



Celebrating Autism Awareness & Occupational Therapy Month



Dear Parents and Families,

It's no coincidence that **Autism Awareness Month** and **Occupational Therapy Month** are both celebrated in the same month, highlighting the pivotal role of OT in aiding children, families, and systems in embracing differences and addressing individual needs.

For 33 years, POTS has championed **neurodiversity-affirming** care, a term coined by Judy Singer in 1990. Neurodiversity-affirming care prioritizes understanding and supporting each child's unique talents and needs, rather than expecting them to conform to a set standard. POTS celebrates children's differences by fostering a safe, supportive environment in which every child feels valued and understood.

Empowering children and families throughout their therapy journey is a cornerstone of our mission and values. We collaborate closely with parents, caregivers, and other grown-ups in a child's life, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to support their child's development beyond therapy sessions. On social media, we offer life hacks for families and the latest information on emerging research and techniques.

At POTS, we believe every child deserves the chance to thrive, regardless of their neurological differences. Every therapy session caters to the specific needs and interests of each child, utilizing sensory tools, play-based activities, and visual, auditory, and tactile supports to ensure that sessions are engaging and enjoyable. Embracing neurodiversity fosters an inclusive and supportive environment where all children can reach their full potential.

In this newsletter, we offer our top 5 safety tips for kids on the spectrum and an ASD survival kit for kids traveling, at home, or at a grandparent's house. We also featured a poem on leveraging OT for kids with autism. Our employee spotlight focuses on Leah, who provides insight into four techniques she uses in OT: reflex integration, DMI, gymnastics, and aquatic therapy. Check them out! Finally, we present all of the special summer programs we've designed with your children in mind. Feel free to inquire about groups or lessons that might meet your child's needs.

With sincere dedication,

Dr. Chaye Lamm Warburg

Director, Pediatric Occupational Therapy Services



Celebrating Autism Awareness Month: **Top 5 Autism Safety Tips**

April is Autism Awareness Month, a time to celebrate and support the autistic individuals in our community. Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how people communicate, interact, and experience the world around them.

In honor of Autism Awareness Month, we've put together five safety tips to ensure the well-being and security of the individuals in our lives with autism. The concept of safety and security may take on a different spin for autistic individuals whose sense of safety and security often relies on predictability and routine. We also want to provide you with extra tips to keep children safe, especially in the summer when kids are outside and swimming pools abound.



1. Be Mindful of Sensory Needs to Reduce Anxiety: Many individuals with autism are overly sensitive to ambient stimuli, such as loud noises, bright lights, smells, or crowded spaces. Others have a high threshold and fail to notice sights, sounds, and proximity as quickly or effectively as others do. Understanding and respecting these sensory needs can help prevent overwhelming situations that may lead to distress, anxiety, and meltdowns.

2. Create a Predictable Environment: For many individuals with autism predictability, consistency, and structure make them feel safe. While many children thrive on structure and predictability, kids on the spectrum often need it. When schedules change for the summer it's a good idea to write a social story with your child about the new schedule. To make the days more manageable create a visual schedule and review it at the start of every day.





3. Teach Safety Skills: Explicitly teach children how to recognize and respond to dangerous situations, such as crossing the street safely or knowing whom to trust. Strategies should include any way your child learns best, including visual aids, social stories, role-playing, and of course, practice.

4. Target Communication Strategies: Communication difficulties can pose significant safety risks for individuals with autism, especially in emergencies. Practice using all of the alternative communication methods available to your child to enable them to provide their basic information and get help. Examples are picture cards, communication apps, or simple phrases to express needs and seek help. Practice communication strategies regularly to enhance their effectiveness. Gamifying safety drills can be fun and helpful.



5. Ensure your Child is Water Safe: Drowning is the No. 1 cause of death for children of all ages with autism. Kids with autism face a higher risk of drowning due to their tendency to wander off ("elopement"). Water is a powerful attraction that can outweigh the protections that parents/caregivers put in place, so it is especially important to have good **routines and rituals** around water. **Here** is a safety tool kit to download to keep all of your children safe around the water. **Sign up** for adaptive instruction this summer at POTS, and teach your child to swim.

