



All Special Kids

Contents  
SYNDROME MIX

A Word from the Editor	1
Syndrome Mix	2/3
ADD, Short Attention	4
Bullying, Ways to Help	5
Visual Spatial	6
Giftedness	7
ASK Programs	8
Summer Camp	9
C.A.R.E.	10
ASK SEMINARS	11
ASK Calendar Geneva/Bern/Vaud	12

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# All.Special.Kids

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

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Dear Parents,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! We wish you a joyous, prosperous and healthy year.

This year, I am making only two resolutions; to take better care of myself and to give Allegra better opportunities to learn more life skills.

I realized I had been neglecting myself and that my health suffered as a result. When one is not well, the worries about one's special needs child, can multiply to unimaginable proportions. Hence, my first resolution to take better care of my health this year.

I grew up in a large family with 7 sisters and brothers, plus 3 adopted siblings. We learned to have patience. Sharing and negotiating became second nature to us. Allegra being my one and only child, missed out on having a built in support group and most importantly, the opportunity to develop and practice her social skills most of us with multiple siblings learned at an early age.

This past October, using Allegra as a guinea pig, we launched a peer mentoring program. Allegra was paired with two girls her same age for a social outing. The two volunteers mentors from LGB had such a positive outlook on life and contributed



to the great success of the outing.

Social skills such as making and maintaining friends are life skills that we normally took for granted. Meeting new people in a social setting is not difficult for a friendly girl like Allegra. However, skills like making suitable conversation with newfound friends, having to independently decide where to go, what to eat or buy could be a monumental step for our children which needs practice and reassurance from parents.

In this issue, we addressed, children who have syndrome mix, ADD with short attention span, Giftedness, Visual Spatial issues and Bullying. Our seminars for this year are geared towards the same themes.

Hope you enjoy this issue.

**Joy and the ASK Team**

*"We don't accomplish anything in this world alone, and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something" - Sandra Day O'Connor*



## THE SYNDROME MIX - When Kids Experience

Start with a real, live child --- a kid with feelings, needs and hopes. Mix in a double helping of ADHD, a touch of "Tourette's and a dash of dysgraphia. Stir gently. That is one possible "syndrome mix" that a child may be dealt. The child in question then must deal with symptoms from all three disorders.

Special needs issues often cluster together in various combinations. Common contributors to the syndrome mix include:

- ADHD
- Learning Disabilities
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders, such as Asperger's Syndrome
- Sensory Integration Dysfunction
- Anxiety
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Tics and Tourette's Syndrome
- Depression
- Bipolar Disorder
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- Central Auditory Processing Disorder

If a child has any issue in this syndrome mix, there exists a significant chance of occurrence for each other problem listed.

### *Problems may exacerbate and imitate each other.*

Not only does a special needs child tend to be born with multiple issues, the problems may exacerbate each other. For example, a child may innately have ADHD and learning disabilities. The child's poor attention span can then make it harder for the child to learn, while the difficulty learning makes it harder to concentrate.



As the mix of syndromes keeps exacerbating, learning becomes increasingly difficult. Similarly, the problems can imitate each other. For example, a child constantly mulling over his anxieties can look distracted, as well as become confused because of his ADHD.

### *Stressed caregivers can cause other problems.*

Often a stressed child will find himself in a stressed home or school environment. True, the stressful environment may have been caused by the youngster with special needs, but the end results is that the child now finds himself having to deal with stressed out adults--- the last ingredient the child needs!

Also, many of the neuro-psychiatric conditions run in families. Thus, the child with special needs may find himself coping with parents (or teachers, therapists and caregivers) with personal special needs issues.

### *Parents and teachers are typically the first to detect an issue.*

How does an evaluation start to identify special needs issues? With you! When you think about it, psychologists, therapists, neurologists and psychiatrists do not stand on the street corner and randomly pick children to evaluate. Rather, kids are all sent to doctors because other people have noticed a problem. Those people, namely parents and teachers, are the ones on the frontline. Parents, caregivers and teachers may not know exactly what the problem is, however, they are generally the first to diagnose that a problem exists. The whole system depends on you and other first-responders.

