Resource Family Connection

News, Events, and Information Benefiting the Children of Waukesha County

March and April, 2021

Supporting Your Child with Sensory Processing Challenges

By: creatingafamily.org

For a child who struggles with sensory processing or regulation - whether it's a diagnosed disorder or not - the world can be overwhelming and triggering. How do you support a child with sensory processing challenges?

1. Educate Yourself
On a recent Creating a Family radio show about Connected Parenting, our guests talked about the impact of trauma and loss on a child's developing brain, including how attachment issues can be confused with sensory struggles.

2. Exercise Empathy
When you've learned that your child's behavior is not just willful acting out and that her nervous system struggles to organize all the additional sensory information around her, you cans summon empathy for her challenges. Reframing your mindset from assuming willfulness to understanding her struggle helps you respond in compassion. It also forges connection and allows her to trust you more fully.

3. Educate Your Child
Use your compassion to invite her to learn together about the impacts her sensory processing challenges have on behavior. You can become her ally in learning what triggers sensory overwhelm or what pending dysregulation feels like inside her body. Working together to build understanding and equipping her to address her needs gives you both a taste of success to keep learning and growing together.

4. Prepare for Sensory Processing Challenges
By educating yourselves, you are learning what it takes to prevent your child's body and brain from becoming overwhelmed. Make a habit of being prepared for overload. For some families, that might look like a "bag of tricks" that you keep in the car, full of sensory -soothing tools.

Activities outside of your routine present extra challenges for kids with sensory processing challenges, so think about things you can do to keep tantrums and dysregulation at bay:

- Keep your child well-hydrated and well-rested as much as you can.
- Carry a stash of healthy snacks. Proteins like yogurt, cheese, turkey, or crunchers like carrots, crackers, and nuts are sensory -rich helpers.
- Bring crayons and a travel-size coloring book for younger kids.
- Allow screen time judiciously and use it to your benefit to get through tough moments.
- Have a "back-up" of his favorite comfort toy or "lovie" blanket.
- Be willing to relax your rules about phone or video game use for older kids at events you know can trigger.

5. Empower Your Child's Voice
When you are preparing in advance for potentially challenging activities, get your child's input. Talk about what he is choosing and why. Offering him voice and choice in the preparations is empowering to identify his dysregulation and cope with it. If you plan for a specific event, ask him what he thinks the tough parts of this event might be and how he'd like to manage them. Then encourage him to include those tools in his preparations.

6. Teach Your Child to Recognize the Signs
Talk to your child about what she felt inside her brain or body just before a meltdown has happened in the past. You might hear things like:

- My tummy felt all jumpy
- My brain felt foggy, fuzzy, crazy
- My ears couldn't hear right anymore
- My arms and legs couldn't be still
- My chest hurt, felt tight
- My face felt hot, red, itchy
- My eyes burned, felt too bright

Help her understand that these are how her body lets her know that it needs a break. Some families find it helpful to work out a "secret signal" of rising stress, like the child tugging on her ear. Other kids might as for a quick walk around the block as their sign.

7. Keep Your Eyes Open for the Signs, Too
Don't lay the responsibility for knowing the signs of sensory overload solely on your child's shoulders - even if she is older. Family events and holiday activities are supposed to be fun, connecting times. Your child should not feel anxious about managing her sensory challenges all by herself.

Keep your eyes peeled during holiday activities for signs that your child is struggling with sensory overload. Watch her facial expressions. Check on her energy level through the event. Listen to her tone of voice and her volume. Is she communicating with body language that she's nearing her limit for new or different sensory input?

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Tips for Supporting Your Child with Sensory Processing Challenges

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8. Do the Coping Strategies Together

When your child gets overwhelmed during family gatherings or social events, come alongside him by offering to do some coping strategies together.

- Find a quiet room and listen to soothing music on your phone while snuggling under a blanket.
- Take the crayons and coloring book out onto the porch and do some deep breathing while you color together.
- Go for a walk around the neighborhood.
- Compete for the highest bounce on the trampoline.
- Do lunges or jumping jacks in the driveway.
- For older kids, work out parameters for how and when it's okay to retreat to re-regulate. Fifteen minutes on a video game for phone to hang with friends can be the re-set he needs.

