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# Special Needs Fitness Magazine

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**LEGITFIT PARTNERS  
WITH INCLUSIVE  
FITNESS PROGRAMS**

**GOOD POSTURE IS THE  
KEY TO YOUR HEALTH**

**ADAPTIVE FITNESS  
TRAINING**

AUTUMN/WINTER 2021  
VOLUME 1



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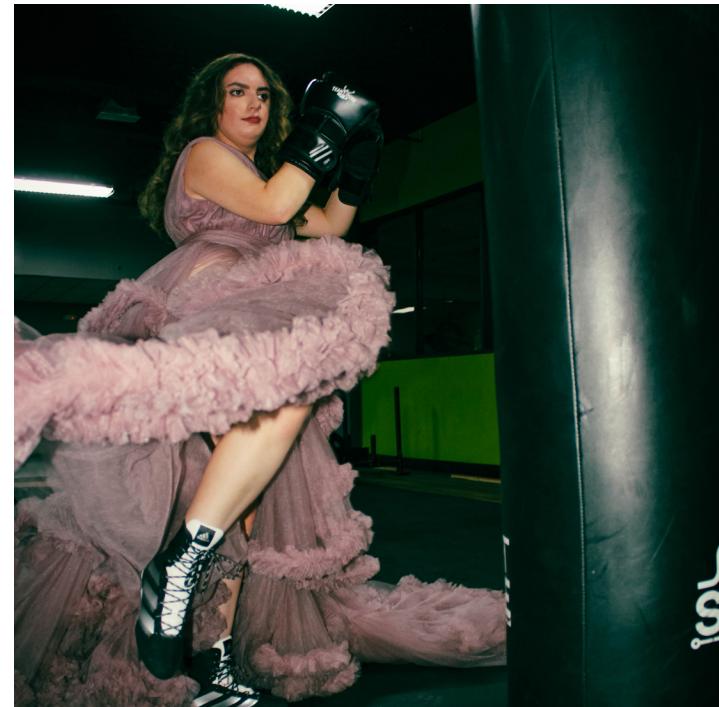




# I CAN, I WILL TRY, I WILL CONQUER.

Written by Pilar McKenna (mother), edited by Fiona (Sister to Keira)

**Keira's development was a little behind the regular markers, yet we thought she would catch up.**



Gavin E.B Rodriguez

Simultaneously, she was delayed in walking and had some difficulties crawling. Her observation and imitating skills were off the chart. One day at school review at the age of 3, before she was ready to move into the regular school, her teacher pulled me aside and showed me a picture of a young woman graduating high school. She told me that she had been her student, and she shared with Keira several things in common. She was severely apraxic like Keira, and, like my daughter, she was a fighter. She shared with me that there was hope, and her student was attending University. My and the teacher's goal then was to get her to speak clearly and put simple sentences together. Yet, in the back of my mind, I was hoping that we could see her thriving in the regular world. This was the key that I needed to be inspired and inspire her to forge along.

It took Keira until 5th grade to read at a 1st-grade level. Her difficulty was not comprehension but being able to retrieve the thoughts and form them into graceful sentences. What complicated it more was the short-term memory lapse diagnosis. The funny thing was that Keira had no idea that she was different, nor did the people she shared the classroom with had any learning issues or disabilities. In her upbeat and naive personality, she thought she was part of an exceptional group; her innocence was her best shield from the cruelty of the bullies.

The day that she became aware that she was a child with severe learning disabilities, this awareness greatly impacted her; someone called

her a "weirdo" in school. They laughed at her because of how she communicates. She stopped taking pictures and declared she was ugly and spent a lot of time by herself. She gained a lot of weight; food became her best friend. I was devastated; how could I help her without alienating her? Her casual naive persona was gone. So I started doing research, and through her Nanny, we found an exercise program designed specifically for special needs students. We joined Yomi and her personal and group training program, I.F.P, four years ago, the inside and the outside transformation began. Yomi and Keira created a bond like no other; their exercises encompassed throwing a tire across the gym, rowing, kickboxing, running (which she hated), dancing 80's tunes when they were over the limit, you named it they did it.

Soon enough, we started to get back that wonderful smile, great attitude, and confidence back. Over the first three months, the results were like turning pages of a great book; you want to get to the end because you know it will be good. Keira shed 40lbs after two years of personal training with Yomi, meeting twice a week for 45 min each time. I got back the same gift I always knew I had; a thoughtful, kind, persevering, magical spirit that not only has inspired her teachers and peers but a strong, beautiful, caring human being that sees her special needs as a gift and not as an obstacle.

## Soon enough, we started to get back that wonderful smile, great attitude, and confidence back.

Keira has learned to be independent at school, advocate for herself, read, do basic math, and cook a mean meal. She is savvy with money, passed her written driving test, and drives with tenacity. So watch out because I am sure we will hear lots of accomplishments shortly. I know that if she could write this article as eloquently as she sees it in her brain, Keira will leave you with this quote:

"I can, I will try, I will conquer. There are no limits."

Keira has become "limitless" thanks to those who believe in her. Thank you all for allowing Keira to be "the warrior," a true honor to her Irish name.

## HOW WE KEEP FIT



### Mary Says

Livingston, NJ, Age: 19

Strong in my words is putting yourself out there and doing anything you put your mind to. A healthy lifestyle is about maintaining a diet and staying on track. If I had to describe myself: I am fearless, I am caring, I put other people's needs before mine.

### KH

Working out with Yomi has been an amazing experience. So far I lost 20 pounds and she works with you at your own pace which is good if you're not used to exercising and helps build you up.



### Max

Montclair, NJ, Age: 19

Maximilian "Max" Byrnes. Max is 19 years old who lived in Montclair, NJ. Max loves the arts – drawing, painting, sculpting, and customizing toys and action figures. He also loves to watch movies and filmmaking. Max likes working out with Yomi. He is a fast sprinter and loves to swim. More recently, Max has taken up tennis, and enjoys playing tennis!



### Meet Christopher

Christopher is a loving 14-year old who enjoys basketball, running, swimming, and the outdoors. Christopher also enjoys music and that is where his strength is. The ultimate goal is to develop his musical talent in hopes that Christopher has the option to have a career in the music industry.



### Nassan's Place

Saturday Inclusion Basketball Camp: July 24 - August 7 2021

Children on the autism spectrum and their siblings enjoyed our annual "Saturday Inclusion Basketball Camp" as they learned basic skills, drills, techniques, and more while engaging with their peers. Find out more at: [www.nassansplace.org](http://www.nassansplace.org)



### Meet Eric

Age: 25

I have been working out with Yomi since 2018. In the years since I have gained quite a bit in my abilities. For example, I have more endurance. I have also had more motivation when it comes to exercise, which isn't something I had much of beforehand. While sometimes the sessions can leave me quite winded, I enjoy them quite a bit. I like when I'm finished and there's sweat all over my forehead. It's a sign that I have done well. It's clear that Yomi strives to have her clients do their best, and she makes the sessions fun amidst all the hard work.

# LEGITFIT PARTNERS WITH INCLUSIVE FITNESS PROGRAMS

*This October sees the partnership of Irish fitness software provider LegitFit and Inclusive Inclusive Fitness Programs (I.F.P) with Yomi Karade.*

When Yomi Karade met Legitfit Co-founder Ian O'Sullivan last month there was no doubt that Legit Fit was the perfect fit to be able to provide the Virtual Gym for Inclusive FitnessPrograms and help facilitate all of the fantastic work that I.F.P. does

This partnership revolutionizes the fitness space for those who wish to work out but have restrictions. It is a game-changer for the disabled demographic, empowering them to engage in physical activity from anywhere and provides a space for all to come and join the revolution!

In a statement, LegitFit Co-founder Ian O' Sullivan said 'We are delighted to be able to be a part of this project. The work that Inclusive Programs do is absolutely fantastic and we want to be able to help in any way we can'.

Inclusive Fitness Programs was created in 2019 by Yomi Karade under her company UK Today Media Group LLC. The specialized programs enhance gross motor skills, functional mobility, strength, flexibility, coordination, balance, proprioceptive awareness, muscular and cardiovascular endurance, agility, behavior reduction, and meal planning. I.F.P currently implements a wide range of exercises and techniques which require the use of the client's own bodyweight, free weights, bars and machines, balance and stability equipment, TRX and resistance bands, as well as boxing equipment.

"Most of all, our programs increase confidence, independence, and social interactions" Yomi explains  
"I.F.P's new online gym programs with software provider LegitFit is an innovative project. It is perfect for those who want to maintain or enhance their fitness in the environment of their choice and still have that gym feeling."

I.F.P's group classes will include Strength Training, Endurance Training, Cardio Kickboxing, Zumba, Kids Zumba, Core Training, Medita-



tion and Relaxation, and Seated Strength Training. Future classes will include classes for people with visual impairments, meal planning, and behavior management coaching. Each class will be tailored to each person's ability, whether they have a disability or not. Individuals, schools, day programs, and other organizations are encouraged to join us in this innovative adventure. Single classes are \$8 per session. Monthly Online Gym Membership is also available.



Pre- register here  
Or email:  
[info@specialneedsfitnessmagazine.com](mailto:info@specialneedsfitnessmagazine.com)  
In subject area write pre-registration form request.

## About LegitFit

LegitFit works with hundreds of businesses in 12 countries including Ireland, the UK, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Its scheduling and management platform was launched in 2019 and allows fitness entrepreneurs to automate their workflows, reduce cancellations and maximize their customer's experience. Putting a focus on customer support, something that has been at the heart of the company since its inception. This can be seen in their excellent online reviews.

LegitFit is coming off the back of the recent acquisition of UK-based GoFyt the Co-founder and CEO of LegitFit Ryan O'Neill said in a statement "We have a major vision for the company here at LegitFit, and moreover, for the industry as a whole", going on to say. "With this acquisition, we believe that we're going to be able to support thousands of more fitness entrepreneurs across the world to start-up and scale-up successful businesses with our simple, all-in-one management software".

The company is on track to meet and exceed its goal of 1 Million Euros in Annual Recurring Revenue by the end of the year, having recently come out of the American accelerator Techstars. A program that has significantly boosted the company's position in the international marketplace. With the program culminating in the DemoDay presentation for LegitFit.

For more information visit [www.legitfit.com](http://www.legitfit.com)

## MY FITNESS AND DANCE BACKGROUND WERE KEY TO MY REHABILITATION

*By Jennifer Gerring-Drozdz (pictured right)*

*Fourteen years ago, Jennifer Gerring-Drozdz was happily working as an aerobics instructor at Lucille Roberts, a popular gym for women based in Queens, New York.*

The high-energy fitness instructor had no idea that her life was about to drastically change. Yet in 2007, it did. "My boss, from Lucille Roberts, drove me home, so I couldn't have to ride the subway. On the drive home, we were lightly rear-ended. Being that I was 4 blocks from home, I chose to get out and walk the rest of the way", the 52 years-old explained. "As I was walking, an EMT saw me leaving the scene of the accident. He stopped me, instructing me to go to the hospital anyway just to get checked out."

When Jennifer arrived at the hospital, for precautionary measures, a Computed Tomography (CT) scan was carried out. What was to happen next, left the mother of two in disbelief. The CT scan revealed that Jennifer had a brain tumor that had possibly been present for a "lengthy amount of time."

This devastating news left Jennifer desperately searching for answers and also a second opinion. So, the Queens- New York-born dancer wasted no time and sought a Neurosurgeon in New York City. "I immediately had the scans looked at by the best neurosurgeon, in NYC. Upon reviewing the scans, we scheduled surgery, because it was a sizeable mass that could've caused major problems sooner than later."