## a Combination of Special Needs Issues

### *Redefine ADHD to include "executive dysfunction."*

Consider the "star" of the syndrome mix as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). ADHD occurs in roughly six percent of children, no matter where in the world we look.

ADHD needs to be redefined to include a wide range of "executive dysfunctions." Executive functions are what allow us to think about where we came from, where we want to go and how we can control ourselves in order to actually get there. In ADHD, there is poor executive function because the brain's frontal lobe brakes are "asleep on the job." Without brakes, problematic behaviors are free to disrupt executive functions. Therefore, people with ADHD are better understood as brakeless than inattentive.

### *Will it all be OK?*

We doctors and parents miss the point when we address only the ADHD triad of inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity. These symptoms are only the tip of the iceberg. Much greater problems have usually been plaguing a child with special needs for his entire life. Yet, often no one has understood that the associated symptoms described earlier are part and parcel of the same neurologically-based condition--- or relate to another issue in the syndrome mix.

Without this recognition, parents and caregivers tend to think that their ADHD child has been incidentally uncooperative and apparently self-absorbed. Unless we recognize that these extended symptoms are part of the same

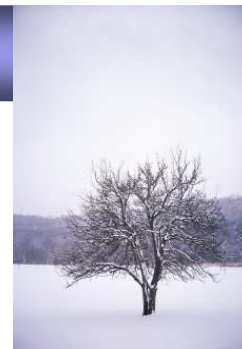
spectrum, teachers and parents will not address them, and doctors will never deal with them.

Finally, we must also keep in mind that some symptoms that special needs children experience are fantastic and enviable. While the rest of us obsess about the future or feel morose about the past, people with ADHD honor the present. People with ADHD can be a lot of fun - dullness is never a problem. Their carefree attitude may encourage people with ADHD to take chances that the rest of us may be afraid to take. Their flux of ideas may lead to creative innovations. Their extreme passion can be a source of inspiration and accomplishment that benefits us all.

It's going to be quite a ride. Make sure that you and your doctors address all of the problems that are likely occurring simultaneously in your special needs child.

#### *About the author:*

*Martin L. Kutscher, M.D., is a pediatric neurologist specializing in children with neuro-behavioral disorders. He is author of several books, including Kids in the Syndrome Mix of ADHD, LD, Asperger's, Tourette's, Bipolar and More!: [www.syndromemix.com](http://www.syndromemix.com)*





## ADHD is more than a short attention span

Kids with ADHD often exhibit the following personality traits or personality dysfunctions.

### ***They act like moths by being attracted to brightness.***

Kids with ADHD are like moths in the sense that they are always drawn to the brightest light. Sometimes, the brightest light is a fascinating paperclip on the desk; rarely is it homework. Unfortunately, sometimes the brightest light is a bug zapper.

### ***They have trouble executing a task.***

Johnny has ADHD, Johnny often finds himself saying, "I'm gonna do it, I'm gonna do it... Holy cow, I didn't do it."

### ***They lack organizational skills.***

Kids with ADHD who appear organized must work extremely hard to keep things in order.

### ***They show a lack of foresight.***

Mothers are usually endowed with great foresight--- that verges on obsession--- concerning their child's future happiness. They are often crushed as they watch their child with special needs repeatedly head down counter-productive paths.

### ***They live at the mercy of the moment.***

It's not that Johnny doesn't care about the future. It's not that Johnny doesn't care about all of the nice things that you have done for him in the past. However, right now, the future and the past don't exist in Johnny's mind. Such is the nature of ADHD.

### ***They frequently feel overwhelmed and angry.***

If you're the parent of a child with ADHD, you've probably heard this: "Mommy, just stop! I can't stand it! Just stop! Go away!"

### ***They lie, curse, and blame others.***

Negative expressions become frequent symptoms of ADHD, especially as children age.

