

Accepting the Spectrum

By Grace Majewski,
RBT

Happy New Year & welcome to 2025! Collaborative ABA Services, LLC, is so thankful to have gone into the new year with our wonderful staff and families.

As the winter season continues on through the new year, families of children with autism may begin to notice some unique challenges that arise with the colder weather and subsequent changes in daily routines.

For example, heavier clothing or needing to wear a coat often can disrupt the familiar structures that children with autism often rely on. In this month's newsletter, we will explore the potential challenges winter brings and practical ABA strategies that parents and caregivers can use to help kids cope with these changes and continue thriving during the winter season!



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Winter Wellness: Helping Children with Autism enjoy the Winter Season

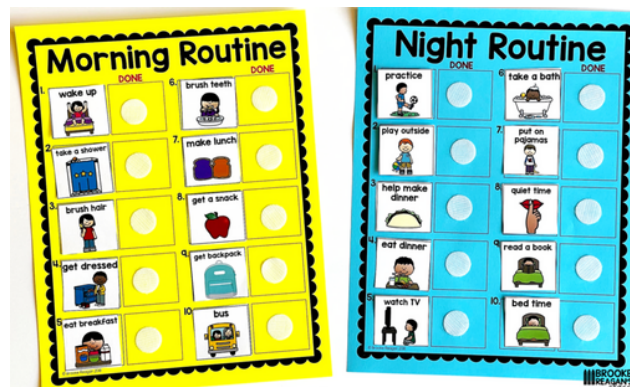
1. Change in Routines

One of the most significant challenges in the winter season is the disruption of routine. Although school holidays, snow days, or late arrivals are quite inevitable during this time, they offer unpredictability for our kiddos.

How can we help?

Visual schedules are an amazing way to show what the day will look like to your child. A visual schedule not only helps children understand the structure of their day, but with consistency, can help them understand changes for school breaks or family events.

Social stories can also be a very beneficial way to work through new challenges. Talking through a potentially stressful situation can help our children be more prepared when it arises in real-life.



2. Sensory sensitivities

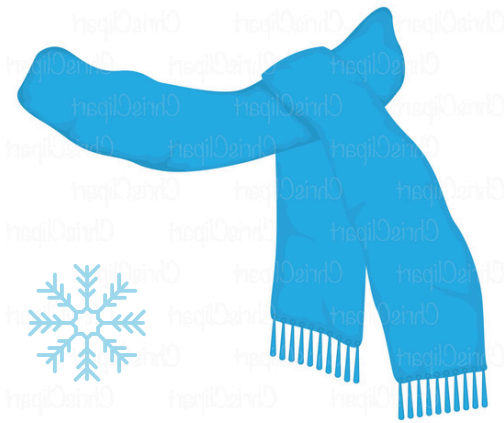
The cold weather brings new clothing challenges, as children may have trouble wearing heavy coats, scarves, hats, or gloves due to sensory sensitivities.

How can we help?

1. Choose soft, tag-free clothing to keep your kiddo comfortable and still warm.

2. Reinforce flexibility: Offering reinforcement to your kiddo for desirable behaviors can greatly affect their future willingness to engage in these behaviors. For example, you may choose to offer social praise for encouragement, tickles, or another preferred item (toy) after putting on coat or boots to reinforce the behavior.

3. Parents/caregivers can further reinforce flexible behavior by continuing to introduce small changes to their routine and positively reinforcing adaptation to these changes.



3. Limited Outdoor time

Many children with autism enjoy outdoor activities as a way to burn off energy or relax. However, cold temperatures or inclement weather can limit outdoor playtime, which may lead to frustration.

How can we help?

Self management and coping skills are important tools for processing stressful situations. Teaching your child deep breathing or other self-soothing techniques may help them feel less overwhelmed. Also, see below for fun, sensory-friendly activities that can be done inside.

Inside Activities!

1. Making snowflakes with paper and kid friendly scissors.
2. Sensory bins: cotton balls, plastic ornaments, foam snowflakes, real snow, etc. Get creative!
3. Sensory bottles: Fill clear water bottles with glitter, water, and other fun winter-themed items. Don't forget to shake it up and enjoy lava lamp effect!

Agency News and Staff Updates



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Introducing me!



Hi all! My name is Grace, and I will be taking over the company newsletters for Collaborative ABA Services, LLC. I know we will all miss Olivia's hard work, but I am so excited to take on this project! Since working with kiddos is my passion, I am a Registered Behavior Technician as well as the Lead Behavior Technician at Collaborative ABA Services, LLC. I have been at the company for a little over a year now! Additionally, I am a BCBA student, currently pursuing my Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis. Outside of work and school, I love to travel, spend time with family and friends, and listen to music. I greatly look forward to collaborating with you all further via the newsletter!

Please welcome Rosemary!

Meet Rosemary! Rosemary has worked with children since she was a teenager. Her experience made her fall in love with working with children. She is a trained teacher in South America, Guyana. When she became a parent, she paused her career to homeschool and spend time with her children. Since then, she obtained her degree in Child Development - Pre-Occupational Therapy. After working with the awesome children at Collaborative she has fallen in love with ABA and plans to obtain her Masters in ABA.



