

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., CWC
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

Dianne Lamm
Administrative Support Assistant

Arnette Green
Executive Assistant

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.

Increasing Empathy and Prosocial Behavior in Your Children

By Diego Castillo, M.S.

Parents play a crucial role in nurturing empathy skills in their children. **Empathy** is the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and understand what they are feeling. Empathy is part of prosocial behavior. **Prosocial behavior** is voluntarily cooperative, helpful, kind behavior towards others. Parents help build prosocial behavior in their children through **encouragement**, not material rewards. Material rewards can weaken a child's internal drive to be prosocial. Instead, researchers suggest nonmaterial reinforcement like verbal praise.

There are many factors that can affect a child's empathy development. One factor is closeness. **Parent-child closeness** can foster concern for others. Another factor is **parental warmth**. Parental warmth means responding to and interacting with your children in a supportive, comforting way. Parental warmth can increase prosocial behavior because you are modeling cooperative, nurturing relationships to your child. Additionally, **parental sensitivity and responsiveness** can increase your child's empathy and prosocial behavior. If you try to understand how your child feels, you teach your child to try to understand how others feel.

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Upcoming Events

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|------------|--|
| Mar 21 | Spring Fling |
| Mar 23 | CARD Night with the Jacksonville Icemen |
| June 21-23 | REACH Institute—Patient Centered Mental Health |

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.

There are many strategies parents can use to increase their child's empathy and prosocial behavior. One effective strategy is to create an **open and non-judgmental** environment where kids feel comfortable expressing their emotions. Encourage them to talk about their feelings and thoughts, helping them develop emotional awareness. Model empathy in your interactions, showcasing understanding and kindness. When conflicts arise, guide them through effective communication and problem-solving, emphasizing the importance of considering others' perspectives.



Additionally, expose children to diverse experiences and perspectives. Engage in activities that promote empathy, such as volunteering as a family or discussing characters' emotions in books and movies. Teach the value of kindness through small acts and highlight the positive impact it has on others. **Consistent, positive reinforcement** will contribute to the development of strong empathy skills in your children.



Kiddin' Around A Social Skills Group

A program which focuses on opportunities for social interaction with peers via social emotional activities and games. Skill areas include: sharing the conversation, waiting, turn taking, giving compliments, being empathetic, building community, accepting feedback, oversharing of information, and making friends.

For more information contact
Chanel.Baldwin@jax.ufl.edu

Unwind to Get Ready for the Grind

by Lotoya Odom, SSP, B.A.



Most students look forward to the end of the school year as they have often recently completed high-stakes testing which can be daunting and stressful. Luckily, most schools/school districts offer a break just before those testing periods begin—Spring Break! Individuals and families utilize Spring Break in a number of ways: to take family vacations, to begin spring cleaning, to regroup and reorganize schedules, etc. Sometimes we forget to simply unwind and take the ‘break’. For students, the timing of Spring Break allows for rest and relaxation before returning to school and gearing up for tests that measure what they’ve learned all year. Spring cleaning, vacations, and reorganizing all are certainly needed to serve their purpose. Afterward, however, breaks are usually welcomed by

all. Decompress and rejuvenate the body by allowing it to relax so that it has the stamina to continue thriving. One way to do this is to engage in mindfulness exercises. Simply put, that means to be in the moment and focus less on thinking—a cognitive task that takes mental effort and can make you tired. Mindfulness exercises can be structured or more free-flowing. Use the QR code provided below to read an article to better understand mindfulness and to get ideas for exercises that may work for you and your family!

Here is information on the Spring Break dates for several local counties to help you plan those vacations and break times!

St. Johns County Schools, you’re up first!

County/School District	Consecutive calendar days out for Spring Break (includes weekends & other student breaks)
Baker	Friday, March 15-Sunday, March 24
Clay	Friday, March 8- Sunday, March 17
Duval	Friday, March 15-Sunday, March 24
Flagler	Friday, March 15-Sunday, March 24
Nassau	Thursday, March 14-Sunday, March 24
St. Johns	Monday, March 11-Monday, March 18
Volusia	Friday, March 22-Sunday, March 31



New Year's Resolutions and Goal Setting

By Diego Castillo, M.S.

As we anticipate the coming of a new year, individuals and their families are presented with a valuable opportunity to reflect on the past and envision a brighter future. While the concept of New Year's resolutions is often associated with personal development and improvement, it is equally relevant for families navigating the unique challenges and joys that come with raising children with special needs. Creating New Year's resolutions and setting goals for the upcoming year can be a fun bonding activity for the entire family. I hope this article will guide and inspire your family in setting meaningful goals that foster growth, self-confidence, and joy in the coming year.

