

weap: The People

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Wisconsin Early Autism Project, Inc.

2011

Aspergers Idol

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James Durbin is a 22-year-old young man from Santa Cruz, California. He has tourettes syndrome as well as Aspergers. He is also a top 12 finalist on this year's American Idol, a popular reality singing contest which results in worldwide fame and a record contract.

James is engaged to be married to his love Heidi with whom he has a son Hunter. Both are tattooed on his arm. "I auditioned mainly for my family.", he explains. "I auditioned 2 years ago and it really didn't work out but my family has been my saving grace and they

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Not a Haircut!

Katie Gleason

Wisconsin Early Autism Project, Inc.

Going to get your hair cut can be a scary experience for anyone. Don't believe it? Ask anybody who has come home with a 'bad' haircut. For kids with autism, this fear seems to be rooted deeper than being afraid of having a bad hair-do. Throughout my experiences at WEAP working with kids on the spectrum, there have been numerous times a family has expressed the difficulty they all experience during the 'haircut process.'

"I dread haircut time. My heart just breaks every time we have to give him a haircut."

Research has indicated that some children with autism may have an increased sensitivity to the five senses. This sensitivity can have a negative effect on these children and their apparent fear of a haircut. When attempting to understand and explain the crying, yelling and tantrums that may come about when kids are receiving a haircut, it is important to consider all aspects involved in this process:

- 1) You have to sit still for an extended period of time.
- 2) The razor cutting your hair makes a loud noise.
- 3) The razor vibrates on your head, increasing the noise inside your head.
- 4) Sometimes the person cutting your hair accidentally cuts your skin.
- 5) You FEEL and HEAR your hair being cut.
- 6) You SEE your hair (which is part of your body) fall from your head.

This process and experience of a haircut can be traumatic. So, how do we help our children overcome this fear? There are a variety of

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techniques we can use to help make this experience more enjoyable. The first step is to identify what seems to be the trigger causing such extreme behaviors. After the cause is determined, then we can develop a plan to lessen the fear our children feel. Some techniques that have had positive outcomes on the haircut process for children with autism are the following:

- 1) Have your child watch their favorite show or play their favorite video game while receiving a haircut.
- 2) Video model a haircut performed by a familiar adult or child. Your child can watch this video prior to receiving a haircut. Be sure your actor or actress uses phrases such as "Haircuts are fun!", "This doesn't hurt!" and "I like getting a haircut!"
- 3) Write a social story about receiving a haircut. Be sure to include images of people enjoying receiving haircuts. Ask the child questions about the story as you read it.
- 4) Set up a reinforcement system for your child to receive a haircut. For every swipe of the razor, they earn a sticker. After the hair cut is over, they earn a prize for the number of stickers they have earned.
- 5) Set up a tolerance program that uses systematic desensitization. This technique slowly exposes the child to the steps to receiving a haircut and requires a lot of time and patience. It can begin by having your child tolerate having the razor in the same room and slowly work up to touching

your child with the razor off, turning the razor on while touching your child's head and finally cutting your child's hair.

Any of these techniques can be effective for your child. It is dependent upon the severity of the fear and the personality of your child. After a year of starting a Haircutting Tolerance program, a child who once tantrumed when someone would say the letter 'H' (because 'haircut' begins with 'h') can now tolerate having a clipper, turned on and touching his head for one minute.

"We experienced the best haircut ever this last time!"

With time and patience, the horrors of hair-cutting can be a thing of the past. If you are interested in fighting this battle, talk to your Senior therapist about what you can do to help your child receive the best haircut experience of his or her life!♦

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pushed me and coached me. I started singing when I was really little. I can't even remember what age."

He has been a favorite of the judges so far with his rocker look and signature high wail, no doubt influenced by celebrity judge Stephen Tyler.

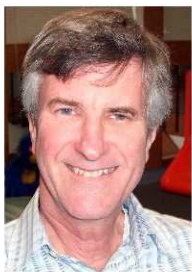
Although greatly enjoying his whirlwind success on the top-rated show, he misses his family.

