

# McPartland Lab

## NEWSLETTER

Greetings from the McPartland Lab!

All of us at the McPartland Lab hope that you and your families have been safe and healthy during this challenging period. Most of our team has been working remotely for several months now, and we have missed the opportunities to connect with you all during visits to the lab. We are introducing a newsletter to help us stay in touch.

In each issue we will provide you with information that we hope will be interesting and useful. We will provide updates on the progress of our scientific studies and we will let you know about opportunities to participate in upcoming research. We will also include tips for parents and caregivers of individuals with special needs, as well as ideas that might be useful for adults on the spectrum. And we will highlight some interesting facts about the staff members that you might meet during a visit to the lab!

We are dedicated to understanding autism and to supporting people affected by it. We hope that this newsletter helps us serve these goals while we are socially (and scientifically) distanced. Please let us know if there are other types of information you would like to see!

Gratefully,  
Jamie McPartland



## Adulting with ASD

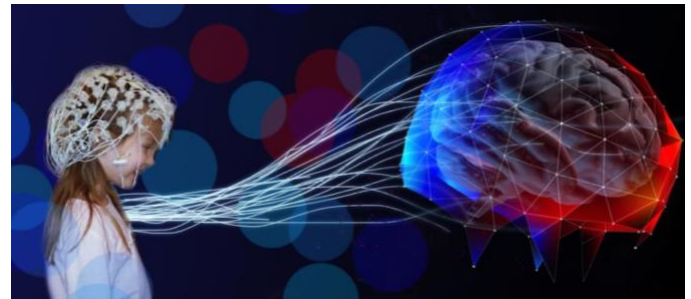
### Staying Organized by Julie Wolf, PhD

As an adult, you may be finding that you have more responsibilities to keep track of, and without the structure of a school day, you have to be much more independent in knowing what needs to get done. Luckily, we live in a time when there is a lot of technology available to help us stay organized and keep track of what we need to accomplish. Here are some tips/strategies that may be beneficial for those looking for some extra guidance.

- If you have a smartphone, tablet, or other device you can search the app store for “productivity” apps to help you stay organized. There are many to choose from, and you might need to do some trial and error to find apps that work best for you. If you don’t have a device, you can also choose a paper planner.
- You can use your device to set reminders about things you need to do at a certain time, or things you don’t want to forget. Or write these reminders in your paper planner on the date they need to get done.
- Create a calendar in your planner or device with all of your appointments.
- Keep a to-do list of things you need to accomplish and cross them off as you complete them.
- If you have a big project you need to accomplish that feels overwhelming to you, think about the smaller steps that are involved. Make a to-do list of each of those small steps and focus on accomplishing one step at a time. Give yourself a deadline for each step and set a reminder in your device or write reminders in your planner to notify you when that deadline is approaching.

- If you are still feeling overwhelmed, or are struggling with these strategies, it can be helpful to have a “check-in” person who can help you. This could be a trusted family member, counselor, coach, or friend who could check in with you weekly to help you with any areas of difficulty, or even to help you create your schedules and task lists.

## Exciting New Research Study



The McPartland Lab is launching a new study of social attention in children with intellectual disability (ID) and children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and ID between 6-11 years old. We are studying the brain systems involved in social attention so we can better understand the social difficulties that are often experienced by children with ASD and ID. We hope to use the knowledge we gain to develop better tools to help individuals living with these conditions.

Participation involves one or two visits to our lab where children will interact with a clinician and watch videos while their brain waves are recorded. Participants will receive a clinical evaluation and report, as well as compensation up to \$120.

**If you would like to find out more about this exciting new study, please contact Erin MacDonnell at (203) 737-3439 or [autism@yale.edu](mailto:autism@yale.edu).**

## A Parent's Perspective

by Laurajean Vaughn

As my husband Bob and I age, we look back on our efforts to help our sons on the autism spectrum with gratitude. Challenges along the way for me included struggles with anxiety and depression (therapy and medication were invaluable). Once those issues were addressed, my outlook changed completely. We have been fortunate in that Charles (35), David (32), and Robert (28) were able to continue their studies past high school and eventually obtain college degrees. We attribute their success in that arena to their perseverance, respecting their interests, and affirming the help and encouragement of school and college professionals along the way. Nevertheless, all three men, who are decent and literate, remain underemployed. As we think about their future, we are currently focused on their employment, lifetime housing, and financial support.

Understanding individuals' unique profiles is critical as is effective advocacy. There are many components to assisting those with autism spectrum disorders and what works for some does not necessarily work for others. We encourage parents to take care of yourselves (sleep and mental health are critical), learn about rights and responsibilities and government programs in order to become more effective advocates, and acknowledge those who are dignifying and helping your children. Do not take it personally when systems resist your efforts (the reality is money considerations are often the reason, not a personal animus toward you – understanding “systems” helped us in that regard). We acknowledge there are times when you have to push the envelope by engaging an advocate or lawyer, which can be emotionally and financially draining. Rest and reenergize

when you need to, and most importantly, endeavor to enjoy your precious children. They are indeed uniquely wonderful and should be loved and dignified along life's journey.