Jennifer endured a 13-hour operation and battled to save her own life. During surgery, the doctor had to remove half of Jennifer's cerebellum so that her tumor could be removed successfully. "The cerebellum is responsible for balance, and coordination and therefore, I was left, unable to walk," Jennifer revealed.

In surgery, Jennifer was told by her doctor that she also almost died; not only once, but twice "The doctor informed me, that I went into Bradycardia twice. Bradycardia is a condition where your blood pressure drops so low, that you need to be revived." This life-changing ordeal took a major toll on Jennifer. She went from being an active dancer who graduated from the High School of Performing Arts and fitness instructor, to not being able to walk. To access her environment, Jennifer had to use a wheelchair. This was all too much for her. "I could not accept this fate," Jennifer admitted.

However, all was not lost. Jennifer's brother found Universal Institute in Livingston NJ for her rehabilitation. She soon began speech therapy, cognitive therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. "The physical therapists now say that I'm doing so well and can attribute my progress to my background in fitness." "I must admit, at first, I was very negative, and unmotivated. I didn't want to do ANY of the work. Suddenly, one day, I overheard a therapist say, "Jennifer, is so negative." From that moment on, I decided to do the work and motivate myself back to health." Jennifer and her therapists also believe that her fitness



background was a key factor in her recovery. "The physical therapists now say that I'm doing so well and can attribute my progress to my background in fitness. Had I not done all the prior work, and exercise, I might not have progressed the way I have."

**The physical therapists now say that I'm doing so well and can attribute my progress to my background in fitness.**

Jennifer's recovery has been so profound that she no longer attends speech therapy and she can now hold a plank for over 3 minutes. In fact, her fitness teaching days are not over. She currently runs a group wheelchair fitness class for other clients as part of her vocational rehabilitation. "I am in the best shape EVER and I hope to inspire others to work as hard to achieve their goals." "Fitness is a very important part of my life. I also now have a very positive attitude. I am always laughing and joking around. I am a completely different person." Jennifer says that she would love to be a motivational speaker and hopes that one day she will give a speech on Ted Talks.

Universal Institute is a rehabilitation facility dedicated to serving individuals with traumatic brain injuries and developmental disabilities. Their program offers opportunities for clients to participate in skilled physical therapy, occupational therapy, cognitive therapy, speech therapy, and vocational services.

For more information visit [uirehabnj.com](http://uirehabnj.com)

# THIS IS JAN'S JOURNEY. JOIN HER ARMY @ GO FUND ME

Janice McManus-Genervino- "Love is Free. Love is Sweet. Love is Peace. Love is Life."

**Janice's world changed in a heartbeat on the corner of 8th Ave and 24th Street on October 30, 2015, when moments after emerging from the NYC subway, she collapsed, unconscious after suffering a massive cerebral hemorrhage, an event which has left her paralyzed on her left side and wheelchair-bound.**

After 3 brain surgeries and 6 months institutionalized, Jan began her new "life" – facing the long and difficult road of rehabilitation and recovery that continues until today and which will soon enter its 7th year.

As time has marched on, Janice has been served by amazingly wonderful doctors, therapists from all rehab disciplines, aides, clinical psychologists, social workers, and medical professionals of every ilk. On the flip side of that coin of support, she's been blessed with the support of some very devoted friends and family offering concern and encouragement. The Covid lockdown made it even clearer how vital that support (both clinical and personal) has been in helping Jan get as far as she has. If the lack of contact due to Covid restrictions has affected all of us negatively, it affects those with a brain injury in even more profound ways. Gratefully, Jan is now showing benefits from the added social contact with others, restarting previous treatments, and the addition of novel new ones.



To assist with the added costs of new treatments, Jan needs some practical help from others who can assist by becoming part of Jan's human-powered funding army. Any gift you might offer for Jan's ongoing effort comes with a big thank you from the bottom of Jan's immense and ever-present heart. Your gift will begin helping Jan's efforts immediately.

Since 2015 Mike Genervino has been a full-time caregiver for his wife, Janice, who suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage, has been confined to a wheelchair, and is now speech & cognitively impaired.

## The Covid lockdown made it even clearer how vital that support (both clinical and personal) has been in helping Jan get as far as she has.

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Adaptive fitness training from the US to the UK  
RME Exercise Rehabilitation Trainers

### What is an Exercise Rehabilitation Trainer?

An exercise rehabilitation trainer is qualified and experienced in providing rehabilitation exercises for those with neurological conditions, brain, spinal and other injuries, amputations, disabilities, and other complex needs.

UK based RMR Rehabilitation are a group of experienced and qualified exercise rehabilitation trainers who work with clients in their homes, gyms or place of their choice. All their trainers are Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or background checked, have relevant insurance, and complete ongoing professional training programs. An effective Exercise Rehabilitation Trainer also works closely with professionals in the rehabilitation sector. RMR Rehabilitation states that

# WHY I CREATED YOUR SPECIAL PLAN

By Alyssa Apostolopoulos

***In life, we are often faced with opportunities that just speak to our authentic selves.***

These magical moments pave the way to where we are meant to be. This is what happened to me when I was in high school and I was asked to babysit for a family who had an incredible set of twins. One of them had autism.

From this experience, I knew I wanted to become a teacher and work with families and their children with special needs. After completing my Master's at Montclair State University, I went on to gain over ten years of experience in the world of Special Education as a one-to-one aide, an ABA therapist, and a Special Education teacher. Throughout this time, I saw how families struggled with day to day events; what to do when the school day ended, and the overwhelming idea of what the future had in store for their child. While I wholeheartedly loved working with children, one on one, and in a small group environment, I knew that I could help more people with special needs and their families by providing the guidance, tools, and resources that would help them navigate through challenging situations.

I was always a planner and a good one. Helping families navigate the unknowns, setting goals, and planning their child's happiest life has always been my passion.. This is how I decided to create Your Special Plan.

With families, I help them establish short and long term goals for their child with special needs and provide clarity to the future they seek.

Through their chosen plan, I help to enrich their child's optimal lifestyle by providing guidance in opportunities for extra curricular enrichment, physical and emotional health, scheduling, vocational placement, education, medical needs, tailored trainings, social growth, assisted living, and so much more that is based on the child's profile while also considering what brings them the utmost joy.

In my office, located in Caldwell, New Jersey, parents are able to come in, unwind and know that they are one step closer to creating a more organized and happier life for themselves and their child.



**Alyssa Apostolopoulos**  
Your Special Plan LLC  
Master of Arts in Teaching Students with Disabilities  
336 Bloomfield Avenue, Suite 1B Caldwell, N.J. 07004  
Email: yourspecialplan@gmail.com  
Instagram: @yourspecialplan  
Website: yourspecialplan.com

### Services Offered

- Life Plan
- Educational Plan
- Medical Plan
- Resource Plan
- Your Special Plan \*Includes all of the above plans\*
- Consulting, Home Visits, Site Visits
- Collaborations
- Presentations & Trainings

**Your child's future begins today.**  
Please reach out to discuss your needs!  
yourspecialplan@gmail.com

### Specialized Programs and Courses (USA)

American Fitness Professionals Associates, (AFPA) currently have a Certified Post Rehab Exercise Specialist course. The AFPA Certification is designed to teach certified personal trainers to effectively work with people who are recovering from injury, disease, and/or treatment. For more information visit [www.afpafitness.com](http://www.afpafitness.com)

American Council For Exercise (ACE) also has an Orthopedic Exercise Specialist program that teaches how to design programs for those with chronic conditions or injuries, empowering them to regain daily function and move with confidence. For more information visit [www.acefitness.org](http://www.acefitness.org).



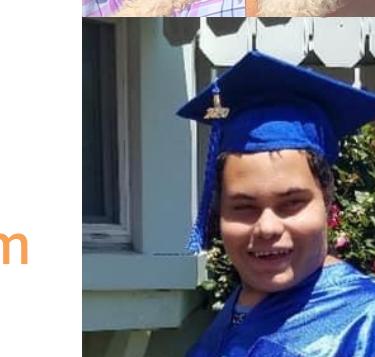
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### Assessing Anxiety and Treating with 5 lifestyle recommendations, A Non-Invasive Approach

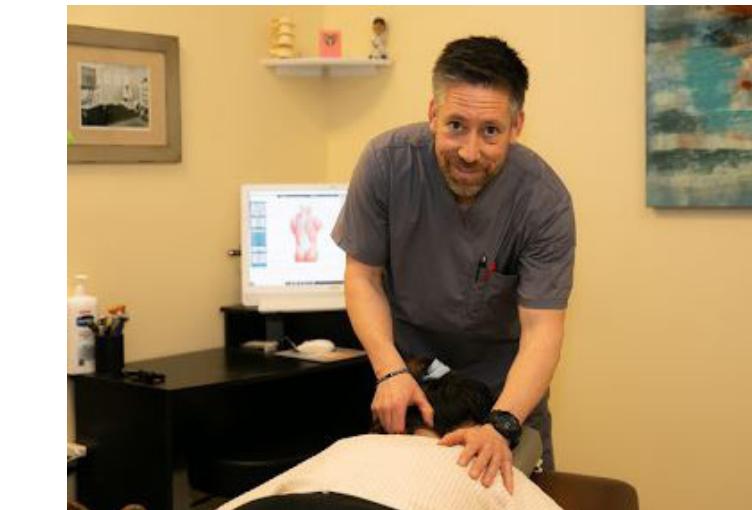
By Dr Kyle. R. Eopecchino

#### *Did you know that anxiety is actually a normal emotion?*

That's right, occasional anxiety or anxious feelings should be considered natural when in the right circumstance. In fact, anxiety is actually your brain's way of warning you of a potential threat, danger, or reacting to stress.

Often we can feel anxious when faced with a problem at home, school, work, before taking an important test or making an important decision. Typically, these are considered normal expected emotions, which are also known as "eustress" or good stresses.

In some cases, anxiety symptoms can appear as sweaty palms, dry mouth, rapid heart rate, shallow breathing, nausea, difficulty concentrating, difficulty sleeping, tight muscles, worrying, fatigue, and restlessness.



Anxiety becomes a "disorder" when the symptoms go beyond short-term worry or fear. When anxious feelings fail to resolve or actually worsen with time this is known as "distress." This distress can cause relationships, school, work, gastrointestinal issues, and a wide spectrum of other problems.

So how can we promote the good type of stress "eustress," and minimize the bad stress or "distress?"

Taking for granted our patient has already been examined by a healthcare professional and has no underlying organ, hormonal, underlying metabolic, or trauma that may require additional treatments, here are 5 lifestyle suggestions that may reduce the intensity and duration of a patient with anxiety.

#### 1. Get your diet in check.

Cut back on the foods that cause inflammation and are stimulants. Avoid foods that have high sugar or high glycemic index items such as soda, coffee, teas, candy, chocolate, alcohol, and popcorn.

#### 2. Get your cardio on!

Research suggests that regular aerobic activity may help to lessen anxiety by releasing chemicals such as dopamine, which helps to improve your mood.

#### 3. Improve your quality of sleep.

Make your sleep health a priority. Set and stick to a bedtime. Avoid television or elevated activities before going to bed. Aim for 7 to 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep.

#### 4. Relax!

Yes, take time each and every day to relax. This may be done in the form of journaling, listening to soft music, taking a hot bath, introducing essential oils, visualization, meditating, and or deep breathing.

#### 5. Spend time with your cat or dog.

That's right, unless you are allergic, studies have shown that spending time with your favorite pet has many benefits such as lowering blood pressure to reducing anxiety so pet away!

