

Accepting the Spectrum

Celebrating Autism Awareness Month at Collaborative

April 2025 Newsletter

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ABA SERVICES, LLC

APRIL IS NATIONAL

AUTISM

AWARENESS MONTH



April marks Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month - a time to honor diversity by reflecting, celebrating, and amplifying the voices of the autism community.

At Collaborative ABA Services, LLC, this month holds deep significance as we continue our mission to provide compassionate and individualized support and care to those with autism and their families.

Read more to understand why this month matters, how to foster awareness and acceptance year-round, and how to keep the momentum going to create a more inclusive world for our kiddos.



Why is Autism Awareness and Acceptance important?

Awareness helps people understand autism by educating the public on what autism is and isn't. Awareness is just the first step, as acceptance means embracing neurodiversity, leading to more inclusive schools, workplaces, and communities. Acceptance, furthermore, encourages others to adapt to environments rather than expecting autistic individuals to mask or change who they are.

Moreover, autism awareness and acceptance helps reduce stigmas that autism needs to be "fixed" to offering individuals with autism respect and support. When individuals with autism feel understood and accepted, they are more likely to develop self-esteem, build meaningful social connections, and access appropriate and equalized opportunities.

How do we celebrate autism here at Collaborative ABA Services, LLC?

Here at Collaborative, we celebrate and value neurodiversity and want to foster a culture of inclusion for our staff and families. We believe each individual brings special contributions to our world and have the right to access opportunities at an equal rate as other people.

How can we show autism awareness and acceptance every month?

Autism awareness and acceptance does not need to be confined to one month. By talking openly about autism, respecting the voices of the autistic community, and promoting inclusive education, we can ensure the conversation is continuing year-round. We can also continue to respect routines, sensory needs, and communication preferences as we teach our little ones to navigate the world.

Agency News

Collaborative ABA Services, LLC is on social media! Follow us online for resources, more agency news, and details about upcoming events! Please click these live links to access each of our pages.

YouTube

<https://youtube.com/@collaborativeabaservices?si=Nj9dg5HK4INY90gx>

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/Collaborativeabaservices/>

Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/collaborativeabaservices/>

LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/collaborative-aba-services-llc/>

TikTok

www.tiktok.com/@collaborativeaba

Website

www.collaborativeabaservices.com



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Lisa's Coaching Center

A couple of years ago, Ben and I spent several months living in a hotel in Rhode Island while he attended a partial hospitalization program for OCD.

It was a Hail Mary—a desperate attempt to help him manage the compulsions that had taken over his life.

Except for his daily program, Ben brought a comfort item everywhere—an old lady puppet named Grandma.

Grandma was more than just a puppet; she was Ben's way of coping.

He had created a hilarious, crusty, and inappropriate personality for her.

Grandma had a lot of "back in my day" opinions, especially about therapy. It was all good-natured fun and a great distraction from his anxiety.

So, Grandma came to Rhode Island with us.

Ben took her everywhere—the pool, the gym, and sometimes, just for laughs, he'd pull up a barstool for her at the hotel restaurant.

A 15-year-old boy walking around with a puppet is something you just about NEVER see. So people looked.

And even though I've always told Ben it's okay to be different, part of me didn't want him to stand out like this.

I told myself it was because I wanted to protect him—from ridicule, rejection, and feeling like an outsider.

But the truth is, his severe OCD had already set him apart.

And the real truth? I wanted to protect myself, too.

Why We Fear Judgement

There's a deep, primal part of us that fears being cast out of the group. Our brains are wired for belonging because, from an evolutionary standpoint, isolation meant danger. When our child stands out, it triggers something raw inside us. It's not just about their safety or well-being. It's about our own fears.

We fear the stares, the whispers, and those awkward moments when we can feel someone else's discomfort settling into our own bodies like an unwelcome weight.

We fear being judged as parents—too permissive, too naïve, too indulgent.

And more than that, we fear what happens when the world doesn't accept our child.

What if they're bullied?

What if they never find their people?

What if the world refuses to see them for who they truly are?

It's not just about our child fitting in. It's about wanting to soften the sharp edges of the world so they don't get cut.

But here's the real dilemma—does protecting them from judgment come at the cost of teaching them to hide who they really are?

Do We Encourage Authenticity or Teach Them to Blend In?

There's a tension we all feel.

We tell our kids to be themselves, but we also warn them about being "too much." We want them to feel safe in their identity, but we also know the world isn't safe for everyone. We don't want them to be ashamed of who they are, but we also don't want them to be hurt.

So, where do we draw the line?

When I saw the looks people gave Ben and his puppet, my instinct was to shut it down.

But if I had told him to leave Grandma behind, what message would I have sent?

That being himself is only okay when it doesn't make others uncomfortable?

That his comfort item is something he should be ashamed of?

That I am uncomfortable with who he is?

I refuse to teach him that.

Instead, I stood next to him, puppet and all, feeling my own discomfort but refusing to make it his burden.

Letting Our Kids Take Up Space

There is no perfect answer to this dilemma. We will always feel the pull between wanting our children to embrace who they are and wanting to shield them from the world's judgment.

But here's what I've learned: Our job is not to erase that tension. Our job is to sit with it and still let our kids take up space.

That means:

Letting them speak their truth, even when it makes others uncomfortable.

Supporting their unique interests, even when they seem "too young" or "too different."

Allowing them to stim, dress how they want, or carry what brings them comfort—without making them feel like they need to hide.

Because when we shrink them to make the world comfortable, we teach them to hide who they are and believe that being themselves is somehow wrong. And that's a lesson far more damaging than judgment itself.

What To Do When You Feel This Tension

When you feel that pull between letting your child be themselves and wanting to protect them from judgment, here's what you can do:

Pause and Acknowledge Your Feelings - Notice when the tension rises. Maybe it's when your child speaks bluntly, carries their comfort item everywhere, or stims in public. Instead of pushing away your discomfort, acknowledge it. Remind yourself: It's okay to feel this.

Take a Deep Breath

Ground yourself with a deep, steady breath. Let it fill your body with calm and clarity. This simple act can be enough to ease the urge to control or hide your child's behavior.

Check Your Thoughts

Ask yourself:

Am I trying to protect my child, or am I trying to protect myself from discomfort?

What message will I send if I try to change or hide who my child is?

What do I want my child to believe about themselves when they look back on this moment?

Model Acceptance

Show your child that it's okay to be who they are, without apology. When you choose to let them be themselves, even when it feels hard, you're teaching them to do the same.

Remind Yourself of the Bigger Picture

Each time you let your child take up space, you're making the world a little more accepting—for them and for others like them. You are the first example of what true autism acceptance looks like.



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