



March 23 & 24, 2023
Conference Abstracts &
Learning Objectives

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HEALTHY LIVING | WELL-BEING

Keynote Title: Yoga and Autism: Incorporating Movement and Mindfulness as Complementary Therapy

Speaker: Rachel Costello, C-IAYT, ERYT500, RCYT, RPYT, YACEP, Executive Director, Yo Re Mi

Day One: March 23, 2023

Time: 8:30-9:30 a.m.

Abstract

This presentation will invite attendees to discover the therapeutic and educational benefits of yoga and mindfulness for people with autism. We will review a case study of Yo Re Mi classes at The Block Institute in Brooklyn, NY with both ABA and non-ABA classrooms. Attendees will practice yoga and mindfulness techniques which have been shown to support people with autism while complementing various therapeutic modalities including PT, OT and Speech. We will also explore Yo Re Mi's play-based, inclusive and non-judgmental educational approach.

Learning Objectives

- Participate in yoga and mindfulness activities.
- Establish the benefits of yoga and mindfulness practice for people with autism.
- Provide strategies and techniques to support people with autism through yoga and mindfulness.
- Energize professionals to incorporate yoga and mindfulness into their therapeutic practices.





HEALTHY LIVING | WELL-BEING

Panel Title: The Benefits of Recreation on the Physical & Emotional Health & Well-being of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Moderator: Dr. Erin Brooker Lozott, BCBA-D, CCC-SLP, Els for Autism Foundation

Panel Participants: Jen Van Horn, DT, MS HS, Holistic Nutritionist, Dr. Kimberly Watterson-Rivieccio, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Els for Autism Foundation, and Dr. Stephen Shore, Professor, Adelphi University

Day One: March 23, 2023

Time: 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Abstract

In this interactive panel discussion, an interdisciplinary panel of experts will discuss the benefits of good nutrition, the arts, leisure activities, and exercise on the health and well-being of individuals with ASD. The panel will review recent research results from a Patient Care Outcome Research Institute (PCORI) study focused on mental health for autistic people, including suicide prevention. Practical examples of daily healthy living practices for individuals with ASD will be infused throughout the discussion.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to understand the role that healthy living plays in promoting positive outcomes in physical and emotional health and well-being for individuals with ASD.
- Participants will be able to recall the most up-to-date research results from the Patient Care Outcome Research Institute (PCORI) study focused on mental health for autistic people.
- Participants will be able to identify research-based practices in suicide prevention for individuals with ASD.
- Participants will be able to describe examples of daily healthy living practices supporting positive outcomes in individuals with ASD.





HEALTHY LIVING | WELL-BEING

Keynote Title: Being your best self: A mindful approach to physical activity, sleep, and overall health

Speaker: Dr. Shannon Dieringer, Professor of Applied Behavior Analysis and Department Chair of Special Education, Ball State University

Day One: March 23, 2023

Time: 11:00-12:00 noon

Abstract

Research indicated that autistic children and their caregivers report significant sleep problems (e.g., lack of sleep, interrupted sleep, etc.) compared to their peers. Research studies also report that autistic children engage in lower moderate to vigorous physical activity (PA) levels compared to their peers. In this presentation, we will briefly explore the current research on sleep and physical activity levels for autistic children and adolescents. Next, we will discuss the relationship between healthy sleep habits and quality physical activity. Then we will discuss the benefits of taking a mindful approach to improving overall health related to sleep and physical activity. We will also provide examples and suggestions on implementing a mindful approach when addressing sleep difficulties and inactivity for autistic children and adolescents.

Learning Objectives

- Understand what mindfulness is .
- Determine the relationship between sleep and overall physical activity.
- Identify strategies to improve sleep habits.
- Identify strategies to promote increased physical activity.





