

University of San Diego  
School of Leadership and Education Science  
Autism Institute

*Summer Autism Conference*

*Autism: Work With Me, Not On Me*  
*June 23-24, 2008*

*Session Descriptions\**

*\*All sessions are subject to change*

**General Sessions:**

*Session 1: A New Understanding of Autism*  
*Anne M. Donnellan, Ph.D.*

A major purpose of the Autism Institute is to challenge our present definitions and understanding of autism. For many years most professionals and many parents have described the behavior of individuals with the autism label in terms of social constructs. This has led to much confusion and miss diagnosis. For example, children and adults with autism are described as being "unwilling to respond," without regard to the documented problems people with autism have initiating movement. Likewise, children and adults have been described as mentally retarded, i.e. lacking understanding because they fail to answer on a standardized and timed test. This presentation will update the present "common knowledge" and incorporate sensory and movement differences/disturbances into the conversation with quotes from self-reports and data from recent research.

*Session 2: Sensory and Movement Differences: How do these differences affect a person's participation*  
*Martha R. Leary, MA, CCC-SLP*

People labeled with autism move their bodies in ways that are unfamiliar to most of us. Some people rock, repeatedly touch an object, jump and finger posture while other people come to a standstill in a doorway, sit until cued to move and turn away when someone beckons. Some behaviors may not be intentional, but rather artifacts of the difficulties a person may be having in organizing and regulating sensation and movement. Other behaviors may be subtle signs of the desire for relationship or expressions of meaning. Detailed personal descriptions of movement and sensory differences found in other disabilities have given us some clues as to what it may be like to deal with various symptoms such as compelling impulses, a loss of conscious control, lack of initiation, akinetic moments and unusual ways of being in the world.

***Session 3: Walk Awhile in My Autism***  
***Nan Negri, Ph.D. and Kate McGinnity, M.S***

Home is not where you live, but where they understand you (Morgenstern, 1991). This session is part 1 of 2 that are designed to bring a greater understanding of what it might be like to experience autism. Part 1 will address the rationales behind conducting sensitivity and awareness training with staff, family members, peers and the greater community who will be or are interacting with individuals experiencing autism. Through it participants will be presented with a variety of activities designed to simulate some of the various experiences and challenges of living with autism.

***Session 4: The Mismeasure of Autism: The basis of current autism "advocacy"***  
***Estee Klar-Wolfond***

Estee Klar-Wolfond, a successful art dealer and entrepreneur in Toronto, and mother of a six year old boy named Adam, describes her recent journey in the autism world. When Adam was given the autism label she quickly began to notice how the press as well as well meaning advocates and others "catastrophize" autism. Tragic, devastating and other fear producing words are readily applied and produce fear in families and in our culture. She founded the "Autism Acceptance Project" to promote an alternative view of children and adults with the autism label and to advocate for a more

productive and supportive approach to individuals with autism and their families.

***Session 5: Dynamic Systems Theory and Autism***

***Anne M. Donnellan, Ph.D.***

Research based on a Dynamic Systems approach to development has revolutionized the field of infant development studies. This presentation will describe dynamic systems and how this approach can bring a more coherent understanding to the unusual developmental patterns so often seen in autism, e.g. "splinter skills," "echolalia," and "islands of precocity." Application of this information to the diagnosis and teaching of individuals with autism will be addressed.

***Session 6: Rhythm, Relationship and Communication***

***Martha R. Leary, M.A., CCC-SLP***

Relationship is the basis for all communication. People in a relationship tend to move and speak in ways that are synchronous with each other. This session focuses on the role of rhythm as a key feature in relating and communicating.

***Session 7: Walk Awhile In My Autism***

***Nan Negri, Ph.D. and Kate McGinnity, M.S.***

Part 2 of this presentation and set of experiences will address issues of how to help people help each other respectfully, problems of power in relationship, developing compassion for one another, and celebrating differences of all kinds. Participants will have an opportunity to see how to develop presentations of their own to meet the individual needs of their situations, and to see how, through understanding the experiences of one another, we can develop more meaningful ways of being with one another with supports that work for us all.

***Session 8: Framework for Support***  
***Martha R. Leary, M.A., CCC-SLP***

The assumptions we make about the nature of a people's differences affect our expectations for people, the way we speak with them and the educational and social opportunities we offer to them. Our assumptions directly influence the relationships we form and the support we give to other people. This session offers a simple framework that outlines: some of the essential assumptions behind effective supports; guidelines for collaboration with people using supports; and supports to assist people to learn what they want to learn.

***Session 9: The Autism Hub: Autistic Self-Advocacy and Autism Resources in the Internet Age***  
***Bev Harp, Camille Clark, Steve Dionne, James, Estee Klar-Wolfond***

The Autism Hub is comprised of over 75 bloggers, many of whom are autistic individuals. Join 5 Autism Hub bloggers for a comprehensive, multimedia look at numerous dynamic issues affecting the autism community today.

***Session 10: Work With Me, Not On Me: A Discussion***  
***All Presenters, Individuals with Autism, and Family Members***

This session provides an opportunity for participants to address issues from their experience that relate to the overall USD Autism Institute theme of collaborative support.

***Breakout Sessions:***

***Blogging and Autism: The role of the internet in today's autism community.***

***Bev Harp, Camille Clark, Steve Dionne, James, Estee Klar-Wolfond***

Major topics to be discussed include autistic self-advocates, autism science/research, and developing a positive approach to parenting and education.

***Explorations In Using Rhythm As An Accommodation***  
***Martha R. Leary, MA, CCC-SLP***

The word '*accommodations*' describes supports that temporarily assist a person with neurological differences to communicate, participate and regulate their behaviour. This session will include a short presentation of aspects of rhythm as an accommodation and a discussion with participants.

***Yoga for Fun...Learning...and Regulation for Children***  
***Nan Negri, Ph.D. and Kate McGinnity, M.S.***

This workshop explores the use of yoga as a way to facilitate neural-integration in children; as a way to improve strength, body awareness and coordination; as a way to improve children's communication and social skills; as a way to promote inclusion; as a way to support friendship and relationship development; as a way to address educational standards and benchmarks in new and exciting ways; as a way to increase focus; as a way to have fun; and more! See how to run an entire yoga class and how to use individual or groupings of poses to achieve specific learning, being and performance benefits for all students. It's a fun and VERY interactive breakout. Wear comfortable clothes☺.

## ***Yoga for Fun...Learning...and Regulation for Adolescents and Adults***

***Nan Negri, Ph.D. and Kate McGinnity, M.S.***

This workshop explores the use of yoga as a way to facilitate neural-integration in adolescents and adults; as a way to improve strength, body awareness and coordination; as a way to enhance communication; as a way to support friendship and relationship development; as a way to increase focus; as a way to reduce stress and anxiety; as a way to have fun; and more! See how to help adults incorporate the benefits of yoga to help attain a healthier lifestyle. It's a fun and VERY interactive breakout. Wear comfortable clothes☺.

## ***IMPROV Your Communication***

***Darlene Hanson, MA, CCC and JD Walsh***

This session promises to make learning and communicating fun! We have taken some of the basic principles of IMPROV and are applying them to how you can be a different kind of communication partner. You will see you can enhance the quality and ability to have a real conversation with the individual with autism.

## ***Building Supportive Relationships***

***Jodi Robledo, Ph.D.***

Recent research which focused on the experiences and perspectives of academically successful individuals with autism and their supporters indicates that effective support is given and received within trusting and unified relationships. This session will present critical data gathered from both participants with autism and those whom they identified as supportive. Additionally, this session will focus on how these findings can be taken directly into practice.