

FDLRS Record

Newsletter for the University of Florida FDLRS-MDC program in Jacksonville

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Don't Be Scared, Get Prepared

By Lotoya Odom, SSP, B.A.

Licensed School Psychologist

It's "testing season" in most schools in Florida! What does that mean exactly? It means that many students and teachers are preparing for end-of-the-year exams or assessments. It may also mean that you have noticed a difference in your child's behavioral presentation. Taking tests is not a task that one looks forward to, in general. Feelings of nervousness, failure, and unhealthy stress are among some of the common natural responses leading up to the time for tests. Those feelings show up differently depending on the person. One person's feelings may lead to crying, irritability, stomach aches, etc. And, another person's feelings may be present but not show at all; instead, they may feel a sense of dread, have difficulty thinking clearly, etc. Learning to control one's breathing is one of several proactive coping strategies that can be incorporated to help settle one's nerves during any stressful event, including test-taking.

"Learning" to control one's breathing may seem bizarre. Our bodies naturally do that on their own, right? No. Our bodies do breathe naturally, but the breaths we take are not always controlled. Think about it. When you've come into contact with your deepest fear, what happens to your breathing? It probably quickens, or maybe you completely stop breathing for a moment. If someone startles you, maybe your breath catches, or worse, you hyperventilate and have trouble catching your breath/breathing steadily. That's how learning to control your breathing can be beneficial. And, nearly anyone at any age can "learn" to do it!

Controlled breathing works best when it is practiced before experiencing a stressor, like test-taking, then applying it when it's needed. The more it's practiced the more natural it becomes and the more effective it works when trying to calm stress/nerves. Controlled breathing works well in any situation, especially during quiet times, like test-taking. Here's to calm schools, teachers, and students, even during this "testing season"!



Florida Diagnostic & Learning — RESOURCES SYSTEM —

OUR SERVICES

Who we Serve:

- Individuals between the ages of 3 & 22 who have not graduated high school.
- Who are struggling in school and have complicated medical, behavioral, developmental, &/or social histories
- And who reside in Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, & St. Johns counties

Services for Families:

- Comprehensive, multidisciplinary assessment, which may include psychoeducational, emotional-behavioral, &/or developmental pediatric evaluations
- Feedback sessions and a report detailing our findings
- Assistance in planning for your child's educational and psychological needs
- Trainings for parents covering a variety of topics

Services for the Community:

- Training/consultations for educators, students, & other professionals
- Educational consultation and support services: This can include collaboration with school personnel to facilitate school placement & provision of services



A Very Sensory Summer

By Gwenivere Mauro, M. Ed.

Summer is here! The sun is out longer. The weather is warm. The kids are out of school... The kids are OUT of school!? With summer time upon us there is a mad dash for ways to fill the day. Sensory play is a great activity to integrate into the day. Sensory play allows children to engage in activities that stimulate their senses. Sensory play helps develop language and motor skills along with fostering opportunities for social interactions. Sensory play increases cognitive growth and allows opportunities for children to experience and explore their environment.

Let's look at ways to make this the best sensory summer and remember to use our ***senses!***

Sensory: Tune into all your child's senses. Allow children to move, see, hear, touch, sniff, and taste (when appropriate)! By stimulating a child's senses, brain development occurs. Freeze toys in ice cubes and allow the child to feel the coldness of the ice as they work to melt the ice into water. Make playdoh and add coffee beans to explore the texture and smell. Offer kids pudding or yogurt to

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finger paint. They can taste the “paints” and talk about what flavors they experience.

Exploration: Allow opportunities for your child to explore their environment with opportunities to discover and make sense of the world around them. Children find absolute delight in exploring the world so allow them to get messy. Allow them to make mistakes. Allow them to have fun. While your child engages in exploring the world through their senses they are building a stronger foundation of understanding, problem solving, and creativity.

Nature: As the weather warms up, head outside for sensory experiences. Playing in a sandbox, rolling in the grass, adding water to the dirt to make mud, splashing in puddles after the midafternoon shower, riding a bike, swinging on the playset – all of these activities provide opportunities for sensory play. **Enjoyable: Make it FUN!** Tailor the sensory play to your child’s interest. Create themed sensory bins based on their interests. Allow them to use their construction vehicles in kinetic sand or let them make mud outside to roll their excavators through. Fill up a water table and allow them to use ocean animals to swim and splash around. Create an obstacle course with items found around the house that the child can balance on or jump from obstacle to obstacle.

Simple: Keep it simple! Sensory play does not require expensive equipment or extensive planning. Sensory play can be easy to setup. Use what you have on hand! If you have soap, water, toy cars, and an old toothbrush on hand you can easily turn that into a bubble sensory bin that the child can have a car wash. Spray shaving cream on the table and practice making shapes, letters, or numbers. Creative thinking and developing imagination skills can be fostered with engaging in simple activities.

