Developmental Delays

Title: Developmental Delays and Prematurity: a Primer

Description: Dr. Scafidi is back by popular demand and will be adding new information and insight into this year’s discussion! Children born very premature often have neurodevelopmental delays during early childhood. This talk will provide parents with an understanding of normal development and how premature birth affects social, cognitive (learning and memory), sensory and motor development. The latest research findings will be presented along with available therapies and/or treatments.

Speaker: Joseph Scafidi, DO is a board-certified child neurologist at Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Dr. Scafidi specializes in neonatal neurology and consults on patients with neurological issues in the Neonatal Intensive Care unit. His clinical interest is in caring for infants, children and adults that have neurological sequelae from being born very preterm. His research, which is funded by the National Institutes of Health, uses clinically relevant animal models of premature brain injury to study how prematurity alters normal cellular development of the brain’s white matter – an important structure for connectivity. Dr. Scafidi is an advocate for children born premature and works with families and the community to improve quality of life. He has been a board member of Preemies Today since 2008.

Preemie Parenting

Title: From Surviving to Thriving - Helping Preemie Parents See Their Child and Themselves through a Different Pair of Eyes

Description: Many preemie and special needs families feel overwhelmed, stuck, isolated and anxious and like they’ve lost their voices and in many ways, their lives as they knew it. While these feelings are common and very relevant given the trauma and challenges of preemie and special needs parenthood, they can also be very debilitating for the parent and child. This presentation aims to empower, inspire and flip all of these feelings on their heads by helping participants to:

- understand the three (3) most common emotions parents of preemies and/or of children with special needs struggle with,
- explore the impact perception has on parenting and,
- ‘try out’ proven techniques designed to help parents thrive and view themselves and their children in a more positively different way

It will also touch on what preemie and special needs professionals should be aware of and can implement to ensure that these parents are fully supported emotionally. Participants will leave inspired and armed with key strategies to use designed to help parents move forward and become more confident and empowered.

Speaker: Gigi Khonyongwa-Fernandez is a preemie and special needs mom, Professional Life Coach and Founder of Families Blossoming LLC, a unique business specializing in providing coaching-based emotional support and other related services to preemie and special needs parents and relevant organizations and agencies. She received her BSc (honors) in Occupational Therapy, MSc in Health, Population and Society from The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and her Diploma in Personal Performance Coaching (Distinction) from The Coaching Academy (UK). She is an active member of a number of international, national and local preemie and coaching organizations and is a passionate and seasoned presenter and speaker to both parents and professionals on a wide range of topics as they relate to the preemie and special needs experience, particularly post-NICU/post-diagnosis.
Breakout Session 1

Managing Stress
Description: Having childbirth complications or an unexpected premature birth can be traumatic for many women and men. In this session you will learn about the common symptoms of anxiety and postpartum post-traumatic stress disorder and the treatment options available, including the self-help stress reduction technique, EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques).

Speaker: Jan Steele Watkins, JD, MSW is a licensed clinical social worker in private practice in the Washington, DC area. She uses Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and energy psychology modalities with children, families, adults, groups and couples. She helps clients work through difficult emotions, including trauma, and clear limiting beliefs to eliminate barriers to empowered living. Jan offers trainings and workshops in energy psychology, including EFT Universe certification training, to individuals and corporations. She is a contributing author in the upcoming EFT Clinical Handbook, by Dawson Church PHd, published by Hay House.

Infant Loss
Description: Sean Hanish will discuss his family’s experience with infant loss, his involvement in the Lifetime movie RETURN TO ZERO, and his own healing journey. “RETURN TO ZERO is based on the experience that my wife and I went through when we lost our first son, Norbert, at the end of our first pregnancy in 2005. We were shocked when it happened—we had no earthly idea that this was even a possibility in this day and age,” says Sean Hanish.

Speaker: Sean Hanish (Writer/Director/Producer) is a multi-award-winning film and commercial director and has been a member of the Director’s Guild of America (DGA) since 2005.

Homeopathy
Title: An Introduction to Homeopathy
Description: Homeopathy is a healing modality in which specially prepared natural substances are used to stimulate the body's innate healing capacity. It is extremely safe and gentle and yet can produce dramatic results. In this session you will learn about the common uses of homeopathy to treat acute and chronic conditions such as attention, emotional conditions, constipation, and coughs to name a few.

