



AUTISM ALLIANCE
Empowering Families for 30 Years

a program of  **Advocates**



December Newsletter

Autism Alliance December Guest Speaker



**Autism Care
Partners**

Date: Tuesday December 12, 2023

Time: 6:30-7:30pm

Location: Virtual

Please join [Autism Care Partners](#) for a virtual presentation. Their clinicians will be discussing the utilization of Applied Behavior Analysis in addressing unexpected changes to daily routines with children. Zoom link can be found by clicking below.

[Guest Speaker: Autism Care Partners | Autism Alliance](#)

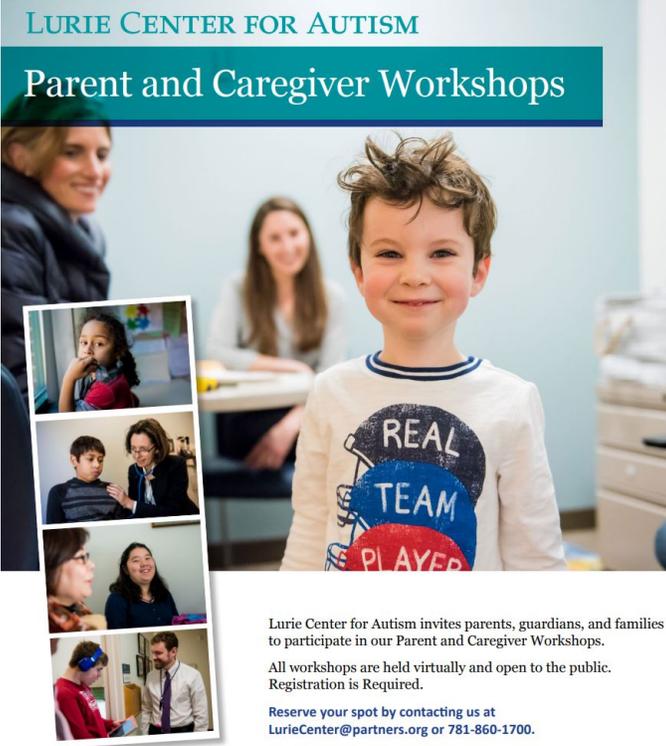
Looking Ahead to January's GuestSpeaker

**Guest Speaker Speech-Language Pathologist Megan Romanczyk
Supporting Communication through Augmentative and Alternative
Communication (AAC)**

January 23, 2024, at 6:30 - 7:30 pm

Please join us for an evening with Speech-Language Pathologist Megan Romanczyk to learn about Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). This presentation is intended for families of children who use AAC to communicate, families who are considering using AAC, or

Workshops SPOTLIGHT on GUARDIANSHIP



The graphic features a large central image of a young boy in a white t-shirt with a 'REAL TEAM PLAYER' graphic. To the left, there are three smaller inset photos showing people interacting. At the top, a teal banner reads 'LURIE CENTER FOR AUTISM' and 'Parent and Caregiver Workshops'.

Lurie Center for Autism invites parents, guardians, and families to participate in our Parent and Caregiver Workshops.

All workshops are held virtually and open to the public. Registration is Required.

Reserve your spot by contacting us at LurieCenter@partners.org or 781-860-1700.

Guardianship 101

This workshop offers information about alternative protections, what guardianship is, the different types and paths to guardianship, as well as how to prepare for guardianship. Participants will be provided with resource materials and referrals to legal experts.

Guardianship 102 This workshop offers a group tutorial for family members and caregivers to obtain guidance in completing the required documentation. Discussion will include the process of filing and giving notice, as well as what to expect when appearing at a court hearing.

Participants will be provided with referrals to legal experts.

Guardianship 103

Once you have successfully obtained the guardianship, one of the important duties for legal guardians in Massachusetts is reporting to the probate court. This workshop is a hands-on group tutorial to help family members and caregivers complete the Guardian Care Plan/Report.

Guardianship 104

This workshop provides an overview of the Rogers Guardianship requirements and responsibilities, including what is required by the court. This workshop is not intended to provide legal advice, simply an overview of the Rogers Guardianship requirements and process.

[Parent and Caregiver Workshops \(view schedule\)](#) The Lurie Center for Autism invites parents, guardians and families to participate in our Parent and Caregiver Workshops. **All workshops are held virtually and open to the public.** Registration is Required. Reserve your spot by contacting us at LurieCenter@partners.org or 781-860-1700. Virtual meeting links will be emailed to all confirmed registrants prior to event day. A list of current workshops being offered, workshop descriptions, and scheduling details are [available here](#).

