

Newsletter 100
Parent Edition
March 2007

*This Month's Theme:
"We're All Special"*

*We're all different.
Children with special
needs and their friends
need to learn to respect
individual differences.
Help them understand
each other through play
and great books.*

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Let's Celebrate Earth Day

Child Care for Your Special Needs Child Finding a Supportive and Stable Provider

All parents have the same basic needs when looking for child care. They want someone to care for their child with the sensitivity they would if they were at home with them. If you have a child with special needs, you have the added responsibility of finding a provider who has the training and the facility to take care of your child properly.

While children with special needs are as diverse as the rest of the population, it's important for you to be clear on what that need is and to be able to use the accepted vocabulary to begin discussions with providers about caring for your child. Most children will not fit neatly into one of these categories. This is simply a starting point that will help you have an open discussion with providers and weed out those who aren't a good match for your family.

Use the special considerations under each heading when you make your initial phone calls and then make appointments with those who satisfy your concerns. Because no child fits into one category, read through all of them and make a special list of your questions, so you have an outline to help you through your initial interview.

Physical Disabilities

Children who have physical disabilities need assistance from either an adult or other rehabilitative apparatus to go about their lives. These children may be in wheel chairs or they may have



difficulty controlling their muscles due to weakness or nerve damage. They may have lost limbs or been born without them. Their physical disability does not affect their intellectual or social ability.

Considerations:

- Is the provider physically fit enough to help your child get around? Can he or she lift your child, help the child in the bath room or help the child at meal times?
- Can the home accommodate the child? If the child is in a wheel chair, is the house accessible?
- Are the doors wide enough?

- Can the provider get your child out of the house by herself in case of fire?

Visual or Auditory Disabilities

Children with these disabilities have significant problems seeing or hearing. With early diagnosis and support, such as glasses, hearing aides or other medical interventions, some of these children will be able to overcome any delays brought on by the impairment and developmentally catch up to their peers in their early years. You may be able to take part in this.

Considerations:

- If your child has visual problems, will the provider be open to child-proofing the house to accommodate the handicap?
- Can the provider take the time to become familiar with Braille, so your child can begin reading with the other children?
- If your child cannot hear, is the provider open to learning sign language?
- Can the provider work with you on strategies that expose your child to language and literacy?

Intellectual Disabilities

Children with intellectual challenges may have delayed educational, social and emotional development or just a delay in one of these areas. They may not learn as fast as their peers.

Considerations:

- Is the provider sensitive enough to understand that your child needs extra help and time to learn certain skills?
- Does she have the time to help your child learn to the best of his abilities?

Communication Disorders and Autism

Children with these disorders can have problems learning language, learning to articulate sounds or may be autistic. These problems can range from the child who has a simple lisp to the severely autistic child who cannot relate to others and appears to live in his own protected world.

Considerations:

- Does the provider have the time and patience to build a relationship with a child who may have a difficult time bonding?
- Does the provider have the time to learn how to communicate with your child using alternative methods?
- Will the children in the group be sensitive to your child?
- Can the provider offer a safe quiet place for your child to escape to, if necessary?

Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities are behavior patterns or learning styles that keep children from learning in the traditional ways that are available to them. There continues to be a great deal of controversy whether these are true disabilities or simply differences in learning style. They can range from an inability to pay attention or sit still, an inability to understand and decipher symbols or an inability to process incoming or outgoing information.

Considerations:

- Does the provider have the room to take care of children who need a lot of space and time to run around and be active?
- Is the provider flexible and creative enough to teach children in non-traditional ways?
- Is the provider open to children who may perceive the world differently than they do?

Gifted Children

Gifted children are children who have the ability to learn very quickly. They may be gifted in many areas or especially gifted in one area. While they seem to be intellectually blessed, they may sometimes have trouble fitting in with other children and may need a great deal of intellectual activity to satisfy their constantly growing minds.

Considerations:

- Can the provider keep your child stimulated with activities and field

trips that they find interesting?

- Is there a peer in the group that shares your child's interests?

Social or Emotional Disabilities

These children may have difficulties dealing with others in social situations and have trouble dealing appropriately with their own emotions. This may be caused by past abuse, trauma, brain injury or lead poisoning.

Considerations:

- Is the provider willing to take the time to bond with your child and able to commit to a long-term stable relationship?
- Does the caregiver have any prior experience with children who have emotional challenges. Can she understand the need for constant communication with you?
- If you have a plan of action set up with a therapist, is she able to carry out the plan at childcare?

Chronic Illness

These children have chronic diseases or health problems ranging from cancer to allergies.

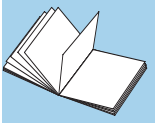
Considerations:

- Does the provider clearly understand the complexities concerning your child's medical condition?
- Is the provider comfortable administering medicine and willing to be trained to do so properly?
- Can the provider be calm and think clearly in an emergency?
- Does the provider have previous medical training in nursing or emergency medical care?
- Can the provider keep a very clean house and/or pet free house?

