



EMPOWER COLORADO NEWSLETTER

Spring 2007

In This Issue

- **Article: Understanding Autism” by Autism Society**
- **Article: “Your Oxygen Mask” by Lisa Stroyan**
- **Kids Corner**
- **The Lighter Side**
- **Support Services**
- **Resources and Organizations**

CONTACT US

EMPOWER Colorado
c/o CP of Colorado
2200 South Jasmine Street
Denver, CO 80222

1-866-213-4631
www.empowercolorado.com

Discover Article "Understanding Autism" Breaks New Ground

*Wednesday, March 28, 2007, Written by: Marguerite Kirst Colston, Autism Society of America Advisors Herbert, Pessah, James
Featured*

Bethesda, MD (3/27/2007) Discover magazine, a major science magazine with a broad national circulation, examines the interaction between vulnerable genes and environmental triggers in contributing to autism in the cover feature of its April issue. The article, "Understanding Autism: The answer may lie in the gut, not in the head," thoughtfully explores the new paradigm of autism treatment as a "full body condition" instead of exclusively a mental or behavioral health issue. The April issue is out in newsstands across the nation this week and available now online at <http://www.discover.com/>.

"I can't think of it as a coincidence anymore that so many autistic kids have a history of allergies, eczema or chronic diarrhea," said Harvard pediatric neurologist Dr. Martha Herbert, a main contributor to the article. Interviewees Herbert, Isaac Pessah, M.D., and Jill James, Ph.D., are members of ASA's Environmental Health Advisory Board, established in June 2006 to explore this new paradigm in autism treatment. ASA convened this Advisory Board in response to parents' concerns that biomedical research and interventions were being ignored by research that focused on genetics. "We have children manifesting serious gut and allergy issues whose families are being told by experts that their child was untreatable because they were diagnosed with autism," said Dave Humphrey, ASA Board member and leading autism advocate based in Oregon. "We convened this group because we knew the paradigm had to change if these children were going to get better." Herbert, Pessah, and James were among the 40 contributors to the special issue of ASA's Autism Advocate, now online. Discover explores the same view of autism as a "whole body medical condition" with a strong environmental component.



ASA congratulates Jill Neimark and Discover magazine for featuring this important story, and we applaud their forward-looking vision on covering autism research. "We are heartened that a periodical with the prestige of Discover would feature this important research" said Lee Grossman, President and CEO of ASA. "The overwhelming responses we've received from this article show that families are clamoring for this type of treatment-guided research."

To access the Discover magazine article, please visit www.discover.com or your local newsstand. To access ASA's Special Edition on Environmental Health and Autism, visit http://www.autism-society.org/environmental_health. For more information on Autism please visit www.autism-society.org

YOUR OXYGEN MASK? BY LISA STROYAN

When was the last time you actually went to that yoga class that you might write in your calendar each week? Or sat down with a good book and a cup of tea without feeling guilty? How often in the last month have you thought, “I can’t do this anymore!?”

Raising children with challenges (or who challenge us) takes amazing strength. As parents, we often want to (or feel that we should!) give everything to our children, until nothing is left. Sometimes it feels “selfish” to hold back something for ourselves. Sometimes, it feels logistically impossible – that there is not enough time, not enough money, to even get by. So, we make ourselves into martyrs. And, not only do we put pressure on ourselves to handle it all, we think we have to do it alone.

The problem with this strategy is that not only is it unfair to ourselves, but our children need us to have something left. It’s not a service to wear ourselves so thin that we might break at any moment! We’ve probably all heard on airplanes, “Put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others”. Have you ever thought about why? Doesn’t it feel counter-intuitive and selfish to put on your own mask when you have a baby or small child that isn’t getting enough air, right there, and you could, really quick, just help them out?....But there is a good reason...because if you pass out from lack of air, you won’t be any help to that child or anyone else!

