



SNAC Workshop Report Template

SNAC members who attend various Workshops may use this template to create a report to share information with other members of the group.

<u>Attended By:</u>	Barbara Schnider, Donnalynn Rainey, Robin Keough
<u>Written By:</u>	Barbara Schnider
<u>Title of Workshop:</u>	Advancing With Autism
<u>Date of Workshop:</u>	Sunday March 30, 2014 8:00 am- 6:00 pm
<u>Brief Description of Workshop:</u> (A series of 7 workshops and exhibitors organized to bring parents and professionals together to discuss personal stories ,professional perspectives and display products and services of interest to the Autism Community.)	
<u>Topics Presented and Main Points that were Learned:</u>	Opening Remarks: Tracey and Andre- organizers of Conference in conjunction with Giant Steps-parents of a child with autism briefly discussed their story and how they became involved with Giant Steps.
<p>1) Nick Katalifos -“One Giant Step at a Time: A Father’s Perspective”- school principal within the EMSB, chairman of Giant Steps School and Resource Center discussed his family’s own journey with autism and gave background about Giant Steps. His son was diagnosed at the age of 2 ½ . A round table discussion in conjunction with Giant Steps had taken place the previous day in which representatives of the Government, those in the Educational and Medical fields as well as parents and those with autism met. Nick emphasized that we need to network and bring everyone together to find a way to help students with autism. He raised a concern about what happens at the age of 21 when very few resources and services are available.</p>	
<p>2) Dr. Stephen Shore -“Obstacles into Opportunities: Turning Away from Closed Doors and Opening New Ones “Author and Professor at Adelphi University. Dr. Shore shared his own life experiences as someone who is on the autism spectrum. He spoke of moving toward an ABILITY model and getting away from a DEFICIT model. We should focus on the strengths of the individual instead of always concentrating on what they cannot do. He discussed the importance of tapping into a child’s interest. Dr. Shore spoke about looking toward the future .In many cases, he said those on the spectrum can lead independent and successful lives. It is a matter of matching interests to skills. Many Colleges and Universities are set up to offer support to students with ASD, who tend to have higher grade point averages and stick with their course of study.</p>	
<p>3)Dr. Laurent Mottron- “L’Autisme Moderne “- Psychiatrist and Ph.D. full professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the Université de Montréal, and “Chercheur National” with Quebec Health Research Fund. Holds the Marcelle and Rolande Gosselin research chair on cognitive neuroscience in Autism since 2008. Founded the specialized autism spectrum disorder without mental retardation clinic at the Rivière des Prairies Hospital (Montreal) in 1995, and the pervasive development disorder centre for excellence of Université de Montréal in 2007. Since 1997, his research has been funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. He has signed some hundred scientific articles about the cognitive neuroscience of autism. His most significant results relate to visual and auditory perception in Savant and non savant autism, investigated by brain imaging and cognitive tasks. The Enhanced Perceptual Functioning model that he developed with the Montreal group is now one of the leading theory</p>	

for interpreting cognitive and fMRI data in autism. He is also interested in re-examining the role of mental retardation in primary autism, and in the inclusion of autistic researchers in science. Dr. Mottron spoke about the main characteristics of Autism and that people on the spectrum may have difficulty with socialization and with recognizing emotions. However, according to his research, we should shift our thinking as many on the spectrum have superior abilities in the areas of perception and reasoning and in fact often score very well when asked to perform many tasks. He reiterated that speech and intelligence are not necessarily correlated.

