

weap: The People

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Travel Tips

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The Holidays are coming which means that many of us will be hitting the road and taking to the skies. Traveling can be very stressful to anyone with children, but especially if you have a child that doesn't travel well. Here are some general travel tips to make it a little easier.

Safety is of utmost importance when traveling. When traveling by car, make sure that your child is safely strapped in. If there are concerns that your child can get out of their safety belt and move around the vehicle, you need to look at alternative ways to keep them seated and safe. There are a variety of harnesses available and there are devices that can be placed over the existing seatbelt so that children can't undo them.

The portable DVD player can be a lifesaver both in the car and on the plane. Bring plenty of DVD choices. If you really want a video to be reinforcing, you can "misplace" their favorite DVD about a week before the trip and then have it magically appear when you need it most.

If you are traveling somewhere new or traveling by plane for the first time, it is a good idea to write a social story a couple of weeks in advance and read it frequently prior to the trip. It might also be helpful to use a visual schedule to make the trip more

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Why Won't He Look At Me?

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A recent UW-Madison study may help explain why so many autistic children have trouble making and maintaining eye contact.

The March 6 issue of the journal *Nature Neuroscience* contains an article describing interesting results by a team of researchers.

It details a two phase study of autistic children. In the first phase, these children were placed in an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scanner. Inside they were shown pictures of faces with both emotional and neutral expressions. By pressing one of two buttons, they chose whether or not the face carried an emotion. In addition to this input, eye movements were tracked so the researchers could see which part of the face the participants appeared to be keying off. Perhaps unsurprisingly the autistic candidates identified fewer emotional expressions.

In the second phase the experiment was repeated only instead of emotional vs. neutral expressions, they chose between familiar and unfamiliar faces. Again autistic children were less successful in identifying those faces.

Ok, interesting, but not revolutionary. When they looked at the data however, some insight was found. While the autistic children's eyes were identifying a face, the amygdala lit up like a pinball machine. The amygdala is the fear center of the brain. It helps form memories based on emotional events, triggers fearful expressions and the release of epinephrine (fight or flight response), among other things. This would seem to indicate that autistic children may be afraid of faces, particularly the eyes. Tracking indicates that they actually spend more time looking at the mouth.

Psychiatry and psychology professor and senior

predictable. For older children you may want to print out directions, so the child can participate in getting to the location. They can also see how far it is and how long it will take to get there.

If you are traveling by plane, let the flight attendants know that your child has a diagnosis. Also, let them know if there is anything you may need or any extra support that you may require. They are more likely to check in and be more supportive if problems arise. You may want to let others around you know that your child has a diagnosis, especially if you anticipate problems. I knew of a mom that would give people a little card with a brief description of autism and her daughter and attach an autism ribbon to it. She would hand it out to people in the community that they would regularly interact with. This might be helpful to hand to passengers around you.

Pack plenty of snacks and drinks.

Play their favorite music or have headphones/IPOD so they can listen to music.

If your child enjoys hand held video games, buy a new game just for the trip. Bring any new and novel toys or books that your child might like.

Stickers might be a bit messy if they stick them everywhere, but can keep kids very occupied.

If you are traveling by car, plan frequent breaks for using the bathroom and moving around. At the earliest signs of distress, stop and give the child a break. If you are on an airplane it may help to get up and walk frequently.

Plan ahead and then relax and go with the flow. Remember that you will eventually get there!♦

study author Richard Davidson explains. "Imagine walking through the world and interpreting every face that looks at you as a threat, even the face of your own mother".

"This is the very first published study that assesses how individuals with autism look at faces while simultaneously monitoring which of their brain areas are active" adds Kim Dalton, lead author and assistant scientist at UW-Madison's Waisman Laboratory for Brain Imaging.

Until now it has been widely accepted that individuals with autism have problems with face recognition due to some malfunction with the fusiform area of the brain. The fusiform, located within the vision center, specializes in facial recognition. The researchers do note that the fusiform area is less active than in non-autistic children, but attribute that to instructions from the over-aroused amygdala forcing them to avoid eye contact.

Although this is a disturbing revelation, eye contact is an essential part of human development. It gives us subtle social cues we need to function. Overcoming fear is a natural process we all go through. As we know, children with autism have a broad range of fears that WEAP's programs help them conquer.

What we can do is take this information in stride as an insight to the real problem. We can incorporate this new information into a strategy for helping our children feel comfortable with eye contact.♦

Great News Regarding Full Time Employment!!!