Resource: [www.syndromemix.com](http://www.syndromemix.com)



### ***Attention - ways to help***

- Use the traffic light system to think about your child's red, amber and green behaviour.
- Make sure you praise your child when they do something right - who would you rather work for, a boss who always criticises, or one who notices your good points?
- Give praise that lets your child know exactly what they have done well, and how it makes you feel.
- Set clear, fair rules, but give your child choices and freedom within these limits.
- Be consistent, and if you have a partner, work together as a team.
- If your child breaks a rule when they should know better, give a clear reprimand. They may need to have instant consequence.
- If your child is irritable, ask yourself if they are bored/ hungry/ tired etc. Make sure there is something more interesting available for them to do.
- Try to make sure that you give your child more of your attention when they are behaving well, than when they are misbehaving.
- You don't need to change a child's feelings, but instead try listening, empathising, and naming the feeling.
- All feelings can be accepted; it is the actions that need to be tackled, for example, 'It's okay to feel angry. It's not okay to kick the door'.
- Comment on your child's behaviour, but don't attack their character. Think about how what you say will affect their self-esteem. Give them an opportunity to make amends.
- Look after yourself. A good parent is a happy and confident parent.
- Involve your child in the decision-making process, providing them with explanations.
- Children need good role models to help them develop.
- Children need to have their feelings accepted and respected.
- Listen quietly and attentively - don't always ask questions OR DENY FEELINGS.
- Acknowledge feelings with a word - 'Mmm...Oh...I see...'

Resource: <http://www.parent-plus.org>

## Bullying - Ways to Help

### *As a parent what can you do?*

Some children with cognitive impairment and/or learning differences may not immediately recognize that the behavior they are dealing with is bullying.

Bullying behaviour includes threats, damage to personal property, verbal abuse and racist or sexist name-calling. It also includes being ignored and being left out of games or sports.

### *Why do bullies bully?*

They want to establish themselves as a part of the group. Some bullies may have been bullied themselves and this allows them to be accepted by their peer group.

### *Ways to Help*

#### *Talk it through with your child.*

However anxious you may be feeling, try to take a gentle approach when talking about bullying with your child. Tell your child that bullying is not acceptable behaviour and you will do what you can to help get the bullying stopped.

*Reassure your child* that help is available and that this is not something they should face alone. Let them know that what has happened is not their fault. Say that you will have to talk to the school, but you will not rush in and cause a scene; let them know that you will talk to the teacher about not identifying your child and that you'll find ways to keep them safe from the bullies.

*Discuss with the child* what sort of help they think they need and ways to keep safe, e.g. ways of steering clear of the children who bully, or staying with another child or children at break times (safety in numbers) or not taking special possessions into school. If you fear for your child's mental or physical safety, you may decide to keep them off school until the matter is dealt with. Legally you must send your child to school regularly, so you will need a sick-note from your GP to keep them off school.

*Try to get as clear a picture* as possible from the child as to what's been going on: who has been doing the bullying? Where and when? How often? Anyone else involved? Any witnesses? And did they tell anyone? Make notes afterwards and start your own Bullying Report that will be useful when you talk to the school. Further incidents can then be added.

*Encourage your child* to keep a journal in which they can draw pictures or write about the bullying - this can help to release painful feelings and will be a record of what happened and when. By its nature bullying is rarely a one-off and take any allegations of bullying seriously.

### *How to get help from your child's school?*

- Tell the class teacher or head of year about your suspicions.
- Check there is an anti-bullying policy in the school.
- Speak to the parent-teacher association about procedures - prevention is better than cure.
- Adopt the no-blame approach, and talk about the school doing group work with the classes, and about talking to the children about the problem. This allows the pupil to come up with solutions to prevent bullying occurring.

### *Lastly and most importantly, believe your child.*

The best way to safeguard your child from bullying is to encourage your child to improve his or her self-esteem and social skills; encourage them to be an expert in an area, so that they can gain kudos from their peers. Go through with your child how to respond in an intimidating situation, so that they are prepared and have the answers ready.