1. Encourage Self-reflection:

Before jumping into new resolutions, take some time to reflect on the progress made this past year. Celebrate the accomplishments, both big and small, and

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acknowledge the resilience and strength displayed by your family. Reflecting on the challenges faced and overcome can provide valuable insights that inform your goals for the upcoming year.

2. Set Meaningful and Achievable Goals:

When establishing New Year's resolutions, it is important to set goals that are realistic and designed around your family's unique circumstances. Consider the individual needs, strengths, and preferences of your child with special needs. Break down larger goals into smaller, achievable steps to provide a sense of progress and accomplishment. Whether it's improving communication skills, enhancing life skills and social interactions, or focusing on academic milestones, the key is to set goals that align with your child's developmental abilities.

3. Embrace Flexibility:

Life with special needs children is often unpredictable, and flexibility is a valuable tool. While setting goals is important, be prepared to adapt and modify them as circumstances change. Flexibility allows families to navigate unexpected challenges with resilience and creativity.

4. Celebrate Every Success:

Acknowledge and celebrate every success, no matter how small. Whether it's a breakthrough in communication, a newfound skill, or a moment of joy, these accomplishments contribute to the overall well-being and progress of your family. Celebrating even the smallest of achievements will foster a sense of pride, responsibility and purpose.

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.

[CLICK HERE TO TAKE THE SURVEY](#)

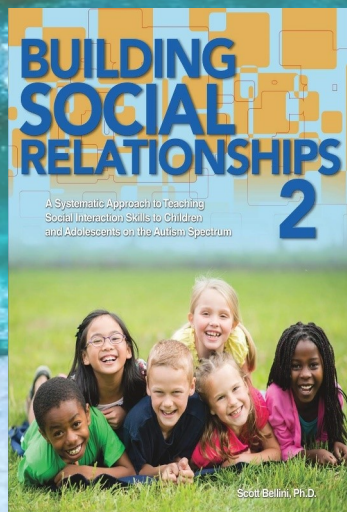


Now available in the CARD Lending Library:

How to Parent Your Anxious Toddler

by *Natasha Daniels*

This accessible guide demystifies the difficult behaviors of anxious toddlers, offering tried-and-tested practical solutions to common parenting dilemmas. Once the toddler's anxious behavior has been demystified and explained, new and effective parenting approaches are introduced to help parents tackle everyday difficulties and build up their child's resilience, independence, and coping mechanisms. Common difficulties with bath time, toileting, sleep, eating, transitions, social anxiety, and separation anxiety.



Building Social Relationships 2

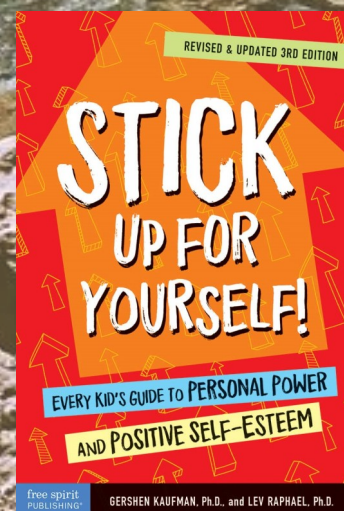
by *Scott Bellini*

Too often social skill interventions are designed merely as a reaction to problem behaviors. Building Social Relationships-2 (BSR-2) provides readers with a conceptualized framework that will improve their understanding of social functioning in youth on the autism spectrum. The book will teach readers how to assess and teach social skills and activate social cognitive processing in both children and adolescents. Contains over 40 instructional strategies and includes a revised version of the Autism Social Skills Profile (ASSP-2)

Stick Up for Yourself!: Every Kid's Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem

by *Gershen Kaufman & Lev Raphael*

Using simple words and real-life examples, this book shows kids how to be assertive with other kids—and with adults. Kids will learn to feel better about themselves, stronger and more secure inside, and more in charge of their lives. They'll read about effective ways to deal with intense feelings and to build self-esteem and self-confidence. In addition, they'll learn strategies for building inner security to cope with powerlessness and uncertainty and discover ways of protecting themselves when using social media.



Spring Fling

for individuals with special needs

You and your family are invited to the
UF Neurodevelopmental Pediatric Center
for an evening of fun and games at our annual Spring
Fling event!

When: March 21, 2024

5:30 to 8:00 pm

Use the QR Code (at right)
to register ahead of the event.



Where: 6271 St. Augustine Rd, Suite 1
Jacksonville, Florida 32217

For more information email
Terry.Lee2@jax.ufl.edu
or call 904.633.0760

- Hunt for eggs
- Game Rooms & Prizes
- Dancing
- Crafts & Activities
- Face Painting



SPRING FLING



Bring your camera for a special photo
with the Easter Bunny