Are you gasping for air? Have you been, “really quick”, putting everyone else’s needs ahead of your own? This summer, I encourage you to take better care of yourself and get support so that you can breathe a little, and thereby more effectively help your family as well.

There are a few key areas I personally think about (you might have others): health (which includes eating and exercise), self-renewal, and community. Many of us do well in one area, and then feel guilty about doing the others, but reality is we all need all of them.

Our health is critical to manage, because of the extra burden that is added by stressful family situations. Exercise dissipates some of the effects of stress, and healthy eating will help balance mood (not to mention that we need to model both of these things to our children!). For me, self-renewal is very important – finding activities that I enjoy and that keep me mentally healthy. Hobbies, reading, and spending time in nature are my favorites.

Lastly, this is not something we can do alone. It’s so very necessary to find community and support that we can call on when times get tough. I find some community through friends and church, but if that is isolating because they “don’t get it”, online communities can be an option. However, there are still times when I just need to pick up the phone and hear an understanding voice. That is one of the functions of coaching, and I’ve found a couple of people that I trade with. However, it

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ABOUT LISA STROYAN

Through workshops, talks, and phone coaching, Lisa Stroyan empowers parents across the country to create positive, respectful relationships with their children. Lisa’s down-to-earth style and playful approach is based on programs such as Positive Discipline, Life Coaching, Non-Violent Communication, and Collaborative Problem Solving for Children with Behavioral Challenges.

Her respectful philosophy draws a wide variety of parents, from those who are struggling with discipline issues or special challenges to those who simply wish to improve their relationships and effectiveness. Lisa’s writing has been published internationally and her website provides extensive resources for parents.



www.empathic-discipline.com

doesn't have to be a professional – you can make an agreement with a friend to listen to each other without judgment; to word suggestions and ideas in a way that empowers each other, and to be (gently) honest when that is what is needed.

How do we do all this? You may have heard that cells are less efficient if they aren't getting the requisite amount of oxygen – the same is true for our bodies and minds as a whole. Pushing ourselves rarely creates the positive impact we hope for. I'm not advocating ignoring your family's needs, either. The key is not to "work harder" but to get creative. Look at where your time and money is falling through the cracks. Could you, instead of watching TV while you wash the dishes, call a good friend or play soft music? Can you leave the dishes until tomorrow, or enlist your child's help, and go for a walk? Designate 30 minutes a day as "mommy" time, and set up the kids in front of the TV with a special show reserved for those times? I encourage you to find activities that you and the children can enjoy together, such as biking, walking, painting, or learning to knit. If you work outside the home, perhaps take a ½ hour for yourself before you come home. Make homemade coffee and get your books from the library, and perhaps spend the money on a cleaning service. Be creative!

Most Of us are in this for the long haul. We've had to grieve that there is no quick fix; there is no "perfect life" that we imagined – we have to create a new dream. That's a big task. Please, don't do it without enough "air".

Articles Written by Lisa Stroyan

link to article by clicking on name below

[Finding My Compass](#)

[How Children Learn](#)

[Attachment Parenting To Empathic Discipline](#)

[My Discipline Goals and Beliefs](#)

[Make It Fun!](#)

[Strategies for Handling Conflicts With Toddlers](#)

[Empathy](#)

[Foreshadowing](#)

[Brainstorming Solutions](#)

Kids Corner Kids Corner



Clara is a young woman from Colorado Springs diagnosed with Bipolar disorder. She loves to write songs, poems and stories as well as taking hip hop dance lessons and listening to her favorite music. Below are two poems Clara wrote.