Sensory play can be simple and fun way to fill the day. It provides opportunities for a child to experience the world and build foundational skills.

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UF-Jacksonville
FDLRS-MDC serves
Baker, Clay, Duval,
Flagler, Nassau, &
St. Johns County.

Staying Safe for Summer (and Beyond!)

By Amy Lane


Certainly, parents' biggest fears involve keeping our children safe from harm. Adding a disability to the mix intensifies those fears and expands the things parents need to do to be sure that the kids are all right. Here are some suggestions you might consider:

- Take a picture of your child every morning when they're dressed and ready for the day.
 - If your child is missing, you'll have a recent photo with exactly how your child looked that day.
- Make sure your child has an identification card on their person whenever they're in public (even if you're with them). It should have:
 - A relatively recent picture
 - Their full name and preferred name (if different)
 - Their address
 - A couple of phone numbers in case of emergency
- Have your child practice recognizing who the helpers are. Play a game to spot the police, firefighters, and EMS teams when you're in the community and say, "HELPERS!"
- Have your child practice approaching the first responder, asking for help, and giving them their ID card.
- Take advantage of opportunities for your child to explore an emergency vehicle like a police car, firetruck, or ambulance. Children who feel safe with first responders (and all their stuff!), are more likely to seek help from them.
- Consider putting a GPS tracker or other wearable device on your child's person.
- Make a "scent kit" and keep it in your 'fridge. These kits give K-9 officers a huge head start when looking for a missing person.
 - Take a clean, sterile piece of gauze and wipe it 8-10 times in your child's armpit.
 - Place the gauze in a clean jar with a lid, and close the jar tightly.
 - Put some tape around the lid of the jar for extra airtightness.
 - Label the jar with the child's name, date of birth, address, and the date of the sample.
 - Store the jar in your refrigerator



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- Put a decal on your car window or a sleeve on your child's seatbelt informing first responders that a child with a disability is in the car. Doing so will help the first responder be extra alert to the needs of your child and the possibility that they might run away or resist help.
 - Stickers on the doors in your home that lead to the outside are a great idea for the same reason.
- If your child is vulnerable to leaving home without letting you know, you might want to invest in alarms and childproof locks for doors and windows.
- The truth is that **drowning** (and not running away or getting lost) is the biggest danger children with disabilities face. Door locks and alarms can offer some protection. However, parents are children's best protection, and a designated adult should always have eyes on kids who are swimming or near a body of water. Teach kids to swim, require that they wear floaties or life-jackets, and *stay safe out there!*



Presented by UF Health CARD and FDLRS-MDC.

Sibshops are engaging and interactive workshops where siblings can share the challenges and celebrate the joys of having a brother or sister with a special need.

UFHealth
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA HEALTH

SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FOR SIBLINGS

Sibshop is a gathering of siblings across the ages to create community, build support and share in the stories that make us unique as the sibling of individuals with developmental, intellectual, social-emotional, and medical disabilities. Ages 8-12yo+

Location: Via Zoom Meeting

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



SPRING CLEANING

By Jennifer O'Brien M.A., CCC-SLP

Spring is in the air and spring cleaning just might be on your mind. If so, think about this opportunity as not only a time to get the house in shape but also as a wonderful opportunity to enlist the help of your children. Now before you start thinking, “my kids will only complain” and “it’s just easier if I do it myself,” consider some of the long term benefits your child will gain as a result of helping around the house.

Engaging even small children in basic household chores begins to teach them responsibility, and these acquired skills can carry-over into other aspects of their adolescent and adult lives. Children learn

respect for personal property, effective time management, and appreciation for the time and energy it takes to keep a household running. Children also learn a sense of pride in completing a task they started. To help motivate your child, start by working on chores together as a family. Assign each person a task to complete within a specific timeframe -- under 30 minutes for younger children, over 30 minutes for adolescents and young adults. Pull out a radio or speaker and play upbeat music to help keep everyone moving and grooving. Plan a favorite fun activity to participate in together after the chores are completed. To encourage participation over time,

remember to make chores fun and never use them as punishment. Let go of perfection, even if you have to go back later and fix a few things. And remember to find praise and make criticism constructive not destructive! For example, instead of saying “Thanks, even though those windows have streaks,” try “those windows are so much clearer than they were before. You are working so hard.” When your child hears

your praise and feels they are truly a help and not a headache, they will be more eager to help in the future.

Ready to get started? Grab a mop and a bucket and let the cleaning begin! The following is a list of appropriate chores by age. Use these to create a personal chore chart for each family member. Happy cleaning!

