



## SUMMER LEARNING: IT'S MORE THAN LEARNING IN THE SUMMERTIME!

Once upon a time, kids ran around with summertime visions of pool parties, beach weekends and sleep-away camps with friends. Today's kids have the same visions. But researchers are now wiser to the limitations that education-free summer months can impose upon learners. Today's summertime recommendations to parents include brain-based learning and review activities for students to challenge and invigorate the brain. These activities are just as important as relaxation and fun during summer's steamy months.

The term "Summer Learning" gets a bad rap at times. Its mere mention may receive moans and groans by children and adults alike. The phrase conjures visions of textbooks and worksheet packets at a workstation in dark and gloomy sun-less rooms. In reality, summer -- with a slower pace and longer, less-committed days -- can offer the ideal opportunity for fascinating discovery. In other words: Learning. But an alternative to traditional academic learning, discovery allows learning to be lead by one's own interests rather than a forced upon schedule with pressure-inducing deadlines.

According to the National Center for Summer Learning (NCSL), numerous studies show that summer learning opportunities improve academic outcomes for youth. Early and sustained summer learning opportunities lead to higher graduation rates and better preparation for college. Summer programs also have been shown to influence a child's self-esteem, confidence and motivation. **One of the greatest and most impactful rewards of positive summer learning experiences is replacing a "HAVE TO" approach towards learning with a "WANT TO" commitment by the student.**

Summer learning opportunities are as numerous and vibrant as one's creativity allows. Teenagers who need to work on writing skills can prepare letters to state and federal policymakers or organizations related to areas of special interests. Reading comprehension can be improved by selecting graphic novels, fictional stories and nonfiction publications of special interests that together provide a mixture of enjoyment and reading level challenge. Parents can plan activities related to these books to help lift the words off the page and put a child's newfound knowledge and ideas to use: organize a family project, visit a museum, or volunteer in the community.

**Math skills are exceptionally vulnerable to summer learning loss, according to the NCSL.** About two months of grade level mathematical computation skills are lost over the summer months if not practiced regularly. While math work sheets remediate these skills, summertime offers many additional opportunities: have a child work on the family vacation budget, grocery shopping estimation, or computations for a family construction project. Assign estimations in a student's field of interest: sports, cars, horseracing, crafts. Math can be applied to almost anything -- and when done regularly, can keep math skills sharp.

For high school students making the transition to college, summer months can provide the optimal opportunity to work on skills to increase college success. While "reading, writing and 'rithmetic" skills are important, students attending a college away from home also need to be strong in additional critical areas: self-advocacy, self-assessment, study skills, and team-building. Creating a new support system on campus can be a daunting task for the college freshman who is also busy meeting new friends, becoming familiar with a new learning environment and academic structure, and attempting to temper influences that distract the learning process. For those with a diagnosed learning or behavior disability, the challenges of graduating in four years increase. Researchers recommend outlining needed areas of improvement and providing safe ways to practice these skills before needing to do so independently. Strengthened skills allow a college freshman to start out a collegiate career with more anticipation and confidence than apprehension and uncertainty.

## NCLD's OUR KIDS COUNT! CREATIVITY CONTEST

NCLD is launching a new public engagement campaign called **OUR KIDS COUNT!** to support children with learning disabilities. The goal of this year's art competition is to educate politicians, policymakers, educators, friends and family about learning disabilities and to ensure that they have the help they need to succeed.

Calling creative individuals with learning disabilities: artists, designers, poets, bloggers, etc.  
\$500 each for winning works from each of three categories:

- Children (Ages 4-11)
- Teens (Ages 12-18)
- Adults (Ages 19 and older)

### BE CREATIVE

Posters (scanned/ digital .jpg)  
Streaming Web Videos (.mpg/.avi)  
Anything else you can think of!

Photography (scans/digital .jpg)  
Blogs (text / .doc files)  
*Digital/Electronic Formats only\**

**DEADLINE: April 13, 2009**

Winners must verify their learning disability.