Other Considerations

- If your child needs therapy during the day, will the provider welcome the therapist to the house.
- If your child has homework from therapy, can the provider take the time to help them out?
- All providers need CPR and emergency medical training. Is the

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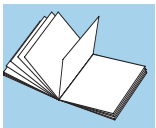


Why Does That Man Have Such a Big Nose?

by **Mary Beth Quinsey**

The title seems insensitive, but the book is honest. Toddlers very often ask questions like these not

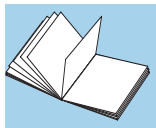
because they lack manners, but because they're honestly curious. This book answers their questions without judgement for the toddler or the subject matter. Each facing page has a question that concerns an individual characteristic. From noses to skin color to body size each question is answered factually helping children to understand that we are all different. Sepia photographs picture people from all walks of life going about their daily business. This is a perfect introduction to a discussion on individual differences. (ages 3 - 6)



Susan Laughs by **Jeanne Willis**

Susan does all the things that other little girls do. "Susan dances, Susan rides, Susan swims, Susan hides." Softly colored pencil drawings illustrate Susan happily going

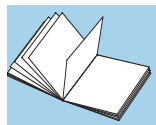
about her life, playing and sharing good and bad days with people she loves. The uncomplicated text supports the pastel pencil illustrations of a typical, happy, carefree life of a child. You won't know until the very last page that Susan spends part of her day in a wheel chair. It's simply illustrated on the last page. "That is Susan through and through - just like me, just like you." A sensitive story that places emphasis on similarities instead of differences. (ages 2 - 6)



Andy and His Yellow Frisbee by **Mary Thompson**

Andy is autistic. He has no interest in playing with other children or even speaking to them. His only interest is his spinning yellow frisbee. When Sarah, a new girl

comes to school, she tries to get to know Andy by introducing her pink frisbee, but he shows no interest. However, Sarah catches the interest of Andy's sister and they form a new relationship. There's a very gentle, non-judgmental message to the reader about the differences in Andy and his sister's social behavior and subtleties that connect Andy's behavior to common behaviors, like his sister's insistence that she must always have her bear. This is an honest look at autism through the eyes of a child. (ages 4 - 8)



Little Smudge by **Lionel Le Néouanic**

Little Smudge is lonely. There he sits on the blank white page all by himself. In his quest to find others to share his life, he comes upon some brilliantly colored shapes.

But they won't accept him. All they see is an undefined smudge. However, Smudge has something they don't. While they can parade around in their perfectly formed shapes, Smudge has the ability to change into any shape at all. The illustrations show all the emotion of Smudge's dilemma and the resolution through one black smudge and five other shapes on a bright white background. This is a great introduction to "being different" for your youngest toddlers. (ages 1 - 5)

Myself and Others **A Feltboard Activity**

You can help your children begin to develop a sense of themselves and respect for others by allowing them to play with individual characteristics. You'll need the following:

- 1 Feltboard
- Felt in assorted colors
- 1 Mirror

Sit down when you have some quiet time and begin to cut out shapes that represent human characteristics. This is not difficult if you remember to use simple shapes. Your preschooler will recognize a blue circle used to represent a blue eye and a rounded triangle to represent a nose You'll need to use different colors of felt to represent different skin, eye and hair colors. Cut different shapes and sizes to represent noses, ears and lips. Make different body shapes to represent short, tall, slender and heavier body shapes. Let this be a long term project, adding items as you talk about all the different characteristics. When you have some basic people represented, you can add some of the following to your collection:

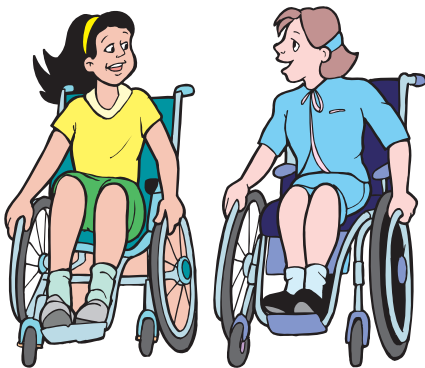
- glasses
- hearing aids
- crutches
- leg braces
- a simple wheel chair
- hair accessories

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This is an ever expanding activity. At some point you may focus on skin color, another time, eyes. You can spend a week making funny hair-dos for your people. The pieces of felt you cut over the month can be used for countless activities.

Place the felt board in a place where your child has access. Place the mirror nearby, so she can look at herself as well as others. She can make herself one day and a friend the next. Use baggies to sort your pieces and remember to have your child help sort when cleaning up. That in itself is a wonderful activity that supports the meaning of *same* and *different*.



