

APRIL 2022

# The SMART Center

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS NEWSLETTER



## THE SMART CENTER

BY JULIA MCMANUS AND ANNA SANDERLIN

The University of Memphis School of Social Work SMART Research, Training and Treatment Center aims to provide evidence-based interventions for school-based mental health programming, increase access for school-based behavioral health programming in underserved areas, provide training on best practices in tele-behavioral health, develop opportunities to research the use of technology in practice, and provide direct services to the states most vulnerable populations.

## HOURS OF OPERATION

We are a 100% tele-behavioral health clinic. We provide remote services to children, youth, and their families/ caregiver in the Mid-South area and across Tennessee. Our current operation hours are Monday-Friday 9:00am-7:00pm and some Saturday's 10:00am-3:00pm.

## MEDIA FOR THE SMART CENTER

Website:

<https://www.memphis.edu/smartcenter/>

Instagram:

@uofm\_thesmartcenter

Twitter:

@uofmsmartcenter

## CONTACT

901.678.1636

[smartcenter@memphis.edu](mailto:smartcenter@memphis.edu)



## THE WARM LINE

CONTACT: 901.678.1636

The SMART Center also hosts a "warm line" for the community that provides support, psychoeducation, and linkage to community services FREE of charge. The "warm line" is not intended for crisis support, but to assist families with identifying resources in the community. The "warm line" is in service Monday-Friday 9:00am-4:00pm CST.



## PODCASTS

### SMART CONNECTIONS

At the SMART Center, our two undergraduate students Julia McManus and Anna Sanderlin, have created two new podcast episodes that are shared on our website. The first was an interview with Dr. Paige Pirkey about her HERO Program that she started and some of her research projects that she has been a part of. We also asked Dr. Pirkey about the impacts that she believes the HERO Program will have and her future plans for the HERO Program.

The next podcast episode discusses Developmental Disabilities, since March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. We discuss what Developmental Disabilities are, how they affect people, and how early intervention can help people with Developmental Disabilities live fulfilling lives. Lastly, we also discuss ways in which Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month can be celebrated and promoted.

Listen to our podcasts on our website for more information at

<https://www.memphis.edu/smartcenter/> and

<https://anchor.fm/susan-elswick>



## SMART CENTER SPOTLIGHT

### DR. ELSWICK AND MEMPHIS SCHOLARS

This past month, Dr. Elswick was chosen to be a part of the National Association of Deans and Directors' Future Leaders Program. This program is designed for individuals who are seeking a leadership position as dean, director, or department chair in the next five years. We are so incredibly proud of Dr. Elswick and her accomplishments! We are also happy to announce our partnership with Memphis Scholars! Memphis Scholars exists to inspire and teach all students so that each and every child has the opportunity to choose, and achieve, their future. **School History:** Memphis Scholars is a two-campus network of public charter schools offering a high-quality education to students from Pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade. Established in 2015, the Memphis Scholars network consists of Memphis Scholars Caldwell-Guthrie which instructs Pre-K through 5th grade in North Memphis, and Memphis Scholars South Campus for Pre-K through 8th grade instruction in south Memphis. Memphis Scholars serves alongside the Achievement School District (ASD).



# WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE SMART CENTER?

## DRIVING THE DREAM TRAINING

United Way of the MidSouth Driving The Dream Network Agency:

Driving The Dream (DTD) envisions a Mid-South in which all people have equitable access to the fundamental resources and support needed to achieve their hopes and dreams. DTD will enhance service providers capacity to achieve this goal by improving communication and coordination of care between the various providers and systems involved (e.g., housing, education, healthcare, etc.). Achieving this objective will require coordination and collaboration between the UWMS and the DTD partners, including the sharing of client information and data. This agreement establishes the terms and conditions under which DTD and a partner agency can acquire and use data from the other party.

The attendees from the SMART Center joined an informational session for organizations, agencies, individuals and the community to learn more about DTD's coordinated system of care that provides equitable access to available resources and support for families and individuals in the Mid-South.

### ***Impact Summit: Building Personal and Community Resilience***

This summit is being hosted on April 7, 2022 in the University of Memphis University Center from 8:00 AM - 3 PM. This is a free summit about the role that trauma plays in our lives, and it will allow for an insight into the skills required for building resilience. This summit is for nay practitioners in the fields of social work, education, counseling, public health, and any other allied professionals. The keynote speaker is Reagan Williams, MD. There are also vendor opportunities available at this event.

To join this event, go to the link below to register!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/iimpact-summit-building-personal-and-community-resilience-tickets-291038232187>



The poster features the University of Memphis logo and the text: **iIMPACT Summit: Building Personal and Community Resilience**, April 7, 2022, 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., University Center, University of Memphis. It includes a **REGISTER NOW!** link and details about the summit, including the keynote speaker, Regan Williams, MD, Medical Director of Trauma Services at LeBonheur Children's Hospital. The poster also lists that the cost is free and participants will receive up to four (4) Continuing Education Hours. It is presented by the University of Memphis iIMPACT (Institute for Interdisciplinary Memphis Partnerships to Advance Community Transformation for Children) and provides contact information for Dr. Elena Delavega at [mdlavega@memphis.edu](mailto:mdlavega@memphis.edu).

## SMART CENTER CLINICIAN HIGHLIGHTS

### CHRISTY PETERSON, SMART CENTER COORDINATOR



For more than 10 years, Christy served as a Project Coordinator for the University of Memphis where she oversaw training and data programs related to administering national evaluation studies and projects. Those duties involve intervention research, translating basic science, and other forms of data into applied skills and points of intervention. She also filled the role of Associate Director for the Center for the Advancement of Youth Development. In this role she was responsible for creating, organizing, and maintaining datasets, conducting statistical analyses, assisting with development of study designs for evaluation components of projects. She is certified in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), Bounce Back, and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS). She will now spearhead the growth and development of the SMART Center at the University of Memphis.

