

2025

Including
AuSM's Guide
to Sensory-
Friendly
Minnesota
2025

AuSM Summer Programs



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Join AuSM This Summer



Welcome to the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM)'s 2025 Summer Programs Catalog! This guide brings together all the ways AuSM supports the autism community, offering a wide range of resources, programs, and services for individuals, families, and allies. Here, you'll find details about our summer camps—an essential part of AuSM's summer experience—and so much more.

Our catalog showcases everything AuSM offers, from Counseling and Consulting Services and Advocacy initiatives to free online resources, all crafted with a neurodiversity-affirming approach informed by autistic voices. Whether you're exploring ways to connect, seeking guidance, or looking for tools to empower yourself and your loved ones, AuSM is here to provide support through every stage of the journey.

We're excited to share these resources with you and invite you to explore the many opportunities AuSM has developed to serve and uplift our community.

Whether you're discovering AuSM for the first time or have been part of our community for years, there's a place for you here. **We're looking forward to spending the summer with you – learning, playing, and growing together.**

If you're looking for more details about any offerings in this guide, or to register, visit www.ausm.org.

Thank You Premier Partners

Join these companies in making a difference in the lives of autistic individuals in Minnesota.



If you are interested in becoming an AuSM Premier Partner, please contact Kelly Ulrick at 651.647.1083 ext. 128 or email kulrick@ausm.org, or visit ausm.org/premier-partners.

Special thanks to Alma Hueso for providing photographs.



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**MINNESOTA
AUTISM
CONFERENCE**

Keynote Speakers

- Tiffany Hammond (Fidgets and Fries)
- Anne Gearity, PhD,
University of Minnesota
- Mash Makhlyagina, Founder,
Neuro Support Services

The Minnesota Autism Conference, hosted by AuSM, is here to help you learn more about autism through educational content, community connections, and resources like exhibitors and the AuSM Shop. Whether you are new to autism or have decades of experience, there’s information for you here as you connect with our community.

www.ausm.org

**April 16-18,
2025**

Doubletree Hilton
Minneapolis Airport Hotel



WWW.AUSM.ORG



Steps for Autism is all about supporting our community – and connecting people with services, supports, and each other. AuSM has spent over 50 years creating a more inclusive Minnesota. Join us by donating or registering as a fundraiser then connect with your community at Steps for Autism on May 18!

**18 MAY
2025**

ROC AT THE ST. LOUIS PARK
RECREATION CENTER

Image: Alma Hueso

Multicultural Partnerships Expand at AuSM

In the past three years, AuSM has been awarded three simultaneous grants on behalf of the state Department of Human Services to create and expand resources and community building amongst Minnesota’s many culturally specific communities. The success of this work is predicated on first, AuSM’s increasing wealth of strong and meaningful partnerships, and second, that the work itself is responsive to specific community drive, context, real relationships and stories.

All cultural groups in Minnesota are a part of our statewide autism identity, and expanding our partnerships and programs in 2024 has afforded AuSM the continued opportunity to better learn and integrate the needs of specific cultural perspectives along with every other facet of uniqueness held by our community members. Each of the following partners have contributed to exciting expansion of programs in 2024, and continue to inform AuSM’s advocacy for a culturally responsive service landscape in Minnesota.

Our Partners

Centro Tyrone Guzman <https://www.centromn.org/>

New to partnership with AuSM in 2024, we have learned that Centro already provides a multitude of wrap around resources for Latine and Spanish-speaking families in Minnesota. Centro is working to build autism awareness and community connectivity into their existing program themes, including early education, maternal and child health, wise elders, and teen programs. Centro is one of two new groups focused on Latine identity, with another to be announced in 2025.

Centro is developing a support group for Latine parents of autistic children. Please contact them if you or your family are interested and would like to be notified of upcoming sessions.

Email: infocenter@centromn.org. **Phone:** 612.874.1412.



Maangaar Global <https://maangaarglobal.org/>

Coined in support of the Somali community’s emerging translation for “autism”, Maangaar rounds out AuSM’s work in Somali-focused partnerships in 2024. Maangaar provides parent education and connection for families of all ages, with a pronounced focus on acceptance and compassion for multiply marginalized families. Maangaar has hosted a number of community conversations, some accessible and intimate, and others large and integrated with many of Minnesota’s mainstream stakeholders, who continue to reach out to our collaborative for feedback and leadership. Maangaar Global is hosting a support group for Somali parents that will provide a space to build community and an opportunity to connect with other parents of autistic children, which meets Tuesday and Thursday evenings. If you are interested, please contact us and we will add you to the groupchat for parents where we post the link for the meeting and any announcements.

Email: a.musa@maangaarglobal.org. **Phone:** 469.995.4424.



Multicultural Autism Action Network (MAAN) <https://www.maanmn.org/>

MAAN diligently focuses on direct service navigation amongst many cultural communities, with a pronounced affinity for service to immigrants factions, such as Somali, Oromo, and other African and Caribbean American communities. In addition to hosting our second annual Multicultural Family Camp with Camp Knutson this year, MAAN and AuSM continue to partner on legislative, educational, health and social service initiatives, with special attention to mutual inclusion of parent and autistic voices in the development and delivery of program.



SEWA-AIFW <https://www.sewa-aifw.org/>

SEWA, translated as “to serve” in Hindi, is a Minnesota organization focused on support for the unmet needs of the Indian diaspora and South Asian immigrant and refugee communities. SEWA has a long recognized stance on neurodiversity affirmation, and has been generating new community building opportunities alongside its many other programs that promote Total Family Wellness. SEWA and AuSM are working on building resources to be released in Hindi, Urdu, and Gujarati languages, addressing autism identity and support strategies that also address community stigma. SEWA is hosting a support group for South Asian parents of autistic children. This group meets every third Saturday of the month from 3-5 p.m. at 6645 James Ave N, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430. If you have questions, please contact SEWA.

Email: Ratna@sewa-aifw.org. **Phone:** 763.205.9873.



Somali Parent Autism Network (SPAN) www.somaliautism.org

In addition to service navigation for Somali families, SPAN is well known for leveraging their broader Somali community connections to leverage anti-stigma work across multiple venues. With ties to popular community mosques, businesses, and immigrant advocacy groups, SPAN adds multiple dimensions of mission advancement, as well as Greater Minnesota reach in other growing Somali locales around the state: Rochester, Wilmar, and St. Cloud to name a few. SPAN provides a virtual support group for Somali Parents and caretakers of children with autism. For additional information, contact SPAN and request to be added to their Whatsapp page. **Phone:** 763.657.0049.



Accra helps families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder that need support in their homes. We are one of the largest providers of homecare services in Minnesota, proudly serving more than 12,000 clients across the state. Our mission is to improve lives by providing individualized homecare services and support to people living at home. Our person-centered philosophy focuses on treating each person as a unique individual.

Our services include:

- Personal Care Assistant (PCA) Choice
- Financial Management Services (FMS)
- 245D Waivered Services
- Mental Health Services

To learn more, call 866-935-3515 or visit accrahomecare.org



Learn With AuSM

AuSM workshops are offered throughout the year and offer insight from experts on autism-related topics. You'll find information for family members, educators, professionals, and of course autistic individuals. All workshops are presented virtually (unless noted) and are available as a recording for one month after the event date.

AuSM Workshops are supported by Premier Partners.



Maximizing Your Disability Services: Person-Centered Planning and Creative Solutions

Date: January 24, 2025; 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Presented by: Barbara Luskin, PhD (she/her) and Jillian Nelson (she/her)

Pricing: \$59.99 (non-member), \$49.99 (member), \$39.99 (autistic individual)

Join us for a workshop focused on empowering individuals with disabilities and their families in Minnesota through person-centered planning and innovative approaches. This session will guide participants on how to leverage available disability services effectively while fostering a personalized, strengths-based approach to support and services. Key topics include person-centered planning, creative solutions to everyday challenges, navigating the system, communication with service providers, and self-advocacy.

