



SPECTRUM STRONG

JULY

2026

A NOTE FROM THE SPECTRUM STRONG TEAM



We hope you and your family are having a wonderful summer! While we know this season can look different for every family, we hope you've been able to find moments of joy, connection, and fun.

Behind the scenes, our Board has been hard at work planning new ways to continue our mission of providing support, resources, and meaningful opportunities for families throughout the St. Croix Valley. We were thrilled to recently launch our Celebrate It Forward Adaptive Equipment Lending Library and look forward to helping families connect by sharing adaptive equipment within our community.

This past month also gave us the incredible opportunity to attend the 2026 Special Olympics USA Opening Ceremonies and volunteer during the Athletics (Track & Field) awards ceremony. It was an incredibly meaningful experience to celebrate alongside the athletes and witness the joy, determination, and sense of belonging that make the Special Olympics so inspiring. We came away even more committed to fostering inclusive opportunities for everyone in our community.

We're also excited to be participating in the North Hudson Pepperfest Parade this year! We'd love for our Spectrum Strong families to join us—whether you'd like to ride on the float or walk alongside us handing out resources and spreading awareness. There's room for everyone! If you're interested in participating, please email us at spectrumstronghudson@gmail.com.

It's hard to believe we're already planning our fall and winter events, and we have some exciting things in the works! Stay tuned for more opportunities to connect, learn, and celebrate together.

Thank you for being part of the Spectrum Strong community. We appreciate each and every one of you and look forward to seeing many of you this summer!

Upcoming Events

SUNDAY, JULY 19
FAMILY MUSIC DAY CAMP WITH
DYNAMIC MUSIC THERAPY

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15
PEPPERFEST GRAND PARADE
11:00-1:00



Shining A Spotlight On: Family Music Day Camp Summer Whole Family Event



We had the opportunity to welcome Tatum Kline and Alison Edwards, Board Certified Music Therapists to our most recent parent workshop. They shared all about how music can help support our autistic children.

We're excited to invite you to our Family Music Day Camp, presented in partnership with Dynamic Music Therapy where we will put the information learned during our workshop into action. This fun-filled event is designed to bring families together through the joy of music in a welcoming, inclusive, and sensory-friendly environment.

Event Details

Sunday, July 19, 2026
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Weitkamp Park, Hudson
As always, our events are FREE OF CHARGE

Led by board-certified music therapists, this recreational, music-based experience is informed by their clinical expertise while focusing on fun, connection, and participation. While this is not a music therapy session, activities are thoughtfully designed to encourage engaging, positive, and inclusive musical experiences for children and their families.

Families will have the opportunity to enjoy activities such as:

- Singing
- Instrument playing
- Movement to music
- Sensory-friendly music experiences
- Structured and creative group activities

Every child is unique, and that's something we celebrate! Activities may be adapted to support participation and enjoyment for all attendees. Whether your child jumps right in, prefers to observe before joining, participates in their own unique way, or needs breaks throughout the event, they are welcome here. We strive to create a supportive, inclusive, and responsive environment where every family can experience the joy of making music together.



KEEPING SUMMER PREDICTABLE, FLEXIBLE AND FUN

SUPPORTING YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD DURING THE MID-SUMMER MONTHS

Keeping Summer Predictable, Flexible, and Fun: Supporting Your Autistic Child During the Mid-Summer Months
By the time July arrives, the excitement of summer break has often settled into a new reality. The novelty of sleeping in, relaxing schedules, and extra free time may have worn off, and many families begin noticing that their child is becoming restless, dysregulated, or seeking more structure.

If this sounds familiar, you are certainly not alone.

Many autistic children thrive with predictability—not because they are "too rigid," but because knowing what to expect helps reduce uncertainty and allows their brains to focus on learning, connecting, and enjoying experiences. While summer is a wonderful opportunity for rest and exploration, maintaining some routines can help children feel safe, regulated, and engaged.

Here are several research-supported, neuro-affirming strategies that families may find helpful.

Keep a Flexible Daily Routine

A routine doesn't have to mean every minute is scheduled. Instead, consider creating predictable "anchors" throughout the day.

These might include:

- Waking up around the same time each morning
- Eating meals at consistent times
- Having a daily outdoor activity
- Scheduling quiet time after lunch
- Following a familiar bedtime routine

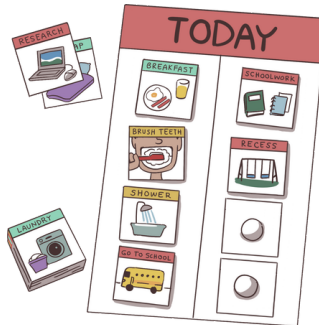
Even if activities change from day to day, predictable anchor points provide a sense of stability while still allowing for flexibility and spontaneity.

Use Visual Supports

Visual schedules aren't just for school—they can be incredibly helpful at home, too. Many autistic individuals process visual information more effectively than verbal language. A simple visual schedule can reduce anxiety, increase independence, and decrease the number of verbal reminders needed throughout the day.