Speaker: Christopher Johnson, ND is the founder and owner of Thrive Naturopathic. He is a graduate of Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine (SCNM), located in Tempe, Arizona. The program at SCNM is a 4 year, accredited, doctorate level education resulting in the degree Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine.
Greenspan Floortime Approach®

Description: This presentation will cover Dr. Greenspan's DIR Model in its final representation, The Learning Tree. His model has proven to be effective at understanding every child's unique strengths and weaknesses, regardless of diagnosis. In the presentation I will explain the unique developmental elements of Dr. Greenspan's Model that help parents and professionals describe a child's developmental profile while identifying the core deficits. Through the use of lecture and video example attendees will also see how the model can be applied and some techniques that are part of The Greenspan Floortime Approach.

Speaker: Jake Greenspan is the Co-Director and founder of The Floortime Center in Bethesda MD, and has worked with over 2000 families around the world teaching them Floortime over the last 10 years. He started working with his father, Dr. Stanley Greenspan in 1998. Together they authored the Functional Emotional Developmental Questionnaire which was published in the Journal of Developmental and Learning Disorders, 2002, and in 2009 Jake was the co-author, with Dr Stanley Greenspan, of Overcoming ADHD: Helping Your Child Become Calm, Engaged, and Focused. He is the former Chairman and current Board member for All The Difference Inc., a DIR/Floortime non-profit in Wilmington DE and is a Founding Member of Creative Minds Public Charter School in Washington DC.

Sensory Integration

Title: How Sensory Integration Techniques Can Support Child Development

Description: This session will provide a brief overview of Sensory Integration theory and then focus on how the unique sensory histories of preemies can influence development. We will discuss regulation of over-responsive and under-responsive sensory systems to allow emergence of improved behavior and motor skills. We will describe and explain activities typical of clinic-based occupational therapy sessions, as well as sensory strategies for home use.

Speaker: JoAnn Kennedy, OTD, MS, OTR/L has been a pediatric occupational therapist for over 30 years. She has a private practice in Fairfax, Virginia where she specializes in working with families to address the sensory aspects of attachment challenges. She has presented on this topic at numerous workshops and conferences for both parent and professional audiences. Dr. Kennedy is a 2013 graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University clinical doctorate program. Her capstone project was titled “Sensory Integration and Trauma-Informed Care”.

Transitions

Title: Navigating the Transitions from Early Intervention to Kindergarten

Description: This panel will include representatives from early intervention, preschool special education, and Fairfax County Public Schools. The discussion will focus on identifying children with developmental delays and disabilities and transition services from birth to age five.

Panelists: Morlinda Dawson has worked in Early Intervention for 8 years. Morlinda started with an Early Intervention program in South Carolina. Currently, she is working as a Service Coordinator with Infant & Toddler Connection of Fairfax-Falls Church.

Jessica Sherman is currently working as a service coordinator with the Infant & Toddler Connection of Fairfax-Falls Church. Jessica has past experience working in preschool settings, working with family child care providers as well as the Early Head Start Program in Fairfax County. Jessica holds a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Special Education from George Mason University.

Leydi Benitez, M.Ed. Early Childhood Special Education is an early childhood special education teacher with Fairfax County Public Schools for eight years. Currently, she is working as an Instructional Support Teacher, facilitating professional development.

Bridget Gorey has been a Procedural Support Liaison (PSL) for Fairfax County Public Schools for the past 5 years. She currently is supporting the schools in the Centreville Pyramid.
Breakout Session 3

School-Age Needs
Title: Painting Your Child’s Educational Portrait
Description: Geared specifically towards parents of pre-school and school aged children with special needs, this very interactive, practical and hands-on workshop will take parents step-by-step in helping them to begin to think about, decide upon and choose ‘the best colors and brush-strokes needed to create their masterpiece’. In other words, the most appropriate educational setting and type of support their child will need in order to shine! Come prepared to be empowered for yourself and your child.
Speaker: Gigi Khonyongwa-Fernandez is a preemie and special needs mom, Professional Life Coach and Founder of Families Blossoming LLC, a unique business specializing in providing coaching-based emotional support and other related services to preemie and special needs parents and relevant organizations and agencies. She received her BSc (honors) in Occupational Therapy, MSc in Health, Population and Society from The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and her Diploma in Personal Performance Coaching (Distinction) from The Coaching Academy (UK). She is an active member of a number of international, national and local preemie and coaching organizations and is a passionate and seasoned presenter and speaker to both parents and professionals on a wide range of topics as they relate to the preemie and special needs experience, particularly post-NICU/post-diagnosis.