ARTS | LEISURE

Keynote Title: Dani's 13 years of entrepreneur experience

Speaker: Dani Bowman, Founder and CEO, DaniMation Entertainment

Day One: March 23, 2023

Time: 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Abstract

Dani Bowman, Founder, and CEO of DaniMation Entertainment and a star of the Emmy Award-winning Netflix series, Love on the Spectrum U.S. has been running her animation social enterprise for more than 13 years, teaching animation to youth on the autism spectrum around the states and the UK. Dani also illustrated and publish 6 books, premiered 13 projects at Comic-Con International, won for "Best Editor" for the 2021 Easterseals Disability Film Challenge, participated in the 2022 CBS Leadership Pipeline Challenge, and animated motion graphics for the 2022 SIGGRAPH Electronic Theater. Dani will be discussing the beginnings of her entrepreneurial journey. From starting her animation company to getting her MBA in Global Strategy and Leadership, to her latest animation projects. Dani will also discuss how she helps youth on the autism spectrum turn their animation passion into a career with her company's mission to Educate, Elevate, and Empower them to reach their full potential, the secrets on how she became a successful social entrepreneur, and how you too can turn your passion into a career.

Learning Objectives

- Learn from Dani's 13-year entrepreneurial journey.
- Recognize and identify that people with autism's strongest passion can turned into a career, and ways to help them develop their strength.
- Support people with autism's life goal based on their biggest passion.
- Learn the important tips of what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur (or social entrepreneur).





ARTS | LEISURE

Presentation Title: Part I - Art, Music, Leisure, & Nature-Based Activities: The positive impact on learning, living, health, & well-being

Speaker: Amy Wagenfeld, PhD, OTR/L, SCEM, EDAC, FAOTA. Principal of Amy Wagenfeld Design, Affiliate Associate Professor, University of Washington

Day One: March 23, 2023

Time: 2:30-2:50 p.m.

Abstract

There is an ever-increasing body of evidence confirming the positive impact that nature-based experiences have on improving physical and social-emotional health and well-being, as well as cognition for people across the life course. In this session, the emphasis will be on establishing the importance of providing a range of sensitively designed indoor and outdoor nature-based experiences and programming and its capacity to improve the health and well-being of individuals with ASD.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to discuss the theories that support the health-promoting capacities associated with nature-based experiences.
- Participants will be able to explain how engagement with carefully planned nature interaction can support self-regulation for individuals with ASD.
- Participants will be able to explore how indoor and outdoor nature enhances learning and overall health for the general population and for individuals with ASD.





ARTS | LEISURE

Panel Title: Part II - Art, Music, Leisure, & Nature-Based Activities: The positive impact on learning, living, health, & well-being

Moderator: Amy Wagenfeld, PhD, OTR/L, SCEM, EDAC, FAOTA. Principal of Amy Wagenfeld Design, Affiliate Associate Professor, University of Washington

Panel Participants: Andrew Blitman, , Professional Artist, and Published Author, Graziella Gadia, Teacher of Arts, Erica Lyles, MT-BC, Director, Whole Vibes, and James A. Williams, Musician, Advisory Board Member, Els for Autism Foundation

Day One: March 23, 2023

Time: 2:50-3:30 p.m.

Abstract

In this interactive panel discussion, an interdisciplinary panel of experts will discuss the health-promoting role that meaningful engagement in arts, music, leisure, and nature-based activities provides for individuals with ASD. The panel will also review how positive learning outcomes for individuals with ASD can be achieved through music, visual, and experiential art in both indoor and outdoor environments.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the role that leisure and arts pursuits play in promoting self-regulation, physical, and mental health for individuals with ASD.
- Explain how interaction with nature in both indoor and outdoor environments facilitates learning and improves physical and mental health for individuals with ASD.
- Explore how engagement with music, visual and experiential arts programming designed for individuals with ASD can positively improve learning, and overall health, and well-being.





ARTS | LEISURE

Presentation Title: Using Music to Promote Skill Acquisition using the Principles of Applied Behavior Analysis

Speaker: Dr. Marlene Sotelo, BCBA-D, MT-BC, Executive Director, Els for Autism Foundation

Day One: March 23, 2023

Time: 3:45-4:45 p.m.