"I've been getting video from Heidi of [Hunter] dancing and saying 'Da da on TV'", says James. "He'll sit there and watch the videos of me performing on the computer on Youtube. He dances along. Before I left I was teaching him to sing 'Rock and Roll All Night' by Kiss. He's kinda getting' it down, ya know. He's not even 2 yet; he can count to 20. He just learned how."

James acknowledges he has hurdles to climb. "I have toerettes and Aspergers, but toerettes and aspergers don't have me. I'm doing what I can to suppress it and I don't let it take advantage of me. It's not who I am. I'm here to show America who I am."

Despite his obstacles, James seems steadfast and confident. "The reason why I can be the next American Idol I feel is because I believe." He says. "From day 1 of this contest all I've been doing is believing. Believing that I can; believing that I have the power to do something real."

American Idol can be seen Wednesdays and Thursdays on Fox at 7PM central time.♦



Ask Dr. Sallows

You can submit more questions to Dr. Sallows by putting "Ask Dr. Sallows" in the subject line of an email to:

jsallows@wiautism.com

Are there medications that are helpful for children with autism?

Medications make sense when, in spite of treatment, behavior problems cause decreased access to social opportunities, educational or community settings. Effective medications (from our experience) include SSRIs like Zoloft (sertraline), for social anxiety, Risperdal (risperidone) for aggression and meltdowns, and Ritalin (methylphenidate) for hyperactivity. Alternatives are available for each of those mentioned. Selecting the most effective medication and dose is a trial and error process that may require many weeks. All medications have side effects, primarily decreased appetite for ADHD medications, increased appetite for Risperdal and disinhibition for SSRIs. Side effects can be minimized by using the lowest effective dose.

How does Weap use psychological testing? How is it helpful?

Standardized cognitive, language and adaptive/socialization testing prior to treatment and annually thereafter provides a clear picture of progress in comparison to same-age peers. Testing is useful for identifying specific strengths and weaknesses guiding interventions where they are needed. Cognitive tests assess verbal and non-verbal reasoning, working memory and processing speed. Language tests assess receptive and expressive language and specific underlying skills, such as decoding meaning, generative sentence construction, and mastery of grammatical forms. Other tests assess coping strategies, social interaction skills, math, writing spelling, oral and reading comprehension and whether signs of anxiety or hyperactivity are serious enough to warrant treatment.

How can I choose a treatment provider that will be the most helpful for my child?

Behavioral interventions have been shown in rigorous research studies to be effective in building the skills necessary to succeed for a large percentage of autistic children. Try to locate a provider who 1) trained with a well known clinic 2) has worked with at least 50-60 children; 3) The children varied from non verbal to highly verbal from toddler age to upper elementary age 4) has worked with autistic children for several years; 5) can describe many

children who improved to the average range; 6) upon hearing the description of your child's problems, can easily describe procedures to address them.

I have an autistic child who is a "runner". How can I take her into the community?

Controlling a child's behavior in the community is much easier once it is under control at home. First, set a few household rules that you can enforce, such as asking nicely before getting a treat. Next, put up visual markers around the yard (e.g., traffic cones) and reward your child for observing the boundary. Next, practice having your child stay by your side when on walks. Next, before traveling to a public place, prepare a visual schedule with a picture of each place that you will go, ending up at the child's favorite store. Go over this several times with your child, and bring along a special treat for good behavior on the outing.

My child is a picky eater and only eats a few foods. What can I do?

Most interventions for selective eating rely on the child's hunger as a motivator, so eliminating between meal snacks is the first step. Try using a favorite food as a reward for trying a small bite of healthy food, or mix a small amount of healthy food with the favorite food. Hiding healthy foods in favorite foods can work, but may fail if the child feels "tricked". The most successful approach is "non removal of the spoon" in which the mix of mostly preferred food is presented until the child finally eats it. This may initially result in gagging and vomiting, but many severely selective eaters have been helped.

My child doesn't pay attention when I talk to him and doesn't listen when I ask him to do things. What can I do?