Our Support Groups



[Just for Dads Support Group](#)

First Wednesday of Every Month
Next Date: December 6th | 7:00pm-8:30pm

Morse Institute Library | 14 East Central Street | Natick, MA



[Autism Support Group for Parents of children aged 10 and under](#)

First Wednesday of Every Month
Next Date: December 6th | 12 noon-1:00pm

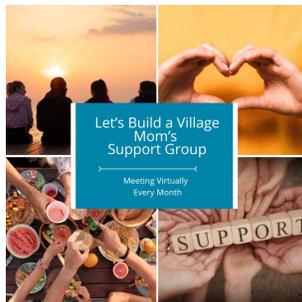
Location: Virtual | Drop-in's welcome



[Portuguese Educational Autism Family Support Group](#)

Fourth Monday of Every Month
Next Date: December 18th | 6:30pm-8:30pm

Location: Virtual | Drop-in's welcome



[Mom's Self-Care Support Group](#)

Third Thursday of Every Month
Next Date: December 21st | 12noon to 1pm

Location: Virtual | Contact: [Penny Anderson](#)



[Sibshop Support Group](#)

Meets Monthly
Next Date: December 2 | 2:30pm - 4:30pm

Sibshop meets monthly during the school year. In addition to the traditional sibshop curriculum, participants will also enjoy activities such as archery, orienteering, navigational games, snowshoeing (weather permitting), animal tracking and survival skills. There's still room in this amazing program. [Registration required.](#)

NEW Social Skills Program



Boston PEERS® Social Skills Program, LLC

Supporting teens and young adults who:

want to make friends, but have trouble connecting with others

feel awkward or anxious and are struggling with social interactions

are motivated to improve their social skills to make and keep friends!



Learn more about Boston PEERS®

where neurodiverse learning and thinking is celebrated, as participants along with their families make a choice to enhance their social interactions by learning specific skills shown to result in successful relationships!

Find us at www.bostonpeers.com

Developed at UCLA by Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson, the Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®) for Teens is a 14-week evidence-based social skills intervention for motivated teens who want to enhance their social interactions.

PEERS® is for Teens (ages 12-17) who have:

- Social pragmatic communication challenges
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Social anxiety or behavioral challenges

Parents/caregivers are required to attend a weekly Zoom session.

Participants learn to:

- initiate, maintain and exit conversations on a variety of topics
- choose appropriate peers for friendships
- schedule and host successful gatherings
- navigate and appropriately use electronic communication
- solve social conflicts and resolve disagreements
- handle bullying, teasing, and rejection
- And more...

DEADLINE
January 5th

NOW ENROLLING for January 2024
14-week PEERS® for Adolescents (ages 12-17)
Two convenient meeting locations in Brookline, MA



For more information, visit their website at
www.bostonpeers.com.

The mission of Boston PEERS® is to help teens and young adults with social skills challenges (including Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, social anxiety and other behavioral challenges). Their goal is to guide individuals through social interactions and help them develop meaningful relationships. Their team of professionals utilize the Program for Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®) curriculum, developed at UCLA's Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior. PEERS® for Teens is a 14-week *evidence-based* social skills intervention program, where teens are taught social skills through didactic instruction, role plays, and behavioral coaching. Parents/caregivers are taught how to assist their teens in making friends and maintaining friendships by providing support and feedback with homework assignments.

Teens will participate in a weekly 90-minute session in-person, and their parents/caregivers will participate the following day in a 60-minute session via Zoom. Teen in-person sessions are offered after school on either Tuesdays or Thursdays, beginning January 16th.



Holiday Social Stories



Social stories are an easy and effective way of teaching appropriate behaviors to individuals with autism by using written and/or visual cues that help guide those who struggle to navigate unfamiliar or non-routine social situations.

Below are some social stories, perfect for this time of year.

[Christmas social story - visiting family](#)

[Christmas social story - visiting Santa](#)

[Christmas social story - getting presents](#)

[Hanukkah social story](#)

[Getting Dressed for Winter](#)

Holiday Gift Ideas



Buying a toy or gift for someone on the autism spectrum can be challenging. The product specialists at [National Autism Resources](#) have put together a guide to help you choose the best gifts for kids, teens, and adults on the autism spectrum. See their [Holiday Gift Guide](#)

[Healthline](#) also rounded up their suggestions for the 19 best toys for kids on the spectrum that prioritize engagement, sensory input, skill-building, and fun. See their [top picks](#).