*Resource:* <http://www.parent-plus.org>

*He who angers you conquers you.*

*Elizabeth Kenny*





## Is Your Child a Visual-Spatial Learner?

Just in case you think and learn in words, though:  
Visual-spatial learners remember what they see, but forget what they hear.

Visual-spatial learners are attracted to puzzles, mazes and building with blocks, LEGO, K'Nex, and even just a roll of tape!

Visual-spatial learners have a wonderful sense of space, but not necessarily a very good sense of time.

Visual-spatial learners have a wild imagination, are "outside-the-box thinkers" and can think of numerous solutions to a single problem.

Visual-spatial learners excel in spatial tasks but may have difficulty with spelling, math facts and organizational skills.

Still curious? Take a look at these quizzes - for parents, teachers and kids, too!

1. Does your child think mainly in pictures instead of in words?
2. Is your child good at solving puzzles or mazes?
3. Does your child like to build with LEGOs, K'Nex, blocks, etc.?
4. Does your child often lose track of time?
5. Does your child know things without being able to tell how or why?
6. Does your child remember how to get to places visited only once?
7. Can your child feel what others are feeling?
8. Does your child remember what is seen and forget what is heard?
9. Does your child solve problems in unusual ways?
10. Does your child have a vivid imagination?
11. Is your child organizationally challenged?
14. Does your child love playing on the computer?
15. Is your child terrible at spelling?
16. Does your child like taking things apart to see how they work?
17. Does your child have at least one visual-spatial parent?

If you answered yes to at least 9 of the above questions, your child is most likely a visual-spatial learner.

<http://www.visual-learners.com/support-files/parentquiz.pdf>



## Characteristics of Giftedness

Parents are excellent identifiers of giftedness in their children: 84% of the children whose parents say that they fit  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the following characteristics score at least 120 IQ (the superior range). Over 95% show giftedness in at least one area, but are asynchronous in their development, and their weaknesses depress their IQ scores.

- Reasons well (good thinker)
- Learns rapidly
- Has extensive vocabulary
- Has an excellent memory
- Has a long attention span (if interested)
- Sensitive (feelings hurt easily)
- Shows compassion
- Perfectionist
- Intense
- Morally sensitive
- Has strong curiosity
- Perseverant in their interests
- Has high degree of energy
- Prefers older companions or adults
- Has a wide range of interests
- Has a great sense of humor
- Early or avid reader (if too young to read, loves being read to)
- Concerned with justice, fairness
- Judgment mature for age at times
- Is a keen observer
- Has a vivid imagination
- Is highly creative
- Tends to question authority
- Has facility with numbers
- Good at jigsaw puzzles

Developed by Dr. Linda Silverman: (<http://www.gifteddevelopment.com>)



## ASK Programs

### Monthly Kids' Social

#### SPRING TERM OUTINGS ALL ON SATURDAYS

Jan 10th Juniors. Ice skating at Meyrin skating rink  
14h30 -16h Cost CHF15 (inc. hire of skates).

Jan 24th 10yrs + and interested parents. Visit, tasting and making chocolate at the Rapp Factory in Prangins 10h30 Cost CHF25/30 adults We need 12 people minimum to go.

Feb 7th 10yrs + Tour round Geneva Servette Hockey Club and train with the players. 10h30, Cost CHF10

Feb 14th, Juniors. Visit to Geneva Vivarium for a (very) close up look at reptiles with a guided tour and talk. Cost CHF10

Mar 7th All. Family ski day to Mont Jura.

Mar 21st 10-yrs + Visit Cern « Fun with Physics workshop » 14h50

All outing chaperoned by an adult and volunteer students.

RSVP: [Karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org](mailto:Karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org)

### Peer Mentoring Program

**GREAT SOCIALIZATION OPPORTUNITY** for your child!

Are you looking for a safe socialization opportunity for your child and/or teen?

Are you interested in an appropriate volunteer activity for your teen?

ASK is launching a peer mentoring program in January 2009 to benefit children age 11 and up. Children will be matched up with teenage volunteers in a ratio of two volunteers to 1 child. The program is specifically designed for the children who need to develop and practice their social skills, to meet typical peers in a supervised structured outings, which is pre-approved by the parents. Parents can determine the frequency and participate with the young volunteers in the planning of the outings.

