities to swim all over northeast Florida, and you are strongly encouraged to access those programs. While it's critical that children know how to swim, it's also critical that families don't trust them to do it. Even if you know that your child is able to swim, never leave them unsupervised around a pool or at the beach (or in the bathtub). Panic causes us to forget the things we know how to do when we are happy and relaxed, and your child may not be able to remember to use their swimming skills if they are afraid.
- Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities – If you are

exploring educational options outside of the public school system, be sure to get on the notification list for the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities: Notification List Registration. Those dollars ran out very quickly this school year, so it's smart to get ahead of the curve for next year if you're giving any thought to private school or homeschool. Ultimately, you may decide public school is the best place for your student, but being on the notification list will give you more choices.

Lastly, remember we're open all year 'round. If you have questions, or if any of us at the FDLRS Multidisciplinary Center can be helpful to you, please reach out.

FDLRS-MDC/CARD Satisfaction Survey

Here at FDLRS-MDC we continue to look for creative ways to meet individual and family needs. Please consider taking a moment to complete a short survey. We hope to use the feedback to tailor our services, group offerings, and training opportunities to best meet our constituent's needs. We look forward to hearing from you.

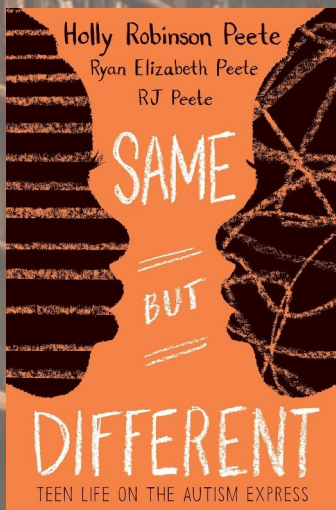
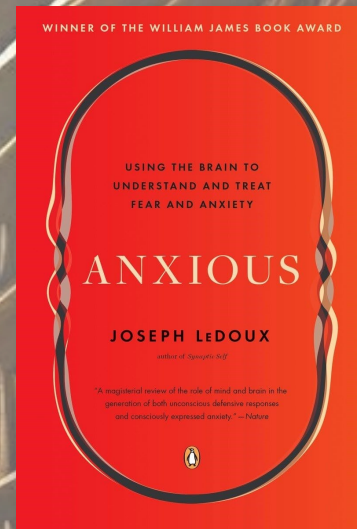
Use this QR Code to take our quick survey:



Now available in the CARD Lending Library:

Anxious: Using the Brain to Understand and Treat Fear and Anxiety by Joseph LeDoux

In *Anxious*, Joseph LeDoux, whose NYU lab has been at the forefront of research efforts to understand and treat fear and anxiety, explains the range of these disorders, their origins, and discoveries that can restore sufferers to normalcy. LeDoux's groundbreaking premise is that we've been thinking about fear and anxiety in the wrong way. These are not innate states waiting to be unleashed from the brain, but experiences that we assemble cognitively. A major work on one of our most pressing mental health issues.

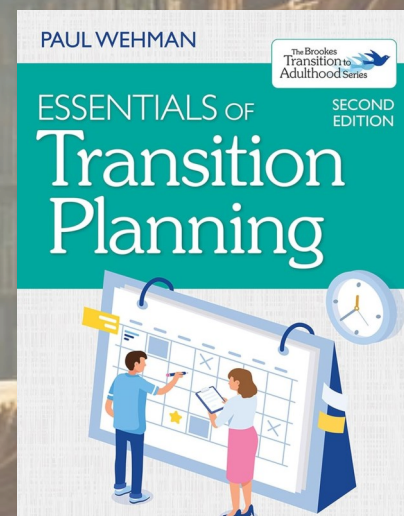


Same but Different: Teen Life on the Autism Express by Ryan Elizabeth Peete & RJ Peete

Actress and activist Holly Robinson Peete pairs with her twins in this narrative about the challenges and triumphs of being a teen who has autism and the effects on family, school, friends, and life. *SAME BUT DIFFERENT*, explores the funny, painful, and unexpected aspects of teen autism, while daring to address issues nobody talks about. *SAME BUT DIFFERENT* underscores tolerance, love, and the understanding that everybody's unique drumbeat is worth dancing to.

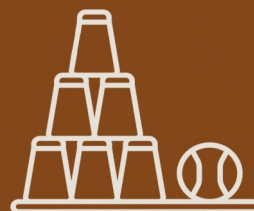
Essentials of Transition Planning by Paul Wehman, Ph.D, M.S., B.B.A

For a smooth transition to adulthood, young people with disabilities need the support, guidance, and planning expertise of a successful collaborative team. All the essentials of transition planning are at your fingertips in the second edition of this popular book, a one-stop guide to helping young people live fulfilling adult lives beyond the classroom. The book covers the fundamentals of transition planning, offering fast facts, vivid examples, realistic case studies, and checklists and tools for putting your plan into action.



FALL FAMILY FUN

Oct. 3
5:30-8:00 pm



A fun event for families to visit our center and indulge in Fall related activities and games. We welcome all disabilities and promote inclusivity. The UF Health Neurodevelopmental Pediatric Center houses the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD), the Florida Diagnostic Learning and Resources-Multidisciplinary Center (FDLRS-MDC) and the Neurodevelopmental Pediatric Clinic. We will have a variety of vendors present, games, arts & crafts, snacks and a raffle.

THIS YEAR: Families will have an opportunity to leave their "imprint" for our upcoming partnership with Deck the Chairs of Jacksonville Beach. We want to include our families in the design of our chair and are excited for this upcoming holiday event!

So please come out and enjoy! Costumes are welcome and encouraged. Looking forward to seeing you!

Questions?
904.633.4332
Terry.Lee2@jax.ufl.edu

Register online using the following QR Code or visit:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/uf-health-fall-festival-tickets-976645160967>

Location: 6271 St. Augustine Rd., Suite 1, Jacksonville, FL 32217

