



The Mini Page

Betty Debnam, Founding Editor and Editor at Large



© 2015 Universal Uclick

from The Mini Page © 2015 Universal Uclick

April Is Autism Awareness Month

Let's Talk About Autism

Try to imagine what it would be like if you couldn't talk. How would you tell a teacher or your parents that you needed to use the bathroom? What if your stomach was upset, or you had a headache? Suppose you were just hungry?

This is what many kids who have **autism** (AH-tiz-um) struggle with every day. Even kids with autism who can talk may have a difficult time saying what they're thinking. Imagine how frustrating that must be!

Today, 1 out of every 68 children in the United States is diagnosed as autistic. Do you know autistic kids in your school or neighborhood?

This week, The Mini Page talks with an expert about this disorder and how it affects children.

Every child is different

You know that you're a little bit different from every other child in the world. It's the same for kids with autism.

The disorder affects everyone differently. Some people can speak very well; others don't speak at all. Some can focus on one or two favorite subjects but can't concentrate on anything else. One child might be very sensitive to noise; another might be bothered by certain types of light.



photo © Stylephotographs | Dreamstime.com

Boys are four times more likely to have autism than girls. Autism is the fastest-growing developmental disorder.

What is autism?

Autism is a disability in the brain that affects how certain skills develop. For instance, people with autism may have trouble communicating with other people. They may not understand the way others interact with each other, such as with body language or jokes.

People with autism can be overly sensitive to certain **stimuli** (STIH-myoo-lie), such as noises or touch.

Other problems

Autistic kids can have physical problems, too, such as seizures and allergies. They may have trouble digesting food or sleeping.

Scientists and doctors have not been able to figure out what causes the disorder. Researchers are working to discover not only the cause, but also better ways to treat autism and help people live with it.

On the spectrum

You may have heard adults talk about the "autism spectrum." They are talking about the range of how severe autism is.

For example, Asperger's is the highest-functioning level of autism. Many young people with Asperger's graduate from high school, go to college and have jobs, and form relationships.

More severely autistic kids may not speak or be able to learn very well. They might not be able to live alone as adults or drive a car.



Meet Tyler McNamer

The Mini Page interviewed Tyler McNamer, the author of “Population: One.” Tyler’s book is about his life with autism. Today he is 20 years old and is enrolled in a design engineering class. “I like to learn things,” Tyler said. “I like the routine (of school).”

“What’s going on?”

Tyler was 6 when he first realized that he was different from other kids. When he was 10, his parents explained to him about his autism.

“It was pretty confusing. I didn’t quite know what was going on. It was kind of an odd experience,” Tyler said.

Tyler didn’t go to a special school or special classes, but he did have **paraprofessionals*** with him in school. “They reminded me to do stuff or not to do stuff,” he said. “I kind of liked having paraprofessionals; it was kind of a normal thing to do for me.”

*A paraprofessional is an aide who helps students one-on-one in school.

Getting along

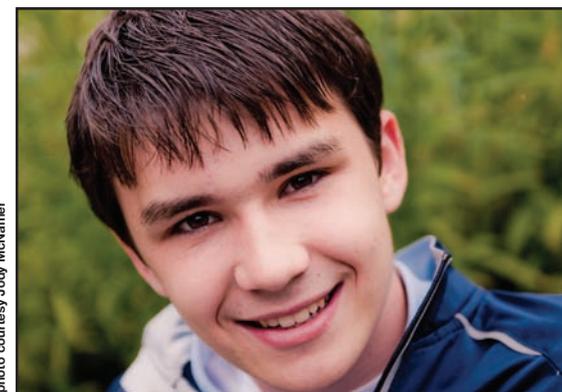
Tyler said at first he would observe other kids and try to be like them. “But then the strange part is, the other kids were trying to talk slowly and be all gentle and calm and stuff,” Tyler said. They would go easy on him when playing sports. “And it felt kind of weird, to be quite honest,” he said. “People don’t have to be easy on me or anything like that.”

Growing up

Tyler said it’s become easier for him to manage his autism as he’s gotten older. “When I was real little, I had trouble with noise and many noisy things. Today, sure, I prefer quiet a lot of times, but it’s not hard. It’s a noisy world outside,” he said.

Writing the book

Tyler began his writing career with articles for his high school newspaper. With the book, he said, “I wanted to expand my thoughts on different things and help others.”