*If you could help anyone in your life
Who would it be?
Would it be your wife?
Or someone you no longer see?*

*If you could help just one person
Who would it be?
Would you have to have a reason?
To realize that person is me?*

*If you could help one broken heart
Who would it be?
Someone who's drifted apart
And haven't met*

*If you could help one lost soul
Would it change your life?
Would it change your goals?*

*These are all wonderful
But I would help the one that reminds me of me
And she will be thankful she can finally see
Because I remember the pain
And I have things left to gain*

*One of you helped me
Cause I reminded you of you
And since some people see others equally
Some of us can believe God is true*

*So come forth believers
And come forth non believers
We aren't deceivers
We are just your retrievers.*

*Just because I'm mentally ill
You think I have nothing to fulfill.
I may have bipolar
And all you see is this disorder.
See my anxiety and depression,
Well, this is my confession,*

*I'm no different from you
I love too.
I can hate,
I appreciate,
I feel sad,
Sometimes I'm mad.
Sometimes I just want to cry
And curl up in a ball and die
I do these things with and without my disorder.
Now you are the beholder.*

*I write,
I fight,
Despite my pain
I do have something so precious to gain.
I dance, I sing
No matter the mood swing.
I draw, color, paint
Until I almost faint.
Sure I cut
But I am no slut
I am a person too.
Maybe... a person like you*

"Children's talent to endure stems from their ignorance of alternatives."

-- Maya Angelou



THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LIFE



A Baker's Dozen: Tips for Parents

1. Be responsible for your own growth. This is the primary responsibility in life, and your children will have an example in you.
2. Be aware of your own expectations. It is OK to have them, but don't let them run you. Sometimes they prevent you from seeing the beauty of your child.
3. Be a model for "learning and change." This is characterized by an "aliveness." Even our concept of the "ideal parent" should be changing with experience.
4. Be permissive with feelings and strict with unacceptable behavior. Respect the feelings of your children and set realistic limits that you can and do enforce.
5. Be fully present with your child. Don't slip into a role where you hear your parents' words coming from your mouth. Don't miss the present worrying about the future. Be in the "now" with them as much as possible, because that is where they live.
6. Don't take personally all their ups and downs. It's not personal, it's normal.
7. Try to listen to them without judging – listen for the feelings. Their experience is real for them, and when they share their truth, they are providing a key to how they are perceiving life — and it may be very different from your perception.
8. Don't panic! A values conflict is not the end of the world. In fact, children often return to values very similar to parents.
9. Trust that they are capable – even of making their own mistakes and learning from them. This involves a "letting go," which is gradual, but necessary.
10. Praise them and be specific. They need to see the good things about themselves as they form their identity. The more specific, the more helpful and believable.
11. Keep the doors open – try not to feel rejected. While they won't require you as much, be available for that hug or just to talk or for meaningful activities together.
12. Communicate with other parents. This adds perspective and provides a support system.
13. Last, but certainly not least, **KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR**. What would we do without this delightful survival tool?

P.S. While the word "love" is not mentioned in the above list, the truth is, the whole relationship is about love. You come from love in your communication with your children and in your gentleness with yourself.

Crockpot: Easiest Pork Chops



INGREDIENTS:

- 4 pork chops, well trimmed
- 1 envelope onion soup mix
- 10 oz. can ready to serve chicken broth

PREPARATION:

You can brown the pork chops if you wish in a nonstick skillet 3-4 minutes on each side. Place pork chops in 3-1/2-4 quart crock-pot. In medium bowl, combine soup mix and chicken broth and stir until blended.

Inspirational Quote

You Are Someone with Great Potential

You have the ability to make every day special. Each new morning comes to us gift-wrapped, and fresh out of the box are moments we've never experienced before, opportunities we've never known, and chances we've never taken. What a truly magnificent gift! Those with the "same-old, Same-old" outlook let the chances just slip away. But those who understand the value of the gift? Well...they have a chance to turn the present...into a really extraordinary day! ~Douglas Pagels

Family Fun in Colorado

Alamosa: Splashland Hot Springs (all ages)

Located 1 mile north of Alamosa on State Highway 17: (719)589-6307. Open all year- call to check for hours and days of operation. \$

This fun-filled complex features a geothermal-water outdoor swimming pool, a diving area, and a wading pool for toddlers. A concession stand sells snacks and beverages; they also have a rental booth for towels and wetsuits. Wouldn't the kids enjoy swimming in a naturally heated pool while the snow is falling?!

