

Issue 11

# Exceptional Needs TODAY

**ADRIAN WOOD:**  
WHAT HAPPENED  
WHEN WE SAID  
GOODBYE TO THE  
IPAD

WHAT IS "GOOD"  
THERAPY?

DOES AUTISM  
"CANCEL CULTURE"  
EXIST?

HOW TO TALK WITH  
PEOPLE SO THEY  
"CLICK" WITH YOU

## PROMOTING PEACE



Parenting Life  
After Your Child  
Has Left the  
Nest



Preparing  
School for  
Your Blind  
Child

UNDERSTANDING  
MASKING



# Hats Off to Our Exceptional Contributors and Book Authors

We want to thank our remarkable contributors who, in concert with our supporters, have helped shape our publication into an award-winning magazine.

We are honored by our alliances with leaders in the exceptional needs community and have plans to grow our reach AND our team in 2023. As many of you know, Exceptional Needs Today received the Gold Award from the prestigious Mom's Choice Awards honoring excellence in 2021. We dedicate this recognition to everyone who shared their voices with us.

Please help us congratulate the following people selected for this special recognition.



## Top Psychologist

Rose Adams, OTD,  
OTR/L

Rose Adams, OTD, OTR/L, is an occupational therapy practitioner with a clinical focus in pediatrics. She works with children and families of children on the autism spectrum and other neurodiverse needs. Dr. Adams has worked in schools, private practice settings, and community-based programs. She is the executive director at Changing Lives Occupational Therapy, P.C., and currently works at a community-based preschool in New York. Dr. Adams is a graduate of Boston University's Post Professional Occupational Therapy Doctorate (PP-OTD) program. Her doctoral project focused on using song-based interventions to support young children with autism and related disabilities so they could participate in school-based occupations.



## Top Parenting Advice Writer

JC Ellinger

JC Ellinger brings life stories and experiences as an autism mom to publications such as *Autism Parenting Magazine* and *Exceptional Needs Today*. She is currently working on her first children's book geared at bringing relatability and support to other ASD children, just like her amazing son. She carries an MBA from Regis University and a B.A. in Communications from CSU Long Beach. Now, she is returning to graduate school to add an M.A. in English to her resume and spread her love for writing to young minds.



## Top Education Writer

Toby Tomlinson Baker,  
PhD

Toby Tomlinson Baker earned her PhD at Pepperdine University in Leadership and Global Policy. She is a lecturer at California State University—Los Angeles (CSULA), and she teaches special education with the Los Angeles Unified School District. Dr. Baker was awarded the Harrison Sylvester Award for her research by the Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) and has been CHADD's 2018 Educator of the Year.

Website: <https://tobytomlinsonbaker.net/>

## Top Rights Advocate

Guy Stephens

Guy Stephens lives in Southern Maryland with his wife and two amazing children. He started the Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint to raise awareness about the use of restraint and seclusion in classrooms across our nation. He has been meeting with local, state, and federal lawmakers to support legislation to ban seclusion and reduce the use of restraint in schools across the nation. Guy is the Executive Director of the Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint.

Website: <https://endseclusion.org>



## Top Child Safety Advocate

Nicole Moehring

Nicole Moehring's daughter and son, who has Fragile X Syndrome and autism, were both victims of sexual abuse. As a mother suffering through this unbelievable nightmare, Nicole witnessed extreme differences in the justice system of how her daughter was believed and treated well when her son was not. She also quickly recognized the distinct differences in recovery, trying to find support and resources. Nicole and her daughter Maci founded Voices of Change 2018 (VOC18), a nonprofit organization, to begin making much-needed change for children with disabilities and their families. By sharing their lived experiences and through collaborations with other individuals, mental health professionals, law enforcement, and organizations, they are building a foundation of advocacy, abuse awareness, resources, and supports for children with disabilities.

Website: <https://www.voicesofchange2018.org/>



## Top Exceptional Needs Writer

Melissa Dean, PhD

Melissa Dean is a homeschool mom to eight children who range from ages nine to twenty-six. Her youngest three children have exceptional needs. She has a PhD in Special Education and is an Adjunct Professor of Education at Regent University. She is passionate about helping children with special needs maximize their potential. She lives in Chesapeake, VA, with five of her children, two dogs, a beta fish, and a bearded dragon. Melissa loves books, plants, complicated coffee drinks, enjoys playing strategy games, and blogs occasionally at [crosseyedliving.wordpress.com](http://crosseyedliving.wordpress.com).