Post-Preemie Pregnancy
Title: Post-Preemie Pregnancy: What Do You Need to Know?
Description: This session will include written materials and a group discussion. The class content has been developed specifically by parents who have experienced the struggles of a premature birth and the ongoing needs of caring for premature children. Our goal is to provide parents with current information about possible treatments that might help their next pregnancy and emotional healing after premature birth.
Preemies Today, along with the March of Dimes and healthcare experts who work in the field of maternal and infant health, have developed these materials. As with all medical and mental health advice, we strongly encourage parents to speak directly with their healthcare providers. Each person and each pregnancy is different. However, this information will serve as a foundation to help parents make personal decisions about this most personal issue – their family.
Speaker: Sara Donahue, MSW, MPH has been the March of Dimes NICU Family Support Specialist at Inova Children Hospital in Falls Church, VA since the project began at that site in 2007. In addition to her current work providing information, comfort and support to NICU families, Sara has worked as a hospital perinatal social worker and conducted family interviews for the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Team in San Diego, CA. Sara is a graduate NICU parent as her daughter was born early following several weeks in a high risk perinatal unit. Prior to working for the March of Dimes, Sara coordinated the Sexual Assault Response and Awareness (SARA) Program which provides comprehensive criminal justice and counseling services for survivors of sexual assault. Sara received a Master of Social Work and Master of Public Health with a specialization in maternal and child health from San Diego State University. Her undergraduate work in Psychology was completed at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC.
Breakout Session 3 cont’d

**Feeding and Nutrition**

**Title:** Achieving Normalcy with Feeding and Speech with Your Preemie: Identifying Potential Problems and Providing Strategies

**Description:** Participants will learn what constitutes a feeding disorder, how to recognize signs and symptoms of GERD, food allergies and food sensitivities and the differences between a typical picky eater, vs. a problem eater. They will learn strategies of what to do with picky eaters/problem eaters to broaden their diet repertoires, as well as ways to enhance nutrition with children with feeding disorders and/or GI disorders. Participants will also receive information regarding developmental norms for speech and language development.

**Speaker:** Kelly Benson-Vogt has been a speech and language pathologist for 17 years. She graduated with her bachelor’s degree in Speech Pathology and Audiology from West Virginia University and with her master’s degree in Speech Pathology from Northwestern University in Illinois. Kelly lives in WV with her husband and two boys, two dogs and a turtle. She is the owner of Pediatric Feeding & Speech Solutions, PLLC, in Leesburg, VA which she started in April of 2009. Kelly started this private practice to offer evaluations and therapy in a home-like setting so that children and their families are comfortable while they receive in-depth, one on one attention. Kelly also sees children in WV through the WV Birth to Three program. She holds licenses in WV, VA and MD.
Gross Motor Development

Title: From Tummy Time to the Playground

Description: This presentation will provide an overview of gross motor development from birth through kindergarten. We will cover expected milestones, essential childhood games, and the necessary movement skills to allow independence on the playground and be ready for Physical Education.

Speaker: Amy O'Malley, PT, MPT has been practicing physical therapy since 1998, exclusively in pediatrics. She joined Good Beginnings of Falls Church, VA in 2004. She is currently the Clinical Support Manager in addition to treating patients. She also teaches internationally, previously with Health Volunteers Overseas in Haiti and most recently with Firefly, Inc. in Russia. She has a special interest in development from birth to twelve months as well as exercise training for children with special needs. Out of the clinic she likes to run half-marathons and is very involved with Lost Dog and Cat Rescue of Arlington, VA.

What to Expect the First Year Panel

Description: A panel discussion from veteran preemie parents. We will discuss the transition home from the NICU, community resources, dealing with insurance companies, and more. There will also be a question and answer session at the end.

Panelists: TBA

Music Therapy

Title: Music Therapy for Premature Infants

Description: Learn about music therapy services for premature infants while in the NICU and during discharge and follow-up care. Includes evidence-based interventions that increase tolerance to the hospital environment, assist neurological development, positively affect physiological state, promote parent-child interaction, and decrease length of stay in the hospital. Outside of the NICU, learn how music therapy can help your child work toward achieving critical developmental milestones while strengthening your caregiver-infant bond.

Speakers: Katie Myers, MM, MT-BC, NICU Music Therapist: Katie is a board-certified music therapist and emergency medical technician. She recently earned her master’s degree in music therapy at The Florida State University, where she also received her certification as a NICU music therapist. While at FSU, Katie became involved in medical music therapy research, and is the first music therapist to conduct a music therapy study in an ambulance. Katie completed her undergraduate degree in music therapy, with a minor in psychology, at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, and interned at the world-renowned University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

Leanne Belasco, MS, MT-BC: Leanne is the Director of Music Therapy at Levine Music in Washington, DC. She holds a bachelor’s degree in music therapy from Duquesne University and a master’s degree in special education from The Johns Hopkins University. Leanne has provided music therapy to a wide variety of clients ranging from infants to older adults and has presented nationally and regionally on topics related to music therapy practice.