**For More Information, visit:** [www.nclد.org/content/view/1501/456246/](http://www.nclد.org/content/view/1501/456246/)

**E-mail questions and submission(s) to:** [artist@nclد.org](mailto:artist@nclد.org)

## INSPIRATION CORNER

"Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy."

-LEO BUSCA GLIA-

## 2009 ESSAYS FOR AUTISM:

### ***"HOW HAS AUTISM AFFECTED YOUR LIFE?"***

Do you have autism? Do you have a child, sibling, other relatives, or a friend on the autism-spectrum? The Baltimore-Chesapeake Chapter of the Autism Society of America in conjunction with Baltimore County Public Schools is accepting essays, poems, and drawings for an Autism Awareness Contest. Cash prizes!

### CONTEST RULES

1. All essays are limited to 500 words.
2. There are five judging categories:
  - Elementary school      -Family and friends
  - Middle school            -Teachers, school employees, therapists
  - High school
3. Write your essay on only one side of each page.
4. Staple or paperclip a sheet of paper to your essay, poem, or illustration which will include your name, grade, school, home phone number and essay/poem/illustration title.
5. You may only enter once.
6. Your essay, poem, or artwork is **due no later than April 24th.**
7. The BCC-ASA reserves the right to use material for publication. Submissions will not be returned.

Yes it is true that summer learning is a commitment to more in the summer months than responsible-free sun-worshipping days at a beach or pool. But learning in the summer offers wonderful rewards that contribute to lifelong learning. The bottom line is simple: summer learning – and lack thereof – impacts what the fall months will look like for you and your child. **It is an unknown but wise person who once said: “the less motivated the summer, the harder the Fall.”**

## **BRAIN BYTE**



### **DID YOU KNOW?**

#### **Caffeine – Not a Substitute for a Nap to Enhance Memory!**

When cramming for that big test, loading up on coffee, M&Ms, or caffeine pills isn't as much of a student's crutch as once thought. In fact, according to an NIMH-supported study reported in the 2008 November issue of Behavioral Brain Research, **caffeine impaired motor learning and verbal memory** where an afternoon nap benefited three different types of learning areas. Tests conducted by Sara Mednick, Ph.D. and colleagues at the University of California, San Diego showed participants who napped instead of consuming caffeine in the afternoon performed significantly better on tests for repeating physical movements and repeating words. They also outperformed the caffeine-laden group on a texture discrimination task of perceptual learning. Increased levels of caffeine can also result in anxiety, depression or mood swings as it wears off, obstructing one's natural learning process even further. *So while Starbucks offers a wonderful break in the middle of the day, the nap still prevails as the wiser choice for many completing schoolwork or tasks on the job.*

## **PATHFINDERS FOR AUTISM RESOURCE CENTER** **GRAND OPENING – 303 INTERNATIONAL CIRCLE, SUITE 110, HUNT VALLEY**

**The new center offers three different areas of community support:**

- 1) On-site resources, such as computer programs, sensory materials, etc,
- 2) A lending library: curricula, books, diet guides and DVDs
- 3) A resource exchange – gently-used donations available to be taken home by another family.

**Center Hours:** Monday – Friday, 10 am – 3pm.

Should you wish to discuss concerns or need assistance from staff, or have access to the center outside regular hours, contact the office to schedule an appointment.

**For more information:** 866.806.8400 or [www.pathfindersforautism.org](http://www.pathfindersforautism.org).

## **2009 NAMIWALKS FOR THE MIND OF AMERICA**

**Saturday, May 2, 11am Walk Start Time**

**University of Maryland, College Park**

The NAMIWALKS for the Mind of America is a nationwide fundraising and mental health awareness program that is being held in more than 70 communities around the country in 2009, including right here in Maryland. All the funds collected by walkers and sponsors will be used to fund NAMI's programs here in Maryland. These programs include support, education, research and advocacy involving schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder and severe anxiety disorders.