Starting October 13, 2008 line therapists who were classified as full-time will be paid their regular hourly wage for travel time. This is in addition to the health and dental insurance and PTO (paid time off) benefits already being offered. Full-time is defined as consistently working 30 hours a week or more. You must also have worked at least four consecutive weeks at 30 or more hours and have the intent to stay employed with WEAP for at least the next six months to be considered. Your classification as a full-time employee is reviewed monthly for eligibility based on hours paid in that month. If not already classified as full-time you will be notified when you become eligible and given an effective date. PTO and increased travel wages will become effective as of that date. **Remember to be eligible for these benefits you must maintain 30 hours a week or more.**

We want to encourage you to contact your clinic HR department if you are interested in becoming a full-time employee and want to take advantage of the new benefit being offered to staff working full-time.

We are excited about this change and feel it will have a positive impact on our employees and the kids we serve.

You may contact Michelle Krueger, Payroll/Benefits at 608-288-9040 with any questions or inquires you may have.

Upcoming Events

Madtown Twisters Special Education Program

Program is designed for children and adults with significant developmental disabilities. Highly trained coaches with 25 years of experience teaching children with special needs lead the specially designed gymnastics classes. Each class can include core training, group games, turn taking skills and free time to explore the gym. They are able to accommodate individual auditory and sensory needs and physical differences. Classes are physically challenging, safe and lots of fun!

Madison

September through December

All ages

10-11AM

Madtown Twisters on the east side of Madison

Jo at 829-2922 to reserve spot.

PECS Basic Training

This intense two-day training is designed to teach participants to appropriately implement the Picture Exchange Communication System.

It begins with an overview of the Pyramid Approach to Education to explore the key components of designing effective educational environments. A historical overview of language training programs used with non-verbal individuals.

Green Bay

Nov 24 - Nov 25

8a-4p

\$395-professional-\$295-parent

Stefanie Levendis

www.pecs.com

slevendis@pecs.com

888.732.7462

SEE COMPLETE LISTINGS ON OUR WEBSITE WWW.WIAUTISM.COM

Groups and Classes

Location	Group	Age/Level	Facilitator	Fee	Days	Time	Start Date
Madison	Speech Adventurers	Ages 2 1/2-4	Dana Bohrer	\$50/session	Mondays	1-2:30PM	Sept 8- Nov 17
Madison	Speech Pioneers	Ages 5-7	Dana Bohrer	\$50/session	Mondays	3:30-5:00PM	Sept 8- Nov 17
Madison	Parent Group	Open to Community	Chris W	\$30/session \$4/child daycare (rgstr 2 wks in advc.)	2 nd Tues ea. Month	4:00-5:30PM	Ongoing
Madison	Social Skills	Ages 9-12	Katie K	\$30/session	Wednesdays	4:30-6:00PM	Sept. 17- Dec 9
Madison	Social Skills Yellow Group	Ages 5-7	Katie K	\$30/session	Thursdays	4:00-5:30PM	Jan 8- April 2
Madison	Social Skills	Ages 9-12	Katie K	\$30/session	Wednesdays	4:30-6:30PM	Jan 14- Apr 1
Madison	Teen Group	Community Ages 12 +	Matt N	\$40/session	Thurs E/O Is outing	4:00-6:00PM	Ongoing
Milwaukee	Kid's Group	Ages 8-12	Stephanie B	\$30/session +outing entry fees	Mondays	4:30-6:00PM	Sept. 8- Dec. 15
Milwaukee	Play Group	Ages 3-6	Stephanie B	\$30/session	Mondays	2:30-3:30PM	Sept. 8- Dec. 15
Milwaukee	Self-Esteem	Ages 6-8	Stephanie B	\$30/session	Tuesdays	4:30-6:00PM	Nov. 18- Dec. 16
Milwaukee	Bully Free Group	Ages 6-8	Stephanie B	\$30/session	Tuesdays	4:30-6:00PM	Oct. 14- Nov.11

Current Openings

GREEN BAY	MILWAUKEE	MADISON	LA CROSSE	EAU CLAIRE
920-338-1610 Fond du Lac GB Door County Oshkosh	262-432-5660 Milwaukee West Allis Sturtevant Kenosha Milwaukee Juneau	608-288-9040 New Berlin Brookfield Waukesha Mukwonago Slinger West Bend Cedarburg	608-781-6500 Beaver Dam Waunakee Brodhead Portage Madison	715-832-2233 Buffalo Hixton Augusta Ellsworth Marshfield Menomonie Mondovi Wausau