Also check out Alamosa/Monte Vista Nat'l Wildlife Refuge and Colorado Alligator Farm. Both attractions are free.

SUPPORT SERVICES

SUPPORT

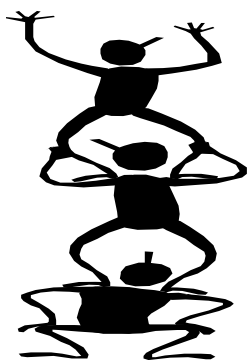
Support Groups are one way we offer support to families.

- Support groups offer a safe, non-judgmental and confidential outlet for sharing with others who have gone through similar experiences.
- Support groups provide understanding and assurance to families so they feel less isolated.
- Support groups help families by providing ideas, avenues, resources, information and thus families can begin to see they have options and that is empowering

FAMILIES HELPING FAMILIES

SUPPORT – GIVING AND RECEIVING

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted" --Aesop quoted



Supporting each other is a gift we love to give.

The foundation of EMPOWER Colorado is *Families Helping Families!*

We support by sharing with others our stories, our experiences and by passing along information and resources. This is

where hope starts...

Contact EMPOWER Colorado and find out ways you can support others or be supported.

SUPPORT GROUPS

AURORA
2nd and 4th Thursday

ADAMS COUNTY
3rd Monday

COLORADO SPRINGS
2nd Saturday

FORT COLLINS
Last Thursday

LITTLETON
1st & 3rd Wednesday

GRAND JUNCTION
Every Monday

MEEKER
3rd Tuesday

ONLINE LISTSERVS
EMPOWER Colorado offers three email listservs.

FAMILY/CAREGIVER
LISTSERV
This forum is families helping families through support, education and resources.

ANNOUNCEMENTS
LISTSERV
Our announcements listserv is a one way distribution list to keep families and professionals updated on support groups, workshops, events and speakers.

CONSUMER LISTSERV
This listserv is for families who have their own mental health issues that they want to discuss.

RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONS

LOOKING FOR RESOURCES?

GO TO WWW.EMPOWERCOLORADO.COM

Here is some of what you will find on our website:

- **Tips for families – listed by disorder (written by families)**
- **Tips for educators – listed by disorder (written by educators and families)**
- **Information and resources on specific disorders.**
- **Colorado and National Resources (not just links but details on other resources).**
- **Downloadable sheets including mood charts, picture charts, and forms. (e.g. some forms include ways to organize data, preparing for an initial doctors appointment, tracking between appointments –written by families).**
- **RTC's, Day-Treatment Center and Camps.**
- **Upcoming Events including Workshops, Speakers, Conferences.**

Organizations

The Advocacy Coalition:

One call to the toll free number above or to any of our groups will connect you to this coalition. This is a formal coalition that brings together three organizations. Those organizations include the following: EMPOWER Colorado, Family Voices and Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health.
1-800-881-8272, www.empowercolorado.com

P2P: Parent to Parent of Colorado:

Parent to Parent of Colorado provides information, support and systems change for parents of children with disabilities and/or special healthcare needs.
1-877-472-7201 www.p2p-co.org

Autism Society of Colorado:

720-214-0794 (Denver) or 1-866-733-0794, www.autismcolorado.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness:

www.nami.org

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance:

www.dbsalliance.org

FEEDBACK AND INPUT WANTED

****In an attempt to provide an up to date informative and interesting Newsletter we would like to invite you to send your input, suggestions or concerns, tips and recipes to Crystal at the email address below.**

Also if your child has a special talent that we can share through the newsletter (art, song lyrics, poems etc.) please send an email to empowercolorado@yahoo.com.

With your permission you may see your tips in one of our future newsletters. **



EMPOWER Colorado

c/o CP of Colorado
2200 South Jasmine Street
Denver, CO 80222

1-866-213-4631

www.empowercolorado.com