Dr. Barbara Luskin is a licensed psychologist who has worked closely with children and adults with ASD for more than 30 years in professional and home settings. She specializes in providing assessments and counseling to individuals with ASD and those who support them. Dr. Luskin serves the local autism community in multiple capacities including professional consultation, autism trainings, certification instruction, and individual work with clients.

Jillian Nelson is a queer autistic adult from Saint Paul and is the full-time Community Resource and Policy Advocate for AuSM. Jillian is passionate about disability justice and teaching others to advocate for themselves, as well as reforming existing systems through legislation and advocacy to create a more equitable and accessible society for people with all types of disabilities. Jillian is a 2023-24 Humphrey Policy Fellow. She is passionate about diversity and intersectionality – and how that unfolds in the mosaic experience of people with disabilities.

What's New With The Zones of Regulation? Updated Approaches and Curriculum

Date: March 7, 2025; 9-11 a.m.

Presented by: Leah Kuypers (she/her)

Pricing: \$59.99 (non-member), \$49.99 (member), \$39.99 (autistic individual)

Join us for an engaging 2-hour webinar with Leah Kuypers, the visionary behind The Zones of Regulation. This session will unveil the updated Zones of Regulation Digital Curriculum, highlighting its evolved framework and enriched resources designed for effective teaching and learning. Discover how the Digital Curriculum incorporates the latest research, neurodiverse-affirming practices, and Universal Design for Learning to create a meaningful and impactful experience for

learners with diverse support needs. You'll also receive a guided tour of the new Zones curriculum, showcasing its interactive features, updated visuals, and expanded resources. The webinar includes an exclusive interview with Leah, where she'll share her insights and answer your questions, empowering you to confidently embrace the next chapter of The Zones of Regulation.

Leah Kuypers, MA Ed., OTR/L is the author of The Zones of Regulation® Digital Curriculum (www.zonesofregulation.com, 2024) and Getting Into The Zones of Regulation: The Complete Framework and Digital Curriculum Companion (Think Social Publishing, 2024). Leah Kuypers is an internationally recognized trainer, consultant and speaker on regulation and social emotional learning. While working in public schools as an occupational therapist and autism resource specialist, Leah Kuypers encountered learners of all ages with diverse needs. Recognizing that difficulties with regulation skills often had a significant impact on learners' functioning and overall well-being, Kuypers created The Zones of Regulation, a systematic and practical approach to fostering regulation skills.

Policy Power: Advocacy Skills for an Inclusive Future

Dates: Saturdays; March 15-29; 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Presented by: Jillian Nelson (she/her)

Pricing: \$59.99 (non-member), \$49.99 (member), \$39.99 (autistic individual)

Held in person at AuSM's office: 2380 Wycliff St. #102, St. Paul, MN 55114

Join this engaging three-session class designed for adults with autism and their allies to explore disability policy, build coalitions, and practice advocacy skills. Participants will learn about disability history, identify areas for policy reform, and collaborate on creating mock legislation. Through project-based learning, role-playing, and expert guidance—including feedback from a legislator—participants will gain tools to make meaningful policy changes and create inclusive communities.

Jillian Nelson is a queer autistic adult from Saint Paul and is the full-time Community Resource and Policy Advocate for AuSM. Jillian is passionate about disability justice and teaching others to advocate for themselves, as well as reforming existing systems through legislation and advocacy to create a more equitable and accessible society for people with all types of disabilities. Jillian is a 2023-24 Humphrey Policy Fellow. She is passionate about diversity and intersectionality – and how that unfolds in the mosaic experience of people with disabilities.

Neurodivergent Intimacy: Tools for more fulfilling communication, relationship dynamics, and sex lives for neurodivergent people and their partners.

Date: June 6, 2025; 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Presented by: Mason Esposito (they/them)

Pricing: \$59.99 (non-member), \$49.99 (member), \$39.99 (autistic individual)

Explore relationships, sex, and intimacy with a neurodiversity-affirming perspective. Drawing from a wide range of relationship structures, including LGBTQ+, BDSM, polyamory, and more, this workshop will give you tools for improved communication and healthy boundaries. You will learn how to communicate your needs and support your partner(s) in long-term relationships or short-term relationships. This workshop is for neurodivergent people, including autistic adults, and their partners, including neurotypicals. The discussion will include mentions of sex, and is intended for adults.

Mason Esposito earned their Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA and their Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology from the University of St Thomas in St Paul, MN. Mason is a neurodivergent clinician who is passionate about supporting other neurodivergent people, and has worked primarily with neurodivergent clients and their families. Mason loves working with LGBTQ teens and young adults, although they welcome all clients. They have experience as an LGBTQ sex educator at the college level, and are passionate about sexuality and sexual health education for neurodivergent, disabled, and LGBTQ teens and young adults.

Demystifying “The Sex Talk”

Date: July 31, 2025; 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
Presented by: Logan Sand (they/them) and Elizza Marble (she/her)
Pricing: \$59.99 (non-member), \$49.99 (member), \$39.99 (autistic individual)

Current research undeniably supports the value of comprehensive sexuality education, with benefits ranging from reduced rates of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, to decreased instances of sexual harm, to a positive impact on global climate change; however, these important conversations are often not inclusive of autistic and neurodivergent individuals. This is not only because health class is often deprioritized for these students, but also because sexuality topics like consent and healthy relationships are often covered through the lens of unwritten and assumed social rules. This often leaves both autistic individuals and their support system feeling underequipped to discuss important topics like consent, boundaries, healthy relationships, and socially appropriate behaviors within those relationships. This workshop aims to demystify those topics and provide tangible tools for their discussion.

Logan Sand has been with the LSS SELF Program since 2017 and has been a sexuality educator since 2014. Logan currently teaches a sexual development elective at the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare at the University of MN and has served as an adjunct professor teaching sexuality at Adler Graduate School. Before LSS, Logan worked in training and curriculum development for Family Tree Clinic in St. Paul and taught Introduction to Human Sexuality at Montgomery County Community College.

Elissa Marble joined the SELF team as the Program Coordinator in May 2023. She is passionate about advocacy and making sexuality education accessible for all people. Prior to her work with SELF, Elissa was an advocate for youth and families experiencing homelessness, sexual exploitation, and trafficking. As program coordinator, Elissa develops and maintains partnerships with many community organizations to provide comprehensive sexuality education to youth, people with disabilities, caregivers, and professionals.

Now and Venn: Moving Forward with Overlapping Neurodivergencies

Date: November 6, 2025; 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
Presented by: Beth Pitchford (she/her)
Pricing: \$59.99 (non-member), \$49.99 (member), \$39.99 (autistic individual)

More people are finding that they are diagnosed with both autism and ADHD, or AuDHD. Learn the basics of what AuDHD is as well as the strengths, challenges, and idiosyncrasies of being doubly neurodivergent in this virtual workshop. Beth will go through what qualifies someone to have the AuDHD diagnosis, the barriers to diagnosis, and various tools to improve quality of life for those with challenges caused by being neurodivergent in a world made for neurotypicals.

Beth Pitchford, MA, MA, LPCC is a mental health therapist who specializes in working with neurodivergent individuals for over 10 years. Starting out at the Autism Society of Minnesota, she now works at Dakota County Technical College where she does individual therapy with students as well as social programming, education workshops, and assessments for autism and ADHD.

Beth has a master of arts in Adlerian Psychotherapy and Counseling (Adler Graduate School; 2014) and a master’s in Forensic Behavioral Health (Concordia, 2023). She focused on Autism with both degrees. In 2024, she presented at the International ADHD Conference where she expanded her knowledge about ADHD & AuDHD. She continues to work to remove barriers to success and quality of life for neurodivergent people.



