



Development is CHILD'S PLAY!

DICP Digest

A monthly newsletter for clients and colleagues of Development is CHILD'S PLAY!



Happy December! This month we thought it would be nice to hear from Sena and Sahana about their first year as owners.



I don't know about you, but for us this year has flown by. Some days felt like every second was precious and necessary to accomplish the day's tasks while others crept by like the slowness of the evening commute, but overall the weeks and months have sped by like a bullet train. And with the passage of time, we have enjoyed watching all of our clients develop new skills and strategies to make life easier, more fun and more fulfilling. From running, to jumping, to tying shoelaces, trying new foods, calming down from tantrums, making choices, writing, climbing, playing games and riding bikes, we delight in the growth and pride that comes with each client's accomplishments.



We started this year with the retirement of Teri Wiss, after 25 years of owning and running Development is Child's Play!, and Sena and Sahana taking over ownership. We did what any new owners would do and took to putting our own mark on the clinic with some remodeling, painting, reorganizing and added

some new furniture in the last week of 2016. We felt like these little changes, along with finally accepting credit card payments, were some much needed modernization for our clinic. We also hosted a retirement party for both Teri and our colleague Melanee Murphree who had supported Teri in running the clinic for the past decade. And as January came to a close, we hosted our very first parent/caregiver appreciation week with snacks, conversation and raffle prizes. For us as new owners, making it to the end of our first month was like completing a marathon. We were tired but thrilled with what we had been able to accomplish thus far.

In March we hosted a professional open house and got to discuss the latest research and strategies in the special needs community, as well as, catch up socially with our colleagues in medicine, speech therapy, vision therapy, psychology, physical therapy and educational assistance. It's always fun to hear about what is happening in related fields of practice and know who in the area is best for referrals for our clients.

Spring moved into summer and summer into fall. We heard about fun vacations that our clients and their families went on, as well as, some that our individual staff members took. The long, warm summer days beckoned us to try more outdoor play with some of our clients, focusing on bike and scooter riding, ball games, running and water balloon activities. We had the pleasure of promoting one of our aides, NhuMai Do, to the role of office manager. She claimed this position with enthusiasm and has been an integral part of making sure our clinic runs smoothly and efficiently. We also welcomed our current fieldwork student, Diana Nguy, in September for a three-month internship and have benefitted from sharing our knowledge with her and from the enthusiasm and new ideas that come with having an occupational therapy intern.

In October we hired two new therapists; Laurie Ferrell and Jaime Yoshino. With their arrival we have enjoyed opening the clinic to weekend therapy sessions and adding an additional Sensory Gym session. Laurie and Jaime come to us with a wealth of knowledge in diverse areas including school based therapy, rehabilitation and feeding therapy. They are energetic, enthusiastic and passionate about working with children. We are fortunate to have them on our team. We closed October with the fun and silliness that comes with celebrating Halloween. We got to decorate the clinic with black and orange garlands and lights and the children enjoyed carving pumpkins and searching for treasures in the "witches hair," (aka cooked and colored spaghetti). The staff joined the children in donning costumes to get into the spirit of the season.

And here we are in the beginning of December coordinating living in the moment to enjoy the current winter holidays, while simultaneously making plans for 2018 and scratching our heads wondering where 2017 has gone. We cherish all our therapists and staff members who work daily to provide outstanding services to our clients. We also appreciate the clients and families with whom we work. We will continue to make small changes around the clinic in order to enhance your experience at Development is CHILD'S PLAY!. We appreciate any constructive comments you feel could make the clinic better

and we take your concerns very seriously. We look forward to tackling more challenges and growth opportunities in the new year, for us, for you and for your children!

Happy Holidays!!
Sahana and Sena



Saturday, December 23: Sensory Gym TBD

Please contact the office for December sensory gym schedule

Monday, December 25: Christmas

DICP is closed

Tuesday, December 26 - Friday, December 29

Appointments are optional, please talk to your therapist about your plans.

Monday, January 1: New Year's Day

DICP is Closed

Therapist Vacations

If your therapist is out of the office, we still want to see you! Please note the following dates, and we will do our best to make it up or find another therapist who can see your child at or near their scheduled time.

DICP is closed Monday December 25 and Monday, January 1. Please discuss your December plans with your therapist or contact NhuMai in the office.



Meet Laurie Ferrell

This Fall, we welcomed two new therapists, Jaime and Laurie, to Development is Child's Play! This month, please meet Laurie Ferrell. Laurie has years of OT experience, and we are lucky to have her on the team!

Education: Laurie attended Pacific Union College where she completed her BS in Occupational Therapy. She then received an MA in OT at USC. Laurie has been a practicing therapist for 20 years, and has worked in pediatric settings

including clinics, school districts, counties, at regional center, and privately for families. Laurie is SIPT certified.

Laurie has two sweet rescue dogs (siblings, pictured above), and enjoys adventuring near her home in the Santa Cruz and Monterey Bay Areas. She also enjoys board games with friends, biking, swimming, walking her dogs near the ocean, and face-timing with her niece and nephew.

Laurie says:

"I love working with kids. You can't beat the smile on their face when they work so hard to do something and finally succeed."

Surviving Special Holidays

The holiday season is often filled with twinkling lights, crowded malls and stores, carols blasting through the stores, unique smells, and special time spent with distant loved ones. For many families, this is no big deal – chaotic, but manageable. But for families of children with special sensory needs (especially sensory

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sensitivities), these events may often be met with dread, stress, and major meltdowns.

