

Wellness Wednesday this month has a little different focus. Did you know that **April is Autism Acceptance Month?**

I know you're probably thinking, what does that even mean, we're human so like most things, if it doesn't affect me or my child, why should I know or care about this?

Autism is the fastest growing development disorder amongst children. In 2021 the CDC reported that approximately 1 in 44 children were diagnosed with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) With boys being four times more likely than girls.

So where do we go from here? Knowing the signs as children develop and having access to resources is vital; whether it's your child, a family member, or someone just close to you.



Social Communication Skills

- Avoids or does not keep eye contact
- Lack in variety of facial expressions
- Does not play interactive games like pat-a-cake
- Lack of interest in others
- Does not engage in pretend play

Restricted or Repetitive Behaviors

- Lines up toys or other objects
- Plays with toys the same way each time
- Focused on single parts (e.g., wheels)
- Upset by minor changes
- Obsessive interests
- May flap hands, rocks body, or spins to self sooth or express

Additional Characteristics

- Delayed language skills
- Delayed movement or learning skills
- Hyperactive, impulsive, and/or inattentive behavior
- Unusal eating or sleeping habits
- Lack of danger, fear, and potential harm

KNOW THE SIGNS

This week, try to get familiar with local resources that can assist with recognition and providing access to diagnostic testing. And as always, if you are ever concerned about your child, please speak with their doctor.

- Children 0-3 years, Baby Watch Early Intervention Program – Utah Department of Health
<https://health.utah.gov/cshcn/pdf/BabyWatch/2021%20Baby%20Watch%20Program%20Summary.pdf>
- Northern Utah Autism Program
<http://www.nuapparents.com/>
- Matt's Place
<https://www.mattsplace.org/>
- Utah Behavior Services
<https://utahbehaviorservices.com/>
- Intermountain Healthcare
<https://intermountainhealthcare.org/services/behavioral-health/conditions/>

So now that we've learned the signs, what can we do.

As a mother of a child with Autism, ADHD, OCD, Sensory Processing Disorder, and Anxiety and Depression; my top tips are below ❤️

How can you help end the stigma?

Acceptance for difference on any level.

Have patience and empathy.

Ask how you can better understand or help out.

Have difficult conversations with family, friends and even strangers. Sometimes, they just don't know.

Interact – don't shy away, be flexible.

Teach your children about inclusion.

Volunteer.

Learn to advocate and be a voice.

KNOWING BETTER MEANS DOING BETTER



Books on autism and inclusion

- **Uniquely Wired**
<https://autismawarenesscentre.com/shop/autism/uniquely-wired-story-autism-gifts/>
- **Carly's Voice**
<https://www.amazon.com/Carlys-Voice-Breaking-Through-Autism/dp/1439194157>
- **Our Diversity Makes Us Stronger**
<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/our-diversity-makes-us-stronger-elizabeth-cole/1140370482>
- **Inclusive Ninja**
<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/inclusive-ninja-mary-nhin/1137674594?ean=9781953399564>

Videos

- **Carly's Café – Experience Autism through Carly's eyes**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmDGvquzn2k>

Blogs

- **Life with Greyson + Parker**
<http://www.lifewithgreyson.com/p/start-here.html>

Local ways to get involved

- <https://www.autismcouncilofutah.org/events>
- <https://takeaction.autism-society.org/autismsocietyofamerica/?0>