Join us for a relaxed performance

guthrietheater.org/relaxed

An enchanting comedic delight

A Midsummer Night's
DREAM

Sunday, March 9 at 1 p.m.

An iconic murder mystery

The
MOUSETRAP

Saturday, April 19 at 1 p.m.

A provocative musical masterpiece

CABARET

Sunday, August 3 at 1 p.m.

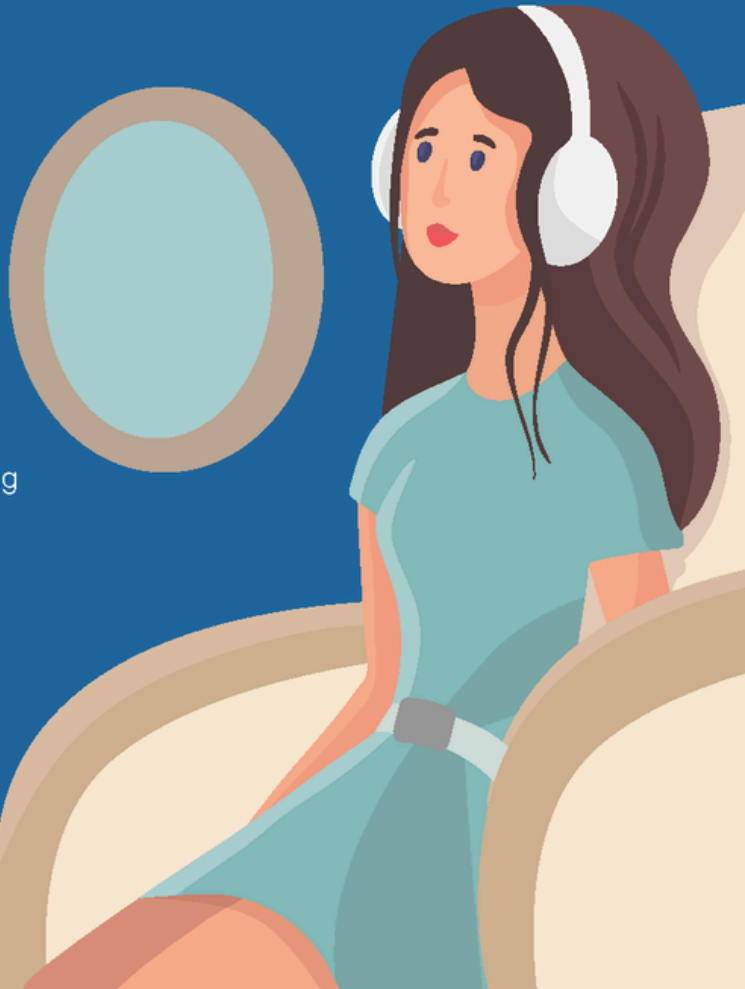
Want a little practice before taking a trip? Buckle up.

The **Navigating MSP Airport** program was created in partnership with the Fraser organization and the Autism Society of Minnesota to allow people to practice unique airport experiences—including security screening, boarding and fastening your seatbelt —before you fly.

Thinking forward. Rising above.



Learn more about Accessibility at MSP.



ASD Direct Support Certification

This certificate program is designed to prepare professionals, educators, caregivers, and service providers, to provide direct support to people impacted by autism. You will gain an in-depth understanding of the autism diagnosis, the issues affecting autistic people, and some of AuSM's favorite support strategies. This three-part series is ideal for support staff, PCAs, group home staff, educational aides, and anyone who works directly with autistic individuals. Individuals on the spectrum also are welcome and encouraged to attend to increase their self-awareness and to share their unique perspectives. Email education@ausm.org for information about discounted group rates.

Training Objectives

- Understand Autism Spectrum Disorder and how autism can affect communication, relationships, and behavior.
- Explore the social issues impacting the autism community and how you can help autistic people thrive.
- Apply evidence-based practices to support autistic people experiencing challenges.

Location: Held Virtually

Session	Day/Dates	Time	Price
Spring Session	Fridays, May 9, 16, and 23	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	\$300
Summer Session	Fridays, Aug. 22, 29, and Sep. 5	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	\$300

Understanding Autism

Understanding Autism is AuSM's introductory class. You'll learn all about the diagnosis, common characteristics, and some basic evidenced-based best practices to support autistic individuals and sensory processing sensitivities. This class is ideal for caregivers, parents, grandparents, group home and day program staff, Personal Care Attendants, and health care staff.

*Note, this is a single-session class. Content is the same for all sessions. AuSM offers these sessions at different times to accommodate as many schedules as possible. When registering, select the session that works best for you.

Location: Held Virtually

All sessions are free

Day/Date	Time
Monday, Feb. 10	12-1 p.m.
Monday, Mar. 10	6-7 p.m.
Monday, Apr. 14	10-11 a.m.
Monday, May 12	12-1 p.m.
Monday, June 9	6-7 p.m.
Monday, July 14	10-11 a.m.



2025 Understanding Autism classes are sponsored by AuSM Premier Partners Best Care and MICC

BEST CARE
YOUR CARE. YOUR WAY.

MICC
MINNESOTA INDEPENDENCE COLLEGE & COMMUNITY
Learn Skills. Experience Life.

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Training

By learning more about autism and neurodiversity, you are taking proactive steps toward acceptance and inclusion. AuSM will provide you with strategies to help you understand the needs of people affected by autism, allowing you to offer a positive, supportive environment for the fastest growing disability population in the United States.

Training

AuSM's team of education specialists provide you with customized trainings that offer strategies to help make your environment positive, inclusive, and supportive for neurodiverse individuals. Common topics include:

- Accessibility and Inclusion
- Autism 101
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace
- Sensory-Friendly Environments and Events
- Understanding Behavior and Positive Supports

Consulting

AuSM offers a range of consulting services through our partnerships. Our services include, but are not limited to:

- Customized staff trainings
- Sensory-friendly inventory of spaces
- Customized social narratives and visual tools
- Sensory-friendly guide listings
- Event listing on AuSM's Community Calendar
- Sensory kits and tools
- Guidance for inclusive spaces and resources

 education@ausm.org

 www.ausm.org

 651.647.1083

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245D Basic Licensed Service (IHS)

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PICS is a subsidiary of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota.





Social and Recreation Programs with the Minnesota Zoo

The Minnesota Zoo is excited to partner with the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) to offer summer camp opportunities for youth with autism. Registration is through the Minnesota Zoo website and opens on Feb. 4 at 10 a.m. for Zoo Members, and on Feb. 11 at 10 a.m. to the general public.

These classes are staffed at a 1:4 staff-to-participant ratio. If an individual is able to participate safely in a program but requires more support than 1:4 staffing provides, the individual may bring a Direct Support Professional (DSP). The DSP will be responsible for supporting the individual with communication, behavior, and daily living skills. Contact the Minnesota Zoo for more information.

Location: Minnesota Zoo, 13000 Zoo Blvd. Apple Valley, MN 55124
Price: \$275

Zoo Explorers (Ages 8-11)

Tromp through the tropics, journey through the grasslands, and “swim” through the oceans to observe animals like real zoologists.

Ocean Commotion (Ages 12-15)

Welcome to a world of constant change. Meet the creatures of this wonderful watery world and explore their awesome abilities to survive and thrive—despite all the commotion. Through observations, discussions, and scientific data, determine what changes have already occurred in our oceans, what might be in store for the future, and how you could make a difference!

Wildlife Heroes (Ages 16-19)

From working with animals at the Zoo to saving wildlife in the field, zookeepers and scientists must problem-solve daily to design innovative solutions. Test your skills with real-world design challenges while learning how STEM is being used to help animals —around the world, in Minnesota, and right here at the Zoo.