Here are some tips for helping children with special needs survive the holidays:

1. **PLAN AHEAD.** All the people and events involved in holiday festivities can be overwhelming for kids in general, but this is especially true for kids with autism/sensory difficulties. One of the best things you can do is prep them for what to expect. You can familiarize them with who they will see by going through photos with them online (yay, Facebook) or creating a special photo book (nothing fancy) so they can look through it with you in prep for the big day. If you'll be traveling a long distance, you can prep them for what will be involved with transportation and include that in your social story (standing in line, security checks, special seat belts, cabin pressure, loud railroad noises, etc.). The more you can prep them for what's to come, the better for everyone.

2. **PREP YOUR FAMILY:** If you'll be spending time with family and loved ones who may not be in the loop with your child's needs, you may want to fill them in a bit so they know what to expect and won't be offended if little Christopher cries when Aunt Mary tries to give him a big hug and kiss or sweet Anika won't eat Grandma's homemade pie. This can be a touchy subject for some families, especially if they don't feel comfortable letting others know their young child has a diagnosis yet (such as autism). Only share as much as you are comfortable. All you need to say is that Christopher is more comfortable with high fives than hugs and kisses (which you know is due to tactile sensitivities), or Anika is still learning how to try new foods (which you know is due to oral sensitivities), and leave it at that. But please make sure you communicate something so your sweet family gathering doesn't turn into a day of raised eyebrows and hurt feelings.

3. **ROUTINES.** Many children with autism/sensory challenges have major difficulties when it comes to change, especially changes in routine, diet, or sleep schedule. Their bodies and brains often don't adapt as well, and this may result in over-arousal, disorganized behavior, increased sensory seeking/avoiding behaviors, and/or meltdowns. If your child is one who heavily relies on routines to maintain their sense of organization and emotional regulation, then keep to the schedule. So amidst all the school plays, errands, and travels, try your very best to keep your most critical routines as much the same as possible. If your child follows a special sensory diet, then make sure he or she is engaging in those special vestibular and proprioceptive sensory activities as regularly as possible in order to maintain their level of physical and emotional regulation.

4. **SUPPORT.** Enlist at least one other person or family to be on your "team" during your gathering. This could simply be someone who makes sure the "quiet space" is all ready to go, or it could be an adult or older kid whom your



child trusts and is able to hang out with while you try to eat and socialize. Whatever you do, don't do it alone! Recognize when you are reaching your stress limit. When this happens, talk to your spouse, a relative or a close friend and ask for a break. Even if it's only for an hour it is important to take some time to recharge. If this is not an option, get up 15 minutes earlier to give yourself some quiet time before starting your day.

Enjoy, and Happy Holidays!

Occupational Therapy vs. Sensory Gym

We have been told time and again by the families who regularly come to our weekly sensory gym that they love the chance to work/play with their children at our clinic. The joy and bonding that come with interacting with your own child in a fun and productive way is something our clients' parents and the therapists both delight in. But sometimes the question comes up, "What is the difference between skilled occupational therapy sessions and sensory gym?"

Skilled occupational therapy is provided by a therapist who holds an advanced degree in occupational therapy and has been trained in the administration of testing tools and modalities of treatment. The focus of therapy is to provide challenges for the child that help him/her grow socially, increase independence, advance in motor skill development, and improve with regard to sensory and reflex integration. We work toward helping our clients achieve more mature nervous systems so that they can more easily function in day-to-day life. In order to change the brain and make gains in therapy, children must be pushed outside their comfort zone. Change in the brain happens when there is the right amount of intensity, duration, and frequency of input. The clients must also perform activities that they have not done before, or that are not very familiar in order to learn new skills. Therapists must use their expertise to grade each activity to the "just right challenge" so that it is not so easy that the child loses interest, and not so hard that the child gives up or is repeatedly unsuccessful. We also work from the belief that the play-based activities the child chooses provides the most buy-in from the child and reinforces their intrinsic motivation and enjoyment. Of course this must be tempered with making sure the child is challenging his/herself, and thus the delicate dance of therapy is performed.

Sensory gym is intended to be an opportunity for the parents/caregivers to engage with their child in a way that supports the occupational therapy treatment plan. Equipment can be used as part of the child's daily sensory diet and to promote strength and play skill development. The parent and child can work on bonding and playing together in a comfortable and familiar environment, while also socializing with others. The therapist who is present during sensory gym is there simply to answer questions, maintain safety and provide suggestions for therapy equipment. Sensory gym is not a replacement

imaginative expedition around the world!

This show is best enjoyed by children ages 6 and up. Sensory-sensitive performances are designed to create an experience that can be shared and enjoyed by all. Accommodations for these performances include:

- A reduction in lighting and sound effects that may be considered jarring or startling
- Modification of the house lights during the performance
- Patrons are free to talk or leave your seats during the performance
- Access to resource materials to prepare for your visit
- Extra staff on hand at the theatre
- A judgment-free, no-shush zone

Seating at this performance will be general admission and discounted off the regular full price. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the TheatreWorks Box Office at boxoffice@theatreworks.org or 650.463.1960

<https://theatreworks.org/>

Questions, comments, feedback?

We have really enjoyed creating the DICP digest for our families, friends, and colleagues. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for us we would love to hear from you! Feedback about content, layout, and ideas for future issues would be appreciated. We want to give you information that you find valuable, appropriate, fun, interesting, funny, and pertinent. Please send us a message on the portal, call or stop by the office, or send a message to karendicp@gmail.com.



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