As this is a new program, places are limited to the available number of volunteers we have. If you are interested, please indicate your interest soon so that we can begin the process of pairing your child up with volunteers, who have already completed our volunteer training session in Fall 2008. Volunteers will be supervised monthly by the peer mentoring coordinator.

To sign up for this program or to get more information, please contact [petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org](mailto:petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org)

### Social Drama Group

**When: Mondays**

**Where: Crossroads Church, Ferney Voltaire Time: 16h30 17h45.**

**NEW TERM starts Monday 19th January.**

**A small friendly group open to children aged 6 to 14 years old who enjoy fun activities and games to help them learn or improve on their social intergration skills. Topics covered last term included: Classroom behaviour, Bullying, taking turns, sharing, developing good manners, just to name a few.**

**If you feel your child could benefit from a little extra guidance with their Social Skills in a fun, friendly and safe environment then please contact:**

**[Petal.Jaffrey@allspecialkids.org](mailto:Petal.Jaffrey@allspecialkids.org) or**  
**[karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org](mailto:karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org)**



## 2009 ASK SUMMER CAMPS Educational & Summer Fun Activities

**Social Skills & Life Skills for children ages 5 - 14**  
**Optional Morning Tutoring for children ages 7 - 18**

- Does your child have difficulty making and keeping friend
- Does your child have high level of frustration and low self-esteem
- Do you think your child may benefit from summer tutoring

At ASK, we understand the problems your child/ren may have due to their lack of social skills which we often take for granted. ASK summer camps offer an accepting and welcoming, educational and therapeutic environment to kids in all level of social skills. Our fun and educational activities are tailored to encourage development of self awareness, self confidence, empathy and assertiveness. Our low child to staff ratio allows us to address each child's individual needs and provide the child to develop social skills such as cooperation, sharing and conflict resolution at his or her own pace.

We now also offer group tutoring in the mornings with the option of joining the regular camp activities in the afternoon.

First week: 20th to 24th July  
Second week: 27th to 31st July  
Third week: 3rd to 7th August  
Fourth week: 10th to 14th August

### **Special Limited Time offer:**

Register your child for ASK summer camp before 31st January, 2009 to receive CHF125 discount and additional sibling discount of CHF50.

Registration received after 31st January will entitle only CHF50 discount per child and no sibling discount.

Contact [petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org](mailto:petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org) or visit the website to register. [http://www.allspecialkids.org/ask.php?x=Events\\_ProgramDetails&y=ASKCamps](http://www.allspecialkids.org/ask.php?x=Events_ProgramDetails&y=ASKCamps)



**2008-2009**  
**C.A.R.E. LECTURES SERIES**

**Community Assistance Resource Enrichment**  
**A Family Approach**

Bi-monthly lectures addressing  
**PARENTING ISSUES AND COPING SKILLS**

By Rachel Melville Thomas, Psychotherapist  
World Radio Switzerland - Kids in Mind

**1. Why does he do this?**

**Puzzling Behaviors of Some Children**

**When: 20th January 2009**

**Time: 19h to 21h, Where: Webster University**

**2. Being Different—Coping with Bullying**  
**March 2009**

**3. Letting them grow, Letting them go.**  
**Adolescence and beyond.**

**May 2009**

**Fees: ASK members: CHF40, Non-members: CHF75**

**Pay at door: CHF100**

For further details please visit the below link  
[http://www.allspecialkids.org/ask.php?x=Events\\_ProgramDetails&y=CARE](http://www.allspecialkids.org/ask.php?x=Events_ProgramDetails&y=CARE)

Or Contact: [info@allspecialkids.org](mailto:info@allspecialkids.org)

## 2008-2009 SEMINARS & LECTURES SERIES

1 Saturday, 31<sup>ST</sup> January 2009  
**ASD/ADHD/Dyslexia/Dyspraxia**  
**Which one, pick one - Thinking of the whole child**  
One-Day Workshop with Professor Amanda Kirby, MBBS MRCGP