# Stress Awareness Month

**Stress Awareness Month has been recognized every April since 1992, but this year it is particularly important.**

Learning to cope with our stress and finding healthy ways to deal with these situations can go a long way in living a healthy and positive life. We all experience stress, but we all experience it in different ways. Because of this, there is no single definition for stress, but the most common explanation is a physical, mental or emotional strain or tension. Stress is a reaction to a situation where a person feels anxious or threatened. Learning healthy ways to cope and getting the proper care and support can help reduce stressful feelings and symptoms.



## Common Reactions to Stressful Events:

- Disbelief, shock and numbness
- Feeling sad, frustrated and helpless
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Headaches, back pains, and stomach problems
- Smoking or the use of alcohol and drugs

## Long-term Effects

Long-term stress can prove to be more than just a mental issue. From headaches to stomach disorders and depression, even very serious issues like stroke and heart disease can come as a result of stress. When you are placed in a stressful situation, specific stress hormones rush into your bloodstream leading to an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, and glucose levels. This is helpful in an emergency situation, but having this "rush" for extended periods of time can be dangerous.

## Toxic Stress and its Connection to ACEs

Toxic Stress is a phenomenon that occurs when the body is exposed to lasting and serious stress, without enough support from a caregiver. When a child doesn't get the help they need, their body can't turn off the stress response normally. This lasting stress can harm a child's body and can cause lifelong health problems. Toxic stress from ACEs, or adverse childhood experiences, can change brain development and affect such things as attention, decision-making, learning, and response to stress.

**To learn more about ACEs and Toxic Stress, listen to the SMART Connections Podcast episode on the topic on our website.**

<https://www.memphis.edu/smartcenter/>  
<https://anchor.fm/susan-elswick>

## Basic Coping Mechanisms for Lowering Your Stress Levels

- Recognize when you don't have control and let it go.
- Avoid getting anxious about situations that you cannot change.
- Take care of yourself - eat healthy, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and give yourself a break if you feel stressed.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol. These can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.
- Recognize when you need more help, know when to talk to a counselor, psychologist, or social worker if things continue in a negative way.
- Start to recognize when you need to talk to others about your stress. Being able to talk about the issues is the first way to start learning how to deal with those issues.

# Autism Acceptance Month

## What is Autism

- Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. According to the Centers for Disease Control, autism affects an estimated 1 in 44 children in the United States today.
- We know that there is not one autism but many subtypes, most influenced by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some people with ASD may require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support and, in some cases, live entirely independently.
- Several factors may influence the development of autism, and it is often accompanied by sensory sensitivities and medical issues such as gastrointestinal (GI) disorders, seizures or sleep disorders, as well as mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression and attention issues.
- Signs of autism usually appear by age 2 or 3. Some associated development delays can appear even earlier, and often, it can be diagnosed as early as 18 months. Research shows that early intervention leads to positive outcomes later in life for people with autism.



## Why Autism Acceptance Month Is Important

- It is the fastest-growing developmental disorder
- There are approximately 70 million recognized cases of autism worldwide. Besides genetic mutation, environmental triggers such as exposure to heavy metals, antibiotics, chemicals, drugs, and even extensive TV viewing can cause autism.
- The increasing occurrences of autism in the United States is a telltale sign that it is high time the general public is factually educated on the disorder to inspire change and support. This month reminds us to be empathetic, warm, and welcoming to autistic individuals and families around us.
- If we can screen autism at an early age by being aware of its signs and symptoms, we can improve quality of lives such as by underlying brain development, behavior therapy, and occupational therapy.

## How To Observe Autism Acceptance Month

- Find out and participate in local groups activities
- There are many events lined by local autism awareness organizations in your city. Reach out to one of the local groups, get a timetable of the events planned for the month, and make sure you bring along your children to participate. These can range from fundraisers to Awareness Walks while enjoying the spring weather.
- Read autism books to your children
- The key mission of Autism Acceptance Month is to educate the new generation in fostering acceptance and kindness towards the autistic community. "Ella Autie," a story of a 4th grader battling society with autism is a great way to educate your kids during this month and start important conversations.
- Donate to Autism Acceptance Organizations
- In the light of the pandemic, the autism community continues to face the worsts of challenges. Make it a goal to donate as much as you can to your local Autism Acceptance Organizations or the Autism Society of America to further their efforts, and encourage their unrelenting support for the community.



## ICHC Resources for Autism

Behavioral, Early intervention, and Autism Therapy Services (B. E. A. T. S)  
More information coming soon!

UofM Autism Treatment, Training and Research Clinic  
Dr. Thouraya Al-Nasser

Visiting Clinical Assistant Professor, Applied Behavior Analysis, ICL; Director of UofM Autism Treatment, Training and Research Clinic (Autism clinic on campus)  
tnasser@memphis.edu



## IMPORTANT APRIL DATES NATIONWIDE AND IN THE MID-SOUTH

MONTH: NATIONAL AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH  
STRESS AWARENESS MONTH  
SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH  
ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH  
NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH  
NATIONAL COUNSELING AWARENESS MONTH  
NATIONAL MINORITY HEALTH MONTH

WEEK: NATIONAL FAMILY VOLUNTEER WEEK (APR. 19-25)  
NATIONAL INFERTILITY AWARENESS WEEK (APR. 19-25)

DAY: WORLD AUTISM ACCEPTANCE DAY (APR. 2)  
WORLD HEALTH DAY (APR. 7)  
NATIONAL ALCOHOL SCREENING DAY (APR. 7)  
NATIONAL STRESS AWARENESS DAY (APR. 18)



***"Providing Quality Care, Everywhere You Are."***