Preferred Foods



Calming Music



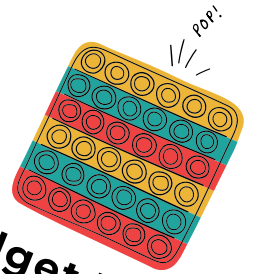
Essential Oils

ASD

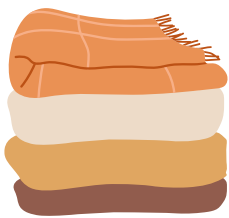
SURVIVAL KIT



**Noise-canceling
headphones**



Fidget Toys



**Weighted
Blanket**



Chewelry



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move . play . grow

Triggers for Kids With Autism & SPD

too fast



too high



too overwhelming



too unfamiliar



too close



too hectic



too loud



too new



too bright



too unexpected



too vague



too loose
too tight





Employee Spotlight: **Leah Schonfeld, OTR**

1. TELL US ABOUT YOUR OT JOURNEY.

My passion for occupational therapy began during my sophomore year of high school while assisting a child with special needs with their "OT homework." I went on to attend Long Island University, where I earned my master's degree in occupational therapy. Since then, my dedication to the field has only strengthened. I am fueled by a love for learning and seize every opportunity to enhance my expertise. Occupational therapy continues to captivate me. I love coming to work every day and helping kids grow!

2. WHAT IS REFLEX INTEGRATION AND HOW DO YOU USE IT IN YOUR OT SESSION?

All newborns come into this world with innate (primitive) reflexes that help them move and respond to the world around them. As they mature, these reflexes develop from instinctive reactions to voluntary movements that the child can control.

For example, babies are born with a startle reflex. When they hear a loud noise they may respond by quickly extending their arms and legs outward, then bringing them close to their body. However, as infants develop and gain better control over their movements, the reflex becomes "integrated" and the baby is no longer bound by responding to sound with that movement.

There are many reflexes and each one contributes something unique to development. Well-integrated reflexes form a strong foundation for higher-level skills such as crawling, walking and writing. When reflexes don't become integrated on time they may interfere with higher-level fine and gross motor skills.

In most of my sessions, I tap into reflex integration to address skills on a neurological level to support higher-level functional skills.



3. WHY DO YOU USE DMI? HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM OTHER THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS?

DMI (Dynamic Movement Intervention) is an exciting and powerful technique used to help children with motor delays achieve developmental milestones (such as sitting and walking) more rapidly than traditional approaches. DMI is a comprehensive intervention built on the Medek technique developed 43 years ago by Ramon Cuevas. DMI taps into the neuroplasticity of the brain to develop new pathways and connections to improve automatic postural responses and advanced movement patterns.

DMI sessions incorporate series of unique exercises and equipment to progressively build up a child's postural control and gross motor skills. To speed up progress further, parents are taught exercises to do at home to support their child's growth.

4. WHY DO YOU LOVE AQUATIC THERAPY?

In aquatic therapy, we harness the properties of water to help children overcome various physical, sensory, and developmental challenges and improve mobility, strength, endurance, coordination, and sensory processing.

For kids who are in occupational and physical therapy throughout the winter, the novelty of working in the water boosts engagement, enthusiasm, and motivation. In addition, progress often speeds up as the water provides heightened sensory feedback, and any movement against the constant resistance of the water builds up strength, endurance, and body awareness.

Getting ready to swim in our cabana, and showered and dressed afterward also provides opportunities to practice dressing, showering, and hair brushing skills, and tolerate and apply sunscreen.

In my experience, so many children progress more rapidly in the water than on land, and it's so gratifying for everyone to see them reach their goals more quickly.



5. ARE YOU A GYMNAST? HOW DO YOU INCORPORATE YOUR GYMNASTICS TRAINING INTO YOUR OT SESSIONS?

I am a gymnast, and have taught gymnastics as well! Gymnastics is a powerful way to provide children with a lot of sensory input such as deep-pressure, and vestibular input in a short amount of time. It's also an effective way to work on strength and coordination using age-appropriate activities that are highly valued. Often kids don't even realize that they're working because they're just having fun and are focused on accomplishing new gymnastics skills.

6. IF YOU COULD HAVE ONE SUPERPOWER, WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

I would want to see the future. The number one question I'm asked after every evaluation is "How long will therapy take?" Sometimes therapy can be a lengthy process as we work to overcome layers of challenges and reveal a child's full capacity. It would help me keep children's and parents' motivation high if they could see the future and know exactly how long therapy is going to take.

Every child is unique and progresses at their own pace. While it's hard to predict how rapidly a child will respond to therapy before starting, children who come to therapy consistently, more often (2+ times/week), and for lengthier sessions (60 minutes) are set up for success. Being able to see the future could provide hope for families, guidance for therapists, and enable children to relax and enjoy the process.