Tell him you will be on the look-out for signals that he's struggling. For example, during a holiday activity with cousins, he might feel very anxious but be reluctant to leave the room to re-regulate. Because of this, he can trust you to help him exit and then re-join the fun when he's feeling more in control. Work together to find compromises in advance and at the moment so that he feels supported and can enjoy yourself.

9. Be Flexible and Realistic

No matter how well you plan, you might end up being the only one who can be flexible in those moments of big feelings. That's okay - feel free to tweak the plans for the sake of your child's needs. That could mean driving two cars to Aunt Nell's weekly game night. This might be the year that you skip midnight mass. Be flexible with your preparations, plans, and expectations.

If you have to change the plan, remind yourself that it's okay to feel disappointed but that this isn't the family gathering this month. Tell yourself and your child that you will try again soon. In the end, if changing plans allow you to build trust, safety, and connection with your child, then your flexibility becomes a "double win!"

We Say This A Lot: Take Care of Yourself!

Don't forget that you also have sensory challenges and preferences. Be sure to schedule some downtime to do the things that bring joy and meaning to you. Obviously, your sensory regulation will look quite different from your child's. However, it is no less important. When things are frantic and stressful, you are more equipped to handle it all if you engage in healthy self-care. Self-care is crucial all year round, but it should not be ignored during this "most wonderful time of the year!"

Changes at Health and Human Services

After 22 years of commitment to and quality service with Waukesha County DHHS, including seven years as Director, Antwayne Robertson retired on January 29. We thank Antwayne for his professionalism and his dedication to Waukesha County and the health, safety, and well-being of county residents.

Elizabeth (Liz) Aldred has succeeded Antwayne as Director of Waukesha County DHHS. For the past 14 years, Liz has served in leadership roles at the Walworth County DHHS as Deputy Director and Department Director. Liz guided Walworth County DHHS through many similar challenges, chaos, and triumphs as we have had in Waukesha County.

Sign Up for COVID-19 and Vaccination Updates

Waukesha County residents can now sign up to receive a weekly communication about COVID-19 and vaccination information. These updates will go out every Thursday, after the Vaccine Dashboard is updated. Sign up at https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/FrNgFnP/Vaccine.

Meet The Foster Care Team
Libby Sinclair

Last year, we started introducing members of the Foster Care Team. We will continue to do this every other month. This month, we would like to introduce Elizabeth (Libby) Sinclair.

Libby has been with Waukesha County for 23 years. She started off in what was then called the Parent Services Unit. From there, she became an on-going Social Worker in the Child and Family Division. 5 years ago, Libby joined the Foster Care Team and licensed Level 1 foster homes. Libby currently works with all the Voluntary Kinship families and is involved with foster parent training. When asked why she like working with relative caregivers, Libby stated, "Relative caregivers have a unique situation. They did not sign up to care for their grandchildren and/or nieces and nephews. In most cases, they changed their life plans to care for the children that they love. I hope that I can offer support and help these families in some small way."

When Libby is not working, she enjoys spending time with her 11-month old dog, Winston. Libby loves all animals. She also enjoys doing craft projects on the weekends.

Eek! Environmental Education for Kids

Students learn about Wisconsin's natural resources through games, science experiments, virtual exploration, activities, and more! https://www.eekwi.org/.

Live Webinar: Why It's Important to Have Conversations About Race

In this webinar, Rhonda Roorda will share her extensive knowledge about why race matters in transracial adoptive families. She'll explain some of the history of transracial adoptions and why it's important to talk about race within our families. A goal of this webinar is that you will have some ideas of how to talk with your children (or children you work with) so that they know that you'll have their back when trauma around race happens.

Date: Tuesday, April 20, 2021
Time: 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Fee: $5.00
To Register: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/live-webinar-why-its-important-to-have-conversations-about-race-registration-138866642867?aff=

SAVE THE DATE! Families Like Mine Conference

The 3rd Annual Families Like Mine Conference for Relative Caregivers of Children will be held in a completely virtual format on **July 19, 2021** given the continued concerns around the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to make the conference more accessible in the virtual format, the presentation will again be available for all registered participants to view at any time during the week of July 19 and beyond!

Presentations will again be pre-recorded. Topics and presenters are yet to be finalized.

Registration details will be provided soon.

Turn Those Clocks Ahead!

Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, **March 14, 2021** at 2:00 a.m.!! Be sure to turn your clocks ahead or you'll be late to everything!