2 Saturday, 28th February 2009  
**“Utilizing Brain Plasticity for the  
Remediation of Dyslexia”**  
By Professor Ian Creese, Board of Governors Prof. of Neuroscience,

**Brain Based Learning What your Student needs in order to be  
an effective learner & reader**  
By Joyce Kerins, Reading Specialist & Director,  
Neuron Learning Centre for the Development of Reading & Learning Skills

3 Sunday, 1<sup>ST</sup> March 2009  
**Dyslexia Realizing Potential**  
**EFFECTIVE LEARNING & THE LEARNER -**  
By Dr. Gavin Reid, Chartered Educational Psychologist

4 Saturday, 28th March 2009  
**Lost for Words**  
**Helping pupils overcome & compensate for poor  
Vocabulary development & understanding**  
One-Day Seminar with Maggie Johnson

Please make note of the new venue for the first 3 seminars  
Collège du Léman, Route de Sauvigny 74, CH-1290 Versoix, Geneva  
Fees: ASK member CHF180, Non-member CHF300, Pay at door CHF350  
For further details please visit <http://www.allspecialkids.org>  
Or Contact: [info@allspecialkids.org](mailto:info@allspecialkids.org)

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<http://www.allspecialkids.org> - contact: [info@allspecialkids.org](mailto:info@allspecialkids.org)

## ASK Geneva Upcoming Events

### JANUARY 2009

#### MONTHLY PARENTS GET TOGETHER

Thurs, 15th Jan, 10h - 12h

#### MONTHLY KIDS SOCIAL

Sat 10th Jan, 14h30-16h, Juniors - Ice skating at Meyrin skating rink.

Sat 24th Jan, 10h30, 10 yrs + and interest parents- Rapp chocolate Factory in Prangins.

Sat, 31st Jan, One day Seminar by Prof. Amanda Kirby

### FEBRUARY 2009

#### MONTHLY PARENTS GET-TOGETHER

Thurs 5th Feb, 10h - 12h

#### MONTHLY KIDS SOCIAL

Feb 7th 10 yrs +. Tour Geneva Servette Hockey Club. 10h30

Feb 14th, Juniors. Visit to Geneva Vivarium ASSESSMENT WITH DR.GAVIN REID

Tue to Fri, 24th to 27th February (Appointment only)

Sat, 28th Feb, One day seminar by Dr. Ian Creese & Joyce Kirin

### MARCH 2009

Sat, 1st Mar, One day seminar by Dr. Gavin Reid

#### MONTHLY PARENTS GET-TOGETHER

Thurs 5th Mar, 10h - 12h

#### MONTHLY KIDS SOCIAL

Sat, 7th - Mar All. Family ski day to Mont Jura

Sat, 21st Mar - CERN, Fun with Physics

## ASK - Bern Chapter MONTHLY PARENTS GET TOGETHER

### JANUARY 2009

Friday, 23rd Jan 09, 9h15 - 11h15

Jubiläumsplatz, St. Ursula Church

FEBRUARY 2009- No support meeting

### MARCH 2009

Saturday, 7th March 2009

Coffee at the Book and Food Sale  
Jubiläumsplatz, St Ursula Church

RSVP: Jennifer Hockley <[hockley@bluewin.ch](mailto:hockley@bluewin.ch)>

## ASK - Vaud Chapter MONTHLY PARENTS GET TOGETHER

### JANUARY 2009

Thursday, 22nd Jan 2009, 10h - 12h  
Ch de la Louye, 2, 1134 Vufflens-le-Chateau

### FEBRUARY 2009

Thursday, 19th February 2009, 10h - 12h  
Chalet de Brie, Chemin de Bendes, 1806 St Legier

### MARCH 2009

Thursday, 19th February 2009, 10h - 12h  
Chalet de Brie, Chemin de Bendes, 1806 St Legier

RSVP: [gillian.flowers@allspecialkids.org](mailto:gillian.flowers@allspecialkids.org)