Tyler is thinking about writing a second book. “It’s been a big adventure. Not a lot of teenagers are able to publish a book!” he said.

A message to kids

“People (with autism) think differently and act differently. It’s such a mysterious diagnosis that even the person with it doesn’t really know what’s going on,” Tyler said.

Tyler said kids should know it’s OK to ask children with autism what’s going on in their heads, or to ask a teacher to help you understand why a child with autism is acting differently.

Ready Resources



The Mini Page provides ideas for websites, books or other resources that will help you learn more about this week’s topics.

On the Web:

- bit.ly/1A3WJCP
- bit.ly/1DCXnIu
- bit.ly/1vG9qy9

At the library:

- “My Friend Has Autism” by Amanda Doering Tourville
- “Russell’s World” by Charles A. Amenta III, M.D.
- “A Is for Autism, F Is for Friend” by Joanna L. Keating-Velasco



Basset
Brown's

Try
'n'
Find

Autism

E	W	F	J	L	O	O	H	C	S	G	R	D	S	D
V	M	R	L	I	G	H	T	P	N	E	I	R	Q	I
I	H	I	N	O	I	S	E	I	D	F	E	T	S	A
T	C	E	P	X	L	C	Y	R	F	G	A	T	U	G
I	E	N	V	L	T	L	O	E	R	S	I	T	N	N
S	E	D	E	R	L	S	R	E	T	M	I	C	B	O
N	P	M	U	U	I	E	P	E	U	S	F	L	H	S
E	S	M	B	D	N	S	O	L	M	W	B	K	Y	I
S	N	O	I	T	A	C	I	N	U	M	M	O	C	S

Words that remind us of autism are hidden in the block above. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find: ASPERGER’S, AUTISM, BULLYING, COMMUNICATION, DIAGNOSIS, DIFFERENT, DISORDER, FRIEND, LIGHT, NOISE, SCHOOL, SENSITIVE, SMELL, SPECTRUM, SPEECH, STIMULI, TASTE.



Mini Spy

Mini Spy helps Andy on the playground.

See if you can find: mouse chicken

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> dragon | <input type="checkbox"/> word MINI | <input type="checkbox"/> toothbrush | <input type="checkbox"/> pencil |
| <input type="checkbox"/> number 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> sea horse | <input type="checkbox"/> butterfly | <input type="checkbox"/> frog |
| <input type="checkbox"/> carrot | <input type="checkbox"/> hammer | <input type="checkbox"/> number 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> cat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> caterpillar | <input type="checkbox"/> needle | <input type="checkbox"/> cheese | <input type="checkbox"/> heart |



from The Mini Page © 2015 Universal Uclick



Rookie Cookie's Recipe Wrap 'n' Bake Hot Dogs

You'll need:

- 1 tube refrigerated pizza dough
- Cooking spray
- 1 package low-fat precooked hot dogs
- 4 cheese sticks, cut in half lengthwise

What to do:

1. Spread out pizza dough and divide into 8 equal pieces.
2. Spray cookie sheet with cooking spray.
3. Make a lengthwise slit in each hot dog and place half a cheese stick inside.
4. Wrap each hot dog in pizza dough, pinching seams together. Place on cookie sheet.
5. Bake in oven at 400 degrees for 15 to 18 minutes until lightly browned.
6. Serve with mustard, relish and ketchup if desired. Serves 8.

You will need an adult's help with this recipe.

from The Mini Page © 2015 Universal Uclick

Meet Maria Bello



photo by Ron Phillips, ©Disney Enterprises Inc. All Rights Reserved

Maria Bello stars as Cheryl White in the Disney movie "McFarland, USA," based on a true story. In it, high school runners from a low-income, mostly Latino town build a top team.

Maria has starred in many movies, including "The Jane Austen Book Club," "The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor" and "Flicka," and in TV shows such as "ER."

Maria, 47, was born in Norristown, Pennsylvania. She majored in peace and justice education in college. She took an acting class her senior year in college and discovered that she loved it.

She supports several charities, especially those working for women's rights. She helped lead efforts to open a women's clinic after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. She also supports the charity Save the Children.

from The Mini Page © 2015 Universal Uclick



Gus Goodsport's Supersport



Height: 6-3
Age: 27
Hometown: The Woodlands, Texas

Paul Goldschmidt

No one is more eager for the start of the Major League Baseball season than Arizona Diamondbacks first baseman Paul Goldschmidt. The Arizona slugger had a breakout season in 2013, but a broken hand caused him to miss the final two months of the 2014 season.