Family Free Day at Milwaukee County Zoo

Whether it's been years, months, or days since you've been to the Zoo, there is always something new to explore. Family Free Days are a perfect opportunity for you, along with your family and friends, to come and enjoy the Zoo!

Date: Saturday, March 6, 2021
Time: 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Fee: Admission is free; parking and concession fees still apply
For More Information: https://www.zoosociety.org/events/familyfreedays.php

Frog and Toad Call Workshop

Join us virtually to learn about Wisconsin frogs and toads! We will cover basic ecology and identification with the pros at Retzer Nature Center! Those who participate in the workshop will learn frog and toad call identification techniques and protocols before heading outdoors in the spring to put their skills to use.
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
To Register: https://waukeshacounty.maxgalaxy.net/Registration.aspx?ActivityID=5270

Kinnect Virtual Talent Show

Got talent? Show us what you've got at our virtual family fun, "talent show." Each family will have about 3 minutes to share a family or individual talent. To support your efforts, a free activity kit full of fun refreshments and supportive items will be sent directly to each family. These items are for you to enjoy as we watch each family show us their special talent!

Whether your dog has a silly pet trick, or you or your whole family have a song to sing, dance to dance, or an instrument to play, we want to cheer you on!

Register soon, as we can hardly wait for the show to begin!

Free event for relative caregivers and grandparents.

Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021
Time: 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
To Register: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/kinnect-virtual-family-event-talent-show-registration-138314812327?aff=

Marcus Theatres

Marcus theatres are now open. See the hottest blockbusters for ONLY $5 every Tuesday at Marcus Theatres and Movie Tavern. Plus, enjoy great food and beverage specials! https://www.marcustheatres.com/marcus-specials/value-pricing/5-dollar-tuesdays

Planetarium - The Little Dragg's Adventure

Do you know where the Earth lives? What surrounds it? How far is it from the Earth to the Sun, and what makes our planet different from the others? Take a wonderful journey with a cheerful dragon, Wood, who travels around the Universe in search of fantastic adventures.

Registration is required with max seating for 22 people. No walk-ins allowed. If seats are available, you can purchase them up to 9:00 a.m. the day of the show.

Date: Every Saturday in March, 2021
Time: 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Where: Horwitz-Deremer Planetarium, S14W28167 Madison St, Waukesha, WI 53188
Fee: $5.00 for the ticket, $1.25 in additional fees per ticket
Tickets and Additional Information: https://hdplanetarium.ticketleap.com/the-little-draggys-adventure/

Waukesha County Parks

Winter activities at Waukesha County parks include sledding, snowshoeing, hiking, cross country skiing, dog walking, and snowmobiling.
More Information: https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/winteractivities

Craft Time!
Egg Carton Flowers
By: iheartartsncrafts.com

Love having eggs for breakfast (or lunch or dinner!)? Maybe you are dying some eggs for an Easter egg hunt? Make some colorful egg carton flowers to brighten your Spring!

What You'll Need:

- Acrylic Paint
- Egg Carton (not foam)
- Paper Straw, Thick (a pipe cleaner won't hold the weight of the carton)
- Pom Poms
- Scissors
- Glue
- Paint Brush
- Something to put the paint on like a paper plate may be helpful too! ;-)

What You'll Do:

1. Have an adult cut out four containers out of the egg carton. Trim around the edges so it gives a rounder shape for the flower petals.
2. Using the acrylic paint, paint your flowers! Be sure to get the edges! And don't forget about the backside (maybe do that first so it can dry quick and you won't smudge it while working on the front side)!
3. After the paint has dried, glue the paper straw to the flower back as a stem!
4. Glue a colored pom pom to the front center of the egg carton.
5. Put your flowers in a nice cup or vase (they don't need water! YAY!), and admire them all springtime long!

Craft Time!
Rainbow St. Patrick's Day Wind Catcher
By: craftymorning.com

Hang this outside of a window so you can always keep an eye on it during the day!

