



SPECTRUM STRONG

MARCH

2026

A NOTE FROM THE SPECTRUM STRONG TEAM

As we step into March, we want to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude for the incredible connections that were made throughout February. From families gathering at our family event to new relationships forming within our community, it has been such a joy to watch connections grow and support networks strengthen. We are also thrilled to welcome our new subscribers. We're so glad you're here! There are many exciting things planned over the next several months and we cannot wait to share upcoming events, resources, and opportunities to connect with all of you. Thank you for being part of this amazing community — the best is yet to come!



Spectrum Strong Resource Spotlight:

Podcast: On-Time Autism
Intervention

By Ashley Penney and Jessica
Greensom

Episode 13: Sleep

Webinar: Sleep Issues in
Autism

By Beth Malow M.D.

Autism Research Institute

Upcoming Events

THURSDAY, MARCH 26:
PARENT WORKSHOP

SATURDAY APRIL 18:
STEPS TO ACCEPTANCE
5K FUN RUN/WALK

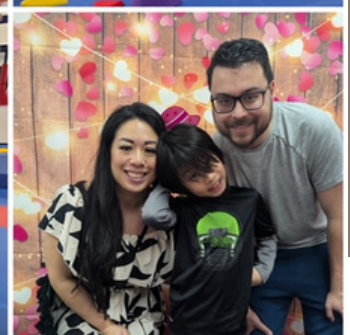
TUESDAY, JUNE 16
PARENT WORKSHOP

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

We are so grateful to everyone who joined us for our February family event at We Rock the Spectrum!

It was such a joy to see our kids laughing, climbing, swinging, and engaging in play together while families connected and supported one another. There is something so special about watching our community come together in a space where everyone feels welcome, understood, and free to be themselves.

Thank you for spending your time with us and for making the afternoon so fun and meaningful. Events like this remind us why we do what we do: building connection, creating belonging, and making memories together. We can't wait to see you at the next one! ❤️



SLEEP CHALLENGES IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Sleep problems are one of the most common and impactful challenges faced by children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). According to the Sleep Foundation, research shows that about half to two-thirds of autistic children experience difficulties such as trouble falling asleep, frequent night wakings, resistance at bedtime, and restless sleep. These rates are far higher than in typically developing children.

The Sleep Foundation notes that sleep disturbances in children with autism are complex and can arise from a mix of biological, sensory, behavioral, and environmental factors:

- Biological rhythms may be dysregulated, with differences in melatonin production and circadian signaling.
- Sensory sensitivities to light, sound, or touch can make it harder to settle in and stay asleep.
- Anxiety, co-occurring ADHD, or gastrointestinal discomfort can also interfere with restful sleep.

Poor sleep not only affects nighttime rest but can exacerbate daytime behaviors, mood, and learning over time.

What Can You Do To Help Establish Good Sleep Habits?

1. Establish a Consistent Sleep Routine

Children with autism often thrive with predictable schedules. A consistent bedtime and wake time every day, even on weekends, helps regulate the body's internal clock.

Tips:

- Start winding down at least 30–60 minutes before bedtime.
- Include calming, low-stimulus activities like reading or quiet play.
- Use visual schedules or picture cues if your child responds well to visual structure.

2. Create a Sleep-Friendly Environment

A bedroom designed for comfort and minimal sensory disruption can make a big difference.

What to consider:

- Darkness: blackout curtains may help light-sensitive children.
- Quiet: white noise machines can mask disruptive sounds.
- Comfort: sensory-friendly bedding and pajamas can reduce irritation.
- Temperature: cool, cozy spaces often promote better sleep.

3. Encourage Independent Falling Asleep

Helping a child learn to fall asleep with minimal parental intervention can improve night sleep continuity.

Approaches include:

- Gradually reducing the amount of time you stay in the room at bedtime.
- Using a favorite stuffed toy or blanket as a “sleep partner.”
- Reinforcing bedtime steps with positive rewards when routines are followed.

4. Promote Daytime Sleep Hygiene

What happens during the day matters too:

- Encourage regular physical activity (play, outdoor time) — movement early in the day supports sleep drive later.
- Avoid caffeine, sugary drinks, or stimulating screens close to bedtime.

5. Track Sleep Patterns

Keeping a sleep diary helps identify patterns and triggers that your child's provider can use to customize strategies.

What to track:

- Bedtime and wake time
- Night awakenings
- Daytime naps
- Activities, meals, or mood changes

This can be extremely helpful if you decide to seek guidance from a pediatrician or sleep specialist.

*Information obtained from the following sources: The Sleep Foundation, Kennedy Krieger Institute and Drake Institute

