

VOL. 2 ISSUE 7 • JULY 2024

# MOSAIC MINDS

Official Newsletter of Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers



## COMING SOON! TO SOUTHFIELD, MICHIGAN

Midwest is growing! We're under construction on a brand new office at 27211 Lahser Rd, Suite 101 in Southfield, Michigan. Our Southfield office will be enrolling ages 2-5 for early intervention services starting in late August.

### UNDER CONSTRUCTION

**Southfield, Michigan**  
Midwest Autism & Therapy Center  
*Coming August 2024*



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Read this issue  
and more online!





## 5 TIPS FOR TOILET TRAINING WITH ASD

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurodevelopmental condition that often leads to challenges in childhood development, behavior, communication, and social skills. It's common for children on the Autism Spectrum to take longer than neurotypical peers to learn certain life skills - including learning to use the toilet.

Challenges with toilet training can come from:

- Switching the “diaper routine” that your child is comfortable with
- Transitioning from diapers to sitting on a toilet (toilets can be intimidating!)
- Pausing preferred activities to use the restroom

Communication barriers can also hinder toileting training. About 30% of children on the Spectrum have limited language abilities, and others may not know how to share when they need to use the restroom. To help bridge the gap we've compiled five of our favorite strategies to help you and your child practice toilet training.

### 1. USE VISUAL AIDS FOR PROMPTING AND REINFORCEMENT

Utilizing a visual depiction of the “potty process” and having icons available to point to, may help your child understand the words you're using, or the concept of using the toilet, especially if it's all new to them. Pictures can also make the process less intimidating by helping to create familiarity.

### 2. UTILIZE TIMERS

If your child typically wets at the same time each day or struggles with transitioning from one activity to the next, setting timers can be a great strategy to remind you both that it's “potty time” and create consistency in toilet training. Especially when pausing a preferred activity to use the restroom, a timer is a great auditory/visual cue to help your child move from one activity to another. (Sometimes that's the biggest problem, right?)

Timers can also be used to set a goal for how long your child sits on the toilet (whether they use the potty or not). For example, if your child is resistant to sitting on the toilet, give them a fun challenge by setting a timer first for 30 seconds. Over time, slowly increase their goal to one minute, then two, etc. If your child successfully meets their time goal, provide positive reinforcement in the form of praise, visual cues (like a sticker chart), or rewards like tablet time or time doing a preferred activity. This helps them learn that sitting on the toilet isn't scary, and helps move them into phase two of potty training which is using the toilet.

### 3. ESTABLISH A NEW ROUTINE (AND STAY CONSISTENT)

Start a new routine using the toilet at certain times of each day and slowly reduce the use of diapers. For example, take your kiddo to use the toilet each morning as soon as they wake up, before each meal, before you leave the house, upon returning home, and right before bed each night. Consistency is key, and the more this new routine can be integrated into your child's day-to-day, the more receptive they will likely be.



Read the complete  
blog online at  
[midwestautismservices.com/  
asd-mosaic-minds](http://midwestautismservices.com/asd-mosaic-minds)







## 5 TIPS FOR TOILET TRAINING WITH ASD (CONT.)

### 4. INCORPORATE REWARDS AND PRAISE EVERY TIME

“Well done Maya, you sat on the toilet!” Words of affirmation, and nonverbal gestures like clapping or a thumbs-up can make a huge difference to your child! Ultimately, you know your kiddo best. Identify the toys, treats, activities, or praise that best motivates your child to work towards their goal. For some, a sticker chart works like a charm, for others, a big hug might provide the best kind of reinforcement and encouragement. And, remember to provide reinforcement as soon as your child meets their goal. This allows your child to connect the positive reinforcement to their achievement.