Session	Day/Date	Time
Zoo Explorers	June 16-20	1-4 p.m.
Ocean Commotion	June 23-27	1-4 p.m.
Wildlife Heroes	July 7-11	8:30-11:30 a.m.



Coffee Club

Coffee Club is a space where autistic and neurodivergent adults can connect with each other, foster friendships, and build community while enjoying a favorite beverage and/or snack. Adults are welcome to bring items that make them feel comfortable, stay as long as they’d like, stim, and parallel play. While it’s free to participate in AuSM Coffee Club, we ask that participants purchase something from our venue.

AuSM provides a staff person to assist with questions, check-in, ordering, or to manage any issues that may arise during the club. AuSM provides resources including a social narrative providing club details, parking info, menus, and more.

Tuesdays, 4-6 p.m.

- Feb. 11
- March 11
- Apr. 15
- May 13
- June 10
- July 8
- Aug. 12
- Sep. 9
- Oct. 14
- Dec. 9

Location:

Dogwood Coffee, 2700 University Ave W Suite 100, St Paul, MN 55114

RSVP at www.ausm.org



AuSM Coffee Club is free thanks to the generous sponsorship of AuSM Premier Partner Best Care.



Support Groups

AuSM provides a variety of support groups to meet the needs of our community. Support groups offer those affected by autism the opportunity to share problems, solutions, joy, and sorrows with one another.

- **Women’s Support Group: first Thursday of each month.**
 - 2025 dates: Jan. 2, Feb. 6, Mar. 6, Apr. 3, May 1, June 5, July 3, Aug. 7, Sep. 4, Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 4
- **LGBTQIA+ Support Group: second Thursday of each month**
 - 2025 dates: Jan. 9, Feb. 13, Mar. 13, Apr. 10, May 8, June 12, July 10, Aug. 14, Sep. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 11
- **Family Members of Adults on the Spectrum Support Group: third Thursday of each month**
 - 2025 dates: Jan. 16, Feb. 20, Mar. 20, No group in April due to the Minnesota Autism Conference, May 15, No group in June due to the Juneteenth holiday, July 17, Aug. 21, Sep. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 20, Dec. 18
- **Independent Adults with ASD Support Group: fourth Thursday of each month**
 - 2025 dates: Jan. 23, Feb. 27, March 27, April 24, May 22, June 26, July 24, Aug. 28, Sep. 25, Oct. 23, No group in November or December due to the holidays

RSVP at www.ausm.org. Held virtually from 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Check the website for details.



AuSM Support Groups are generously sponsored by Premier Partners Accra, Best Care, and MICC.



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Summer Camps

AuSM Summer Camps are tailored for autistic children, youth, and adults. Parents and caregivers can rest assured knowing that their campers are being cared for by highly trained staff, while campers experience success, meet peers, and make memories. **To participate in an AuSM camp, you must be a current member of AuSM** (see the back cover for more details).

Camp Registration in 2025

Camp placements for Camp Discovery and Camp Hand in Hand will be determined through a lottery system. The online application is available from January 1st–February 14th. In order to enter the camp lottery, you will be asked to complete all required camp paperwork except proof of an annual medical exam. Please select only **one** session of camp when applying for the lottery. Once all required forms have been completed and submitted, you will receive a confirmation email saying that your camper is on the waitlist. **All campers** are on a waitlist until the lottery is complete.

If you have questions about which camp is the best fit for your camper, or other camp questions, please contact camp@ausm.org.

Apply for the lottery at www.ausm.org/camps

Waivers

AuSM has created a resource to help you navigate paying for camp with a waiver. Visit www.ausm.org/camps to view the resource!

Camp Discovery

Camp Discovery is a great choice for autistic individuals who do well in small groups. Most successful Discovery campers are mainstreamed part-time, in a transitions program, or working part-time in their communities. Campers should be able to positively interact and safely participate within small groups. At Camp Discovery, you can look forward to swimming, live action role-playing games, nature experiences, arts and crafts, kayaking, canoeing, and small group discussions focused on special interests.

Cost: \$1999
Location: True Friends Courage South, 8046 83rd St. NW, Maple Lake, MN 55358
Support level: Small group

Sessions

Session 1: June 29-July 3, ages 18+
Session 2: July 6-10, ages 10-17



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Camp Hand in Hand

Camp Hand in Hand is the place for campers who need the most support and can meet the needs of all campers except those who are medically vulnerable. AuSM-trained camp counselors and experienced cabin leaders carefully plan and maintain a well-run, relaxed, and rewarding camp experience. Our campers are paired with a single counselor who works with them throughout their camp week, with activities like boating, tubing, horseback riding, crafts, archery, biking, music groups, swimming, paddleboards, ropes courses, nature exploration, and more!

Cost: \$1999
Location: Camp Knutson, 1148 Manhattan Pt. Blvd. Crosslake, MN 56442
Support level: One to one, each camper receives an assigned counselor

Sessions

Session 1: June 18-22, ages 18-23
Session 2: June 24-28, ages 14-17
Session 3: August 4-8, ages 10-13
Session 4: August 10-14, ages 24+





TRUE FRIENDS

EXPERIENCE ACCESSIBLE VACATIONS

Group trips for adults with disabilities



VIEW THE TRAVEL CATALOG AND DISCOVER ALL 2025 DESTINATIONS
TrueFriends.org/Travel-Catalog

 info@truefriends.org
 952.852.0101

30 Years with Camp Knutson

Picture this: 40 acres, tucked into one of the most beautiful peninsulas of Crosslake, Minnesota--a sleepy central-Minnesota town turned summer hot-spot come June each year. Camp Knutson, a small, independent arm of Lutheran Social Services, is nestled between two of fourteen interconnected, vibrant lakes of the Whitefish Chain. The property is neat and meticulously well-kept, and shines with the natural beauty of the forests and lakes that contain it. Certainly, Camp Knutson could be a sought-after destination for any Minnesotan, but remarkably, the property and all its features and staff have been dedicated wholly to people with disabilities since its establishment in 1954.



These days, Camp Knutson hosts upwards of ten different partner groups every summer season, each dedicated to its own special population of campers. Some groups serve those with rare skin disorders or childhood heart disease, even cancer. Others serve those with Down Syndrome or those who experience homelessness or other heavy loss. But the partner that holds the most sessions each summer with Camp Knutson is proudly the Autism Society of Minnesota. Together, we host four sessions of Camp Hand in Hand, an overnight summer camp program that is designed for autistic campers who need a one-to-one level of supervision in order to safely and comfortably enjoy the classic summer camp experience.

Camp Knutson consistently offers so much to the AuSM partnership. Their policies and practices around things like meal delivery and access to medical care prop the door open for many campers who have not been successfully served at other camps around the state. Their facilities are spacious and comfortable, allowing for the inclusion of those who wish to connect to the camp experience without the necessary tribulations of “roughing it.” But above all, their very organizational DNA seems to be focused on creating joy for all who step foot on their grounds, no matter what that joy looks like.

In addition to a core group of leaders, many of Camp Knutson’s summer program staff are recruited for their interest and expertise in serving disabled kids and adults. Their training and internal culture is forged uniquely each year, marked by a true appreciation for its campers and their needs, and a sense of openness and ambition about the way we can access a campers’ true self with the right level of care, planning, and structure. Every activity and every theme is meant to help campers make incredible memories, where they are centered and celebrated authentically. And, collaboration with partners and visiting counselors aims to be seamless, such that we can care for our beloved campers diverse needs while enjoying what comes to group organically—silliness, beauty, and connection - and in our case, autistic joy.