First, become the provider of things your child likes, whether treats, physical play or provider of toys. Next, have him follow your lead in switching between preferred activities, e.g., "let's play chase", then "High five", always rewarding or praising him for joining you. Next, get him to look when you say "Hi", by approaching him closer, tapping his shoulder if necessary and repeating the greeting. When this is established, give a clear instruction that he is likely to follow, e.g., "come get a snack", gently guiding him if necessary. Once fairly compliant, many children can use visual schedules to follow multiple instructions.♦

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

Cherry Cannavo has worked with WEAP since 1997. Her Senior Annie Kernats states "Cherry is dependable and dedicated. She is flexible with the family's need to make schedule changes, including working on weekends. She offers ideas and suggestions at the team meetings and during Senior overlap sessions."

Upcoming Events

Autism Society of Wisconsin 2011 Annual Conference

'Navigating the Spectrum' ASW's 2011 Annual Conference
Early Bird Registration Materials now available.

Apr 14-16

Wisconsin Dells

Varied Times & Fees

Kalahari Resort & Convention Center

Jane Pribek

<http://www.asw4autism.org/>

jpribek@asw4autism.org

920-973-4080

Autism Spectrum Child TLSE 552

3 crd. Graduate/Undergrad/Audit
Cardinal Stritch University Outreach - Develop strategies to more effectively meet the needs of children in your classroom/home on the Autism Spectrum. 8-4 daily. Taught by Deb Pope.

Jun 20-24

Eau Claire

8-4 Daily

\$600 credit or \$405 Audit

Lorna Hager

tools-smu@core.com

262-534-7839

Groups and Classes

Location	Group	Age/Level	Facilitator	Fee	Days	Time	Start Date
Madison	Teen Group	Ages 13-16	Matt S	\$30/class (register by Jan. 5th)	Wednesdays	4:00-5:30PM	Jan. 12th - May 25th
Madison	Social Skills: Lion Pride	ages 6-8	Marissa & Katie	\$30/class (register by Jan. 5th)	Tuesdays	4:00-5:30PM	Jan. 11th - May 24th
Madison	Social Skills: Elephant Parade	Ages 9-12	Stephanie	\$30/class (register by Jan. 5th)	Wednesdays	3:30-5:30PM	Jan. 12th - May 25th
Milwaukee	Friendship Club	Ages 11-14	Stephanie	\$30/class Cost includes outings	Thursdays (no group 2/17)	4:30-6:00PM	Jan. 13th - March 24th
Milwaukee	Conversations for Kids	Ages 5-7	Stephanie	\$30/class	Tuesdays	4:30-6:00PM	Jan. 11th - Feb. 8th
Milwaukee	Monday Fun Day	Ages 5-9	Robin	\$30/class register	Mondays	4:30-6:00PM	Jan. 10th - March 14th
Milwaukee	The 5 Point Scale	Ages 8-10	Stephanie	\$30/class	Tuesdays	4:30-6:00PM	Feb. 15th - March 15th
Green Bay	Social skills	Ages 3-5	TBA	\$10.00 / class Choose # of classes (Register by March 11th)	Mondays	9:30-11:00Am	March 21 - May 16
Green Bay	Social skills	Ages 6-9	TBA	\$10.00 / class Choose # of classes (Register by March 11th)	Tuesdays	4:30-6:00Pm	March 22 - May 17
Green Bay	Teen Group	Ages 10-13	TBA	\$10.00 / class Choose # of classes (Register by March 11th)	Wednesdays	4:30-6:00Pm	March 23 - May 18
Green Bay	Teen Group	14 & Up	TBA	\$10.00 / class Choose # of classes (Register by March 11th)	Thursdays	4:30-6:00Pm	March 24 - May 19

Current Openings

MADISON 608-288-9040 Beloit Janesville Lake Mills Lodi Madison Mauston	Mt. Horeb New Lisbon Portage Poynette Randolph Rio Stoughton Sun Prairie	MILWAUKEE 262-432-5660 Brookfield Delavan Elkhorn Greendale Greenfield Kenosha	Oak Creek Racine S. Milwaukee St. Francis Wauwatosa West Allis	GREEN BAY 920-338-1610 Denmark Green Bay Fox Cities Pulaski Shawano	EAU CLAIRE 715-832-2233 Augusta Barron Brantwood Brichwood Cadott Camp Douglas Catawba Chetek Colfax	Eau Claire Fall Creek Hixton Hudson Menomonie Osseo Stevens Point River Falls Shell Lake Sparta Westfield
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