### 5. ESTABLISH HOW *THEY* WILL COMMUNICATE THEIR TOILET NEEDS TO YOU

For some kiddos, the biggest challenge with toilet training is knowing how to communicate that they need to go. You can try a few different strategies but, a couple of things we’d recommend testing out include:

- Pictures or other visual aids
- Simple key phrases (you can make these fun and silly if you want!)
- Signs or gestures (for example the ASL sign for toilet)

If toilet training is a goal you’d like to work on with your child, your ABA provider can help you build a strategy and reinforce your efforts at home. By creating an individualized plan for your child and staying consistent, your efforts will pay off in no time!



Read the complete blog online at [midwestautismservices.com/asd-mosaic-minds](http://midwestautismservices.com/asd-mosaic-minds)



When I’m playing, I might notice I need to use the toilet. I will take a break from playing and go sit on the toilet. When I am finished, I will wash my hands.



## NEW CLINICIANS



### **KELSEY BARTLETT, BCBA, MA, LBA**

*Home-Based Services*

- Master of Arts in Special Education with an emphasis in Applied Behavior Analysis from ASU
- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Sacramento State University

Knowing at an early age that she wanted to work with children, Board Certified Behavior Analyst Kelsey Bartlett set out to pursue a career in ABA. She gained a background in psychology through her undergraduate program at Sacramento State University and went on to earn her MA in Special Education with an emphasis in Applied Behavior Analysis from ASU. She enjoys working in a data-driven field that allows her to connect with clients while using her knowledge of human behavior to help kids reach developmental milestones.

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### **SAMANTHA SETTY, BCBA, LBA, MA, MBA**

*Home-Based Services*

- MBA in Healthcare Administration from University of S. Indiana
- MA in Applied Behavior Analysis from Ball State University
- BA in Psychology from Indiana University

Samantha is a passionate and dedicated BCBA joining our growing home-based program in Iowa! Driven by her interest in human behavior, she truly enjoys seeing how ABA therapy can help her clients grow in a variety of ways. She has specialized training in Trauma Informed Care and a background working with foster care systems to help promote compassionate care for children with severe behavioral challenges. Samantha is eager to continue growing and developing her career as a Behavior Analyst and to empower children on the Spectrum as well as their families.



### **CAITLIN PENA, M.S., BCBA, LBA**

*Altoona Campus*

- M.S. in Applied Behavior Analysis from Ball State University
- B.A. in Health & Human Services from the University of Iowa

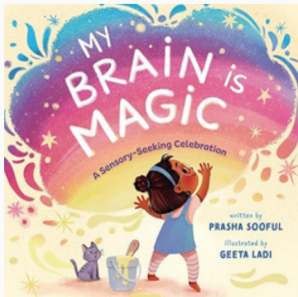
After completing her undergraduate degree at the University of Iowa, Caitlin applied, on a whim, to an ABA therapy clinic where she discovered her passion for the field. Witnessing the growth of her clients and their families led her to a Master's program at Ball State University where she graduated in 2021 with a degree in Applied Behavior Analysis. Caitlin has experience supporting children on the Autism Spectrum, ranging in age from 2 to 13 years old.





# 10 NEURODIVERSE MUST-READ CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Children’s literature is a powerful tool for fostering acceptance, promoting empathy, and boosting self-esteem among little learners! Through stories that feature neurodiverse characters and experiences, books can help your child understand and build empathy for the unique perspectives of those with Autism and other neurodevelopmental differences. So, without further ado, here are ten of our favorite book recommendations celebrating Neurodiversity, Autism, and language differences!

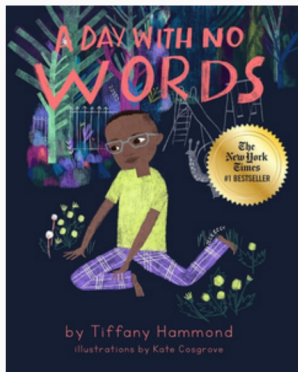
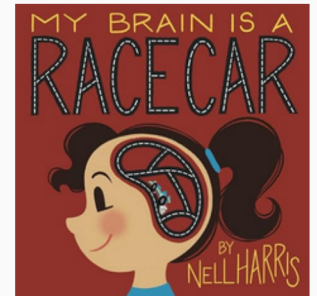


### My Brain is Magic: A Sensory Seeking Celebration by Prasha Sooful

A sensory-seeking child describes and celebrates their wonderful life in this book that positively highlights sensory processing and neurodiversity. Through the power of magic and imagination, different animals and insects represent sensory scenarios. The book includes a note for parents that shares ways they can help make sure their children’s sensory needs are met.