In our wellness center, we have seen dramatic changes in children and young adults with special needs. Parents have reported that following Chiropractic treatments their child showed less tendency to fidget, had improved sleep, was more limber and had better ranges of motion, in previously limited extremities, demonstrated less body rigidity, and was more compliant with verbal and nonverbal cues.

If you or someone that you care about is suffering from anxiety and would like a consultation with a healthcare professional that can offer insight and may be able to offer relief contact Dr. Eopecchino directly at the number listed below.

**Dr. Kyle R. Eopecchino, B.S.,D.C.,FICPA**  
Chiropractic Physician and owner of Health on Main in Little Falls, NJ.  
**Email:** [healthonmain155@gmail.com](mailto:healthonmain155@gmail.com)  
**Website:** [www.healthonmain.info](http://www.healthonmain.info)  
**Facebook/Instagram:** [healthonmain](https://www.facebook.com/healthonmain)  
Health on Main, 155 East Main Street, Little Falls, NJ 07424  
P. 973.832.6722  
F. 973.910.6842



# GOOD POSTURE IS THE KEY TO YOUR HEALTH

By Gina Maffettone, CPT, CES



## Posture is the position in which one holds their body when sitting or standing.

When in good posture, your head, shoulders, hips, knees, and spine are all in alignment. Proper body alignment not only helps prevent pain and injury but can also boost your confidence and mood. Correcting your posture will likely take some time and conscious effort, but the feel-good benefits are well worth it.

Being told to "sit up straight" instantly prompts us to pull our shoulders back and straighten up the torso. We need to remind ourselves of this when sitting at our desks, playing video games, or navigating through our cell phones and electronic devices for prolonged periods of time. According to Elite Content Marketer, the average adult spends 3 hours and 45 minutes on their mobile device each day, and screen time for adolescence went from 3.5 to 5.1 hours a day since COVID! That is a lot of sitting!

Prolonged sitting and standing are just one of the causes of poor posture. It places abnormal weight on joints and stresses muscles and tendons, throwing the body out of alignment and often leading to pain: chronic headaches, sciatica pain, and knee and hip pain. Misuse, poor habits, old/ new injuries, and both tight and weak muscles, are major contributors to poor posture, and most of us have them!

Slouching, rounded shoulders, and forward head syndrome (head juts forward out of alignment) are all associated with poor posture. These misalignments of the neck and shoulders restrict one from taking full breaths and compress internal organs. There are also emotional & psychological consequences. Dr. Forbes explains in her yoga practice, "we use head and neck alignment, heart-opening restorative postures, and deep breathing to lift and balance depression." She adds that "people who have physical symptoms of depression often benefit from lengthening and opening the upper thoracic spine and chest areas."

In my experience as a fitness trainer and corrective exercise specialist, once clients start to experience good posture they display a more positive attitude and exude confidence in their walk. It feels good to feel good!

It is time to take back your posture! As I tell my clients, the body is always striving for balance (homeostasis), and it is your job to get it there. My job, and my passion, is to help clients develop an awareness of their posture and core alike. Teach them how to access the muscles that they need to stretch and strengthen in order to get the body in alignment. Lastly, they will need a plan- exercises and stretches tailored to their needs. Clients need to be consistent and follow through with the plan several times a week. The work and time put in will be well worth it. Clients find peace, rid themselves of pain, and improve their overall health.

### Three tips for better posture:

#### 1. Create Awareness and Practice

What does good posture feel like? Practice up against the wall:

- Stand up against a wall. Your shoulder blades, head and buttocks should touch the wall, with your feet about 4" from the wall. Feel long with a proud chest.
- Put a flat hand behind the small of your back. You should be able to just barely slide your hand between your lower back and the wall for a correct lower back curve. If there's too much space behind your lower back, draw your belly button toward your spine. This flattens the curve in your back and gently brings your lower back closer to the wall. If there's too little space behind your lower back, arch your back just enough so that your hand can slide behind you.
- Feel a sense of tall, long and proud, and now walk away from the wall while holding a proper posture. Then return to the wall to check whether you kept a correct posture.

Take time to practice good posture throughout the day.

#### 2. Breathe

How we breathe affects our posture, and how we hold our body (slouching or stiffening) affects the way we breathe.

- Take full breaths.
- Breathe in through the nose, expanding the belly and torso, breathe out through the nose or mouth, belly pulls back in.
- Visualize good posture while breathing

#### 3. Avoid Prolonged Sitting (any position)

- Take breaks from your position as often as you can. Get up for a short walk.
- Shake out your hands and arms. Stretch side to side and reach for your toes. Take your head from left to right, stretching your neck and shoulders- kick out your legs- twist. The body needs to move!

Gina Maffettone is a certified personal trainer and corrective exercise specialist. She has spent much of her time studying posture, core strength, and functional eating- integral pieces to being well. In 2009 she founded Embracing Fitness, a boutique-style fitness studio where she offers a variety of small group classes in addition to personal training & wellness workshops. Gina has been in the fitness industry for 20+ years. With a holistic approach, & great enthusiasm, she seeks to educate individuals on the essential fundamentals of exercise and nutrition so that they may live their best quality of life for as long as they live.

## Is Massage therapy good for you

By Staff Writer

Licensed Massage therapist, Monika Szetela says that "Massage Therapy has a wide variety of benefits, some of which include, improving health, promoting sleep, relieving stress, boosting energy, and enhancing the immune system. In addition to that, massages can decrease pain, lower blood pressure, and reduce stress and inflammation."

The term massage therapy involves many techniques. Through her studies at the Fox Institute of Business in Clifton NJ and 12 years experience as a massage therapist, Monika uses many different techniques which promote relaxation, rejuvenation, and overall well-being. These include;

Swedish Massage; developed in Sweden in the 1800s, this type of massage is a gentle form of massage consisting of long strokes, slow circular motions, and mild kneading; it is the perfect type of massage for relaxation.

Deep Tissue Massage: This massage uses slower, stronger strokes to target and relieve pressure and tension from the deep layers of muscle and connective tissue.

Chair Massage: This form of massage takes place on a massage chair and typically targets the neck, back and shoulder areas.

Sports Massage: This style of massage is geared towards athletes; it helps relieve pain from injuries and can improve athletic performance.

Trigger Point Therapy: The objective of this kind of massage is to reduce or eliminate knots and the pain that comes along with them; it consists of rubbing or pressing on tense areas until the tension is released.

Monika has been a licensed massage therapist for 12 years, She also studied physical therapy for 4 years, in Poland where she worked within the special needs and disabilities community. Find her at Tranquility Massage MES, LLC 155 E Main St. Little Falls, NJ 07424 (201) 960-0180

1. Paul Chek, Eat Move & be healthy 2004. 86 p.
2. Posture: Align yourself for good health, Jane T Hein, 2016. 200 Mayo Clinic News Network.
3. Screen Time Statistics 2021: Your Smart phone Is Hurting You. Elite Content Marketer, by Rochi Zalanit 2021.
4. Does Poor Posture Suggest Depression? Andrew Weil M.D., 2011

Embracing Fitness is located at 155 E Main St. Little Falls, NJ 07424 P: 973-477-2448



*"My biggest passion when it comes to massage is seeing my clients walk out feeling much better than when they came in. It is very rewarding. I strongly believe that everyone should make massage therapy a part of their health routine." - Monika Szetela, Licensed Massage Therapist*

Parents or carers of someone with special needs or disabilities may be skeptical about integrating massage therapy with their current plan of care. Some may be unsure if the one they care for will actually tolerate or benefit from it, or whether it will interfere with their current medical care or other therapies. These are valid reasons for concern and should not be ignored.

Always consult your healthcare professional prior to any massage treatment and also ask how you can find a massage therapist that is the right fit. Always remember that safety comes first.

### Did you know?

More than 21 Million (1 in 4) US adults 18 – 64 years of age have a disability. Yet, nearly half of all adults with disabilities get no aerobic physical activity. It is recommended that adults with special needs or a disability engage in at least 2 hours and 30 mins of moderate-intensity physical activity a week.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Vital Signs. May 2014 [www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/disabilities](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/disabilities)

# PAYING ATTENTION TO YOUR VAGUS NERVE

By Dr. Kenneth Silvestri

## Your Nervous System is the main source of how you deal with your world.

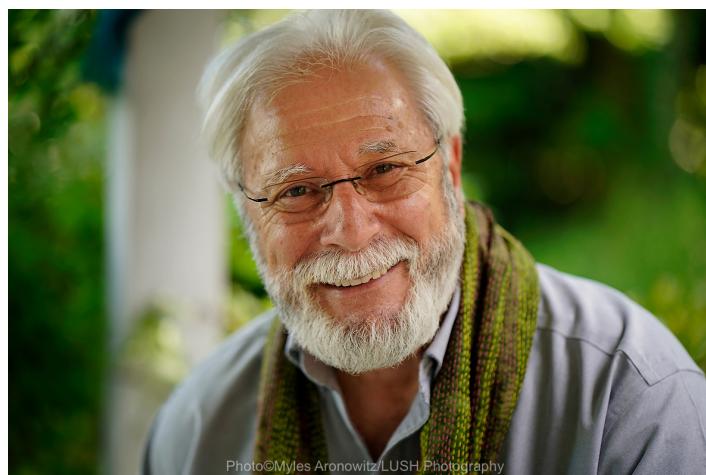
It consists of two main parts, the revved-up part (Sympathetic) and the calm part (Parasympathetic). It is important to know that it is nearly 95% autonomic. What this means is that once you are in a state of stress and uncertainty it gets stuck in that mode. The largest part of your Nervous System is the Vagus Nerve, the nerve of compassion and security. It covers much of your upper body—from the gut to your brain—and regulates metabolism, heart rate, and general well-being. The Vagus Nerve, when it is not threatened supports your wellbeing, especially when you focus on an emphatic thought, and it also sustains a healthy heart rate for your cardiovascular system.

## When the Vagus Nerve is compromised from learned responses of fear and insecurity, it is the root of many health issues including Autism.

It is now believed that when the Vagus Nerve is compromised from learned responses of fear and insecurity, it is the root of many health issues including Autism. This eventually affects you emotionally and physically and can determine how you live and function. There are only a very few ways to adjust our Nervous System including the Vagus Nerve when it is stuck in “fight or flight” situations. Since it is automatic or automatic it can stay in this mode for long periods of time. However, you don’t need to save your life 24 hours a day. The most effective way to address this situation is simply using your breath. My favorite technique is Coherent Breathing developed by Stephen Elliott. It consists of five breaths per minute as compared to our usual average of fifteen, (six seconds inhalation and six seconds exhaling.) A bonus to this practice when done a few times each day is that when you exhale with thoughts of compassion it soothes the Vagus Nerve and strengthens the Parasympathetic calm part of your nervous system to do its job.

Here is a simple but profound exercise, that if done a few times a day will help create and sustain a better sense of well-being. It will not only extend your life but allow you to enjoy it to the fullest. Sitting or standing, relax your body from head to toe and rate how you are feeling at that moment. Breathe through your nose, filling up your stomach and gradually move your breath upward toward your chest to the count of six seconds. As you inhale, slowly raise your arms, stretching them sideways and with a circular motion bringing them upwards to above your head. Exhale through your mouth, also to the count of six seconds, while slowly bringing your arms down to your sides and thinking of something that brings you a genuine sense of compassion. Repeat this cycle five to ten times. When you finish, relax your body from head to toe, again assessing how you feel, taking note of any differences that make a difference in your life.