Your schedule can be as simple as:

- Breakfast
- Get Dressed
- Outdoor Time
- Lunch
- Quiet Activity
- Choice Time
- Dinner
- Bedtime Routine



Photos, pictures, drawings, sticky notes, or even handwritten lists can all work. The goal is not perfection—it's predictability.

Build Interests Into the Day

Autistic passions and deep interests are strengths, not distractions.

Research has shown that incorporating an individual's interests into everyday activities can increase motivation, engagement, learning, communication, and emotional well-being.

Whether your child loves trains, animals, Minecraft, space, dinosaurs, music, maps, or weather, look for opportunities to weave those interests into reading, crafts, outdoor adventures, cooking, or community outings. When children feel seen and valued for what they love, learning often follows naturally.



KEEPING SUMMER PREDICTABLE, FLEXIBLE AND FUN SUPPORTING YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD DURING THE MID-SUMMER MONTHS

Balance Activity with Recovery Time

Summer often brings vacations, family gatherings, camps, sporting events, and community celebrations. While these experiences can be enjoyable, they may also require significant sensory, social, and emotional energy. Remember that rest is productive. Building intentional downtime into the day allows children to regulate before becoming overwhelmed.

Quiet activities might include:

- Reading
- Building with legos or other construction toys
- Drawing
- Listening to music
- Swinging or spending time outdoors
- Enjoying a favorite sensory activity
- Simply having uninterrupted time alone



Recovery time isn't a reward—it's an important part of supporting nervous system regulation.

Continue Practicing Everyday Life Skills

Summer offers wonderful opportunities to practice functional life skills in meaningful ways.

Depending on your child's age and support needs, they might help:

- Make grocery lists
- Prepare simple meals
- Water plants
- Feed pets
- Sort laundry
- Organize toys
- Pack for outings
- Follow a recipe
- Budget spending money



These everyday experiences help build independence while naturally incorporating communication, sequencing, problem-solving, and confidence.

Create Meaningful Movement Opportunities

Movement supports regulation for many autistic individuals. Rather than thinking about "exercise," consider opportunities for joyful movement throughout the day:

- Nature walks
- Swimming
- Playground visits
- Bike rides
- Dancing
- Obstacle courses
- Trampoline time
- Yoga
- Family scavenger hunts



The goal isn't performance—it's helping children meet their sensory and movement needs in ways that feel enjoyable.



KEEPING SUMMER PREDICTABLE, FLEXIBLE AND FUN

SUPPORTING YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD DURING THE MID-SUMMER MONTHS

Offer Choices Throughout the Day

Providing choices increases autonomy and helps children feel more in control of their day.

Instead of asking open-ended questions like, "What do you want to do?" try offering two or three concrete options:

- "Would you like to go for a walk or play with water outside?"
- "Would you rather read a book or build with blocks?"
- "Should we make popsicles or bake muffins together?"

Offering choices supports communication while reducing decision fatigue.

Remember That Every Child's Summer Will Look Different

Some children may enjoy camps and busy community events. Others may thrive with quiet mornings, familiar routines, backyard adventures, and favorite interests. There is no single "right" way to spend the summer. The goal is not to fill every hour with activities. Instead, focus on creating a summer that feels safe, meaningful, joyful, and sustainable for your family. Some days will be full of adventure. Other days may simply involve popsicles on the porch, favorite books, or watching clouds drift by. Those moments matter, too.

If your child seems to be struggling as summer continues, remember that behavior is communication. Changes in routine, increased sensory input, disrupted sleep, heat, social demands, or uncertainty may all contribute to what you're seeing. Rather than asking, "How do I stop this behavior?" consider asking, "What might my child be communicating, and how can I support them?" By approaching summer with flexibility, curiosity, and compassion, we can create experiences that honor each child's unique strengths, needs, and ways of engaging with the world.

Here's to a summer that continues to be filled with connection, regulation, and plenty of opportunities for joy.



References

- Autistic Self Advocacy Network. (n.d.). Autism Acceptance and Neurodiversity Resources. Emphasizes strengths-based, autonomy-supportive approaches and honoring autistic ways of learning and communicating.
- National Autistic Society. Guidance on routines, visual supports, transitions, sensory differences, and reducing uncertainty for autistic people.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Learn the Signs. Act Early. Resources supporting the use of visual supports, routines, and family engagement in development.
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Clinical guidelines for supporting autistic children and young people emphasize individualized, strengths-based supports and environmental adaptations rather than changing autistic traits.
- Koegel, R. L., Koegel, L. K., & Carter, C. M. (1999). Pivotal Response Intervention. Research demonstrates that incorporating a child's interests and choices increases motivation, engagement, and learning.
- American Occupational Therapy Association. Resources on sensory regulation, meaningful occupations, play, and participation in daily routines.