Paul was born in Wilmington, Delaware, but grew up near Houston, Texas. After attending Texas State University, Paul was taken by the Diamondbacks in the eighth round of the 2009 MLB Draft. After two seasons in the minor leagues, Paul made his debut in the majors on Aug. 1, 2011.

In 2013, Paul led the National League with 36 home runs and 125 RBIs, and was named to the National League All-Star team. He also won the Hank Aaron Award as the NL's top hitter with a .302 batting average, and received a Gold Glove Award for outstanding defense at his position. As this season gets underway, Paul is ready to swing his bat once again.



Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?

Pam: Why did the angry lady put a firecracker under her pancakes?

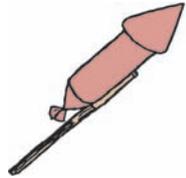
Pete: She wanted to blow her stack!

Piper: Did you hear about the boy who ate 500 pancakes?

Philip: How waffle!

Perry: In what sport does a pancake compete?

Patrick: Stack and field!



Understanding Autism

“Children with autism are just like every other kid,” an expert told us. “They want to have friends and have fun.”

For many autistic people, the biggest struggle is with social skills — getting along with other people. Autistic kids may not look you in the eye. They might need extra processing time to answer a question, or they might not understand friendly teasing or joking. This makes building friendships harder.

“Autistic kids struggle with communication. Be patient. They’re worth getting to know! They are interesting, and some are super smart,” the expert said.

Victims of bullying

Autistic kids who are higher-functioning often end up being the victims of bullies. Because their symptoms are less obvious, they get labeled as “nerds” and become easy targets for bullies.

Adults can also be unkind. For instance, an autistic kid who is sensitive to loud noises may react in public with a **melt-down**, or tantrum. The child may be unable to communicate through words that all the noise is painful to him, so he screams. Other people might judge the child and the parents for his behavior — but he can’t help it.

The Mini Page thanks Wendy Fournier, president of the National Autism Association, for help with this issue.



photo © Photoeuphoria | Dreamstime.com

Some kids are so sensitive to sounds that they wear noise-canceling headphones in school or in public. Kids can be sensitive to certain kinds of sounds, like a baby crying or squealing.

At school

Autistic kids can learn, but they may need to be taught in different ways. For example, a teacher or therapist may break a lesson down into small steps and start with pictures instead of words.

Autistic kids might get help from therapists with speech or **gross motor skills** such as balance, jumping and running. Others need help understanding their sensitivity to light or noise, or learning to use a pencil.

Like Tyler McNamer, many kids work with a paraprofessional in the classroom. These aides can help kids stay focused.

New technologies, such as tablets, are helping make autistic kids’ lives easier.

For later:

Think about how you might reach out to a neighbor or classmate with autism. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- What kinds of things is your friend interested in? Ask him or her to share something about a favorite subject with you.

Being a friend

Kids need to remember that autistic children, even those who don’t speak, can hear everything we say, and they understand. Children with autism want to make friends and do all the same things other kids do, but many times they just don’t know how.

Most of the parts of our day that we don’t even think about — coming to school, saying “hi” to friends, eating lunch — are a huge struggle for kids with autism.

The “clang” of a locker door may be painful to hear. The buzzing and flickering of fluorescent lights may be unbearable. Children who are sensitive to being touched may feel as if walking down a crowded hallway is like being beat up.

Kids with autism have to use extreme self-control to avoid screaming or running away from overwhelming situations.

“Respect their strength to get through the day,” one expert advised. “Include them, and appreciate what makes them special. Reach out and make an effort — that’s what’s missing for many of them.”

- Try not to use idioms, or figures of speech, that might be confusing, such as “Take a seat” or “Don’t spill the beans.”
- Don’t freak out if your friend gets frustrated and yells or has a melt-down. You can ask an adult for help or just take a break and come back later.

Next week, The Mini Page celebrates National Library Week.

The Mini Page Staff

Betty Debnam - Founding Editor and Editor at Large Lisa Tarry - Managing Editor Lucy Lien - Associate Editor Wendy Daley - Artist