\*You can also augment Coherent Breathing with the Homeopathic Remedy Argent Nitricum when you are feeling anticipatory anxiety and Bach Rescue Remedy



Photo©Myles Aronowitz/LUSH Photography

Kenneth Silvestri, Ed.D. is a Systemic Psychotherapist, Classical Homeopath, and author of *A Wider Lens: How to See Your Life Differently*, who practices in Montclair, NJ; Nyack, NY and virtually.

His website is  
[www.drkennethsilvestri.com](http://www.drkennethsilvestri.com)

### Did you know?

The term autism stems from the Greek word *autos* meaning “self”, autism literally means “alone”. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is one of the fastest-growing developmental disorders in the United States. ASD is more common than childhood cancer, diabetes and AIDS combined.

Source: Mass General Hospital for Children

# CAN TOE WALKING BE EFFECTIVELY TREATED?

By Florence Nardone

## Over the course of the last 27 years, I have encountered an increasing amount of children who present with idiopathic toe walking.

As a pediatric physical therapist in the school environment as well as in the outpatient setting, I have evaluated and treated children both typically developing and those who are on the Autism Spectrum.

Many parents have been told that it is nothing to be concerned about and that their child will outgrow it. In some school districts, parents have been told that toe walking is not “educationally relevant,” or that equinus gait (toe walking), is not affecting their child’s function.

From an orthopedic standpoint, this gait pattern has the potential to cause damage to the joints of the foot, ankle, knee, hip and back. Further, this gait pattern does not allow the recruitment of core muscles that are integral to the development of bilateral coordination skills, balance, and higher level gross motor skills.

From a sensory perspective, there are sensory receptors on the plantar surface of the heel that are not being felt due to this gait pattern, resulting in tactile defensiveness. In addition, visual motor and visual attention issues are commonly seen in this population. Vision works hand in hand with posture, gait and movement through the vestibular system. Socially, toe walking is not acceptable and may be a source of embarrassment to the child and/or the family.

### So what intervention can effectively treat toe walking?

It requires a multi-sensory approach in order to be successful. The structure of the foot must be addressed, with attention made to correcting any presentation of pes planus. Core strengthening is criti-



cal, especially the abdominals and the gluteus maximus. Heel lifts are added to shoes to allow the child to feel the floor. And fourthly, the visual motor component can be addressed by the use of special glasses that allow the child to use their ambient vision. These glasses are simply children’s sunglasses with the lenses removed and taped placed over the third of the area from the nose to the middle. I have used these glasses with a student with good success. He was a 5th grade student on the spectrum. Data was taken with him wearing the glasses whenever he went from his classroom to a special. According to the data, This student was able to demonstrate an appropriate heel to pattern as he ambulated through the school 70 % of the time.

In summary, idiopathic toe walking can be a frustrating presentation to treat for the therapist, child, parent and school district. It should not be ignored and requires a thorough evaluation of all sensory and motor systems to ensure that the child’s gait can return to as close to a normal pattern as possible.



### School Spotlight: PV/ Bergen ABA Program, Little Falls New Jersey

The PV/ABA classrooms offer a comprehensive program designed to meet the academic, social, behavioral, and vocational needs for high school students who have special needs. The program is highly individualized and based on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). We currently house 40 students within the PV district as well as other sending districts. The program offers a peer participation program involving students in the general education population, internship opportunities, and daily electives. Community Based Instruction (CBI) due to Covid 19 will be accessed best we can utilizing job coaches, etc. within the school until further guidance is provided by state and federal agencies.

PV/Bergen ABA Program is located in Passaic Valley Regional High School 100 East Main Street Little Falls, NJ 07424 . Contact Jackie Dubil Craig, Director of Behavior Services: 973-890-2500 Ext: 0021

Florence Nardone, P.T 40QA0620700 is a Pediatric Physical Therapist who has been practicing for over 27 years. She is available to answer any questions or concerns. Please reach her at: [flonar@optonline.net](mailto:flonar@optonline.net).

Questions by Yomi Karade



### Shawn Dennis

#### At what age did you receive the diagnosis of your child?

Brian was 18 months old when he was diagnosed with autism.

#### Tell us how the diagnosis of your child impacted life as a father?

First, I had to educate myself. I had heard of autism but knew nothing about it. After that, I had to adjust my expectations for Brian. I also had to become more patient. I know Brian can do things; sometimes, it just takes him a little longer.

#### How has your child inspired you?

Like others with special needs or disabilities, Brian is very tough. My wife and I have sent him to school or taken him to events and later found out that he had a high fever. He endures things because he is unable to tell us that he doesn't feel well.

#### How do you stay mentally, physically, and or spiritually strong and centered?

To get a break from autism, I exercise. I run every day and play basketball on Sunday mornings. These allow me to clear my head and focus on something else. I also take my dog for a lot of walks, whether she wants to go or not.

#### What would you like to say to your child that you haven't told him?

I frequently tell Brian how much I love him. Also, whenever I see that he's struggling with anxiety, I try to reassure him that things will be okay. I want him to know that my wife and I will do our best to make sure that he will be okay after we're no longer able to take care of him.

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### Richard Cohn

#### Please include your son's first name and current age.

Jordan, 23

#### How old was your son when he was diagnosed with this condition/disability?

Two

#### Describe your feelings or response to the diagnosis?

Sadness and determination, sadness overburden he would have to overcome and determination that he would and my wife would do everything we can to help.

#### Talk about the things that you do with your son? Do you do any sports with him?

Go to restaurants, ski, motorcycle, bicycle, jigsaw puzzles.

#### How have others around you or in education or other establishments responded to your son?

Yes, with kindness and compassion.

#### What has been your reaction to them?

Thankful in our orbit.

#### Has your son's diagnosis empowered or enriched you in any way?

Made me stronger, determined, hard-working, empathetic.

#### What notable hurdles has your son overcome?

Can ride a bike by himself and ski.

#### Have you ever replayed a situation that you could have handled better or said something to someone that you regret not saying (with regards to your son)?

Sometimes too quick to get angry and frustrated.

**"The more moments I can share simply with Isaiah, the more memories I and he will have on the life we have been given to live."**



### Pastor Tello

#### What is your son's diagnosis? When did you find out about the diagnosis?

Our son, Isaiah John Tello, is diagnosed with a Bi-lateral, Diffuse, Cortical brain injury. In short, he has global developmental delays. This diagnosis was given to us by the Institute for the Achievement of Human Potential in Philadelphia. After going to numerous specialists and doctors, no one would tell us what was wrong with Isaiah. The closest they came was a label they put on him to get him services while we lived in California. That label was, Severely Mentally Retarded. When we attended the Institutes of Philadelphia, it was there that we heard a diagnosis that was a functional diagnosis meaning that we could now do something about our son's condition.

#### As a father with a child with special needs, how has your life been impacted?

I am a father that likes to fix things. I like order and structure. I was not raised in a military family, but my Hispanic upbringing has taught me the value of working hard for the things that mean most in life. I had to face the reality that I couldn't "fix" Isaiah. In fact, our circumstances with a brain-injured child...I could not fix. Dealing with that sense of hopelessness was daunting for about 7 years. I then came to the realization that we (our family) are the best thing in the life of Isaiah and Isaiah is the best thing in our family's life. It was hard for me to face the fact that I will not see Isaiah in football, or basketball. Or go to prom or dates and get in trouble with the girls. It was hard to let that dream of the first-born son rest in the sea of the reality of a disabled child. Through the years, though, we have found that disabilities are not the end of human life for a person with them. Rather, we have become creative in what we do and how we do life. As an example, Isaiah is a wanderer. We got him a dog that would be attached to Isaiah that I trained to be his service dog! Having the addition of the dog has been a great blessing to our family and I believe (even though Isaiah does not talk and can tell us) a great blessing for Isaiah.

#### Do you think that men refrain from sharing their inner thoughts and feelings regarding their

### children with special needs, especially to other men (who may or may not have special needs children)?

I do. Mainly because as a guy, if I can't fix something why talk about it. I have learned from myself that I internalize many of my pains with Isaiah and thoughts and really do not share them with anyone but my wife. I've discovered that many people that I've shared my journey with do not understand nor can they relate. They see my life as a pity. So, through the years I've stopped sharing my journey with people. Then I had an epiphany. On a pastoral/preaching trip to the country of Colombia, I met a mother whose husband left her because he didn't want to raise a disabled child. Alone with only her eldest son home to help, this mother had a situation that was much worst in comparison to ours with Isaiah. As I shared with her my journey and the pain, we as parents deal with, I could see that for the first time in her life she was understood! While we had different situations with our children, we could each relate to each other of the loneliness we feel and the isolation we feel because of our perspective situations. Leaving her home there in Colombia made me realize that Isaiah in our life has made our family relatable to many people that are isolated because of a loved one that is disabled. I found that my story and journey really does help others in their journey of life. I no longer try to "fix" Isaiah and get mad because I can't...I now realize the blessing we have to use our story to help someone else's story find hope in the midst of pain. I received a call from a young man that I baptized into our church. He and his wife had just had their first child, but it was disabled. The shock, disbelief, and anger they faced led them to call me to see what I could offer them as encouragement. Our story let them see that a disability is not the end of the world, but the beginning. A different beginning than we had anticipated, but nevertheless, a beginning for great things to come. We went to California for a preaching trip and there my wife and I sat at lunch with this young couple and shared more of our lives and struggles and were able to be a blessing to this couple by the journey we have lived and survived. While men may not share because they can't "fix" something...they will share when they have "survived" something. Surviving life with Isaiah, on a daily basis, is a victory that keeps me going from day to day, month to month, and year to year.

### How do you bond with your son?

I do Jiu-Jitsu with Isaiah. Although Isaiah does not do Jiu-Jitsu as you're supposed to, I find that just resting with him provides me a bonding moment that lasts for a lifetime. In fact, moments are what make life worth living. The more moments I can share simply with Isaiah, the more memories I and he will have on the life we have been given to live. Moments like, sitting on the couch and watching a movie together (so long as he doesn't pee on me). Or when we walk together with Frankie the service dog along the roads of our small Washingtonian town of Chewelah. The moments of playing in the snow and watch Isaiah try to eat all the snow he can...even the yellow snow! The moments of watching Isaiah sleep and seeing that we have survived another day successfully happy. I've learned that in a moment our lives can change. Therefore, I have vowed to use my moments to the max and live a life that will bless my family and those that we come in contact with.

**continued on [specialneedsfitnessmagazine.com](http://specialneedsfitnessmagazine.com)**

**Hey Parents! It's OK to Take Care of You**

By Sharon

**It is often very difficult for parents of children with special needs to think about their own needs as a lot of their time is spent caring and thinking about their special needs child, their other children and family, home and finance, and work.**

However, in order for a parent to effectively take care of their child, they need to take care of themselves first. A similar concept is when you are on a plane, the flight attendant will instruct parents to put on their oxygen mask first before putting one on their children.

Generally taking care of a child or children with special needs can be exhausting. Parents can often get caught up in the intense daily needs of their child with special needs and sacrifice their own needs. Fundamentally, if parents don't take care of themselves it can lead to fatigue, feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, unhealthy relationships, and other health issues.

The first step to self-care is self-awareness and understanding the importance of self-care. Then, once awareness is established, it is time to practice, practice, and practice.

As self-care becomes part of your routine, it will be easier to carve out self-care time into your schedule.

A great skill that parents need to learn is to ask for help. I am guilty of this one also. Believe it or not, asking for help works. It's not a sign of weakness. It actually shows your strength. Remember, you are not alone and don't have to continue to be alone.