## Practical Parenting Advice

Adaptive Living Skills

by Christine Cukar-Capizzi, PsyD, BCBA



This summer is an ideal time for families to take advantage of the extra time they have to spend together at home. This may result in extra opportunities for individuals with autism to boost their adaptive living skills.

Adaptive living skills are practical skills that we engage in every day in the context of daily activities and routines such as dressing, grooming, doing laundry, and engaging in leisure activities. These practical skills are necessary to develop independence and social development, and mastery of these skills can result in an improved quality of life and self-esteem for individuals with autism.

Families can work together to choose one or two goals to work on over the summer such as learning to cook a new recipe, how to schedule and manage leisure time, or improve phone and FaceTime skills. To facilitate learning these skills, break tasks down into small, attainable goals to help decrease the potential of feeling overwhelmed by the task.

Individuals with autism may benefit from visual schedules, social stories,

demonstrations via live or video modeling, hands on practice, and repetition. Remember to have fun with this process and celebrate your successes as a family!

Please [click here](#) to listen to Dr. Cukar-Capizzi's recent talk, "Strategies for Teaching Adaptive Living Skills to Individuals with ASD", for additional ideas and resources.

## Sibling's Corner

### Take Time to Yourself by Julie Wolf, PhD

Spending time with your brother or sister with autism is a great thing to do. Playing together will help your sibling learn new social skills and will help the two of you get along. But sometimes you might feel like you need a break from your brother or sister, and that's ok, too! In fact, it's really important that you take time for yourself to relax and do the things you love to do. Try to set aside some time each day for yourself. Find a quiet place where you can be alone – your bedroom, a secret hideaway in your backyard, a fort you built out of pillows and blankets – as long as it's your own special place. While you're there, do something relaxing - listen to music, read a book, message your friends, draw, write in a journal, play video games, or anything else you enjoy. If you're having trouble finding the time, ask a parent for help. Tell them that you love your brother or sister, but sometimes need some alone time, too. Ask them if they can help you find some "protected" time each day for relaxation. If you never have this time to yourself, you'll be more likely to get frustrated or angry at family members. Taking care of yourself helps the whole family!

Please [click here](#) to listen to Dr. Wolf's recent talk, "Siblings of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder", to learn more about the sibling experience.

## Q&A with a Lab Member



### Introduce yourself!

Hi everyone, my name is Elise and I'm a second-year fellow in the McPartland Lab. I'm originally from Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia. I went to Swarthmore College, which is close to home, and then moved to New Haven last year.

### Why did you join the McPartland Lab?

I grew up with a younger brother with autism and intellectual disability, so I've always been fascinated by the brain. I got involved in neuroscience research in undergrad and loved it. Working in the McPartland lab is the perfect opportunity to combine my interest in neuroscience research with my personal interest in autism.

### Let's settle the dispute... who has the best pizza in New Haven?

Modern is great for classic New Haven pizza, but I also love One 6 Three for their specialty pizzas.

### Is there anything coming up in the McPartland Lab that you're excited about?

We have four new fellows joining us this month, and I'm really excited to get to know them and welcome them to our team!

## COVID-19 Guides for Families and Adults

As we navigate this time we are happy to share the attached guides with you. While initiated with our ASD participants in mind, this guide includes many resources that may be helpful and enriching for all members of the family. Sending you and yours our very best wishes. Please stay home, stay safe, and take care of yourselves. [Click here](#) to visit our COVID-19 Resources page where you can view the Adult Guide or Family Guide (available in English or Spanish).

## Handwashing Guidelines and Tips



The CDC recommends washing your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. The easiest way to know when the time is up while having a bit of fun would be to sing or hum a tune. [Click here](#) to check out the CDC for suggestions.

## Contact Us!

For more information about our research please contact Erin MacDonnell at [autism@yale.edu](mailto:autism@yale.edu) or (203) 737-3439.

[Click here](#) if you would like us to contact you about participating in our studies or scan the QR code.



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Yale Autism Program



@YaleAutism

The McPartland Lab stands in solidarity with the Black community, and we pledge to work to actively fight systemic racism. As a lab within an institution of higher learning, we are committed to providing education around issues of diversity of all kinds, standing up against injustices, and ensuring that our work reflects and benefits the diverse community that we serve. We strive to create a space in which all feel welcome and respected, from our employees, to our students, to the families who participate in our research.

Sent by The McPartland Lab  
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