4) Alan Kriss- “Building the case for Business“- Enabling Jobs for People With Autism and Similar Challenges - Alan Kriss is the CEO of Specialisterne Canada. The company was founded in 2004 in Denmark by Thorkil Sonne who has a son with autism. It was clear to Thorkil that it would be difficult for his son to find a job, so he decided to start an IT Consulting practice and hired those with ASD. His mission was to approach businesses and convince them to hire people with Autism. He felt that they could experience productive and meaningful employment if given the chance. Alan emphasized that society needs to change our perspective of people with Autism- we need to focus on the positive. He highlighted that those with ASD are highly unemployed and underemployed , when many are capable of holding jobs. What is needed is more “Autism Friendly “ work environments. Specialisterne is now operating in 12 countries , including Canada. Their goal is to create 10,000 meaningful jobs and career paths for Canadians on the autism spectrum. Companies pay a fee and Specialisterne provides : 1) Awareness and Education; 2) Employee Services and 3) Employer Services. They have a list of jobs that need to be filled and a list of candidates. Once they short list them, the candidates come in for a meeting in a fun environment, rather than a traditional interview. They are asked about their interests. There is a 4-6 week training program. It is determined how much support is needed and it is provided to them. Alan explained that it is a win win situation. Those on the spectrum are often very good at finding problems , pay attention to small details and tend to stay in their jobs longer than others.

5) Kristine Barnett- “Spark: A Mother’s Story of Nurturing Genius”- Kristine is an author, former daycare operator and current Director of a Charitable Community Center which she and her husband started for autistic and special needs children and their families called Jacob’s Place, after her son. Jacob has an IQ higher than Einstein and taught himself calculus at the age of 10. He was diagnosed with autism at age 2 and his parents were told that he might never be able to tie his own shoes, let alone engage and talk. He is now a researcher in Quantum Physics and has been working on an original theory in Astrophysics. Jacob is only 14 years old. Kristine has written a book highlighting the family’s journey and emphasizes that those with Autism are capable and have hidden abilities and it is our job to uncover these hidden talents. When Jacob was young, he followed traditional type therapies and then the family decided to take a break from them and focused on teaching him the way he responded to best. She said it is important to find out what fascinates the child and to not be afraid to break the rules and try to reach them.

6) Lucila Guerrero – “Suivre La Lumiere”- Lucila is an author, artist and photographer, born and raised in Peru and currently resides in Montreal. Growing up, she was involved in theatre, choirs, dance and painting activities. She later became a software developer, while incorporating her artistic talents into her work. While she was pregnant, she discovered photography and became passionate about it. Later on, her son was diagnosed with autism and she wrote a book about their experiences entitled:” Lundi, je vais etre Luka”. Growing up, she recognized her differences and explained that she suffered from depression and anorexia, and later on was diagnosed with Asperger’s. Lucila often exhibits her work in various venues around Montreal. She explained that her thoughts are in pictures and when it is difficult for her to find words, her art represents how she feels. She has learned that most people do not understand Autism and that it is not their fault, but that she wants to help educate them.

7)Soma Mukhopadhyay- “ Methodology of Soma Rapid Prompting Method (RPM)”.This workshop was presented online. Soma is a teacher and a mother of a son Tito with Autism. She developed the RPM in order to help her son, who is now a published author and poet. She highlighted the fact that we all have different learning styles and as with anyone else, those with autism have their own way of learning.RPM sessions are usually short- 30-40 minutes, then a break is taken, followed by another session. She explained that RPM is not a one size fits all model .Teaching methods should be adapted to each student. Her method is low tech requiring only paper and pencil. Student responses evolve from picking up answers to pointing to typing and writing. She believes that we have 2 Primary Learning Channels: Visual and Auditory, and 2 Secondary Channels: Kinaesthetic and Tactile and that each learning channel is broken down into Generalized, Global and Selective categories.

Web Links for Additional Information:

- 1) Giant Steps <http://www.mygiantsteps.org/>
- 2) Dr. Stephen Shore <http://www.autismexpertshore.com>
- 3) Dr. Laurent Mottron <http://www.iusmm.ca/laurentmottron.html>
- 4) Alan Kriss <http://www.specialistpeople.com/specialisterne>
- 5) Kristine Barnett
- 6) Lucila Guerrero <http://www.lucilaquerrero.com>
- 7) Soma Mukhopadhyay <http://www.halo-soma.org>

Additional Comments:



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