Prioritizing self-care will help you get through many tough challenges with your children. Adopting tools to stay calm in moments of chaos may be eased by connecting with other parents, friends, or someone you trust who truly gets your situation. Even if your children do not have a special need, they most likely will feed off of the energy around them. This means that if parents are stressed, overwhelmed, and anxious, children are like sponges and will possibly act on that

**Mom Guilt**

By Karen Kehdy

"Mom Guilt" is common. But when you have an autistic child, the guilt is often multiplied.

**What is Mom Guilt?**

That pervasive feeling of not doing enough as a parent, not doing things right, or making decisions that may "mess up" your



energy, whether it is spoken or not. So, the next time your child seems anxious, examine your own feelings in those moments and their surroundings. You may need to take a break, regroup, and re-energize yourself. The more clarity you have the better decisions and choices you can make.

There are wellness plans such as the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP). This model was developed by a group of people with mental health challenges in North Vermont for mental health recovery. It is now an evidence-based practice.

The wellness plan includes physical, social, emotional and spiritual practices. Anyone can use the WRAP to get well and stay well by designing a plan for their life. I have personally used these trainings to develop my own plan. It has helped me gain clarity in many situations and focus on the important things in my life.

Sharon Webber is a single mother of Christopher, 14 who has autism and sensory integration disorder, and daughter, Aja, who is a Junior at Emerson College. Sharon Webber conducts trainings including the Wellness Recovery Action Plan so that parents create their own plan.

This fall, Sharon is to launch Indigo Kidz, a community that supports, educates and entertains special needs families in a safe place. Contact [Sharon@OurIndigoKidz.com](mailto:Sharon@OurIndigoKidz.com) or visit [www.ourindigokidz.com](http://www.ourindigokidz.com)

kids in the long run.

**Any of these thoughts sound familiar?**

"I feel guilty for not doing enough?"  
"I should spend more time with my child?"  
"Am I doing the right thing?"

"Am I choosing the right therapy?"  
"Is it my fault he is not talking yet?"

**Overcoming Mom Guilt****1. Identify the sources of guilt.**

Try journaling or making a quick note on your phone when you feel pangs of mom guilt, and over time themes may emerge. Once you can identify the areas causing the feeling, it's easier to watch for these triggers.

**2. Build your circle of trust**

Are you surrounded by like-minded people who share your values and beliefs? If not then re-evaluate your decision-making process to make sure you are listening to a valued source of information.

**3. Listen to your children and your intuition**

Mother's intuition is not a myth. Women through the ages have used their intuition to keep our babies safe and healthy. Listen

to your intuition when it comes to your kids as you are their best advocate. Children are excellent sources of information on whether your decisions are working, and what areas you should and shouldn't feel guilty about. Listen to them.

**4. Be mindful not to spread the mom guilt**

Usually, mom guilt comes from other moms. We keep checking posts of the perfect moms doing gluten-free meals, playing creative games with their kids, or throwing perfect birthday parties.

Take care when you yourself are making social media posts that could seem like bragging or pushing an agenda on other moms. We can dissolve mom guilt by not spreading it and instead encourage one another. At the same time, if you have a proud mom moment to share, share away.

Karen Kehdy lives in Dubai. She has an autistic daughter and advocates for neurodiversity. Visit her Instagram page [@karen.kehdy](https://www.instagram.com/karen_kehdy)

**Out of despair comes hope and help**

By Priscilla Leto, Founding Board Member of Mission: Kid Success

Heartbreak and confusion, that is what I felt when my 4-year-old son was diagnosed with moderate Autism. That feeling couldn't compare to the devastation I felt when I asked the doctor what I could do to help him and was told there was really nothing I could do. I was told that I should get him into a special school program with speech and ABA therapy (he already was) and here's a prescription for medication. Besides that, there isn't much you can do, and you shouldn't even bother trying. I was told the medication would be the only way he would be able to learn anything. While I have much respect for doctors and think that medication can be an important treatment tool, I was not satisfied with that answer.

My son had many challenges at the time of his diagnosis. He did not turn around when his name was called, only said random words or repeated things others said, didn't answer when asked a question, bumped into walls when walking down a hallway, and threw temper tantrums everywhere we went. I felt there had to be root causes to these issues that could be addressed and not just masked by medication. I started to do my own research and found many interventions that could possibly help improve his sensory processing, proprioception, and frustration tolerance. We tried many different therapies and services over the years – some of which helped, some of which did not. Every child is different. For my son, dietary changes, sensory-motor training, vision therapy, cranial-sacral therapy, ionic foot baths, and other therapies were life-changing.

And while he still has challenges, that same little boy grew into a teenager who loves to go out to eat and on vacation, sits quietly through church services, graduated from Cub Scouts, attended Film Camp, records his own YouTube videos, and acts in plays. I am so grateful

that we had the opportunities and resources to be able to pursue everything that he was able to participate in to get him to this point. The unfortunate reality is that many families are told the same thing – there is nothing you can do. They are not encouraged to investigate the root causes of their child's challenges and address them. Even more discouraging, if they do discover different therapies and services that could help improve their child's development, many families are unable to afford to pursue these interventions.

Out of this unfortunate reality, Mission: Kid Success was born. MKS is a grassroots charitable organization that serves the NY/NJ/CT Metropolitan area and awards grants to qualifying families with children who have autism and other neurodevelopmental challenges so they can receive the services and therapies they need to succeed in life. This is a very personal mission for me. MKS's goal is to help as many children as we can and give those families hope that their child can reach their fullest potential regardless of the sometimes-discouraging treatment advice they are given or their financial circumstances.

For more information on Mission: Kid Success and how you can help or receive help, please visit [www.missionkidsuccess.org](http://www.missionkidsuccess.org). Contact Priscilla Leto [priscilla@missionkidsuccess.org](mailto:priscilla@missionkidsuccess.org). P.O. Box 193, Glen Rock, NJ 07452-0193. Facebook & Instagram: [@missionkidsuccess](https://www.instagram.com/missionkidsuccess)

# FITNESS AND EATING HABITS

by Publisher Yomi Karade, BA, CPT, YTS

## One size does not fit all

Over the years I have spoken to many parents, teachers, educators, doctors, support coordination agencies, and other groups and organizations about fitness and eating habits of adults and children with special needs and disabilities. The general feedback has been that most individuals in the community desperately need a fitness regime, and to learn how to make healthier food choices. In fact many are battling obesity, high blood pressure, heart issues, depression and anxiety, diabetes, poor self-esteem, apathy, poor posture, and other health problems.

### Exercise and Fitness Programs

As the “a la carte menu list” of fitness and exercise workouts gets longer and longer, the many choices can make finding a good fit exercise program mentally exhausting and confusing; and I get it. Many adults with special needs or disabilities that I have spoken to see exercise this way. The general response or feeling is “no your good” to any fitness program.

Yet, exercise is just simply moving your body. Going for a walk, climbing stairs or stretching are exercising the body. Swimming, running and team sports such as tennis, soccer, baseball, American football, netball, and field hockey are also excellent forms of exercise, and they are social too.

Exercise can be a lot of fun and also..it is good for you. I say good for you because it has intrinsic benefits. Working out can boost your self-esteem and enhance positive perspectives in your life. The health benefits are also just off the chain. Engaging in exercise can help you lose weight, regulate blood pressure and other ailments, improve mobility and muscle strength, and much, much more.

Maintaining and sticking to an exercise program keeps you fit and healthy, and promotes longevity in life. Yet, for some people with special needs and disabilities, starting and sticking to an exercise program may not be that easy. There are many reasons which include; limited opportunities and exposure to exercise within the community, stigmas and misconceptions in society about people with special needs and disabilities, bullying, poor habits and low self-esteem, sedentary lifestyles, specific disability and medical considerations, acceptance and accessibility in gyms and other fitness centers, and access to adaptive equipment.

These reasons and more propelled me to set up Inclusive Fitness Programs (I.F.P) with Yomi (2019), formerly named Individualized Fitness Programs (2018) encouraged by James Apap, a former manager of a local gym in Verona New Jersey.

Since 2018, my enthusiasm to train clients with and without disabilities has not changed. Before I start to train any client, I assess how they move their bodies in space and what inspires them. I ask many questions about their health and exercise history, habits, abilities, assistance or adaptive needs, and personal and fitness goals. Clients



Jordan Cohn and Kofi Karade in a Group Training Class Photo Credit: Monica Cohn (2021)

who have special needs may not be able to answer all these questions but their parents, guardians, or the power of attorneys can. In fact, they are key to keeping their loved ones healthy. If they themselves engage in healthy lifestyles, the person they care for will more than likely be empowered to do so too. Alternatively, if unhealthy lifestyles are practiced, health problems and other issues may be the result.

As a personal trainer, I encourage my clients to safely enjoy and have fun in their training sessions. I engage, motivate, praise, break through mental and physical barriers, and engage again. This occurs whether it's a one-on-one or group training session at our resident gym location, in-home, or online. I am potential and exceeding potentials driven, meaning that I don't set the bar so low that an ant can crawl under it. In fact, there is no bar. I just provide my clients with solid foundation skills so they can excel in many directions, not only in fitness but other areas in their life. My sessions build confidence, self-esteem, challenge potentials, and beyond. One misconception when teaching or training a person with special needs is that you have to instruct them “differently” or through “rigid repetitive skill patterns.” Whereas, in my experience, my clients teach me how to train them and that's it. The missed understanding is that they are also our teachers. The teacher-client relationship is constantly interchangeable. They teach me how to plan my training sessions for them, not just the other way around. I have learned to find ways for them to be stronger and move in harmony with their bodies. I have also learned to be sensitive to their inner environment and how they express this to the world. It really is a true blessing to be part of their lives. They teach me how to tune in to them. If you can't tune in to them, they will tune you out. This is the gift.

During training sessions, I spend a great amount of time observing my clients. I can be observing and simultaneously seeking ways to improve my clients' movements, coordination, breathing, balance, response and understanding of instructions, endurance, posture, flexibility, gait, range of motion, strength, speed, staying on task, and ability to complete an exercise with or without prompts. They teach me to always keep in mind that one size does not fit all. What is effective for one client may not be the same for another. The foundation to every fitness program is unique to each individual. Therefore, the key

**“81% of people with disabilities don’t feel welcome in fitness spaces.”**

-Source Lakeshore Foundation August 2021.

to starting any fitness program is to find an experienced and certified trainer that can engage and motivate you to be your best potential while keeping you fit and beyond.

## You are what you eat.... sometimes.

Addressing and promoting good eating habits within the special needs and disability community may, in many cases, need careful attention. Life threatening allergies, gastrointestinal and food sensitivity issues, medication and supplement use, food texture and preferences, sodium and sugar intake, and the inability to bite, chew, swallow or hold down certain foods are some important factors that have to be considered when redefining what should go on their plates. As are, for example, binge eating disorders and other complex syndromes such as Prader-Willi Syndrome where eating is a consistent occurrence, feeling full is never achieved, and therefore weight is gained.