[AngelSense](#) accessed the knowledge from their employees, most of whom have children with autism or special needs and compiled a list of their best gift ideas for kids with autism. Find their recommendations [here](#).

Tips for Having a Sensory-Friendly Holiday



1. If you're traveling, bring food, comfort items, and sensory toys your child is already familiar with and likes.
2. Give your child downtime between events or activities so they have time to recover.
3. Do what's right for you, your child, and your family, regardless of social pressure. It's perfectly okay to say no to events, arrive late, or leave early. You are your child's biggest advocate, so don't feel guilty if things don't go the way you, or others, planned.
4. Allow your child to dress for comfort.
5. Don't force manners such as "please" or "thank you." These social conventions can add even more stress to a stressful situation. Instead, consider allowing them to develop and display gratitude in a way that feels genuine to them.

Self-Care Tips for the Holidays

Give yourself grace this holiday season



"Nourishing yourself in a way that helps you blossom in the direction you want to go is attainable, and you are worth the effort."

– Deborah Day

1. Even if it's just 5 minutes, make a little time for yourself first thing in the morning. Sit quietly with a cup of coffee or tea, meditate, journal, or anything else that feeds your mind, body, heart, and soul.

2. Walk away. Not everything is meant for you, and that's okay. Limit what you allow in. From email and social media to opportunities and opinions, if it isn't right for you, walk away.

3. Listen to music with candles burning or just sit quietly in candlelight (battery operated candles work too). As the days get darker, add light to your day.

4. Declutter. What a gift to yourself to let go of things you don't love and surround yourself with things you do.

5. Respect your budget. Finding the perfect gift can be stressful and expensive. Instead, find a meaningful gift. Give a friend your favorite book and personalize it by writing a note to them on the inside cover. Or give someone a beautiful vase you don't use and fill it with flowers. Look for other things you can pass on with love.



AUTISM ALLIANCE



Autism

Welcoming

**Thank You Hanover Theatre, Our Newest Certified
Autism WelcomingSM Business**

HANOVER THEATRE & CONSERVATORY

Sensory-friendly performances are unique theatre experiences that those impacted by autism or other sensitivities can attend without stress or self-consciousness. With guidance and training from [Autism Alliance](#), The Hanover Theatre has completed the Autism Welcoming InitiativeSM training and is pleased to be recognized as an Autism Welcoming Partner through the organization. In addition to Autism Alliance, the theatre has received guidance from Seven Hills Foundation, The Arc of Opportunity, Autism Resource Central, Autism Theatre Initiative, Autism Speaks and Theatre Development Fund. Accommodations of support will be provided, including a quiet area for individuals and families that need a break from the experience where staff and volunteers can assist patrons' needs. We are thrilled to join Hanover Theatre into our Autism Welcoming community. Since opening in 2008, The Hanover Theatre has entertained more than two million guests with Broadway musicals, comedy headliners, music, dance, and more. POLLSTAR consistently ranks The Hanover Theatre as one of the top theatres in the world. The award-winning historic theatre continues to establish its place as a world-class center for the performing arts, a venue for local cultural and civic organizations, and a catalyst for the revitalization of downtown Worcester.

Sensory-Friendly Hours Within Our Autism WelcomingSM Community



[Registration Here](#)

[Weir River Farm](#)

140 Turkey Hill Lane

Hingham, MA 02043

Saturday December 9th | 10am, 10:30am,
11am, or 11:30 am time slots

Come to the farm in December for Sensory-Friendly Photos with Santa. Meet Santa Claus, get your photo taken, and visit with their adorably furry barnyard friends! Photos with Santa will be taken by a photographer with experience working with neurodivergent children. You may also take your own. This program offers dedicated time slots with a reduced number of guests and a quieter, sensory-friendly environment.



[Register Here](#)

[Castle Hill on the Crane Estate](#)

290 Argilla Road
Ipswich, MA 01938

Saturdays, December 2, 9, 16, and 23
Sundays, December 3, 10, and 17
(Sensory-friendly hours 10 - 11:30 am)

Castle Hill at Christmas is a time-honored tradition. Each room in the 1920s mansion is decorated for the holidays, drawing inspiration from Crane's travels around the world. Enjoy freshly baked cookies and hot chocolate. Try the Crane holiday eye spy, and shop in the Castle Hill Gift Shop during your visit.

Timed entry will limit the number of guests for the 10 am & 10:30 am sensory-friendly entry times. They will admit only 36 guests per time and music will be played at a lower volume.



[Click here](#) for a helpful social story to describe the experience.