AuSM has certainly left its mark on Camp K, too. Their growth with us over nearly 30 years helps them support neurodiversity at all intersections and has recently helped develop new and exciting opportunities for families impacted by autism as well as other cultural marginalizations. With every bit of growth, our gratefulness for Camp K grows too. We hope for decades more of partnership with this incredible place.

Thank you, Camp Knutson!



Work At AuSM Camps!

It takes a lot of staff to make camp happen. Every summer, we hire more than 100 people to work at AuSM camps. Here’s what we’re looking for:

- Two nurses (RN, NP, PA, or MD required) per session.
- More than 50 Camp Counselors and Cabin Leaders per session.
- Autism direct support professionals, personal care providers, students, and educators dedicated to making summer camp accessible for everyone.

Strong hiring preference will be given to qualified applicants who can work all camp sessions.

Go to www.ausm.org/camps/work-at-camp to apply.

20

As we head into 2025, the AuSM Advocacy Committee has been hard at work setting our priorities for the upcoming legislative session. **If you'd like to be involved in AuSM Advocacy, visit www.ausm.org to learn more about the committee!**

AuSM 2025 Policy Agenda

1: Sub Minimum Wage

In 2023, Minnesota passed legislation making historic investments in the move to pay people with disabilities the minimum wage or higher, as well as increase customized and integrated employment for that population. We continue to advocate for guaranteed minimum wage for people with disabilities, the final step in taking our previous work to its fruition.

2: Medical Assistance-Employed Persons With Disabilities (MA-EPD)

This proposal seeks to eliminate the premiums that are charged to individuals who receive MA-EPD, and prevent the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) from discharging individuals who cannot afford to pay their current MA-EPD premium.

3: Event Licensing

We are continuing to work on legislation that mandates sensory-friendly accommodations for large public events in Minnesota, requiring event organizers to submit detailed plans for such accommodations as part of their permit applications.

4: Special Education Parent Accessibility

It is essential that parents of children receiving special education services in school can meaningfully participate in the development and revision of their children's individualized education programs. To support all parents, we are continuing to advocate that school districts are required to adopt policies and processes that assist parents who need language assistance or have disabilities.

5. Insurance Coverage for Autism Reform

This bill proposes to expand insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders in Minnesota. The key changes include removing the age limit for coverage (previously limited to children under 18) and adding several new therapy options to the list of covered treatments, such as SCERTS, floortime, play therapy, art therapy, and music therapy. The bill aims to provide more comprehensive and inclusive coverage for individuals with autism spectrum disorders, regardless of age, and to recognize a broader range of therapeutic approaches in their treatment.

6. Waiver Modification for Swim Lessons

In response to multiple recent incidents of children with autism passing away from drowning, AuSM is proposing two new bills to improve water safety in our community. The first will amend waiver rules to allow swimming lessons as an approved item for all individuals receiving waiver services with a diagnosis of autism.



7. Autism Swim Safety Grant Appropriation

The second water safety step in AuSM's advocacy work, this bill would allocate \$500,000 in fiscal year 2025 and 2026 to create autism friendly swim programs. Existing swim programs would be eligible to apply for grant funding to work with autism organizations for training in autism and assistance in developing effective swim curriculum to teach water safety. Additional funds would be awarded to programs after completion of training and curriculum to provide free or low cost swim lessons to the autism community, with 60% of scholarships going to BIPOC families.

8. Autism Society of Minnesota Appropriation

A proposal to appropriate a total of \$1 million over two fiscal years (2025 and 2026) to the Minnesota Council on Disability. This money is to be granted to Autism Society of Minnesota to provide community information and support services specifically tailored for adults and families impacted by autism. These services include advocacy, information and resources, camps and social opportunities, community education, training, and specialized mental health services.

AuSM Therapists

The Autism Society of Minnesota's highly-trained therapists have committed their careers to helping individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder understand their diagnosis. They provide strategies to support each person's unique autism experience, addressing both the challenges and gifts it can bring. AuSM therapists help individuals with autism from youth through adulthood as they grow at their own pace in a safe, compassionate, and respectful environment. AuSM's clinic is LGBTQIA-friendly and takes a neurodiversity-friendly approach to therapy, with many neurodivergent therapists on staff. We are a leader in adult and gender-affirming mental health services for autistics. Our therapists practice a variety of types of therapy, including EMDR, ACT, CBT, and hold licensures including LMFT, PhD, MA, MS, MSW, and more.

Contact us at autismcounseling@ausm.org to set up an appointment.

AUSM IS A NEURODIVERSITY-AFFIRMING CLINIC

Counseling Services:

- Individual therapy
- Marriage, couples, and family therapy
- Psychoeducation
- Second opinions on autism evaluations
- Trauma therapy
- Onsite consultations for high-intensity challenges when staff or family need additional support

AuSM's services are outpatient only. If you require a higher level of support, we may refer you to another provider.

Autism can be complicated, and finding the right resources can feel overwhelming. AuSM offers free help to individuals and families in the autism community. We're here to give simple, practical advice to help you understand your options, navigate systems, and find the services and support that work best for you. Our Information and Resources team understands what you're going through and is ready to listen, talk through your needs, and connect you with programs, therapists, and other helpful supports.



651.647.1083 (call)



651.321.2909 (text)



info@ausm.org



ausm-resources/information-and-resources

We can help with:

- Recommendations on testing and obtaining a diagnosis
- County service guidance; advice on first proactive steps
- Locating providers for different types of therapies
- Autism-related questions that are not clinical
- Recommendations of general employment services
- Resources regarding social and support opportunities
- Recommendations of tools and adaptive tech
- Book and media recommendations
- Information about disability rights and laws related to autism
- And more, ask us!



Online Resources

AuSM is dedicated to empowering the autism community with accessible, practical tools and information. Our robust library of online resources is designed to support individuals, families, educators, and professionals. Explore videos, worksheets, guides, infographics, and more on topics such as advocacy, emotional regulation, executive function, sensory regulation, and navigating community life. All resources are available for free at www.ausm.org/ausm-resources.

In the following page, you'll find content pulled from our What Is the Double Empathy Problem? resource. We received great feedback on this resource and its companion piece, the Double Empathy Communication Guide, and we hope it will help you as you manage communication challenges.

What Is the Double Empathy Problem?

The Double Empathy Problem refers to the fact that no one has direct access to another person's thoughts, intentions, and feelings. We are all more or less guessing about what other people mean all the time. The more similar our background, experiences, upbringing, etc., the easier it is to guess at another person's thoughts and feelings. Differences in cognitive styles, communication styles, and cultural background make it harder to guess.



Theory of Mind is the human ability to understand that other people have different knowledge, beliefs, intentions, values, and thoughts from your own. This skill helps us to predict other people's behavior and guess what they're feeling or thinking. Most people begin to develop Theory of Mind between ages three and five.

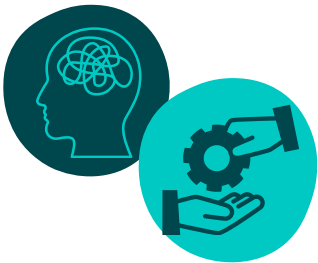


What does Theory of Mind have to do with autism? Historically, service providers and researchers proposed that autistic individuals don't develop Theory of Mind skills, which would explain many of the social and communication challenges in the diagnosis.



How does Theory of Mind relate to the Double Empathy Problem? The Double Empathy Problem provides a different explanation for the social and communication challenges of autism and suggests that autistics aren't *bad* at Theory of Mind. Instead, all people are better at Theory of Mind for people they're more similar to, and autistics are often trying to communicate across big differences. This suggests the communication challenges between autistics and non-autistics are mutual rather than because of an autistic person's deficits.

Autistic people are not necessarily bad at communicating: they just have different cognitive and communication styles and find it hard to guess what non-autistic people are thinking and feeling. This goes both ways: non-autistic people are not great at guessing what autistic people are thinking and feeling.