Below are some training examples and their benefits:

Training	Function and Purpose	Examples of Exercise	Benefit
<b>Strength</b>	For building and enhancing muscles for bone health and growth.	High knees or walking up stairs, squats, planks, push ups, upper body exercises such as bicep curls, shoulder and chest presses with weights, tire flips, TRX exercises, and dips.	Strengthens and builds lean muscles, increases bone density, decreases risk of injury, promotes brain health and weight control, increases longevity in life and mobility and function.
<b>Cardio-Vascular/ Aerobic</b>	Cardio refers to pumping of the heart, and aerobic refers to oxygen use when exercising. Both work simultaneously and interchangeably during cardio and aerobic exercises. When you engage in an aerobic activity your body uses oxygen to help create energy. Therefore your oxygen intake and breathing increases. During cardio exercises your heart rate increases.	Power walking, jogging and running, swimming, cycling, basketball, soccer, rowing, jump rope, treadmill and elliptical machines, exercise bike circuit training, and burpees. HIIT classes, Zumba classes and dancing, cardio kickboxing, water aerobics and kettlebell exercises.	Improves heart health and lung function, lowers blood pressure, aids sleep, strengthens immune system, mood booster, increases stamina and assists in weight control and weight loss
<b>Balance, Mobility and Stability</b>	All three are key for movement. Movement depends on our body's muscles working together and stabilizing the joints. Balance refers to proprioception, a sense of where your body is in space. Maintaining and improving balance is essential for posture and alignment.	Chair or seated leg raises, balancing on one leg (seated or standing with or without supports), musical statues and freeze dance (Kids). Yoga, Pilates, many stretching exercises such as arch and curl and PVC passes, lunges, planks, push-ups, exercises on stability ball and bosu.	Prevents and reduces injury, keeps joints healthy, corrects muscular imbalances, enhances flexibility and range of motion (ROM), increases coordination and strength.
<b>Core</b>	Core muscles include lower back, glutes, pelvis, hips, and abdomen. These muscles are essential for rotating, stabilizing and moving the spine. Core exercises help to train these muscles to work in harmony.	Variety of plank exercises, leg raises, Russian twists, bridges, variety of crunches, v-ups and sit up variations, bird dog, dead bug, and flutter kicks	Improves balance and stability, posture, stronger lower back prevents injuries, protects organs and central nervous system, and overall daily activities in life.

To train with Yomi, contact Inclusive Fitness Programs @ britsrock4autism@gmail.com or call 973 820 5795

For the special needs community eating certain types of foods even if they are considered healthy, may be suitable for some, but not for all. Again, one size does not fit all. However, fast foods and pre-packaged foods with artificial preservatives, sweeteners, or refined sugars should be avoided as they can cause inflammation and other health imbalances and behavior concerns.

It is important to seek advice from a qualified nutritionist or health and nutrition coach to professionally address each individual's needs.

## Training Exercises and Benefits for a better quality of life

Exercising promotes a better quality of life, if done correctly and safely. Exercises should always be performed in a safe environment where injury prevention is practiced. Before practicing any exercise, consult with your health practitioner and certified fitness professional.

# ADAPTIVE FITNESS TRAINING

By Shannon Schafer, Inclusion Sports Performance Training. Inspired by limitless possibilities

**What would you do if a young boy who had no limbs said that he wanted to train with you? Would you embrace him with open arms? Shannon Schafer, Owner of Inclusion Performance Training did. Here's her story.**

Over the years, I have met so many families that have touched my heart and inspired me on so many levels, but no one more so than a little boy named Isaiah (not his actual name). He and his family came to see me about gymnastics for his siblings. However, Isaiah asked his mom if he could do gymnastics as well. What was so strikingly amazing about Isaiah is that he didn't have limbs, but that didn't keep him from wanting to do what his siblings were going to do. After talking with his mom, she explained that she never placed limitations on Isaiah or treated him any differently from his siblings. Imagine if we took this approach with all of our kids and adults with special needs and they knew life was filled with limitless possibilities?

I immediately thought, here is a mom that made the decision to give her child every opportunity to thrive. The fact that having no legs or arms weren't going to stop him and if he wanted to do gymnastics, she wasn't going to put limitations on his spirit. If Isaiah could navigate life with such joy, happiness, and the ability to believe he could do anything, I could certainly think outside the box to teach him gymnastics. So, we found a way for him to use the rings, jump on the trampoline, and flip. Isaiah's family moved away a few months after I started working with them, but they touched my life in a way that I



## Did you know?

The Best Sports for Kids with ADHD include martial arts, gymnastics, swimming, tennis and soccer.

Source: ADDitude [www.additudemag.com/The Best ADHD Activities for Kids- Updated October 2020](http://www.additudemag.com/The Best ADHD Activities for Kids- Updated October 2020)



## Beyond the Gut for ASD Children

By Raline Sexton

It's not unusual for children on the spectrum to have a microbial imbalance in their gut that contributes to behavior issues. These gastrointestinal (GI) disorders ranging from dysbiosis (microbial imbalance) and yeast overgrowth, produce excitotoxins which cause inflammation of the brain. Furthermore, given the research regarding the gut and brain connection, it's no surprise that what our kids eat will impact how their brain functions. Many families find themselves still struggling with behavioral issues even after they "clean up" a child's diet. Typically, they start with a gluten and dairy-free diet, given the inflammatory effects of ingesting wheat and casein products. Unfortunately, that is not enough. A child's diet should be comprised of organic, whole, and unprocessed foods, but believe it or not, even that can be problematic for some children. A whole other host of issues arise such as phenol, salicylate, oxalates, and histamine sensitivity that will still produce unwelcomed behavior. All of these are natural compounds found in fruit, vegetables, and nuts, but when a

## To Diet or Not to Diet, That is the Question

By Hannah Tello, CPT, Pn1, GGS1

**Have you ever had a well-meaning friend or family member encourage you to go on a "diet" in order to lose a few pounds?**

Or maybe your doctor said that you need to lose some weight and told you to eat better and exercise? Perhaps, you have decided that you would like to lose some weight on your own. Whatever the reason, you want to get on a diet and drop some pounds!

The way you live your life influences your health and fitness. When you eat you are not just putting fuel into your body. You are socializing, experiencing culture, making memories, and enjoying life. Sometimes you may be eating because you feel sad, stressed, anxious, or lonely. All of these components work together to make up your nutrition.

Oftentimes when the word "nutrition" is heard the first thing that comes to mind is what you eat. However, nutrition involves so much more than just what you eat. It also involves how, why, when, where, and with whom you eat.

There are a few foundational skills to consider when talking about nutrition. Skills such as, eating slowly and mindfully, recognizing the difference between hunger and appetite, and eating only until you are satisfied or about 80% full. Just by practicing these skills consistently, you will notice a change in your health.

Remember that weight loss isn't necessarily the goal; you really want to focus on total health. While weight loss may be a part of total health, it isn't the entire picture. Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight is a by-product of living a lifestyle of total health.

Total health takes time! We live in a world where so many things are immediate (i.e. internet, phone calls/texts, livestream movies, etc.) and it's easy to get discouraged when you don't see the results you're looking for quickly. In those moments remember the story of the race

child has a compromised gut, it's very easy to tip the bucket and cause aggravations. This tends to be very hard for some parents to process, how can eating too much kale make my child go nuts? The answer is you want the child's diet to contain leafy vegetables but tread carefully, because until the gut is fully healed, even quinoa, which is high in oxalates, can result in the same behavior as your child eating candy. Histamine sensitivity, on the other hand, can produce hyperactivity, laughing out loud for no reason, and increase tics. While phenol and salicylate sensitivity can also contribute to hyperactivity, stammering, inability to fall asleep. For a full list of "why does my child do this?" I recommend people join The Reid Group on Facebook. It's a group of women that have healed their children's GI issues purely through diet.



between the hare and the turtle. The turtle was much slower, but he won because he was consistent and persistent.

So next time you are encouraged to start the newest "diet" ask yourself, "How will this 'diet' affect my total health? Will this "diet" help me to live a healthier life or is it only to lose weight?". If you need some guidance on how to implement the foundational nutrition skills or to work towards a healthier lifestyle consider working with a nutrition coach who is trained in these skills.



Instagram: @tellicoaching  
FaceBook: Tello Coaching  
YouTube: Tello Coaching

Hannah is a deep health, client centered coach and medical fitness trainer focused on empowering women to live a balanced, healthy, and fulfilled life through evidence based methods and practices. She is certified by ISSA, Precision Nutrition, and Girls Gone Strong, some of the most respected organizations in her field. In addition, she is also a member of MedFit Network, an organization that provides ongoing education for health and fitness professionals.

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: SEVEN TIPS FOR PARENTS

By Stephanie Knapp

Often as parents or carers of children with special needs or disabilities, we do not know what to say to teachers, therapists, and heads of schools about our children's education and therapeutic supports. Many of us can relate to being overwhelmed and bombarded with mountains of paperwork and performance information at Individualized Education Program (I.E.P.) meetings. Also, we can be misinformed or not know what quality of education and therapies our children rightly need. Only to leave a lot of our decisions and trust in the hands of those in education, yet we don't have to. We just need to get ourselves tuned up in Special Needs Law and Rights as a Special Need's Parent.

Advocate Stephanie Knapp, CP has been a powerhouse in getting children what they need in schools. The owner and principal advocate at Advocates In Education, LLC has provided parents her Top Seven Tips for advocating for your child in schools.

## 1. Put it in writing.

In the eyes of the law, if it's not written down, it didn't happen. Always try to communicate with the school via email. Whenever a phone call or in-person conversation does take place, follow them up with an email documenting your understanding of the conversation.

## 2. Be stoic, not unstable.

Do your very best to keep your emotions in check at the IEP table. Try to remain calm and practice mindfulness. When we allow our emotions to overcome us, we are prone to more impulsive decision making and we miss important details.

## 3. Ensure the record is accurate.

Make a habit of reading your child's IEP meeting notes and prior written notice (PWN). During an IEP meeting, if the school agreed to do something, or if you disagreed with the school, it should be documented in the notes and/or PWN. If you don't see it documented, request (in writing) that the school corrects the record to accurately reflect the agreement or disagreement.

## 4. Never think you are a burden.

As parents of children with disabilities, we tend to be overly apologetic and sometimes feel as though we are placing a burden on schools or teachers when we ask for additional supports. Don't. Neither you nor your child are a burden. Federal regulations require the school to provide appropriate supports and services for your child and they receive money to do so.

## 5. Incorporate a strong parent/school communication system into your child's IEP.

Requesting that the school provide you with regular updates on your child's academic progress and behavior is something every parent should do. You can then use this data to assist in advocating for future services.



## 6. Make sure the data supports the goals.

Goals should always be based on data. This data should be found within the present levels section of your child's IEP. For example, if the school is attempting to implement a goal that the student demonstrates a skill by the end of the IEP cycle on 8 out of 10 opportunities, ask the school: how many times is the student currently able to do this when provided with 10 opportunities? If they don't know, ask them how they came up with the goal. What if the student can already demonstrate the skill on 7 out of 10 opportunities? If that is the case, the goal is most certainly not ambitious.

## 7. Focus on independence.

In all areas of both academic and functional need, the goal is always optimal independence with the fewest supports possible. When you are analyzing data and discussing your child's current abilities with the IEP team, make sure you ask if the student has been provided with any support, including visual and verbal cues. The ability to perform with supports is not the same as the student's independent ability. Be very careful here. Make sure you don't focus on what you want someone to do for your child, instead, focus on what you want someone to teach your child how to do on their own.

Stephanie Knapp, CP, Certified Paralegal and a graduate of Boston University's Paralegal Studies program and William & Mary Law School's Institute of Special Education Advocacy. A contributing member of the Council of Parents Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA), National Association for Professional Special Education Advocates (NAPSEA), the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA), the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA), and the Maryland Association of Paralegals (MAP).

Advocates In Education offers representation, parent and group advocacy classes, and will soon be offering a certificate training program; How to Advocate Like a Boss™.

# EMPLOYMENT CREATED 4 US BY US

By By Staff Writer, Ethan and the Bean, Cnp Community Services, and John's Crazy Socks

*Once an adult with disabilities ages out of school at 21, many parents come to the realization that their children need somewhere to go. For many it's a day program, But what about work?*

Here are some businesses that have created employment opportunities and skills so that our children can be confident and thrive. Here's Ethan and the Bean.