**For more information, contact:** 410.435.2600 or [www.nami.org/sites/namimetrobaltimore](http://www.nami.org/sites/namimetrobaltimore)

## SPRINGTIME SCHOOL PROJECTS AND TERM PAPERS TEND TO INCREASE FLIGHT OF HELICOPTER PARENTS

The Helicopter parent pays close attention to his or her child(ren)'s experiences and problems, particularly at educational institutions. ***These parents rush to prevent any harm or failure from befalling their children and will not let them learn from their own mistakes***, sometimes even contrary to the children's wishes. These parents are so named because, like helicopters, they hover closely overhead, whether needed or not. Along with springtime robins, helicopter parent sightings typically increase this time of year at your local school grounds, music instruction facilities, athletic fields and anywhere else children may frequent, because expectations typically rise due to end-of-school year projects/papers, recitals and athletic tournaments. Anywhere a child could potentially mis-step or fall, you may find a helicopter parent in position, ready to take immediate action.

While many parents are supportive, loving and involved, helicopter parents behave in a way which limits a child's exposure to life's natural learning process. "It's really become an epidemic," Mary Turos says. "One reason for all this hovering is that 'we've become a very protective culture,'" she adds. "Mothers are bombarded with terrifying warnings, starting with nutrition advice delivered before the child is born and continuing on with the dangers of poorly installed car seats and unhelmeted bicycle riding." That can make it hard for parents to allow their children to take "safe risks." Unfortunately, it also shields them from becoming more independent, self-reliant, and strong self-advocates.

Should you suspect yourself, or someone you know, to be "helicopter," consider these Turos tips:

1. Allow your child to take safe risks, where failure won't harm them. This doesn't mean playing with fire or crossing a busy intersection. It means if a child forgets to bring a book report to school, let the child face the consequences. Don't bring the report to school.
2. Make sure your child has appropriate household responsibilities, something they do every day, and not just when mom or dad asks. "That's a big one, because that builds self esteem," Turos says.
3. Give your child limits and boundaries. Provide two or three choices for an afternoon activity and let the child choose one. That gives the child a feeling of empowerment. "Don't give them unlimited choices because their brains just cannot handle it," she says.
4. Give kids time to experience the world "instead of going from swimming lessons to piano practice to a group play date to movie time," Turos says. Build some down time into your child's schedule.
5. If your child has trouble in school, don't give them the answers. Instead, help the child come up with specific questions and strategies to bring to the teacher.
6. Model the behaviors you want by breaking large tasks into small steps or finding solutions to problems that seem daunting. "If we're faced with some kind of challenge, kids pick up more on what they see us doing than what we tell them to do," Turos says.

## APRIL IS NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

APRIL 2ND IS RECOGNIZED AS WORLD AUTISM DAY, celebrated by countries across the globe. Organizations large and small focus efforts to increase public awareness of autism spectrum disorders and the needs of children and adults with this diagnosis. For more information and resources in Maryland, visit:

<http://www.pathfindersforautism.org/>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **CHADD HOWARD COUNTY PARENT SUPPORT GROUP FEMALES WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES**

**Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 8pm**, Norbel School, 6135 Old Washington Rd, Elkridge

**Speaker: Dr. Caroline Poblete, Child Psychologist**

Presentation explores the impact of ADHD and other learning differences on girls, information regarding diagnosis, therapies and social issues. Do not need to be an active member to attend.

CHADD Meetings, Howard County are held the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

**For More Information, contact Krysta Renzi: 410.796.6700, [www.chadd-mc.org](http://www.chadd-mc.org)**

### **MAIN STREET TOWER AUTISM NIGHT**

**Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 4 - 9pm**, 29 S Main St, Bel Air

Pathfinders for Autism and The Main Street Tower Restaurant will host a night of dining out with other families that understand your unique situation in a setting that accommodates your family's needs.