[A Christmas Carol](#)

December 17, 2023, | 1:00 pm
The Hanover Theater, Worcester MA

Celebrate the holiday season with this sensory-friendly performance of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, Accommodations of support will be provided, including a quiet area for individuals and families that need a break from the experience. Staff and volunteers will be on hand to help assist patrons' needs. Additionally, [The Hanover Theatre](#) will soften the most startling moments of the show. House lights are dimmed for the entirety of the performances and sounds are lower in volume and intensity.



When you have a family member with autism or other sensory sensitivities, even everyday outings can present challenges. Through our Autism Welcoming InitiativeSM, businesses learn how to welcome individuals and families, creating a more inclusive community for all. Many of our Autism WelcomingSM certified businesses offer sensory friendly hours. Find a complete listing of these hours [here](#).

Holiday Fun at Home



Your family's holiday doesn't have to be like all the rest. Make new memories and create new traditions that fit your family's needs. Watch a movie, bake cookies, or do a fun craft. We've listed some fun ones below.

1. Bake cookies using a [visual recipe](#).
2. [Christmas-Themed Sensory Bin](#)
3. [Hanukkah-Themed Sensory Bin](#)
4. [Grinch Calming Jars](#)
5. [Santa Slime](#)
6. [Christmas Tree Sensory Bags](#)
7. [Melted Snowman](#)
8. [Applesauce and Cinnamon Ornaments](#)
9. [Gingerbread playdough](#)
10. [Fake snow](#)

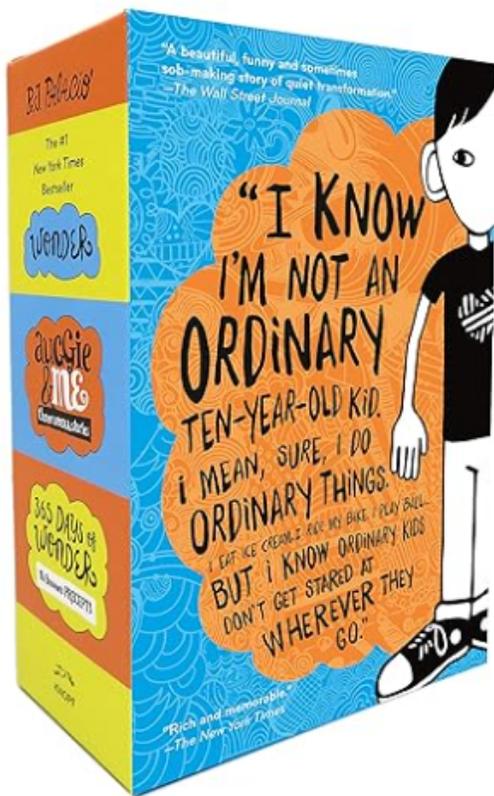
Recipe Corner



Though not an official form of therapy, many health professionals, including psychiatrists and nutritionists, recommend baking to ease stress, anxiety, depression, and other negative emotions. Dr. Yalda Safai, a NYC psychiatrist and contributor to the ABC News Medical Unit, says, "Baking forces us to be present in the moment, very similar to meditation. When we are completely present and focused on baking, it's like escaping the outside world for a few hours."

- [Gluten Free Snickerdoodle Cookies](#)
- [Gluten-Free Fudgy Brownies](#)
- [GF & Dairy-Free Cranberry Oatmeal Cookies](#)
- [GF & Dairy-Free 3 Ingredient Sunbutter Cookies](#)

Book Corner



Wonder, Auggie & Me, 365 Days of Wonder
Boxed Set by [R. J. Palacio](#)

The bestselling book Wonder, the collection of companion stories Auggie & Me, and the paperback edition of the inspirational 365 Days of Wonder: Mr. Browne's Book of Precepts, are now available in this boxed set.

August Pullman was born with a facial difference that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting 5th grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can't get past Auggie's extraordinary face. Beginning from Auggie's point of view and expanding to include his classmates, his sister, her boyfriend, and others, the perspectives converge to form a portrait of one community's struggle with empathy, compassion, and acceptance. In a world where bullying among young people is an epidemic, this is a refreshing new narrative full of heart and hope.

Available from [Amazon](#)



Did you miss seeing one of our featured guest speakers? If so, click on the link and you will see the recordings on the Autism Alliance of MetroWest YouTube Channel.

[YouTube](#)

Please submit requests for accommodations, including ASL interpreters, at least 2 weeks prior to the event date to AutismAlliance@advocates.org or call (508) 652-9900

Connect With Us



www.AutismAlliance.org | (508) 652-9900 | AutismAlliance@Advocates.org

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