Ethan and the Bean is not just a non-profit coffee shop located in Little Falls, NJ. The multifaceted organization was founded by Pat and Pam Donovan to create meaningful employment for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in response to the lack of opportunities available for their adult son, Ethan.

According to the National Bureau of Labor Statistics, the employment rate for persons with disability ages 16-64 was only 17.9% nationwide in 2020.



Since their founding in November of 2019, we have provided employment to five individuals with varying Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to help change this bleak statistic. We have also launched a volunteer job sampling program where individuals with disabilities from the community are integrated into an active volunteer position to gain a work-based learning experience. We celebrate each person's unique contributions and strive to cultivate a positive, empowering space. Our employees are thoroughly trained and have gained self-esteem, meaningful employment, and skills for independent living.

It is incredibly important to create purposeful jobs for individuals with I/DD because this population is more than capable of contributing if given the opportunity. One of the biggest barriers to employment is an unwillingness by many employers to envision the possibilities of success for people with I/DD. Every day and in every day,



Ethan & the Bean seeks to provide a living, breathing example of a social enterprise where individuals of all ability levels can thrive. The community benefits from visiting the coffee shop because they experience firsthand how we provide a population that is all too often overlooked, both visibility and opportunities. It normalizes our sincerely held belief that employment is possible for anyone who seeks it, and a job can truly change a life.

In an effort to create jobs, it also became clear that people were also seeking genuine connection and inclusion outside of the workplace. Thus, since its inception Ethan & the Bean has morphed into a community space where people can also gather to make and share art, explore new hobbies, socialize, and cultivate relationships. Ethan & the Bean's long-term vision is to continue to expand our humanitarian effort to create employment opportunities but also serve as a beacon where all people are seen, included and celebrated for their unique contributions. Visit us at 98 Main Street in Little Falls Monday through Saturday from 9 AM-4 PM and Sunday from 10 AM-2 PM. You can also visit us online at [ethanandthebean.com](http://ethanandthebean.com) or follow along on social media @ethanandthebean.

...and also CNP Community Services

CNP Community Services is a service provider for individuals with Autism and other disabilities located in West Orange, New Jersey. Our focus is to assist clients with developmental job skills, and community inclusion in a retail environment. We carry vintage and antique home furnishings. Visit us at [www.instagram.com/cnp\\_treasures](http://www.instagram.com/cnp_treasures) or visit us at 284 Main Street (Tory Corner), West Orange, New Jersey

....and lastly John's Crazy Socks

We are the father-son team (Mark and John as seen in the photo above right) that founded John's Crazy Socks, a social enterprise with a mission to spread happiness. We pursue our mission by showing what people with differing abilities can achieve, by giving back to our charity partners and by making a personal connection with our customers. When you support John's Crazy Socks, you enable us to hire people with differing abilities and to Give Back to groups like the Special Olympics and National Down Syndrome Society.

For more information visit [www.johnscrazysock.com](http://www.johnscrazysock.com)  
Or call: 631-760-5625

If you know of any entrepreneurial businesses or companies that employ or are founded by someone with disabilities, please email their information to [info@specialneedsfitnessmagazine.com](mailto:info@specialneedsfitnessmagazine.com). We would love to see them listed in our future magazines, both online and in print. Thank you so much.

# FAMILY SUPPORT ORGANIZATION OF ESSEX COUNTY

60 EVERGREEN PLACE, SUITE 900 EAST ORANGE, NJ 07018

FSOEC provides peer support, education and advocacy for parents at all stages so that children and families can thrive. Our vision is to foster nurturing relationships that build on the strengths of families and contribute to family and community wellbeing by offering an array of services from pre-parenting through adulthood.

## Our Network of Supports

### Peer Support

one-to-one peer support provided to parents of youth enrolled in NJ Children's System of Care

### Support Groups & Educational Workshops

to educate and equip families on topics of Trauma, Parenting, Wellness and more

### Warmline

Information & Referral to Community Resources emotional support via telephone

### Youth Partnership

Ages 14-21 youth develop appropriate social skills, communication and leadership skills while having fun



You don't have to do this alone!

TEL. 973-395-1441 WEBSITE: [WWW.FSOEC.ORG](http://WWW.FSOEC.ORG)

### Liam's Story

On April 16, 2020 Liam Marquez entered the world and changed the lives of Kimberly & Sebastian Marquez by making them first-time parents.

Like all new parents, they were ecstatic and scared, especially having a newborn during the Covid pandemic. But in June of 2020, bright-eyed 6-week-old Liam Marquez was diagnosed with a rare type of cancer, Rhabdomyosarcoma. His parents were devastated and heartbroken, but Kim & Sebastian were ready to help Liam start the fight of his life. By 7-weeks-old, baby Liam had begun his 40 weeks of intensive chemo and radiation at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP).

Between chemo, radiation, and several surgeries, each day of his treatment plan came with a new challenge. Then, through a combination of science, faith, and love, Liam was declared Cancer Free in May 2021. Liam and his family were beyond happy to put this behind them and be able to start living a normal life! But before Labor Day Liam's mom noticed that something seemed "off" with his right eye. Sadly, scans revealed that the cancer was back and had metastasized in his orbital tissue. Worse yet, the cancer had spread to various parts of his body including his brain.



Link to Liam's  
gofundme

### Books by Parents in the Special Needs Community

Broken No Longer: The Transformation of Human Life Paperback – September 6, 2018 by Howard Tello (Author) and Dr. Pierre Steenburg (Foreword)

#### BROKEN NO LONGER

What is it like to be the parent of a brain-injured child? To realize that whatever dreams you thought you had, are gone. How does one deal with the fact that you have a brain-injured child? To realize that whatever dreams you thought you had, are gone. How does one deal with the loneliness, shame, and guilt that come with the realization that you are not the parent you once were? This book is the story of one family and their journey to answer these questions. In particular a father, who lost all hope in his son, found that he should never give up.

It has been said that broken means mended. To realize that what you are living is not what you expected from life. How does one deal with the fact that you have a brain-injured child? To realize that whatever dreams you thought you had, are gone. How does one deal with the loneliness, shame, and guilt that come with the realization that you are not the parent you once were? This book is the story of one family and their journey to answer these questions. In particular a father, who lost all hope in his son, found that he should never give up.

In Broken No Longer: The Transformation of Human Life, Pastor Howard Tello tells the story of his family's journey with their brain-injured child, Isaiah. It is a story of coming to terms with the realization that God does not create broken things.

Join Pastor Howard Tello as he shares his heart with the world a story that has inspired and moved everyone that has heard him speak.

Pastor Howard Tello has been serving as a pastor for the past 15 years. He has a passion for God and a desire to serve others. His heart has been moved to inspire others to yearn for God with all their hearts, minds, and souls, and to live a life that is pleasing to God. Pastor Howard Tello has impacted all those around him. Pastor Tello earned a B.A. in Religion and a Masters in Divinity.

Howard Tello is a man of God who has a heart for God and a desire to serve others. He has a passion for God and a desire to serve others. His heart has been moved to inspire others to yearn for God with all their hearts, minds, and souls, and to live a life that is pleasing to God. Pastor Howard Tello has impacted all those around him. Pastor Tello earned a B.A. in Religion and a Masters in Divinity.

ISBN 9781721212008 9.99 USD >

9781721212008

#### BROKEN NO LONGER

The Transformation of Human Life



HOWARD TELLO

HOWARD TELLO

In the pages that lie ahead, the reader will experience the heart, life, and pain of a family dealing with a brain-injured child. Broken No Longer is more than just a story, it's a narrative of any person that has ever gone through the pain, struggle, and sacrifice of true love. Love for someone that means the world to you. You will feel the heart of Pastor Tello, as well as, the victory that he found in believing in his brain-injured son, Isaiah.

This book has received Five stars on Amazon. It is currently free on Amazon kindle and \$9.99 in paperback.

### Giving our kids the spotlight they deserve

By Editorial Staff

George Bostory was a successful and effective special education teacher and had worked at Wayne Hills High School in Wayne, New Jersey and Dr William Horton Elementary School in Newark, New Jersey.

One day, he had a light bulb moment. He realized that he needed to combine his advanced black belt in both Karate and Jujitsu with his special education teaching. As a result, Special Dragons was born.

Bostory is very passionate and sincerely cares for the population he serves. He said: "Understand that Special Dragons service a population of children who are often uninvited or unwelcome to participate in activities with typical children. Special Dragons gives our children the opportunity to perform in the spotlight...rather than watching and, wishing from the sidelines." Bostory added.

For nine years, Bostory has been providing exercise and self-defense programs for students with special needs. All instructors have both a black belt and certified teachers in special education. Classes at Special Dragons, also reflect a special needs classroom where there is a teacher, students, and an assistant. Additionally, classes also have



#### Did you know?

Swimming is an excellent fitness activity for individuals who are visually impaired or deafblind, if they swim laps or participate in aqua aerobics or similar activities. There are few barriers, and the swimmer can move freely without worrying about obstacles, especially when lines clearly mark lane widths.

Source: The American Printing House for the Blind (APH)

Robbie's World – a book series by Cindi Gelormini Paperback – January

30, 2021



Robbie is a little penguin with Autism. Follow his wacky adventures throughout the twelve chapters in this trilogy Children's Book Series. You'll laugh at his antics and learn about Autism at the same time. Written by Robbie's Mama, the stories are based on real-life events that happened when Robbie was a little boy.

At the end of each chapter is a "Mom's Minute" that teaches adults what just happened in that chapter. They'll learn about things like "Stimming", "Eloping", feeding and sleep issues among other things. These books are a great teaching tool for teachers, for Doctors to share with patients, and for parents of children newly diagnosed with Autism to learn and share with other family members. But mostly they're for any child who loves to read fun stories!

Robbie's World Book Series is available on Amazon. Also visit [robbiesworldbook.com](http://robbiesworldbook.com)

an intern who is usually a student who has special needs. Parents are also encouraged to enter the classes to assist in regulating and refocusing their child.

Classes are small with no more than ten students. Ages range from 5-11 years old and 12-20 years old.

Special Dragons teaches basic martial arts which promote hand-eye coordination, gross and fine motor control, and balance. The programs are also designed to regulate and enhance sensory stimulation which is significant for those who have autism spectrum disorders.

Karate and Jujitsu at Special Dragons also have many benefits, these include self-defense, confidence, self-esteem, focus, discipline, respect, friendship, and camaraderie. Bostory has now opened 4 locations since he started in 2004. You can find Special Dragons in Essex, Hudson, Union and Bergen County.

For more information contact George Bostory Program Director/ Founder @ 973 667 8525 or visit [www.specialdragons.us](http://www.specialdragons.us)

# SUPPORT AND EVENTS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

## Skylands Family Support: The Trusted and Proven Support Coordination Agency for New Jersey

By Kathryn Humanick (see advert on page 10)

The transition from New Jersey's Children System of Care to Adult Services can be daunting and at the very least confusing. But it does not have to be! With the right support coordination agency, there can be a seamless shift. The task of a support coordination agency is to help you find service providers and resources in your community as well as respond to emergencies. Also, your support coordinator will meet with you monthly and complete documentation called the Person-Centered Planning Tool (PCPT) and the Individualized Service Plan (ISP). The whole goal of a support coordination agency is to make sure your wants and needs are met in your life. You will want to pick an agency that builds a rapport of trust with you and your family. Skylands Family Support has been the trusted support coordination agency for nearly a thousand families in New Jersey since 2012. Skylands Family Support is different from other support coordination agencies in that we will work with you and your team at school to create a seamless transition to adult services once you turn twenty-one. We will attend your last IEP meeting at school, so your support coor-

dinator can learn more about you and make sure your goals continue into adulthood. We will hit the ground running to find options that will be the perfect fit for you. Skylands Family Support will work with you and your family to create an individualized plan to achieve your ambitions whether it be living independently or acquiring a new skill. Our support coordinators use your adult services' budget creatively and will investigate new avenues to foster your growth and independence.