Abstract

Music can be enjoyed by all individuals regardless of their cognitive, communication, and physical abilities. It can serve as a motivator and reinforcer to promote participation and learning even in the most hard-to-reach children. Due to the activation of multiple areas of the brain when listening to and experiencing music, it can facilitate learning by organizing information, allowing for easier recall thereby reducing processing and responding time. Many children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are involved in therapeutic interventions based on the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA). This presentation will provide specific music-based activities and lessons to target skills commonly addressed in ABA-based programs. A literature review of the use of music in the field of ASD will be discussed followed by a description of easy-to-use songs and activities to incorporate into the classroom and clinical setting.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will state three common goals in early skill acquisition programs along with a song or musical activity to teach the specified skill.
- Participants will state two ways that music promotes skill acquisition and how to collect data on those skills
- Participants will demonstrate an understanding of combining the principles of applied behavior analysis with music activities to promote skill acquisition





SPORTS | FITNESS

Keynote Title: Making Recreation More Therapeutic with the Strategic Use of Evidence-based Practices

Speaker: Greg Connors, Recreation Services Coordinator, Els for Autism Foundation

Day Two: March 24, 2023

Time: 8:15-9:15 a.m.

Abstract

While sports & fitness activities have their well-documented benefits – improved circulation, the development of healthy and functional movement patterns, improved metabolic efficiency and increased immunity – professionals in the field of recreation are beginning to redefine what recreation is and can become with regard to serving individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In fact, the National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice Review Team confirmed fitness as an evidence-based intervention for ASD in 2020.

In addition to the physical, physiological, and even mental health benefits of sports & fitness, opportunities exist for growth in recreation therapy in a multitude of ways. Beyond providing the opportunity to specifically target social/communication, motor, and other skill development, by re-creating recreation as a supplemental therapy where other therapies can live, we can redefine what one thinks of when he/she considers recreation and its impact on the lives of individuals living with ASD.

This presentation will, through direct instruction, as well as video analysis and explanation, detail how programs such as the Ernie Els #GameON Autism® Programs (Golf, Tennis, Fitness) provide a blueprint for how specialists and professionals in the field can reinvent recreation as a supplemental therapy.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to understand why the Ernie Els #GameON Autism® curricula – Golf, Tennis, and Fitness – embed autism learning concepts in tandem with sport-specific or recreational skills.
- Participants will be able to analyze where their own recreational activities/practices could include autism learning concepts.
- Participants will be able to evaluate one of their own common practices w/ regard to skill development with students/clients in an effort to add an autism learning concept to that skill development process.





SPORTS | FITNESS

Co-presentation Title: Drowning and elopement risks for children with autism: Strategies for reducing risk

Speaker: Dr. Jack Scott, Executive Director, Florida Atlantic University, CARD, and Maricarmen Saleta, LGIT, WSIT, AAC, BA Psychology

Day Two: March 24, 2023

Time: 9:15-10:15 a.m.

Abstract

Children with autism are at dramatically greater risk for injury and even death when compared to neurotypical children. Data from the Florida Bureau of Vital Statistics indicates that 10% of the children who drown in Florida are children with autism. The characteristics of the disorder are predisposing factors placing these children at risk. Differences in communication abilities, behavior, and socialization all contribute to the risk. Elopement, sometimes referred to as wandering, so prominent in autism, takes on an especially dangerous aspect for children with autism. In South Florida, for example, water is everywhere with pools, spas, canals, retention ponds, and lakes. Too often these children are attracted to water and, unless rescued immediately, the results can be tragic. This presentation will review the risks with a focus on elopement and drowning and then explore strategies to reduce these risks. We will provide strategies to prevent this risk of drowning, and empowering tools, and techniques to teach swimming to individuals with autism.

Learning Objectives

- State the leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 4 years and for children with autism up to age 10 years.
- Identify three strategies for reducing elopements (wandering) from home and while in the community.
- Describe the benefits of developing an Autism Emergency Plan as the cornerstone for a rapid and effective response to an elopement of a child with autism.
- State the advantages of actively sharing child risk factors with their school to allow cooperative planning to reduce risk for the child with autism.
- Describe the three dimensions of risk in every drowning: Safer Water, Safer Kids and Safer Response.
- Provide empowering tools, and techniques to teach swimming to individuals with autism.