Mirror, Mirror

I look in the mirror and who do I see?
A very wonderful, special me!
(Point to yourself)
With sparkling eyes all shiny and bright,
(Point to your eyes)
My smile shows my teeth all pearly and white.
(Point to your teeth.)
It certainly is great to be,
This very wonderful, special me!
(Hug yourself!)

Ann M. OConnell

Grandma's Glasses

Here are Grandma's glasses
(Make circles with your fingers around your eyes.)
And here is Grandma's hat.
(Make a triangular shape with hands on your head.)
And this is how she folds her hands
(Fold your hands in your lap.)
And puts them in her lap.



Traditional

Purchase some plastic glasses at the Dollar Store and have children wear them to see what they feel like.

The Guessing Game

This is a very simple game that toddlers love to play over and over. You can play at naptime or at the table. An adult simply says, "I'm thinking of someone." She (or he) then gives out clues containing the characteristics of someone in the family. Toddlers always want the answer to be themselves, so make sure everyone gets a turn.





Let's Go Fly a Kite

The March Winds doth blow, which means it's the perfect time to fly a kite. Your children can make very simple kites that will blow behind them as they run in the wind. You need the following:

12 x 18 inch heavy construction paper or poster board
Elmer's Glue
Tissue paper in assorted colors, cut into 1 inch squares.
Ribbon to use as a tail
String
Hole punch and reinforcements
Paint brushes

Cut the corners off your construction paper to form a diamond. Place the Elmer's Glue in a small bowl and thin with an equal amount of water. Have your child paint a thin layer of glue all over

their diamond and then cover it with the tissue paper. Allow the kite to dry.

When completely dry, use your hole punch to punch a hole at the string and tail ends of the kite. Use the paper reinforcements to strengthen the holes. Pull a ribbon through the tail end and tie it so you have two equal lengths of tail flying behind the kite. Pull the string through its hole and tie it off near the kite leaving a single three foot length of string. Go run wild through the park on a windy day with your kites.

Parent Hint: Drop a stapler into your bag. Toddlers will likely pull the string out by the end of the day. This way you can repair any damage at the park.

Shaving Cream Art Work

Toddlers have little respect for the outcome of their artwork. It's the process that gives them pleasure. As a matter of fact, most projects will be taken apart before anyone sees them. However, it makes shaving cream a perfect medium for toddler artwork. It's as soft as bubbles in the bathtub, but will hold its shape long enough for a young artist to realize his sculpture, just before he delightfully flattens it out on the table again. Use shaving cream formulated for sensitive skin and watch for those who want to experiment orally. If you want to share the children's artwork with relatives, snap some pictures while they're working.

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provider's certificate up-to-date?

Once you've found a few providers through Programs for Parents Childcare Referral Service or your medical professional, you can move on to your home visits. Bring your child, so you both get a feel for the environment and so the provider can spend some time with your child. If things go well at the initial interview, set up a longer stretch of time for the child to visit. This allows the provider time to see if she can take on any additional care your child may require and allows your child to see if he is comfortable. This is very important. The best situation for any child is one that is stable and allows time to form relationships with other children and the provider. Moving your child from place to place in search of the right care is very disruptive. Take the time to be sure, even if it means paying the provider for a day.

Specialized Child Care

You may want to find a provider that specializes in

caring for children who have specialized needs. The advantage of this is that your provider is very familiar with the particular disability that challenges your child. The other children in the group may also understand your child's challenges and can become a great support system. On the other hand, some parents want their children to have a real world experience, so they begin to make their own accommodations that allow them to interact with a more diverse population. This is a personal decision you need to make and is very dependent on your child's personality and his individual needs. No matter what, know that ultimately the bond between the provider and the child is what determines success. If the provider, parent and child enjoy and understand one another, any small differences can be worked out.

Childcare Matters 100th Anniversary Makeover

We've made some changes to *Childcare Matters*. We've moved your theme activities to pages three and four. We recommend saving all six pages of the newsletter in a three ring binder. However, if you choose you can now pull out page three and four to take to the library, bookstore or craft store and then make yourself a theme notebook.

The biggest change will be **YOU**. We need to hear your questions and concerns. Your needs will help determine the content of the newsletter. Please e-mail us with your child care questions on any of the following topics.

Physical Development
Emotional Development
Educational Development
Family Child Care Regulations
Provider/Parent Relationships
Healthy Meal Planning
Child Care Activities
Afterschool Care
Special Needs Care
Child Care Training and Education
Effective Discipline

We'll use your questions to write newsletter stories that address your concerns and we'll choose a few questions to be answered on Page six of your newsletter every month. The address is below. Let us know what you need.

FCCservices@programsforparents.org



Please continue to use the WARMLINE when you have questions about a child's health or well-being that need to be answered in a timely manner. We will not be able to address medical issues or issues that need immediate attention in *Childcare Matters*. The Warmline has a trained staff that can address these issues.



Providing you with practical, accurate information on health and behavior issues and regulatory information relating to the children in your care.

1-800-713-9006



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