### My Brain is a Race Car: A Children's Guide to a Neurodivergent Brain by Nell Harris

A story created to help understand the neurodivergent brain, “My Brain is a Race Car” was inspired by Nell Harris’s daughter’s ADHD diagnosis. Within the story, Harris aims to explain her child’s processing and sensory needs in an approachable way for kids of all ages. No big words or acronyms that result in 'what does that mean' and bring the child out of the story.

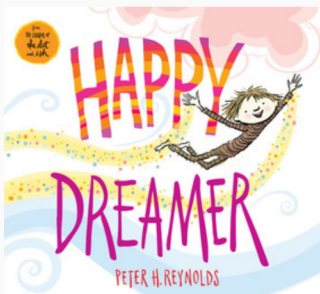
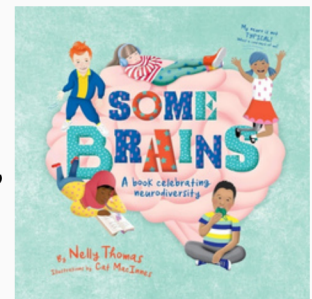


### A Day With No Words by Tiffany Hammond

Spend the day with a mother and her autistic child who use a tablet to communicate between themselves and others. This beautiful book, written by a mother of two autistic sons, reminds kids that not all communication is verbal – and that’s perfectly okay!

### Some Brains: A Book Celebrating Neurodiversity by Nelly Thomas

Let’s celebrate neurodiversity! This book does just that. “Some Brains” encourages readers to examine the strength and power of having a wonderfully unique brain. With amazing illustrations by Cat MacInnes, these pages are filled with vibrantly inclusive pictures to help children visualize the beauty of our diverse world. And with affirmative messages like “love me just as I am,” this book has many many examples of what it means to be a proud neurodivergent individual.



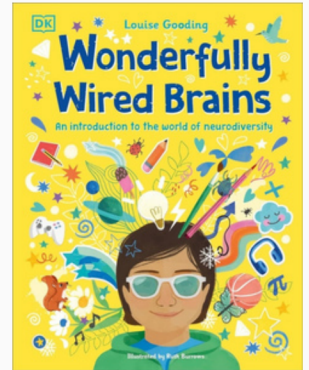
### Happy Dreamer by Peter H. Reynolds

While the world tells us to sit still, follow the rules, and color inside the lines, Happy Dreamer celebrates the moments when we are free to be a dreamer! This empowering picture book aims to remind children that dreams matter and, while life will have ups and downs, to stay true to who they are, tap into their most creative inner selves, and never forget to dream big!

## 10 NEURODIVERSE MUST-READ CHILDREN'S BOOKS

### Wonderfully Wired Brains: An Introduction to the World of Neurodiversity by Louise Gooding

If you're looking for a fun way to introduce neurodiversity to your children, this book is a fantastic place to start. With easy-to-grasp informational content, "Wonderfully Wired Brains" is a teaching guide to help young readers understand concepts through science, history, and fun facts. Written by a neurodivergent author, this inclusive book is also available in an audiobook.