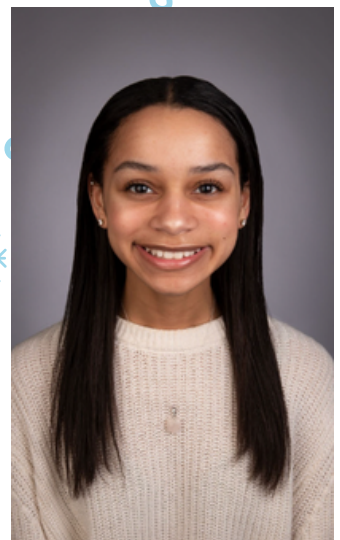
Please welcome Holly!



Hello, my name is Holly! I am excited to begin my journey with Collaborative ABA Services and meet you all soon! I am a Licensed Occupational Therapy Assistant whom graduated from Lincoln College of New England back in 2017. I am also working towards my Bachelors in Psychology at Southern CT State University. In addition, I have a Associates in Human Services along with a certification for therapeutic recreation. I have experience with all age ranges but enjoy working with kiddos the most. I have worked in roles that were specific to Dementia, medical complexities, mental health and addiction, job coaching, intellectual/physical disabilities, and as a Lead Teacher for ages 4mo-5 years. In the future, I would like to get certifications in specialty areas such as vision therapy, sensory integration, and Aquatics.

My favorite role of all has been being a parent myself! I have a 10 year old daughter who I learn through every day. In our free time we like to hike, play sports, bake, go to the library, and see our friends. One of the reasons why I chose this profession is because of my nephew. I have an amazing 8 year old nephew diagnosed with Autism whom I have gotten to support and learn from since he was born. Seeing some of the challenges and celebrations through out his life not only for him, but my sister has driven my love for support in this role and population. Looking forward to working with your kiddos!

Please welcome Aisha!



Meet Aisha. In May 2024, she graduated from Merrimack College with a major in Psychology and a minor in Women and Gender studies. She is pursuing her Behavior Technician Registration while earning a Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Aisha is passionate about making others feel heard and helping them grow which is what feels so rewarding about working with children on the spectrum. She believes that making learning fun and engaging encourages children to gain confidence and reach their full potential. She has 7 years of experience working with kids in home, school, and summer camp settings. She enjoys traveling, music, spending time with her dog, and being outdoors!

Lisa's Coaching Center

My son, Ben, was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 2.

After his diagnosis, my life stopped.

The life I had expected, anyway.

I went from planning my next baby to learning the ropes of Autism parenting.

For me that looked like diving into the research, consulting experts, trying new therapies and interventions and always, always wondering if I could be doing more.

This took a toll on me, and it took a toll on my parenting experience.

Instead of looking at my perfect, beautiful son as the miracle he was (and is), I was looking at him like a "work in progress".

Instead of focusing on his strengths, I was focused on his deficits.

Instead of loving every minute of my time with him, I spent it worrying about his future.

I probably would have continued this for years, if it weren't for Ben pulling the hair of a little girl named Sammy in his pre-school class.

I was terrified that Sammy's parents would insist on Ben's removal from the class, so I decided to do damage control by calling them directly, explaining the situation, and apologizing.

Good thing I braced myself, because what the father said blew me away:

"I am so sorry to hear that your son is struggling. Sammy's brother, Jake, died of brain cancer when he was 4 years old, and it breaks my heart to see any child who is struggling."

In that moment of simultaneous heartbreak and gratitude, everything shifted for me. Their son was dead, and my son was alive and right in front of me. Yes, he struggled in so many ways, but he was right here for me to love.

I vowed that I would continue to work my hardest for Ben's best possible outcome, but not at the expense of enjoying and loving the child right in front of me, exactly as he is.

From that point on, I made it my job to celebrate all of Ben's successes, no matter how ordinary they were, or how much time it took him to achieve them.

- ✓ I threw a Poop Party for a 5 year old
- ✓ I shared his Ben-isms (MY-PAD, NetClicks) with anyone who would listen
- ✓ I bought him a Lego set when he (finally) stopped interchanging the letters "b" and "d" making it sound like he was constantly telling people to "dye".

I have never regretted a moment I spent loving on my child, and neither will you.

It is not either/or; it is both/and. You can do all the things to support your child's development AND love them exactly as they are.

When you learn to do this, it is the most freeing act of love for both you and your child.

Give it a try!

Lisa's Coaching Center: A Free Webinar

Are you sick of tiptoeing around your child, bracing yourself for the next meltdown, and living in constant fear of setting them off?

I get it.

I lived like this for YEARS until I learned how to shift from survival mode to parenting with calm and confidence.

And now I want to share these secrets with you!

Join me in this free webinar to discover:

✓ Why trying to control everything doesn't work.

✓ How to focus on what you can control.

✓ A simple way to stay calm, even during meltdowns.

Here are the Details:

Date: January 30, 2025

Time: 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Where: Zoom

Link to register:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN-BXcVApJjTMyi-P8Uplqfwg#/registration>



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