Our agency's goal is to become a reliable friend that happens to know all the answers to your questions. Whether those questions are how to find a direct support professional (DSP) or even what is a DSP, our support coordinators will be able to assist you with every inquiry from the very technical to navigating the acronym soup that can be Adult Services. The entirety of our agency's focus and attention is on you and your family. Skylands Family Support is the knowledgeable, trusted and proven team for all of your support coordination needs.

## Family Support Organization of Essex County

(see advert on page 26)

Tammy Cohen, a prominent author once said "a great employee is like a four-leaf clover, hard to find and lucky to have" However, having great employees isn't the only driving force behind FSO, it is our lived experiences as parents and guardians of youths with special needs that makes the difference. At the Family Support Organization of Essex County, we provide 1:1 peer support to parents and caregivers of special needs children. We do this by supporting, educating, and encouraging advocacy for our families. Join us as we ask Nairara, a parent who has received support services from us about the importance of having staff that is capable of delivering effective programs and supports.

"I believe it is important because a lot of parents find themselves lost when they first begin their journey as a special needs parent. Many

people do not know what resources are available for their children when they first receive a diagnosis. Having staff with lived experience of serving this population can ease the burden. They have been through it all: educational issues, finding the right professionals to provide services for their children, navigating the sometimes lonely world of special needs families. When you are paired with a family partner that has the experience and that can share with you their story and achievements, you gain a sense of confidence that one day, your child/ren and family too will have the same: acceptance and inclusion."

Being a caregiver of special needs children is not a task for the weak, however, it takes a community of support to gather the strength and enthusiasm required to do the task at hand.

## National and World Events

### **Virtual International Conference on ADHD – November 4–6, 2021**

During our time together, you can expect to have the chance to share information and connect with other conference attendees. Programming for 2021 includes blockbuster presentations from Keynote Speakers, ADHD Professional Institute, cutting-edge research through speakers and poster sessions, workshop, network, peer-to-peer meetings, and a virtual exhibit hall. For additional information and to register online, please visit: [www.theadhdconference.org](http://www.theadhdconference.org).

### **Pasadena Adaptive Sports Festival November 20, 2021**

Come out to enjoy: Quad Rugby, Handcycling, Basketball, Archery, Power Soccer, Boxing, Pickle Ball, Tennis, Beep Baseball, Bocce, Art, and a Resource Fair. Fun for your whole family!

Triumph Foundation, 27811 Avenue Hopkins Unit 5, Valencia, Ca 91355

**Advertise with us for Spring/Summer 2022**

[info@specialneedsfitnessmagazine.com](mailto:info@specialneedsfitnessmagazine.com)

# FITNESS AND SPORTS LISTINGS

## National

Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Visit [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org) The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Adaptive Sports programs are dedicated to motivating, encouraging and sustaining participation and competition for disabled Veterans and members of the Armed Forces through partnerships with VA hospitals and local adaptive sports programs across the country. Source Disability Sports: Information on Sport for the Disabled. 04 April 2020. Visit [www.disabled-world.com/sports](http://www.disabled-world.com/sports).

The Deaflympics is the oldest multisport event after the Olympic Games, it will be held from May 1st to 15th, 2022. The initial date was postponed due to the Covid-19 world pandemic, but the official title remains the year original, 2021, in the same way as the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Source: Visit [www.mobicaxias.com](http://www.mobicaxias.com). 08 Sep 2021

The United States Association of Blind Athletes empowers Americans who are blind and visually impaired to experience life-changing opportunities in sports, recreation and physical activities, thereby educating and inspiring the nation. [www.usaba.org](http://www.usaba.org)

Adaptive Crossfit- Adaptive athletes perform CrossFit based workouts in conjunction with Gymnastics and Olympic Weightlifting and Power lifting. Adaptive Athletes as tough, life challenged individuals with varying degrees of physical disabilities. Visit [www.crossfitoneworld.com/portfolio-items/crossfit-adaptive/](http://www.crossfitoneworld.com/portfolio-items/crossfit-adaptive/)

Down Syndrome Sports of America is a National Sports Organization dedicated to transforming the lives of athletes with Down syndrome who want to develop and compete in sports. Visit [www.dssasports.org](http://www.dssasports.org)

## Worldwide

### UK

Disability Initiative is an established charity for disabled adults that provides services for adults with physical disabilities and/or brain injury. Visit [www.disabilityinitiative.org.uk](http://www.disabilityinitiative.org.uk)

Disability Opportunities in Sport UK (DOSportUK) is a community interest company which offers sporting and physical activity opportunities to people with a disability. Visit [www.dosportuk.co.uk](http://www.dosportuk.co.uk)

### Asia and Australia

Disability Sports Australia (DSA) is Australia's peak national body representing athletes with a physical disability. DSA aims to get more Australian's with a disability, more active, more often [www.sports.org.au](http://www.sports.org.au)

SportCares was established in 2012 as the philanthropic arm of Sport Singapore to enable vulnerable individuals and persons with disabilities to experience and reap the benefits of sport by instilling confidence and elevating one's outlook on life. Visit [www.sportcares.sportsingapore.gov.sg](http://www.sportcares.sportsingapore.gov.sg)

## Africa

Inclusion Africa (IA) is a pan-African, regional federation of family-based organizations advocating for the human rights and full inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities and families throughout Africa. Visit [www.inclusion-international.org](http://www.inclusion-international.org)

The International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) is the world's major association of individuals and organizations concerned with equality of access to appropriate education for children and youth with vision impairment. Visit [www.icevi.org](http://www.icevi.org)

Alexis Miranda Foundation enhances the quality of life for individuals and families impacted by Autism  
Based in Ghana, Africa and the Greater Boston Area in the USA, For more information visit [www.alexismirandafoundation.org](http://www.alexismirandafoundation.org)

## Latin America

Special Olympics in Latin America is dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. [www.specialolympics.org/regions/latin-america](http://www.specialolympics.org/regions/latin-america)

## Canada

Sport for Life is a Nationally recognized not for profit organization that consists of sport and physical literacy experts with the long-term vision necessary to be catalysts for lasting change within the sport and physical activity ecosystem and beyond. Visit [www.sportforlife.ca](http://www.sportforlife.ca)

## Caribbean

Caribbean Disabled Sports Association -The Aim of The Caribbean Disabled Sport Association is to create opportunities to enhance the health and social wellbeing of the disabled, disadvantaged and elderly within the Caribbean community, through their participation in sport and leisure activities. Visit [www.cdsacic.org](http://www.cdsacic.org)

The Jamaica Paralympic Association (JPA) was established in 2008 and is the successor of the Jamaica Paraplegic Association which was formed by the late Sir John Golding in 1966. The JPA is the government approved national body for sports for persons who are physically challenged and visually impaired. Visit [www.jamaicaparalympic.com](http://www.jamaicaparalympic.com)

## Global

### **France, Estonia, Brazil, and other countries**

Founded in 1924 and known as the CISS (Comité International des Sports des Sourds), the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf, ICSD is now approaching the century mark of being the organization behind the building, evolving and fortifying the tradition of inviting deaf/hard of hearing elite athletes from all of the world to come together not only to compete in their respective sports, but to also develop comradships between their countries. Visit [www.deaflympics.com/icsd](http://www.deaflympics.com/icsd)

## Israel

The Israel Sports Association for the Disabled (ISAD) stands in the front line of a strong national effort to instill hope in the hearts of our disabled citizens. ISAD runs the following all-year-around sports in Israeli leagues and sends national teams to international competitions and Paralympic events: Sailing, Swimming, Athletics, Basketball, Weightlifting, Shooting, Fencing, Hand Cycling, Horseback Riding, Wheelchair Tennis, Table Tennis, Archery, Volleyball, Goal Ball (for the blind), Badminton. Source: [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org)

## BUSINESS CARDS AND LISTINGS

**Florence Nardone PT**  
Pediatric and Orthopedic Therapist  
(201) 314 - 0126  
[flonar@optonline.net](mailto:flonar@optonline.net)



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Founding Board Member  
(551) 245-7313  
[priscilla@missionkidsuccess.org](mailto:priscilla@missionkidsuccess.org)



Nassan's Place is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization formed by autism mom, Nadine Wright-Arbubakr, in 2012, due to the lack of accessible and affordable, educational and recreational programs she needed for her own son, in and around her under-served, inner-city communities of Essex County, NJ. Nassan's Place is bringing Help, Hope, Acceptance and Opportunities to these very special children and their families. Nassan's Place can't stop the diagnosis but we can help the families affected by it. For additional information about Nassan's Place call 973-424-7781 and or visit [www.nassansplace.org](http://www.nassansplace.org)

Parenting Special Needs Magazine believes in the Power of Parenting, encouraging, informing, empowering, and inspiring you throughout your parenting journey. Visit [www.parentingspecialneeds.org](http://www.parentingspecialneeds.org)

INCLUDEnyc is the leading provider of training and information for young people with any disability (age 0-26) in New York City, their families, and the professionals who support them. Visit [www.includenyc.org](http://www.includenyc.org)

## Turkey

Turkish Sports Federation for the Physically Disabled- its mission is to reach disabled individuals with a modern organization and infrastructure, increase their participation in sports, and provide scientific and sustainable programs to achieve the targeted achievements at the Paralympic Games. <http://tbesf.org.tr/>

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CNP Community Services is a service provider for individuals with Autism and other disabilities. Our focus is to assist clients to developmental job skills, and community inclusion in a retail environment. We carry vintage and antique, home furnishings. Visit [www.instagram.com/cnp\\_treasures](http://www.instagram.com/cnp_treasures)

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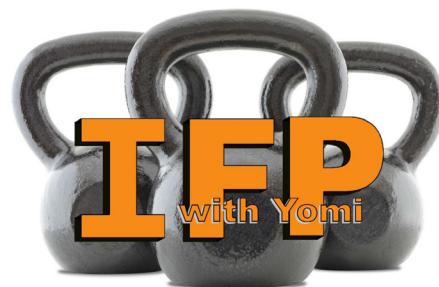
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**OUR NEW MEMBER  
SYSTEM IS GOING LIVE!**

**Join Yomi @ the following group fitness classes.**

Tuesday	Wednesday	Friday	Saturday
<b>9.00am – 9.30am</b> Zumba (Adults and Teens) – Aerobic Dance work out with Latin, African and world beats	<b>5.00pm – 5.30pm</b> Endurance- Non stop exercises to build up your stamina	<b>9.00am – 9.30am</b> Core- Strengthen your core muscles. Includes abdominal, back, hip and chest exercises	<b>10.30 – 11.00am</b> Cardio-Kickboxing – High Aerobic kick boxing class. No bags or gloves needed
<b>9.45am – 10.15am</b> Meditation – Guided meditation to help you relax		<b>9.45am – 10.15am</b> Seated Strength – Guided exercises from a seated chair position. Equipment: weights*	
<b>10.30am -11.00am</b> Strength – Muscle strengthening exercises with and without weights*		<b>10.30am – 11.00am</b> Zumba Kids Jr- Energetic dance party for ages 5-11. Kid friendly music from around the world	