SPORTS | FITNESS

Active Demonstration: The Miracle League of Palm Beach County - Baseball

Speaker: Julia Kadel, Founder, Certified Health Coach

Day Two: March 24, 2023

Times: 10:30-11:45 a.m. and 1:00-2:15 p.m.

Abstract

Co-founded in 2005 by Delray Beach residents Jeff & Julia Kadel, parents of three active boys, the Miracle League's mission is to provide opportunities for all children to play baseball regardless of their mental or physical ability. With the support of the Palm Beach County Commission, local community leaders, and generous donors, Julia, a certified Health Coach, and Jeff, an active coach for all three of his boys' activities, successfully built their barrier-free, specialized field. Through their vision and hard work, Miracle League of Palm Beaches is serving all students and young adults with disabilities, including those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), while incorporating a variety of engagement strategies and evidence-based practices. miracleleaguepalmbeachcounty.com





SPORTS | FITNESS

Active Demonstration: High-5 Basketball

Speaker: Gary Cohen, Founder

Day Two: March 24, 2023

Times: 10:30-11:45 a.m. and 1:00-2:15 p.m.

Abstract

High 5 Basketball, a division of the Boca Hoops Recreation Basketball Program, is a non-profit charitable organization (501c3) designed to enable children and young adults with disabilities, whether mental or physical, to participate in the game of basketball. Under the direction and guidance of Mr. Gary Cohen, each participant has a B-Ball buddy that works with them to enable them to learn the skills of basketball and to learn sportsmanship and teamwork.

Given that basketball is highly social in nature and requires a high-level of teamwork, communication, and motor skills, the athletes not only build the skills necessary for the enjoyment of the game of basketball, but they also receive all of its benefits – physical, mental, emotional, and social. As a participant in High 5 Basketball, athletes build and develop a comprehensive skillset of critical social, motor, and executive functioning skills that can then be applied on and off the court and in other areas of their lives. [High-5 Basketball \(high5basketball.com\)](http://high5basketball.com)





SPORTS | FITNESS

Active Demonstration: Vinceremos Therapeutic Riding Center - A Stable Environment | Equine Assisted Social Emotional Learning

Speaker: Ruth Menor

Day Two: March 24, 2023

Times: 10:30-11:45 a.m. and 1:00-2:15 p.m.

Abstract

Equine Assisted Learning is an experiential learning approach that promotes the development of life skills for educational and personal growth through equine assisted activities. In our fun, interactive environment people on the autism spectrum are encouraged to build relationships with their equine partners. This approach integrates equine-human interaction that is guided by a planned learning experience to meet identified goals. The curriculum consists of stable management and equine caretaker activities, life skill lessons, horse handling, and equine behavior. This program is targeted to assist participants in developing empathic relationships with the horses, classmates and staff.





SPORTS | FITNESS

Active Demonstration: Exceptional Fitness Structured System™ - Fitness

Speaker: Jason Miletsky B.S. CPT

Day Two: March 24, 2023

Times: 10:30-11:45 a.m. and 1:00-2:15 p.m.

Abstract

EFF employs the Exceptional Fitness Structured System™ curriculum and methodology developed by Jason Miletsky B.S. to provide its unique programs created specifically for individuals with autism, Developmental Disorders, and other special and exceptional needs including cognitive and physical disorders. The curriculum integrates functional fitness movements, and accounts for the five health-related and six skill-related components of fitness, as well as adaptive behavior, cognition level, communication skills, sensory needs, and executive functioning. This is accomplished through targeted assessment and individualized supports and fitness plan. The plan is continually reviewed to ensure proper instruction. The "core" movements and "survival skills" of the system are based on functional movement, martial arts movements, musical movement, yoga, and social safety instruction. Developer Jason Miletsky B.S. worked and continues to work very closely with experts in the fields of Autism, Behavior Analysis, Exceptional Learners, Exercise Physiology, Physical and Occupational therapies, medical doctor recreation therapy, and fitness coaches to create an eclectic approach to exercise and fitness programs, evidence-based curriculum, learning, and best practices. Through the use of a variety of fitness, exercise, and recreation equipment, fun activities, circuit routines, sensory items, music, and a variety of individualized and group supports, including visual supports, timers, schedules, etc. The Exceptional Fitness Structured System™ and curriculum are able to provide one of the most unique fitness, athletic, exercise, and recreational experiences not only for exceptional athletes but for all individuals regardless of ability level or age. Instruction can be provided on a 1:1 individual basis, group, private group, and we can come to you!

