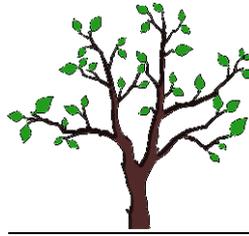


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The Importance of Support

If you've ever been on a flight, you'll have seen the safety briefing which includes the instruction "Fit your own oxygen mask before helping others". When you are raising a child with SEND, it is all too easy to focus all of your energy into supporting your child, and of course the rest of your family as well. You may also be trying to hold down a job, caring for elderly relatives, or dealing with your own health issues – sometimes all of the above!

Unfortunately we are only human, and if you push yourself too hard something will break. It is absolutely vital that you carve out at least some time for yourself, and find others who are in a similar situation to you to turn to for support and advice. (There is a list of local support groups at the end of this article). You must explain to your family that if you don't get this you will not be able to give your best to them, and particularly to your SEND child – it takes a great deal of effort and energy to be the parent of a child with SEND, and we are dealing with situations that many parents simply don't have to, which can be thoroughly draining.

Daunting though it may feel at first, it is incredibly helpful to take a step through the door of a support group. You will find that you are not the only person in this situation, you will find that many others feel exactly like you do, and most importantly you will not be judged for having a child who is 'different' – instead you will find support, understanding and friendship. You will also be signposted to advice and other agencies who can help you and your child – other parents are a goldmine of valuable experience and information!

Get to know other parents at school who have children with SEND – our monthly coffee mornings are a great place to come to meet us. We are also going to organise a coffee evening for those who cannot attend in the mornings.

Finally, make some time to do something YOU enjoy – taking a break from your caring responsibilities is vital for your mental and physical health, so take up that hobby, join that club or group, or even just lock the door and enjoy a bath in peace! Once you have recharged your batteries you are much better able to help your child.

Ruth Rae

List of local support groups

ASSIST – Wokingham's Autism Support Service. Monthly drop-ins held in Woodley, please see the timetable on our school SEND noticeboard opposite the school office.

ASD Family Help – Weekly coffee mornings held in Woodley at the Airfield Youth and Community Centre on Mondays

Autism Berkshire -
<http://www.autismberkshire.org.uk/support-groups/>

Parenting Special Children -
<https://www.parentingspecialchildren.co.uk/support-we-offer/support-groups/>

Peapods - Parent-to-parent support for families with physically disabled children -
<http://www.peapods.org.uk/>

SEND Carers United - a user-led community offering mutual support for local parents/full time carers of children with additional needs, in the Wokingham and surrounding areas. How we can help you:

- We provide a strong network of support via our online Facebook community
- Social gatherings approximately every 4-6 weeks
- Signposting you in the right direction for further support from many amazing local organisations

<http://www.sendcarersunited.co.uk/>

Building Self-Esteem

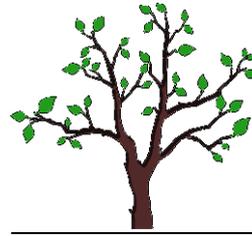
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The Hyperactive Children's Support Group - provides information and advice to parents seeking solutions for children and young people who may be affected by Hyperactivity and/or ADHD - <http://www.hacsg.org.uk/>

Dates for the diary – next SEN Coffee Mornings:

Monday 17th June @9.00am

Monday 8th July @9.00am

Mrs Jones – SENDCo

We are pleased to welcome Mrs Jones to Beechwood as SENDCo. Mrs Forbes continues to support the school as SEN Consultant, appointments can be made through the school office.

Girls and Autism

Autism is a lifelong developmental condition which affects the way individuals communicate with and relate to other people. The diagnosis of autism means that the young person has difficulties in 3 main areas; difficulty in communicating effectively with others, difficulty in social relationships, restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities.

In addition to the core impairments many children will have difficulties with fine and gross motor co-ordination and organisational skills. They can also be affected by sensory sensitivities (sensitivities to noise, smells, light etc.) Children with autism also tend to experience higher levels of anxiety, this can have a significant effect on their behaviour, and the impact of anxiety on daily life should not be underestimated.

It is a spectrum condition and while children share certain difficulties their condition will affect them in very different ways.

Although autism has historically been considered a predominantly male condition, (approximately 4

times as many boys are diagnosed as girls) there is now a growing awareness that the condition manifests itself differently and more subtly in females. In many instances difficulties with social communication can be more subtle in girls and therefore not always be particularly apparent in a school setting. This can certainly be the case when there are supportive peers in the school environment and when they respond well to the structure of the school day and like to follow rules.

Girls are more able to follow social rules through observation and they may mask their difficulties by learning to copy behaviour using skills based on intellect rather than social intuition. They may be quicker to apologise and appease overlooked or forgotten. It is important to recognise that this can be an exhausting process and can contribute to distress and reduced coping, although this distress may be seen in the home rather than at school.

Girls are often more socially aware and socially driven and so seek out play and interaction opportunities (whilst often being 'led' by peers rather than initiating activities).

They may have one special friend with whom they share an intense sometimes dependent relationship. As they grow in self-awareness and recognition of their 'differences' girls may take greater pains to avoid drawing attention to themselves, for example by being quiet, well behaved and compliant at school.

If you have any concerns about your child please do not hesitate to speak to your child's class teacher to see if they have noticed any unusual behaviour at school. It is also important to raise concerns with your GP as soon as possible as there may be a long waiting list for referrals to specialist services in our area.

Sharon Narancic

Building Self-Esteem

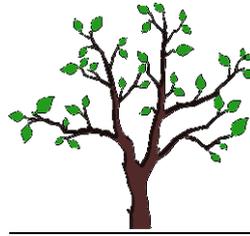
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SEND Parent Workshops

We are happy to report that our two parent workshops – ‘This is Me; Creating a One Page Profile for your Child’ and ‘How to Support your Child with Anxiety’ were very successful, with all the participants finding them helpful. We are happy to run the workshops again if the demand is there, so if you are interested in attending one or both of these, please return this reply slip to the school office and we will arrange additional dates.

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Please return form to the School Office:

I am interested in attending the following Parent workshop/s:

Creating a One Page Profile

Anxiety

I would prefer to attend a:

Morning session (9am to 10.30am)

Evening session (6.30pm to 8pm)

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