The impact ON AUTISTICS

Even though autistic communication is fairly effective when it is between autistic people, it is seen as a deficit. It is diagnosed as a disorder. It is corrected through therapies and treatments. The autistic person is always expected to change to meet the neurotypical expectations of communication. This has significant impacts on autistic people throughout their lives. Some of those impacts are:

- **Mental Health:** autistic people face loneliness, isolation, and bias.
- **School and work:** communication challenges make it hard for autistic individuals to succeed and can lead to bullying or discrimination.
- **Service access and goals:** Historically, many service providers have focused on making autistics better at neurotypical styles of communication. Over time, this leads to burnout and mental health challenges, and makes it harder for autistics to access services.

How you can MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Learn about autistic communication so you can understand how autistic people are communicating with you.
- Try adjusting your own communication style to match autistic people's needs and preferences.
- Ask autistics about their perspectives and experiences.
- Be aware of your language. Instead of talking about communication or socialization deficits, talk about the differences between autistic communication and non-autistic communication.



Helping you Meet Their Needs



612.200.9920
Serving Minnesota since 2009

AUTISM ADVOCACY
901 North 3rd Street, Suite 120
Minneapolis, MN 55401
& LAW CENTER LLC.

Sensory-Friendly Listings

Events and activities listed in this guide have been submitted by community partners and are subject to change. AuSM encourages you to visit the websites provided at least one month prior to attending an event or activity, as they may require advance registration and/or have limited capacity. An event or activity may be postponed or canceled without notice. AuSM does not endorse events and activities included in this guide.

Bell Museum - Saint Paul



Website: www.bellmuseum.umn.edu

Daily, we offer resources including sensory packs for those who need tools for calming, including but not limited to weighted blankets, sunglasses, headphones, and fidgets like tangles, fidget cubes, squeeze balls, and pop-its, as well as a quiet room which provides a respite from the stimulating environment of the museum. We also have monthly Sensory Friendly hours with lowered lights, sounds, and a modified planetarium show offering.

Children's Performing Arts - Saint Paul



Website: childrensperformingartsmn.org

For every mainstage show in our season, Children's Performing Arts hosts a relaxed performance. This allows patrons with sensory, social, physical, and cognitive needs to attend a production in a safe and welcoming environment. Modifications to this performance include lights remaining dim in the audience, elimination of intense lighting and sound effects, and audiences being free to move around the space and make any noises they need to make.

City of New Brighton Parks and Recreation



Website: www.newbrightonmn.gov/297/Parks-Recreation

New Brighton Parks and Recreation understands that not all children can attend the Eagles Nest during normal business timeframes. That is why they have partnered with the Autism Society of Minnesota, Down Syndrome Association of MN, and Northway Academy to create a series of Sensory Friendly events at the very popular Eagles Nest Indoor Playground at the New Brighton Community Center. There will be a limited number of admissions sold at a reduced rate for each session. Each is from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Attendees can guarantee admission by pre-purchasing admission for their children on the City's website. The Parks and Recreation Department will have additional staff on site to assist with accommodation requests, as well as a quiet space for those who need a break during the event.

Gammelgården Museum of Scandia



Website: gammelgardenmuseum.org

Gammelgården Museum offers a social narrative designed for members of the neurodiverse community. The social narrative is a resource for those who may benefit from descriptions and pictures that show what a typical visit to the museum is like. This is a useful tool intended to increase comfort while visiting Gammelgården, and may be used by families, adults, teens, and school groups. The social narrative is available on the museum's website and by request at the welcome desk in the Valkommen Hus at Gammelgården.

In addition to our social narrative, Gammelgården Museum has four sensory kits available for check-out use while at the museum. There are two kits with adult-size headphones and two kits with child-size headphones. If a full kit is not needed, Gammelgården also has a box with various fidgets that may be checked out.

Guthrie Theater - Minneapolis

Website: www.guthrietheater.org

A relaxed performance is intended to be sensitive to and accepting of any audience member who may benefit from a more relaxed environment. Although these performances are open to all patrons, they are intentionally modified to accommodate patrons with sensory and vestibular sensitivities, anxiety, dementia, autism spectrum disorders, learning differences and/or other challenges attending the theater. Small modifications will be made to the performance, which may include reducing the volume of loud noises and effects, eliminating strobe lights, keeping the house lights on and having a relaxed attitude toward sound and movement in the audience. Our lobbies and public spaces will include quiet areas, sensory-friendly activities, and increased staff to create a safe, welcoming environment. Open captions are provided at each relaxed performance.



James J. Hill House - Saint Paul

Website: www.mnhs.org/hillhouse

The Minnesota Historical Society creates atmospheres of inclusivity through offering events outside of regular hours with adjusted sound levels, information about experiences, lighting adjustments, and staff trained in the additional considerations of working with families of and those with neurodiverse considerations such as autism. There is a social story available on the James J. Hill House website.



Laura Baker Service Association - Northfield

Website: www.laurabaker.org

Laura Baker offers Family Support Services throughout the year, including Saturday Fun Respite Events and Family Support Meetings. Family Support Services are intended to alleviate some of the stress of managing disabilities by creating opportunities for respite, community connections, and information sharing.



Looking Forward Life Coaching-Minnetonka

Website: www.lookingforwardlc.org

Looking Forward Life Coaching is a person centered based organization that comes alongside autistic adults as they navigate life. We provide a one-on-one mentor approach either virtually, in the community, or a hybrid of both. We provide a safe, supportive environment for each person to express their needs and wants as they explore what their hopes and dreams are for the future. Our coaches have been trained on providing person centered approaches to their interactions, so if a client needs an environment that supports their sensory needs, we will accommodate.



Mill City Museum - Minneapolis

Website: www.mnhs.org/millcity

The Minnesota Historical Society creates atmospheres of inclusivity through offering events outside of regular hours with adjusted sound levels, information about experiences, lighting adjustments, and staff trained in the additional considerations of working with families of and those with neurodiverse considerations such as autism. There is a social story available on the Mill City Museum website and additional information about the sensory experiences you may encounter.



Minnesota History Center - Saint Paul

Website: www.mnhs.org/historycenter

The Minnesota Historical Society creates atmospheres of inclusivity through offering events outside of regular hours with adjusted sound levels, information about experiences, lighting adjustments, and staff trained in the additional considerations of working with families of and those with neurodiverse considerations such as autism. In addition, there is a social story available on the Minnesota History Center website, and staff has received training on autism to better understand and assist with the challenges and opportunities that may arise during a visit.



Minnesota Orchestra - Minneapolis

Website: www.minnesotaorchestra.org

Sensory-Friendly concerts feature individual musicians or small ensembles in the Target Atrium at Orchestra Hall. Relaxed Family Concerts feature the full Orchestra in the main auditorium, plus a variety of pre/post-concert activities in the Orchestra Hall lobby; these activities always include hands-on art activities, a movement activity, and opportunities to meet Minnesota Orchestra musicians. During Relaxed Family concerts, a quiet space is available in the Green Room, as well as a movement space with a livestream of the performance. Sensory materials including noise-canceling headphones, ear plugs, and fidgets are available at all Sensory-Friendly and Relaxed Family concerts.



Minnetonka Fire Department

Website: www.minnetonkamn.gov

Minnetonka Fire offers a Sensory Friendly open house every spring and this year it is on April 26 from 10-1. We turn down the lights and sirens in the station and invite those with autism and other sensory disorders to come in, see the trucks, meet the firefighters, and experience our fire station first hand. We offer cookies to all who attend and a chance to sit in a fire truck and meet firefighters at the station. A sensory room will be available for those who are in need of a calm and quiet environment.