### Top Sensory Solutions Writer

Laura A. Ryan, OT,  
OTR, OTD

Laura Ryan is an occupational therapist who grew up on a large horse farm in Massachusetts. She has been practicing for 30-plus years and has been using hippotherapy as a treatment tool since 2001. She enjoys seeing the happiness and progress each person has achieved through the therapeutic impact of the horse. Laura has also developed a program for breast cancer rehabilitation using therapeutic input from the horse.



### Top Parental Support Writer

Diana Romeo

Diana Romeo is a proud, full-time, stay-at-home mother of two children. For 19 years, she has been on the front line of mothering a very sweet boy who falls on the moderate-to-severe side of the autism spectrum. She is also a mother to a sweet and drama-filled 17-year-old daughter. She recently published her first book, *From an Autism Mom with Love*. In addition, she has published articles describing her family's adventures in autism in *Autism Parenting Magazine* and *Exceptional Parent Magazine*. She has a degree in business management and has worked in human resources.



### Top Advocate

Richard Schreiber  
PMP, CSM, CSPO

Richard Schreiber's deepest passions as the father of an autistic daughter pushed him to found the NYC Autism Community Group in Manhattan to help parents with children on the spectrum navigate their day-to-day challenges. His passion is to bring tech, innovation, and career opportunities to families with autistic kids and adults to better themselves so they can live the lives they deserve. They hosted several events in 2022, including the Virtual Autism Support and Innovation Summit and their first NYC Autism Tech, Innovation, and Careers Expo. Richard cofounded the Ubuntu Game (Games 2 Unite, LLC), creating an experiential multi-media board game to teach teens about diversity and inclusion through conversations, role play, and activities. Their goal is to reverse racism, bigotry, bullying, and stereotyping in the world. He welcomes everyone to join them on their journey!

Website: [www.ras-consulting.com](http://www.ras-consulting.com)

### Top Parenting Solutions Writer

Andrea Pollack

After practicing law for 19 years, Andrea Pollack left that career to homeschool her autistic son when she could not find a school in which he could thrive. After nearly eight years of homeschooling, her son returned to school. Instead of returning to a law career, Andrea wanted to share her knowledge and experience with other parents. She pursued further education and earned a Master of Science in Education (MSEd) to maximize her impact in supporting parents. She started Autism Parent Solutions to educate, support, and empower parents with parent coaching to reclaim the joy of parenting as they help their autistic children reach their highest potential.

Website: <https://autismparentsolutions.com/>



### Top Family Guidance Writer

Deanna Picon

Deanna Picon is the founder of Your Autism Coach, LLC, which provides comprehensive support programs and seminars for parents of special needs children. Her personal mission is to empower parents as they advocate for their children while balancing productive work and family lives. As the parent of a nonverbal young man with autism, Deanna understands the impact of autism on a family. She knows first-hand how heartbreaking a diagnosis of autism can be for parents and the personal struggles that often follow. But, through her own journey with autism, Deanna also recognizes the special joys, rewarding experiences, and unique life gifts which can result from raising a child with special needs. Deanna's articles have appeared in *Exceptional Needs Today* magazine, *Autism Parenting Magazine*, *Exceptional Parent Magazine*, and *Parenting Special Needs Magazine*. Her academic credits include a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Broadcast Journalism from Syracuse University.

Website: [www.yourautismcoach.com](http://www.yourautismcoach.com)





## Top Parenting Coach

Beatrice (Bea) Moise, MS, BCCS

Beatrice (Bea) Moise, MS, BCCS, is a Board-Certified Cognitive Specialist, parenting coach, national speaker, and author of *Our Neurodivergent Journey*. Her *U.N.I.Q.U.E. Parenting* channel on YouTube is dedicated to educating individuals on neurodiversity.

Website: <https://www.achild-likemine.com/>



## Top Psychologist

Patrick LaCount, PhD

Patrick LaCount, PhD, is the director of Practical Psychological Services in Fort Collins, Colorado, and specializes in the assessment and treatment of ADHD. Dr. LaCount completed his doctorate in clinical psychology at the University of Wyoming, predoctoral residency at Duke University Medical Center,

and postdoctoral fellowship at Seattle Children's Hospital. In addition to providing psychological services, Dr. LaCount is passionate about disseminating the latest science to the ADHD community and is a research consultant for the "How to ADHD" YouTube channel.

