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Foundation Goals

The objectives of the Canadian National Autism Foundation are charitable. The Canadian National Autism Foundation has been formed to provide funding for:

- * Educating the general public and professionals;
- * Providing information and resources to families of children with autism;
- * Providing funding for Canadian based research and development; and
- * Promoting national autism awareness

Mission Statement

The Canadian National Autism Foundation promotes the positive improvement and quality of life for people with autism in Canada.



Ongoing Fundraisers

New CNAF Candles! A real keepsake as small votives can be placed inside to extend burning enjoyment. The light shines through to illuminate the CNAF logo and create a glowing ambience. They would make a wonderful and attractive addition to any gift, while at the same time promoting autism awareness! Pillar \$30.00, Round \$35.00 (+ shipping)

Upcoming CNAF Events

2nd Annual Golf Tournament

Friday, August 12, 2005

*Chippewa Golf Club
Binbrook, ON*

Registration \$100.00 per person

Look for more information at www.cnaf.net

Upcoming CNAF Events

4th Annual Dinner & Dance

Friday, October 21, 2005

Chandelier Place, Stoney Creek, ON

Special Guest: Walter Gretzky

For Tickets or to donate a prize

Call Tina at 905-643-7183

Ask the Expert

The expert for this issue is Dr. Dorothy Griffiths; a professor of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. Dr. Griffiths has extensive experience in working on clinical issues regarding dual diagnosis (persons who are developmentally disabled and have mental health issues). Her expertise more specifically is in the area of sexual abuse and offence, aggression and self-injury, and social skills training with persons with developmental disabilities. She is currently researching Human Rights and persons with intellectual disabilities. She has written and speaks extensively on these topics. She is notably recognized for four of her books that she co-authored/co-edited called *Changing Sexually Inappropriate Behavior*, *Dual Diagnosis*, *Demystifying Syndromes*, and *Ethical Dilemmas of Sexuality and Developmental Disabilities*.

The answers to questions posed below were derived from a presentation by Dr. Griffiths in April 2005, entitled "Asperger Syndrome and Sexuality". For recommended resources, check out our website, under Resources → Books & Other Resources → Sexuality Issues

What would be considered appropriate sexual behaviour for individuals on the spectrum?

"Appropriate sexual behaviour" is defined as:

- ✦ having a consenting and age appropriate partner; which is defined by the law, characteristics of the individual and consent,
- ✦ appropriate time and place, which need to be taught,
- ✦ within the limits of society

This is no different for those on the spectrum, however, it needs to be more explicitly taught.

What should we teach individuals on the spectrum about socio-sexual issues/ health?

Socio-sexual education should:

- ✦ recognize the emotions – individuals on the spectrum have a qualitatively different experience of emotion, therefore there is a disharmony in emotion which causes difficulty in social adaptation
- ✦ be based on a person-centred curriculum – sexual knowledge and attitudes need to be assessed on an individual basis
- ✦ be concrete – emphasis on visual learning, minimize language but use explicit and concrete language, probe for meaning (ie. "my mother told me I couldn't get pregnant until I got married, so there is no need for birth control because I am not married")
- ✦ model cultural norms
- ✦ teach adaptation – developing social cues, and identifying consent
- ✦ test for understanding
- ✦ use graduated learning – teach what is age appropriate and relevant to them at the time
- ✦ recognize personal morality
- ✦ ensure consistent messages – everyone in the child's domain needs to be on board, using the same language and the same messages
- ✦ teach the range of socio-sexual knowledge

If we teach about sex and sexuality, won't this make them want to do it more?

There is no evidence that appropriate training, provided by parents or other caregiver's results in increased sexual interests. However, receiving positive messages about sexuality (relevant and age appropriate) is important in reducing distress and isolation that may typically occur in puberty. This includes that individuals understand and accept physical and emotional changes, feel good about one's body and maleness/femaleness, appreciate individual differences, make informed and responsible decisions, be able to communicate about sexual matters, and realize potential for interpersonal relationships and expression.

Submit questions to our experts via email at cnaf_autism@hotmail.com, by phone at 950-643-7183, by fax at 905-643-0969, or via mail at 1227 Barton Street East, PO Box 47577, Hamilton, ON L8H 2V0

The Canadian National Autism Foundation will attempt to have all questions answered in a timely manner, and to ensure that names are kept confidential. Not all questions posed will be published in a particular issue. The Canadian National Autism Foundation is not responsible for the responses given by the expert to questions posed through this outlet, and we encourage you to consult with other experts for additional advice and information.