MNprov - Saint Paul and community locations

Website: mnprov.org

At MNprov, we believe the magic of improv isn't just about laughs (though there's plenty of that) — it's about building connections, confidence, and creativity, and doing so in a way that's accessible to everyone. Our goal is to empower diverse learners to build social-emotional skills, resilience, and meaningful connections through the art of improv. And guess what? It works! Imagine being in a space where your ideas aren't just heard — they're celebrated. That's what MNprov creates. We turn the skills learned on stage — like teamwork and problem-solving —into tools participants can use every day: from navigating relationships to finding success at work. And since improv mirrors real-life interactions, it's an incredibly effective way to practice social skills in a low-stress, supportive environment.



Mr. Blake's Swim Academy - Minnetonka

Website: mr-blake.com

Whether you're seeking recreational therapy, adaptive services, or athletic training, Mr. Blake's Swim Academy is the one-stop-shop for all aquatic needs. Come as you are, leave as more! Mr. Blake facilitates swim lessons using techniques that place emphasis on water safety and swimming skills modified or adapted to accommodate individual abilities, needs, and goals, regardless of age or experience. For those interested in furthering their swim skills and developing a competitive edge, we offer Wavemakers, an adaptive swim team. Wavemakers will assist in fostering social development through teamwork, discipline, and healthy competition.



Providing Inclusion Support For All Ages

Where inclusion means everyone belongs & can actively participate alongside their peers.



Sign up for Inclusion Services today!

Reach is contracted with over 18 local city parks and recreation departments to provide free inclusion staff support when a person with a disability requests additional accommodations. Programs may include t-ball, dance, swimming lessons, science camp, skating, and many more!

reachforresources.org/inclusion



West Metro

Learning Center, LLC
8877 Aztec Drive Eden
Prairie, MN 55347
612-217-1461
info@socialskills-mn.com

Client Name: _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____
Parent(s) Name(s): _____ Phone #: _____
Email Address: _____
Bill to: ☐ Parent/Guardian ☐ Fiscal Agency ☐ School
Agency Name: _____ Contact Name: _____
Email: _____ Phone #: _____

Social Skills Courses				
Course Title/Activity	Day	Time	Tuition	1:1 Support (\$70/hr)
				Y/N @ _____ hrs x \$70/hr = _____
				Y/N @ _____ hrs x \$70/hr = _____

Day Camp Day Camp June 9 - August 22 (No Camp June 30 - July 4, 2025)
KEY: AM = AM Camp (9a.m.-11:30a.m.) L = Social Skills Lunch (11:30a.m. - 1:00p.m.) PM = PM Camp (1:00p.m. - 4:00p.m.)
FD = Full Day Camp (9a.m. - 4p.m.)

Summer 2025 Registration

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday Excellent Adv. (\$275)
Example	AM L PM FD	AM L PM FD	AM L PM FD	AM L PM FD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
June	9 AM L PM FD	10 AM L PM FD	11 AM L PM FD	12 AM L PM FD	13 Nickelodeon Universe <input type="checkbox"/>
	16 AM L PM FD	17 AM L PM FD	18 AM L PM FD	19 AM L PM FD	20 Bunker Beach Wave Pool <input type="checkbox"/>
	23 AM L PM FD	24 AM L PM FD	25 AM L PM FD	26 AM L PM FD	27 Como Zoo/Town <input type="checkbox"/>
No Class/Camp - SUMMER BREAK					
July	7 AM L PM FD	8 AM L PM FD	9 AM L PM FD	10 AM L PM FD	11 Voyageur Enviro. Center <input type="checkbox"/>
	14 AM L PM FD	15 AM L PM FD	16 AM L PM FD	17 AM L PM FD	18 Cascade Bay <input type="checkbox"/>
	21 AM L PM FD	22 AM L PM FD	23 AM L PM FD	24 AM L PM FD	25 Urban Air Trampoline <input type="checkbox"/>
August	28 AM L PM FD	29 AM L PM FD	30 AM L PM FD	31 AM L PM FD	1 Science Museum <input type="checkbox"/>
	4 AM L PM FD	5 AM L PM FD	6 AM L PM FD	7 AM L PM FD	8 Carver County Fair <input type="checkbox"/>
	11 AM L PM FD	12 AM L PM FD	13 AM L PM FD	14 AM L PM FD	15 Valley Fair <input type="checkbox"/>
Totals	18 AM L PM FD	19 AM L PM FD	20 AM L PM FD	21 AM L PM FD	22 Beach Day at Lake Minnetonka Regional <input type="checkbox"/>
	L AM PM FD	L AM PM FD	L AM PM FD	L AM PM FD	FEA's _____

Friday Excellent Adventures's (FEA)
Adventure 10am - 4pm

• FEA _____ Qty. x \$200 = \$ _____
• 1:1 Support = \$70/hr x 6hrs x # of Fridays _____ Qty. = \$ _____

FEA Total: _____

Day Camp
Monday - Thursday 9am - 4pm

• AM _____ Qty. x \$100 = \$ _____
• L _____ Qty. x \$25 = \$ _____
• PM _____ Qty. x \$120 = \$ _____
• FD _____ Qty. x \$220 = \$ _____ (Full Days only available on non-Social Skills days)

• 1:1 Support = \$60/hr

FD = _____ Qty. x 7hrs x \$60 = \$ _____
AM = _____ Qty. x 3hrs x \$60 = \$ _____
PM = _____ Qty. x 4hrs x \$60 = \$ _____

Day Camp Total: _____

FEA: \$ _____ Other: \$ _____
Day Camp: \$ _____ CC Fee: \$ _____
Grand Total: \$ _____

I/We, the parents/guardians of _____, hereby consent to his/her participation in West Metro Learning Connections, Inc. (WMLC) programming. I/We further agree to release and hold harmless WMLC and the employees, agents and assigns from all liability or expenses arising out of any incident involving, or any account of any injury to the above named minor in connection with this program. I/We further consent to treatment by emergency personnel in the event of injury to, or illness of our child during his/her participation in this program. I/We accept full responsibility for all costs for any such emergency treatment. I/We agree to abide by WMLC's policies as laid out in the client handbook and accept financial responsibility for the course(s)/activities for which I/We have registered.

Parent/Guardian Signature (required) _____ Date _____

Northern Starz Center for the Performing Arts - Ramsey

Website: northernstarz.org

Northern Starz creates an inclusive atmosphere by producing classes, shows, and camps to include individuals with any disability. We have professionals on staff that work with our students one-on-one, when necessary, to help with any sensory-processing difficulties during their time at Northern Starz. This includes, but is not limited to noise earmuffs and a quiet/sensory space with calming music.



Northrop - Minneapolis

Website: www.northrop.umn.edu

In partnership with AuSM, Northrop is offering a Sensory Friendly Lounge equipped with sensory supports and staffed by trained volunteers during select performances. The lounge will allow guests who are experiencing hyper (too-much) or hypo (not-enough) sensitivities to watch the performance from a monitor or take a break from the performance all together. Performances with a Sensory Friendly Lounge will be located on Northrop's east first floor lounge (unless otherwise noted) and will include an icon on the associated event page. These events allow attendees the opportunity to enjoy a live performance in a welcoming and supportive environment that accommodates specific needs. For more information, please contact nrpaccess@umn.edu or call the Box Office at 612-624-2345.

NORTHROP

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Roots and Wings Therapeutic Services - Maple Grove

Website: www.rootsandwingsmn.com

We are here to provide natural opportunities for engagement in meaningful and fun activities for people of all ages. We are occupational therapists that offer inclusive camps and groups for kids, teens, and adults in natural settings in the community (such as parks and other nature settings and community centers). Our groups support autistic, neurodivergent, and otherwise disabled folks by having schedules and activities provided that allow for flexibility and offering adaptations, modifications, and other supports such as sensory and regulation strategies. We create a space for people to connect with their true selves and connect with peers in their own ways. We support all forms of communication and various other support needs. If you do not know if a group is the right fit for you or your child, please reach out so we can collaborate together on supporting your/your child's engagement.