What You'll Need:

- Paper Towel Roll
- Paint
- Dental Floss
- Ribbon (Green? Or maybe rainbow colors!)
- Green Paper
- Paint Brush
- Glue
- Scissors

What You'll Do:

1. Paint the paper towel roll rainbow colors and let it stand straight up to dry.
2. Once dry, poke two holes on the top and tie a piece of floss through (this is where it will hang from).
3. Now it's time to add the ribbons! You can either add holes to the bottom similar to what you did in step 2 and tie them on, or you can just tape or glue them inside the paper towel roll.
4. Cut out shamrock shapes on the green paper. You can do a Google search and use it as a template.
5. Attach the shamrocks onto the ribbon with glue.
6. Hang your wind catcher on a branch and watch it blow in the wind!

Additional Training and Events

Due to COVID-19 and social distancing, we currently are not having any in-person trainings or informational sessions. A survey will be distributed at a later time regarding in-person trainings.

Kinnect Virtual Support Group
Join us for this opportunity to connect with other caregivers and grandparents as a way to share the joys and challenges of being a relative caregiver.

Morning Group:
Date: March 25, April 29, 2021
Time: 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
To Register: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-group-kinnect-relative-caregivers-of-children-morning-tickets-114153498186

Evening Group:
Date: March 17, April 21, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
To Register: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-group-kinnect-relative-caregivers-of-children-evening-tickets-132317728889

NAMI Family-to-Family Class (Virtual)
Family-to-Family is a course offered at no cost, taught by trained family members who have lived with a loved one diagnosed with a mental health condition. This course offers education and support for family members and improves the coping and problem solving abilities of the people closest to an individual living with a mental health condition.

Date: Tuesdays, March 23 - May 11, 2021
Time: 6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
To Learn More and To Register: https://www.namiwaukesha.org/family-to-family

NAMI Family Support Group (Virtual)
For family members and those with a loved one impacted by mental health conditions.
When: 3rd Tuesday of each month ~OR~ 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month
Time: 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
For more information or to register, please contact Denise: 262-409-2743 or denise@namiwaukesha.org.

NAMI Parent Peer Support Group (Virtual Until Further Notice)
For parents and caregivers who have a child under the age of 18 who is affected by a mental health condition and/or emotional difficulties. Gain insight from the successes of others facing similar experiences.
When: 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month
Time: 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
For more information or to register, please contact Denise: 262-409-2743 or denise@namiwaukesha.org.

COVID-19 Resources

How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus - This is a great article with helpful information. The website also has games and activities for your kids to play. https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-coronavirus

Parent/Caregiver Guide to Help Families Cope with the Coronavirus - This resource will help you understand what an infectious disease is, and how you can help your family cope. https://www.nctsn.org/print/2251

COVID-19 Updates from the Department of Children and Families - The Department of Children and Families is working closely with DHS and is committed to keeping you informed about COVID-19 and its impact here in Wisconsin. For up-to-date information, please go to: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/covid-19

Waukesha County Public Health - Waukesha County Public Health website provides up-to-date information about the number of COVID-19 cases, the latest news and information, how to protect yourself and your family, and more. Go to: https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/COVID19

Contact Numbers:

Foster Care Social Workers:

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
262-548-7212

Michelle Lim, Foster Care Supervisor
262-970-4761

Cassie BeLow 262-896-8574
Rhonda Klinger 262-548-7240
Jennifer Mantei 262-548-7250
Libby Sinclair 262-548-7277
Hilary Smith 262-548-7254

Case Management Social Workers:

Angie Sadler, Ongoing Social Work Supervisor
262-548-7272

Eric Calvino, Ongoing Social Work Supervisor
262-548-7271

Eve Altizer, Ongoing Social Work Supervisor
262-548-7267

Nicole Allende..... 262-548-7265
Kimberly Dudzik 262-548-7347
Stephanie Engle..... 262-548-7424
Megan Fishler 262-896-8570
Abbey Girman 262-548-7695
Sharon Godwin 262-548-7684
Laura Jahnke..... 262-548-7359
Alyssa Jones 262-548-7239
Jessica Larsen 262-548-7346
Maria Maurer 262-548-7345
Rachel O'Sullivan 262-548-7639
Johanna Ploeger 262-896-6857
Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349
Kim Sampson..... 262-548-7273
Linda Senger 262-548-7698
Brittany Sutton 262-548-7262

Children's Mental Health Outreach
262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911

Family Emergency: 211 or 262-547-3388

If an Allegation of Abuse or Neglect has been made against you, please call:

FASPP
Norma Schoenberg
920-922-9627