Website: <https://PracticalPsychServices.com>



## Top Board-Certified Behavior Analyst

Brandon Clark, PsyD, BCBA

Brandon Clark, PsyD, BCBA, is a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst at Springbrook Autism Behavioral Health in Travelers Rest, South Carolina. He is completing his doctorate degree in psychology.

Brandon began his career in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis in 2010. Since then, he has worked in treatment schools, private settings, crisis intervention settings, day program facilities, and he has owned a private practice for several years. Brandon is the author of the book, *The Mis-fits; Told by a Behavior Analyst*, detailing a collection of experiences from the treatment school where he first started. Currently, he is a Human Rights Committee member, Ethics Committee Chair for South Carolina Association for Behavior Analysis (SC ABA), and serves as a board member for Lowcountry Autism Foundation

Website: <https://springbrookbehavioral.com/>

## Top Autism Advocate

Ewa Omahen, PhD

Ewa Omahen, PhD, is an Oakland County, Michigan resident and the mother of her young adult son, Patrick, who is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Patrick attends a post-secondary program in Rochester Community Schools. Ewa works as a psychologist for Walled Lake Consolidated Schools. She is a passionate advocate for her son and all individuals with disabilities. Patrick and the students she works with continue to be her greatest joy and inspiration.



Website: <https://www.ewamom.com/>

## Top Special Education Specialist

Karen Kaplan

Karen Kaplan is a native San Franciscan. She completed her bachelor's and master's degrees at Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, in speech pathology and audiology. She minored in Special Education and obtained her speech therapist and special education credentials in California. Karen worked as a speech therapist for both public and private schools for 20 years before opening her own residential and education program for students with autism spectrum disorders. She worked in credential programs at Sacramento State University as well as UC Davis and spent 20 additional years directing private schools for those with autism and similar learning challenges. Karan founded a small nonprofit, Offerings, which travels globally helping other cultures understand those with developmental challenges. For seven years, she founded and facilitated an autism lecture series and resource fair in Northern California. Karen still facilitates an Autism Awesomeness event yearly, showcasing the strengths and talents of those who live on the spectrum. She is currently consulting, helping families, schools, and centers for children, teens, and adults. Karen authored *Reach Me Teach Me: A Public School Program for the Autistic Child; A Handbook for Teachers and Administrators* in the early 70s and published her second book, *On the Yellow Brick Road: My Search for Home and Hope for the Child with Autism*, in 2017. Her third book, *Typewriting to Heaven... and Back: Conversations with My Dad on Death, Afterlife and Living*, is not about autism but about having important conversations with those we love.



Website: [www.karenkaplanasd.com](http://www.karenkaplanasd.com)



### Top IEP Consultant

Markeisha Hall, MA,  
CATP

Markeisha Hall, MA, CATP, is an IEP Coach, Certified Autism Travel Professional, Parent Empowerment Partner, and CEO of Hallegacy, LLC. She also is married to her college sweetheart and has four beautiful children. After 11 dedicated years of facilitating over two dozen IEP meetings annually as a member of the Early Childhood Assessment Team, Markeisha knew she needed to be a Special Education Teacher and advocate to help parents be more impactful members at the table. In 2018, Markeisha became more intimate with this reality when her family adopted their youngest son. During the adoption process, he was diagnosed with autism. Markeisha is now bringing her IEP process mastery and special education expertise into consulting services to help parents take the lead on their students' educational roadmap, create more inclusive educational and recreational experiences, and shift from awareness to empowered action.

Websites: <https://markeisha-hall-empowerment-center.teachable.com/>, <https://www.markeishahall.com/podcasts/markeisha-hall-s-podcast>, <https://ihelpmoms.com/consultants/consultant/566/markeisha-hall>

### Top Young Voice

Coral Levkovitz

Coral Levkovitz is a 23-year-old future physician. She graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a bachelor's degree in biology. In addition, Coral is a second-degree Black Belt in Taekwondo and a licensed EMT. She currently works as a group fitness instructor for cancer survivors and is pursuing medical school. She hopes her journey with ADHD will inspire others to become the best version of themselves and to pursue their dreams.