A Puzzle Perspective

written by Linda Hogdon, M.Ed., CCC-SLP (June E-newsletter)

I had an opportunity recently to observe a professional debate. Two people. Two different professional roles. Both serving students with autism. They were staking out their territory. One person was trying to make the boundary lines very clear. He was the expert in his field and he did not want the other person to cross the line. No one else was permitted to know about "his stuff." He was protecting his turf. In fact, he became angry when the other person said something to cross into his territory.

It Takes a Lot of Information

I began to think about all the different people that provide information to help understand the challenges of Autism Spectrum Disorders. Parent, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Classroom Teacher, Behavior Therapist, Instructional Aide, Autism Consultant, Social Worker, Doctor, Dietician, and lots more. .

Each of these people has training or experiences and information to help us understand some of the mysteries of autism. No one discipline has all the answers.

That's what makes autism so unique

Finding solutions for the challenges of Autism Spectrum Disorders can be difficult. There are many areas to investigate.

Generally, one approach or one profession does not solve all the problems. More likely, a variety of people and a combination of interventions work together to create solutions.

For example, solving a behavior problem may require input from a dietician, the Speech Pathologist, the Occupational Therapist, a behavior specialist and lots more.

What does this have to do with puzzles?

Think of the simple first puzzle we may give a child. Each piece is separate and fits easily into its own space. Then think of those complicated puzzles with hundreds of pieces that can take days to assemble. Which puzzle do you think better represents autism?

So here's the point. . .

There are many pieces to the puzzle of autism and each piece is essential to complete the picture. Information from many places in the education and medical fields are important parts of a bigger picture. Missing pieces result in a picture with holes.

Think about how puzzle pieces interlock with each other

Observe how the pieces connect. Each piece has a unique color and shape. Its shades and designs are distinct and different. Yet at the point where the pieces intersect, they have something in common: color, lines, details. When you hook many pieces together you begin to create a different picture.

That is a model for how we need to work together for solutions to the challenges in autism. Each member of the team brings unique information and understandings. Yet the blending and interlocking creates a different view.

The power of the puzzle

The puzzle piece certainly represents the mysteries of autism. But another way to think about those puzzle pieces is how they link with each other to create the bigger picture of the autism spectrum.

We need to interconnect

But here is the caution. Reading a book or attending a workshop will give me some useful information. *But that is just a piece.* I cannot presume then to know everything you know from your professional background. I need you to teach me and help me learn more about what you know. I want to teach you what I have discovered. **And if we link our understandings . . . think of the possibilities.**

P.S. In puzzle terminology, I think of parents as the borders. They provide the shape and structure for all those pieces to fit together.

In the beginning it can be overwhelming. When you first dump all the puzzle pieces on the table it looks like a mixed-up mess. But as you systematically turn the pieces over and begin assembling the border pieces, the whole puzzle begins to take shape. Eventually, you can appreciate the beautiful picture that was hiding in that pile of pieces.

How to Contact Us

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How You Can Help

As a charitable organization, the Canadian National Autism Foundation strives to raise funds to achieve our goals and it is with the support of generous organizations, companies and people that we are able to put together fundraising events such as those we have had in the past in order to raise the funding needed.

At this time we are looking for financial support, and this can come in various forms:

- Sponsorship of portions of our events
- Donations of prizes for our events
- Purchase of tickets to our events
- Financial contributions directly towards our goals (i.e. research)

Check out our new **Message Board** on the web at www.cnafe.net
Launching in **August 2005!**

In our Upcoming Issue

Ask the Expert about ... we want to hear from you. Who would you like to hear from, and what questions have you always wanted to ask. Email us your questions, and we will find an expert to answer them.

Interesting Information ... something new and exciting!

Disclaimer

The Canadian National Autism Foundation (CNAF) does not support, endorse or recommend any method, treatment, product, program or person for people suffering with autism spectrum disorders. The goal of our site and our responses to your questions is to provide accurate and up-to-date information about autism spectrum disorders. We believe everyone has the right to access all of the information available to them, allowing them to make their own individual choice.