Learning Objectives

- The physical effects of autism on the body and how it influences fitness programming.
- Learning characteristics of individuals with autism and how they influence coaching and teaching strategies.
- Program design and exercise selection based on assessment.





SPORTS | FITNESS

Active Demonstration: Ernie Els #GameON Autism® Golf Program with support from First Tee of the Palm Beaches and Joshua Deer, Certified Golf Instructor

Speaker: Greg Connors, Els for Autism Recreation Services Coordinator

Day Two: March 24, 2023

Times: 10:30-11:45 a.m. and 1:00-2:15 p.m.

Abstract

Through the Ernie Els #GameON Autism® Programs, Els for Autism® is changing the culture of sports and recreation. People with autism are beginning to feel welcomed and are being encouraged to participate in recreation activities, go to public places, and even take lessons or group classes with their local sports professionals. We believe recreation, specifically sports, can be an effective supplemental therapy for individuals with autism.

Golf classes at Els for Autism® use the Ernie Els #GameON Autism® Golf program, specifically designed to teach golf to people with ASD through the use of evidence-based practices. In each class, participants will learn and practice foundational motor skills through fun athletic games and golf activities while developing motor and social-communication skills. elsforautism.org





SPORTS | FITNESS

Presentation Title: Sports and Autism Spectrum Disorder

Speaker: Tiago Toledo, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Applied Behavior Analysis, Neuromotricity and Psychomotricity graduate, BPhEd, Adapted PE Teacher

Day Two: March 24, 2023

Time: 2:15-3:15 p.m.

Abstract

Physical activities have a great positive impact on the lives of people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Research has shown the importance of sports in assisting the treatment of ASD, but the sports environment can be challenging for several students. It is possible to overcome many obstacles by offering adequate classes with the aid of proper teaching strategies, careful customizations, and adaptations to the exercise practice. In this way, children will be able to enjoy the many benefits of a much more active lifestyle.

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate and discuss the difficulties in sports practice by those who have Autistic Physical Disorder.
- How to deal with ASD students in the sports environment by sharing teaching strategies.
- Understand the benefits and improvements offered by sports practice.





SPORTS | FITNESS

Panel Title: Form and Function: Using Evidence-based Practices to Increase Therapeutic Benefits across Athletic Disciplines

Moderator: Greg Connors, Recreation Services, Coordinator, Els for Autism Foundation

Panel Participants: Eric Chessen (Fitness), Joshua Deer (Golf), Jason Milestky (Fitness), Maricarmen Saleta (Swimming), and Tiago Toledo (Various Sports)

Day Two: March 24, 2023

Time: 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Abstract

This Day 2 panel, including experts in the areas of exercise & fitness, swimming/aquatic therapy, and golf, will highlight the best evidence-based practices utilized in various recreational areas serving individuals with autism spectrum disorder. We will explore the most important considerations and best practices for helping individuals living with ASD grow in the areas of social-communication skills, motor skills, and cognitive/developmental skills through our panelists' various areas of expertise.

Panel members will answer a set of pre-written questions, share details about their experiences specific to their recreational areas, and also participate in a brief Q&A with attendees.

Learning Objectives

- Attendees will be able to identify opportunities for increasing the therapeutic nature of their own specific disciplines through pre-assessment, in-session, and post-assessment processes
- Attendees will create a plan to utilize the methods and evidence-based practices discussed by panelists to increase the therapeutic nature of their direct work with clients





MOVIE - FLIP TURN

Optional for Conference Attendees

An autistic high school boy emulates the swim style of his Olympic gold medalist grandfather to become a swimming champion himself. 1 hour and 46 minutes in length.

- **Director**
 - Alin Bijan
- **Writers**
 - Larry Postel
 - Carlos Venegas(story by)
 - Sinjin Venegas(story by)
- **Stars**
 - Evan Brinkman
 - Donny Boaz
 - Sheree J. Wilson

