

AUTISM SUPPORT OF WEST SHORE

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MICHIGAN AUTISM STATE PLAN HAS BEEN RELEASED

The Michigan Autism Spectrum Disorder State Plan was developed to build the state infrastructure for comprehensive, lifespan supports to individuals with ASD and their families through access to information and resources, coordination of services, and implementation of evidence based practices.

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm#inbox/FMfcgxwBTjxhZWLLjFNSPgwPmtGwjbrM>.



LEARNING ABOUT AUTISM LATER IN LIFE

Have you ever heard that getting a diagnosis can make what you are going through easier? Sometimes it does, but that is not always the case. Being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in adulthood can be extremely challenging. Yes, you finally have the answers to many questions like why you feel so lost, why you don't have friends, or why people don't understand you, but, in reality, having those answers is JUST THE BEGINNING!

This article is written by a wife who is married to an autistic man. I am not a professional and do not claim to be. However, I hope I can give some insight to the difficulties that arise in a relationship when one partner is on the spectrum. It can be very troublesome. How each partner handles the difficulties that arise are major factors in whether the relationship will thrive. Even in the best of circumstances, challenges come up that have to be dealt with and each partner may have a different way of dealing with those challenges. When one partner is autistic, even the smallest challenge can become daunting. Like many individuals, my husband did not receive his diagnosis until he was an adult. We had been married several years at that time, but it was not the marriage either of us had expected or desired. It was fraught with unmet expectations, resentment, blame and frustration. We realized very quickly more was needed if we were to have any hope of our marriage surviving.

I believe it is **imperative** to get as much education as you can about what autism is, the symptoms and characteristics of someone with ASD and how it will affect you, your partner, and your relationship. The CDC (Center for Disease Control) states that Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain. People with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. A person with ASD might:

Avoid eye contact and want to be alone, have trouble understanding other people's feelings or talking about their own feelings, have delayed speech and language skills, repeat words

or phrases over and over (echolalia), give unrelated answers to questions, get upset by minor changes, have obsessive interests, have unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel. They may have flat or inappropriate facial expressions, may not understand personal space boundaries, avoid or resists physical contact, or not comforted by others during distress.

Some people with ASD have other symptoms. These might include: hyperactivity (very active), impulsivity (acting without thinking), short attention span, aggression, causing self-injury, temper tantrums, unusual eating and sleeping habits, unusual mood or emotional reactions, lack of fear or more fear than expected.⁽¹⁾

When the partner with ASD displays any of these symptoms, it can definitely strain a relationship. And the responsibility of maintaining the relationship usually falls on the partner who is not on the spectrum. That responsibility requires a lot of patience and willingness to put the needs of your partner first.

On a personal level, my definition of empathy is feeling someone else's pain in your heart. Feeling that empathy is what I have to keep working on faithfully. It is not easy to understand ASD and I continue to make mistakes. But we were created in God's image to feel empathy, acceptance, understanding, forgiveness, support, patience and love especially towards our spouse. That is my goal! How far I am from that goal changes and I know it will continue to take tremendous effort and hard work on my part. I firmly believe that making positive strides toward that goal is essential and will definitely benefit myself, my spouse, my marriage and the people around me.

Seeking out help from a qualified professional specializing in adult autism is also very beneficial. So if, like me, you struggle to handle the demands of being married to someone who is on the spectrum, don't give up!

Learn, grow, love!

For the DSM-5 Definition of Autism Spectrum Disorder go to <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/autism/what-is-autism-spectrum-disorder>

Resources

Family Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs offers a scholarship that assists families in attending conferences. The Conference Scholarship program is provided through the Family Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (Family Center) which is the statewide parent-directed center within Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS). The Family Center offers emotional support, information and connections to community-based resources to families of children and youth with special health care needs. These services are provided for all children who have or are at risk for physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional challenges.

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/Conference_Scholarship_Application_Packet_512751_7.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3YuTErgvOuvZ1LoYwICepdkNqZu_JeqfavHeHJLG0ZYqJ2kcjgvWgETik

How to Apply for Disability Benefits

<https://www.disability-benefits-help.org/disabling-conditions/autism-and-social-security-disability>

Scholarships for Tracking Devices

<https://www.disabilitycoop.com/2014/02/06/feds-clarify-tracking-devices/19085/>

<https://autismallianceofmichigan.org/project/gps/>

Save the date January Events

January 10, 2019

7:00 – 8:30 pm

Learn About: IEP 101

ARC of Kent County is presenting a series that looks at how the important parts of the IEP build on each other. Each week there will be time to network with other families as well as speak with our Parent Mentor. Attend one session or all. RSVP with Debbie Rock 616-588-1988 or debbier@michiganallianceforfamilies.org Register online at www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/rsvp The Arc of Kent County 2922 Fuller Ave. NE #201, Grand Rapids MI

January 16, 2019

6:00 – 8:30 pm RebounderZ of Jenison

Sensory Friendly Night at RebounderZ

At Rebounderz in Jenison, we realize during normal operating hours, our facility can be overwhelming for our friends with special needs and sensory issues. That is why we offer Sensory Friendly Night! The music is softer, flashing lights are minimal, the arcade is turned off and overall, the distractions in our family entertainment center will be dialed down.

<https://www.rebounderz.com/location/grand-rapids/sensory-friendly-night/>

January 24, 2019

7:00 – 8:30 pm

Learn About: The Importance of the PLAAP Statement

ARC of Kent County is presenting a series that looks at how the important parts of the IEP build on each other. Each week there will be time to network with other families as well as speak with our Parent Mentor. Attend one session or all. RSVP with Debbie Rock 616-588-1988 or debbier@michiganallianceforfamilies.org Register online at www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/rsvp The Arc of Kent County 2922 Fuller Ave. NE #201, Grand Rapids MI

January 25, 2019

6:00 – 8:30 pm Allendale Middle School

Pinning Down Autism Wrestling Meet

The Spring Lake Youth Wrestling and Allendale Youth Wrestling Teams will be hosting an Autism Awareness Wrestling Meet. Hundreds of young boys and girls have learned about wrestling and many have excelled in competition. The nature of this sport affords our young athletes opportunities to build on character, adversity, and empathy. The goal of this special wrestling meet is to raise awareness for Autism and the importance of all sports to remain open and compassionate to every

athlete. The Spring Lake and Allendale Team have wrestlers on the Autism Spectrum. Coach Garth Trask states “Having these boys on our team is a blessing! We all get to see first-hand what strength, commitment, and adversity look like on a much higher level.” Spring Lake and Allendale Wrestling strive to be “a place where everyone fits”. Event admission \$3.00/\$10 per family. Concessions are available at this event.

Allendale Middle School 7161 Pleasant View Ct, Allendale



Board Message We wish to thank our families and friends who participated in the speakers, trainings, conferences, events, celebrations and fundraisers. We look forward to continuing to support our children, families, schools and communities in 2019.

Contact Us

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