**BOOK A 15-MINUTE FREE PHONE
CONSULTATION**



A Poem For Autism Awareness Month

April is the month for autism awareness,
A time to educate and increase our care-ness.
In occupational therapy, we have a role
To help children with autism reach their goal.



We start with play, it's the best way
To build relationships and learn every day.
We might sing a song or scooter down the hall
To build trust and have a ball.



We learn skills to help with everyday life
Like brushing teeth or using a knife.
We practice routines to ease transitions,
Reduce anxiety and improve conditions.



We help children with sensory needs
To process information and regulate their speeds.
We might use swings or squeeze nice and tight
To help them feel calm and reduce fight or flight.



In occupational therapy, we see kids' strengths
And to build on them we go to great lengths.
We help children with autism thrive,
Reach their goals and harness their drive.



So let's spread awareness and increase understanding
And work together for a world so outstanding.
A world in which every child is encouraged to flower
And children with autism come into their power.





POTS 2024 SUMMER PROGRAMS

POTS BACK-TO-SCHOOL CAMP (Ages 4-6)

Is your 4-6 year old ready for the upcoming school year? Join us for 1 or 2 week intensive day camp for children entering Pre-K, Kindergarten, and first grade to get back into a daily routine, boost their skills and prepare for a successful school year.

Week 1: 8/19-8/23 Week 2: 8/26-8/29
Monday-Thursday 9am-12:30pm



[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP](#)



[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP](#)

SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP (Ages 4-8)

Our social skills groups help children establish, practice, and enhance social competence. Your child will have a blast as they learn to develop the ability to recognize and control their emotions, understand other people's perspectives, and play with friends. Our 2 summer groups meet once a week for 8 weeks and are for ages 4-5 and 6-8 years old.

Dates: 6/24 - 8/12
Ages 4-5: Mondays 5pm-6pm
Ages 6-8: Mondays 6pm-7pm

AQUATIC THERAPY (All Ages)

Aquatic therapy provides a boost to land-based occupational therapy using the unique properties of the water in our outdoor pool to ramp up the speed and effectiveness of OT to improve gross motor skills, strength and endurance, sensory processing and self-care skills.

Memorial Day - September 1st
Morning & Afternoon Availability



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ADAPTIVE SWIMMING LESSONS (All Ages)

Does your child have difficulty learning to swim in traditional swim classes? In Adaptive Swim, occupational therapists with advanced training will use therapeutic techniques to teach your child water readiness, water safety, and swimming skills. Adaptive Swim lessons are ideal for children with anxiety, motor or sensory challenges.

Memorial Day - September 1st
Morning & Afternoon Availability



POTS 2024 SUMMER PROGRAMS

EASY RIDER BIKE LESSONS (All Ages)

For a child, learning to ride a bike can be scary! As a parent, teaching your child to bike can be frustrating, especially when your child "just doesn't get it!" POTS to the rescue! Like many other sports skills, therapists at POTS use their knowledge of sensorimotor development to adapt bicycle riding training to meet your child's learning style.



[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP](#)

**Memorial Day - September 1st
Morning & Afternoon Availability**



[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP](#)

KIDS YOGA GROUP (Ages 4-7)

Kids' yoga uses dynamic movement, breathing exercises, and mindfulness techniques, to improve children's strength, flexibility, and coordination, and promote relaxation, stress reduction, and emotional regulation. Our POTS occupational therapists will empower your child to manage their emotions and navigate challenges with resilience by tailoring the group to meet the unique needs of every child in a supportive nurturing environment.

Dates: 6/25-8/13

Time: Tuesdays 10am-10:45am

COOL IN THE POOL (Ages 12 months-2 1/2 & their grown-up)

We're Cool In the Pool is a dynamic outdoor parent/child group guided by our aquatic occupational therapists. Parents and children will enjoy a 90 minute session including swimming activities, a relaxing picnic, and sensorimotor activities, to foster social engagement, water safety and sensorimotor skills.



[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP](#)

**6 week parent & child group
Tuesdays from 10:00am - 11:30am**

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ALL OF OUR PROGRAMS, VISIT OUR WEBSITE



With love,
POTS

Contact Us:



www.potsot.com



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Schedule a FREE 15-Minute Phone Consultation

with an Occupational, Speech, Feeding, or Aquatic therapist