SENSE-ational Spaces - Blaine

Website: www.senseationalspaces.com

Here at SENSE-ational Spaces, we use our occupational therapy lens to support individuals with disabilities and their families by promoting education and environmental modification. Through in-depth sensorimotor history, caregiver interviews, and environment assessments, we offer a unique solution bringing custom sensory-friendly spaces directly to families and our local community. SENSE-ational Spaces increases access for clients through diverse service offerings with 3 space packages, continuing education, and research driven PDFs to support families where it matters most!



Three Rivers Park District - Victoria



Website: www.threeriversparks.org

The Three Rivers Park District is offering two summer day camps tailored for autistic needs in summer 2025. These camps are located at Lowry Nature Center and were developed in partnership with AuSM. Explore the forest, pond, and prairie habitats! Build a survival shelter with other campers. Start a campfire using different techniques and make a s'more. Try canoeing in our nearby lake. Meet our resident animals. Gain skills to navigate and overcome obstacles in the forest. Make friends and engage with others during safe, off-trail adventures away from the comforts of home. Participants must be able to demonstrate self-care skills, follow adult direction and safety rules, and show readiness for large group participation, including remaining with the group.

Outdoor Adventure Skills for Autistic Teens: July 21-24, Ages 13-18

Outdoor Adventure Skills for Autistic Youth: July 21-24, Ages 8-12

We Rock the Spectrum - Woodbury

Website: werockthespectrumwoodbury.com

We are a sensory gym that does not play music, has 12 specialized pieces of equipment for our neurodiverse friends to use, and welcomes ALL ages and ALL abilities. We have a teen room, a calm room, and 5000 sq ft of gym floor for children to enjoy.

We offer birthday parties, toddler Tuesday, teen Thursdays, camp, parents' night out, break time for parents, and respite, as well as our open play time where all are invited.



The Arc Minnesota

Providing services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including housing assistance, help desk, resources, training events, public policy advocacy, and much more.

Help Desk Line
866-797-1122

www.arcminnesota.org

Many neurodivergent people have trouble with sensory dysregulation, which means feeling overwhelmed when there is too much or too little sensory input. Sensory dysregulation can be very hard to deal with. It can feel uncomfortable, intense, confusing, or even painful. But the effects of sensory dysregulation don't just happen in the moment—they can also affect a person's life in bigger ways. Sensory dysregulation can affect our emotions. When your body feels overwhelmed with too many sensations or craves more sensations, it is difficult to manage your emotions. Managing your sensory experience can help you to manage your emotions as well.

WHY SENSORY STRATEGIES?

Emotions Happen in Your Body



All of us experience emotions through our bodies: when you're angry, your muscles clench. When you're sad, you cry. We can use our senses to impact what our body is doing, which will in turn impact our emotions.

Your Senses Alert You To Danger



One of the most important ways we use our senses is to tell us if we are safe. When our senses are dysregulated, we feel unsafe. In order to help your body and mind feel calm, you need to regulate your senses or they will continue to alert you that something is wrong.

Interoception Challenges



Many autistic individuals struggle to know what they are experiencing in their body, and may be tired, hungry, thirsty, overheated, etc. without realizing it. Sensory strategies help to address these issues, which creates a more solid foundation for emotion regulation.

Sensory Regulation is the Foundation of All Other Regulation



Emotion regulation is a higher level thinking skill. In order to engage those parts of our brain, we need to feel regulated on all the more foundational levels. If I am hungry, in pain, or overwhelmed with a bad smell, it will be much harder to regulate my emotions.

Traditional Emotion Regulation Misses Autistic Needs



Many traditional therapies rely on noticing our thoughts and challenging the ones that don't make sense. Noticing and understanding emotions can be challenging for autistics, but in addition, autistics experience unique challenges that are real and need to be addressed rather than having their distress questioned. Many autistics also tend to overthink emotions (especially when our emotions look different from the neurotypical majority). Sensory strategies bypass all the overthinking by engaging the body instead.

THE SENSORY SYSTEMS

Sensory dysregulation happens when someone gets too much or too little input from one or more of their senses. Many autistic people are **hypo-sensitive** (under-sensitive and needing a lot of stimulation) or **hyper-sensitive** (overly-sensitive and needing less stimulation) to sensory input. Any person can have a mix of needs across different sensory systems. No two people have the same sensory needs, so it can take some exploration to find what your own sensory needs are.

Most people are familiar with the five basic senses, but we also have three more. They are:

- Proprioceptive:** Your sense of your body in space, especially pressure.
- Vestibular:** Your sense of balance and movement.
- Interoceptive:** Your awareness of internal experiences in your body, like hunger, thirst, or illness.

Meet your basic needs

Your body is at the center of both your emotions and your senses, which means that the most foundational piece of regulating both of those areas is your body. Start with the most basic elements: feed yourself regularly, get enough sleep, stay hydrated, move your body regularly, and take your meds as they're prescribed. If you notice that you're getting dysregulated, check and see if you need to do any of those things.

Take sensory breaks

It's easy to forget about our sensory needs during the day. We all have a lot going on, and pausing to notice our senses and regulate them is not always priority number one. An easy way to start regulating your senses is to schedule time to check in with your senses by going somewhere you find comfortable for you and taking a break.

Get to know yourself

Since every person has different sensory needs, you won't know what your sensory profile looks like until you observe it. One helpful tool is a checklist (you can find quite a few online). As you get to know what you like and dislike, you can also start to notice how that affects your emotions. Jot down how different sensory inputs affect your emotions and your body.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES



Environmental

Environmental strategies are things you can do to make your day to day sensory experience more comfortable. It might be making adjustments to your home, bringing sensory items to work or school, or changing where you go each day so that you avoid sensory triggers.

- Create one space that feels as comfortable as possible.
- Review each sense and think about how your environment can feel good in relation to that sense.
- Make space where you can take breaks to move.
- Remove or adjust things that irritate your senses.
- Avoid places that overstimulate or understimulate you.



Self Awareness

If you can't tell when you're getting overwhelmed, what causes you distress, or what helps you calm down, it's nearly impossible to know when and how to use your strategies. You can work on mindfulness and self-awareness to learn how to notice what impacts you and in what way.

- Write out your sensory profile.
- Identify how emotions feel in your body.
- Practice mindfulness (look for neurodivergent-affirming practices).
- Track your emotions to find triggers or helpful strategies.



Proactive

Proactive strategies are things you do to keep yourself from getting overwhelmed. It might be incorporating positive sensory input into your day to day life, giving yourself breaks, or investing in tools to minimize negative sensory input.

- Keep a list of what works well to calm you down.
- Create a sensory toolkit of items that are helpful.
- Ask for help with co-regulation from friends/family.
- Do a sensory circuit (set up different sensory inputs and go from one to another).
- Use a sensory schedule: plan when you'll get certain inputs.



Responsive

Sometimes things go wrong even when we've done everything else right. This is where reactive strategies come in: what can you do when you're getting overwhelmed or having a meltdown?

- Find a calm place.
- Give yourself comforting sensory input.
- Use a sensory tool like a fidget.
- Focus on your breathing.
- Try a body scan: notice how each part of your body feels.



AuSM 2025 EVENTS



MINNESOTA AUTISM CONFERENCE

April 16-18, 2025
Doubletree Hilton Minneapolis Airport Hotel



STEPS FOR AUTISM

May 18, 2025
ROC at the St. Louis Park Rec Center



JIGSAW PUZZLE COMPETITION

September 27, 2025
Mall of America or virtual on Zoom



AUTISTIC COMMUNITY SUMMIT

November 2025
Location: TBD

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