Ages 3-5 years	Ages 6-9 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put toys away Help wipe up spills Throw trash away Put laundry in the hamper Move laundry from dryer to basket Bring dishes to the sink Put silverware away Match socks Bring personal items from car to house Fold washcloth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of the previous age plus Make bed Wipe door handles Feed pets Water plants Set the table Sort laundry Put laundry away Make easy snacks Bring in the mail
Ages 10-13 years	Ages 14+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of the previous ages plus Clean windows Put groceries away Wipe bathroom sinks Dust Walk the dog Take garbage out Wipe counters and table Unload dishwasher Help with food prep for meal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of the previous ages plus Pull weeds Mop floors Sweep/vacuum floors Bake cookies Change bed sheets Make a grocery list Clean bathtub Wash and dry clothes Set own alarm clock

Building Critical Thinking Skills in Children

by Brett Walden, MPH

Developing critical thinking skills in children is crucial for their overall growth and success. By encouraging and fostering these skills, you are providing your children with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of the world and make informed decisions. To build their critical thinking abilities, allow your children to engage in open-ended discussions where they can express their thoughts and opinions freely. Encourage them to ask questions, analyze information, and consider multiple perspectives. Give them the opportunity to distinguish between fact and opinion. Provide opportunities for problem-solving activities that require logical reasoning and creative thinking. Expose them to diverse experiences and viewpoints, and then encourage them to reflect on their thinking processes. Finally, be a role model by demonstrating critical thinking in your own decision-making processes. With your guidance and support, your children will develop the vital skill of critical thinking, empowering them to become independent, analytical, and adaptable individuals.



What types of activities can parents do to help facilitate this growth?

1. Allow opportunities for play. Use building blocks, puzzles, and board games to encourage deeper thinking.
2. Incorporate STEAM activities into kids' summers, after-school programs, and extracurricular activities.
3. Encourage your child to express themselves through art.
4. Start a story in the middle of the book and ask the child questions to distinguish characters, plot, setting, etc.

If you have questions, please reach out to your local Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System - Multidisciplinary Center (FDLRS-MDC). We are available for trainings, consultations, and additional resources.

***FDLRS-MDC - 904.633.0770.**

Supporting Your Child's Executive Functioning Skills

by Sarah Falls, M.S., CCC-SLP

Students with varying exceptionalities, from ADHD to learning disabilities, often struggle with using executive functioning skills. At home and in school, these students display difficulty with managing time, organizing, prioritizing, and planning. Poor executive functioning skills can significantly impact a student's academic success and independence during daily living routines. Does your child have a disorganized backpack, forget to bring homework to the house, not write down important due dates in his planner, or not study until the day of? Here are some tips to support your child's executive functioning skills at home:

- Find a planner that works for your child. There are so many different layouts- daily, weekly, monthly. Go shopping with your child and see what she is interested in. A daily planner is usually recommended so your child has a designated area to write down daily homework assignments.
- Daily planner checks. Have your child show you what he wrote in the planner. Look to see if there are any upcoming deadlines.
- Create a simple binder system. Again, talk with your child about what she would like. Maybe it's a large binder

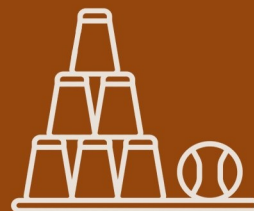
with dividers for all subjects or a small binder for each subject. At the end of the week, organize the binder (s) and see if anything can be discarded.

- Create a predictable routine at home for homework. Set an organized, designated space with minimal distractions. Would homework first, then tv time work best? Or maybe a set time to play outside and have a snack, then do homework? Whatever it is, try to keep the routine consistent.
- Use a reward system! Your child could earn a reward (extra video game time, Dollar Tree trip, etc.) if he writes in his planner each day for a week. Or if she keeps her backpack organized for two weeks. Choose a goal that is functional and attainable, and of course choose a reward that is of interest to your child!
- Ask your child's teacher or ESE teacher about any recommendations. They see your child on a regular basis and can offer recommendations, especially with determining which strategy to implement first.



FALL FAMILY FUN

Oct. 26
6-8:00 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 who will make up "Trick or Treat Lane," providing treats and/or an activities for those attending along with providing families with resources. Our staff will also be on site to provide support as needed.

NEW 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! Feel free to wear costumes.
Looking forward to seeing you!

Questions?
904.633.0917
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Register online using the following QR Code or visit:
www.eventbrite.com/e/fall-family-fun-tickets-718504685857
Location: 6271 St. Augustine Rd., Suite 1, Jacksonville, FL 32217