### Top Exceptional Needs Podcast

Tammy Flynn

Tammy Flynn is the creator of the On-Air Advocate: an online platform that provides education, advocacy, and supportive services for special needs parents, caregivers, and those with disabilities and complex medical conditions. She pulls from her experiences over the last two decades of working in the community as a mother, caregiver and advocate to provide the resources she found missing.

Website: <https://www.onairadvocate.com/>

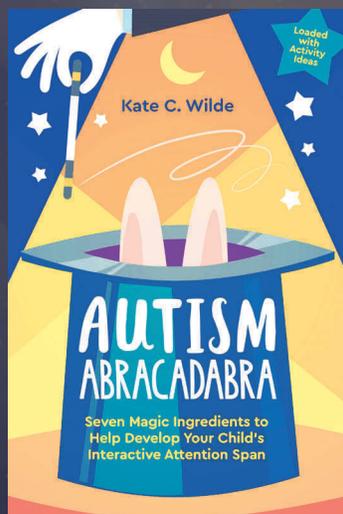


# 2022 Book Awards

## Autism Abracadabra: Seven Magic Ingredients to Help Develop Your Child's Interactive Attention Span

By Kate C. Wilde

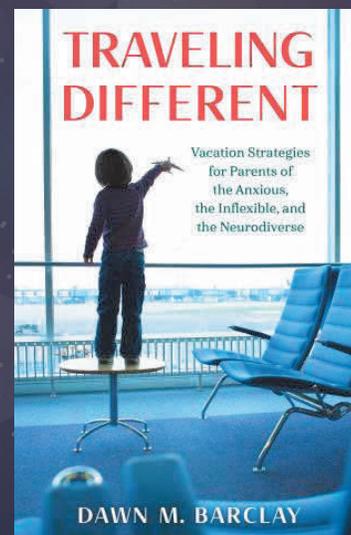
<https://www.amazon.com/Autism-Abracadabra-Ingredients-Interactive-Attention/dp/178775751X>



## Traveling Different: Vacation Strategies for Parents of the Anxious, the Inflexible, and the Neurodiverse

Dawn M. Barclay

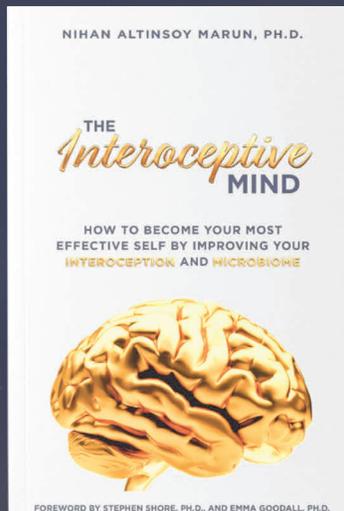
<https://www.amazon.com/Traveling-Different-Strategies-Inflexible-Neurodiverse/dp/1538168669>



## The Interoceptive Mind: How to Become Your Most Effective Self by Improving Your Interoception and Microbiome

Nihan Altinsoy Marun, PhD, DVM

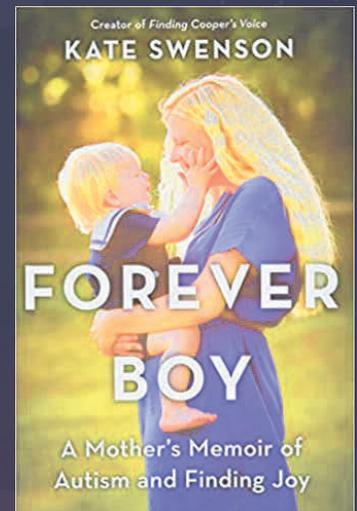
<https://www.amazon.com/Interoceptive-Mind-Effective-Interoception-Microbiome-ebook/dp/B0B5LF5C15>



## Forever Boy: A Mother's Memoir of Autism and Finding Joy

Kate Swenson

<https://www.amazon.com/Forever-Boy-Mothers-Memoir-Finding/dp/0778311996>



Amy KD Tobik is the editor-in-chief of *Exceptional Needs Today* magazine. She coordinates and directs an impressive group of doctors, therapists, and writers to provide expert guidance and support for special needs families. A graduate of Sweet Briar College in VA, Amy's experience includes more than 30 years of writing/editing monthly magazines, newspapers, technical documents/manuals, books, and websites. Her special interests include advocating for children, special needs families, and education. Amy is the CEO of Lone Heron Publishing, LLC.

Website: [exceptionalneedstoday.com](http://exceptionalneedstoday.com)

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