Restaurant will provide:

- gluten and casein-free menu items
- a quiet area in case of need
- reduced background music
- restaurant staff trained in autism sensitivity

**For More Information: 410.838.8007, [www.mainstreettower.com](http://www.mainstreettower.com) or [www.pathfindersforautism.org](http://www.pathfindersforautism.org)**

### **SOCIAL SKILLS WORKSHOP**

**Wednesday, April 22, 2009**, The Highlands School, 2409 Creswell Rd, Bel Air

**Presented by Paula Carmody, The Highlands School Educational Director**

Learn about social skills instruction.

**For More Information, contact: 410.836.1415**

### **RETHINKING AD/HD: WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T AND WHY**

**Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 8:30am – 4pm**, Hilton Garden Inn – BWI, Linthicum, MD

**Presented by Frank J. Kros, MSW, JD**

Learn the 12 Power Tools for maximizing the strengths and minimizing the contextual weaknesses of the AD/HD brain. This seminar explores how and why the AD/HD mind works differently from non-AD/HD minds and is packed with scores of practical interventions for improving learning and behavior. Participants learn how to become "the surrogate frontal lobes" for AD/HD brains and how to change their thinking about AD/HD from a behavioral disorder to a unique brain construct that can be accommodated with highly successful outcomes.

Early Bird rate (up to April 12): \$149 / Registration rate (after April 12): \$169.00

**For More Information, or to register: 410.870.2481 or visit [www.upsidedownorganization.org](http://www.upsidedownorganization.org)**

### **2ND ANNUAL BALTIMORE COUNTY CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH FAIR**

**Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 5 – 8pm**, Perry Hall Middle School, 4300 Ebenezer Road, Baltimore

**For More Information, contact Erin Leatherwood: 410-235-1178 x202, [erinleatherwood@mhamd.org](mailto:erinleatherwood@mhamd.org)**

## THE FUNDAMENTALS OF COGNITIVE FITNESS

The basics of cognitive fitness lie in fundamental healthy-brain practices, such as physical activity, social interaction, mental stimulation, a brain-friendly diet, healthy sleep patterns and stress management.

Benefits from such practices range from cellular and biochemical changes at the level of neurons and synapses to “whole-brain” changes, such as denser neural networks or more efficient neural processing. These kinds of physiological alterations may be manifested as improved cognitive functioning – better memory, faster learning, greater attention, and focus – and as emotional well being.

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***Cognitive fitness is a state of mind in which we are performing well mentally, emotionally, and functionally. Attaining it entails following healthy-brain practices, such as exercising the mind and body, staying socially connected, eating and sleeping well and managing stress.***

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The bottom line is that a brain-healthy lifestyle is a combination of many factors, each of which has its own benefits to the brain. When combined, the benefits are likely to be additive: The more brain-healthy practices you follow, the great the benefits.

Of course, no one can guarantee that adopting a brain-healthy lifestyle will absolutely ensure good cognitive health until your dying day, but the potential benefits of shaping up your brain are increasingly well-documented.

Excerpted from The Dana Alliances for Brain Initiatives booklet:

**Your Brain at Work: Making the science of cognitive fitness work for you.**

To receive a copy, contact Mary Beth Collins: 410.692.6145, [mcollins@confidentstudent.com](mailto:mcollins@confidentstudent.com)

## CONFIDENT STUDENT ... GOING GREEN!

Confident Student is preparing to take another strategy toward conserving resources:

**WE ARE MOVING TOWARDS E-INVOICE AND E-NEWSLETTER.** *Confident Student still offers the same value-added services with its detailed monthly statements and newsletters, but **BEGINNING MAY 1<sup>ST</sup>** can do so in a much preferred conservation-conscientious manner.*

If you would prefer to receive printed newsletters to leave out in your waiting areas or distribute to your clients in print form, simply let us know to make necessary accommodations. Otherwise, look for the May newsletter to arrive quickly, efficiently....digitally!



CREATING LIFELONG LEARNERS

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