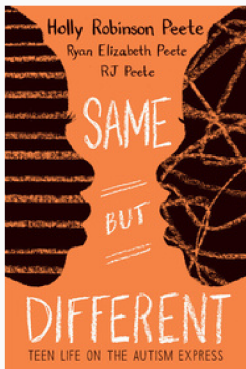
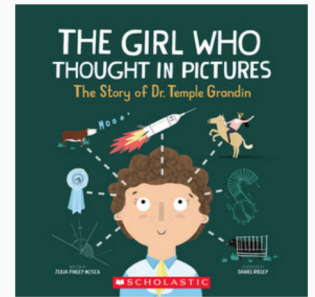
### Too Much: An Overwhelming Day by Jolene Gutierrez

Sometimes everything is too much! Too loud, too bright, and all too overwhelming. Writing from her own experience with sensory processing disorder, award-winning teacher-librarian Jolene Gutiérrez's beautifully illustrated book explores the struggles of a child with sensory sensitivities and how they cope with overstimulation. The wonderful message young readers will learn from this book is that it's OK if some days are too much. Additionally, an extensive author's note to caregivers and educators explores sensory systems, sensory processing issues, and specific information about how to support kids with overstimulated nervous systems as they learn to soothe themselves.

### The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin by Julia Finley Mosca

No one expected this Autistic girl to speak, but Temple did and demonstrated her talent for visual thinking that's made a lasting impact on farm management.

*Dr. Temple Grandin is an influential professor and animal science expert teaching at the University of Colorado. As a child, Grandin was diagnosed with Autism and did not speak until she was three and a half years old. With the assistance of early speech therapy, she was able to integrate into a standard Kindergarten classroom at age five. Being teased and bullied through school for being "weird," Dr. Grandin found comfort in spaces that allowed her to pursue her special interests which included horses, model rockets, and electronics. Today Dr. Grandin is a well-known author and speaker bringing awareness to the wonderful world of neurodiversity.*

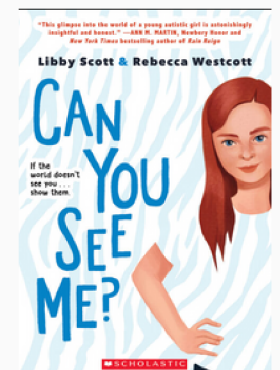


### Same But Different: Teen Life on the Autism Express by Holly Robinson Peete, Ryan Elizabeth Peete, RJ Peete

Being a teen is hard enough. But when you or a sibling have Autism life can be a topsy-turvy ride. What happens when you come face to face with dating, parties, sports, body changes, school, and kids who just don't get you? What if your sibling is bullied or the victim of misunderstood social cues?

### Can You See Me? by Libby Scott & Rebecca Westcott

Inspired by young coauthor Libby Scott's own experiences with Autism, "Can You See Me?" is an honest and moving middle-school story of friends, family, and finding one's place. This book is ideal for readers ages 8+ navigating neurodiversity as they grow.







# CONGRATULATIONS!



**Rose Ludescher, BCBA- *Edina Campus***

Rose, our Sr. RBT in Edina, has officially passed her boards and accepted a new role with us as a BCBA starting in July. Congratulations Rose on reaching this major career milestone!



**Ariana Guerena, RBT - *Altoona Campus***

Congratulations to Ariana in our Altoona center on being promoted to a Level II RBT! To achieve this promotion, an RBT demonstrates knowledge and application of ABA principles for 6-9 months. An RBT II goes above and beyond their daily responsibilities. Thank you Ariana for your dedication and congratulations on your promotion!



**Kiah Kapitan, RBT - *Woodbury Campus***

Congratulations to Registered Behavior Technician Kiah from our Woodbury center as she recently celebrated her one year anniversary with Midwest! Thank you Kiah for everything you do for your team and our clients!



Sign up to receive email updates from Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers! Email updates include monthly newsletters, new blog posts, center updates, activities for the kiddos, announcements and more.



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- ALLIE M. - MARKETING
- MARIAH C., BT - WEST DES MOINES CAMPUS
- ALICIA T., BT - WEST DES MOINES CAMPUS
- SHAWNA J., BCBA - WAUKEE CAMPUS
- MELANIE B., BCBA - EDINA CAMPUS
- ABIGAIL P., RBT - WEST DES MOINES CAMPUS
- ZAKYRA S., BT - EDINA CAMPUS



## Get Connected

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**EDINA CAMPUS:**  
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**WEST DES MOINES CAMPUS:**  
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