



A very warm welcome to the first edition of Bridging the Gap Together! Newsletter.

Bridging the Gap Together! is a new independent Community Interest Company, our aim is to provide a wide range of events covering Autism, Anxiety, behaviour concerns and much more. These events are aimed at young people with Autism or other disabilities along with their parents, carers or professional support workers.

Over the last few months we have hosted a number of successful events, with topics covering Sleep, Anxiety, Behaviour that Challenges, Living with Autism and Transition which focused on preparing for adulthood. We have achieved this by working closely with a number of other organisations Cerebra, Contact a Family, CAMHS, Andrew Powell, Supportive Parents, Weston College and our very talented Young Partners.

Our Young Partners are an integral part of Bridging the Gap Together!, we work together at every level of the business including decision making, researching ideas for future events and the setting up of venues for our events. In this newsletter you can read Lauren's article on Autism, Sam's cartoon strip, Shane's what's on page and Tiernan's article on panic attacks.

Bridging the Gap Together! is run by 3 volunteer directors who are all parents of young people with additional needs and disabilities. We have many years of experience accessing services across the education, health and social care system. While we all have our own paid jobs, we are passionate about making a difference for other young people with disabilities and their families by continuing the work we have already started.

Racheal Tyrrell is one of our directors and as many of you will know from attending our events she works very hard making the refreshments, she now refers to herself as the tea director. Racheal also looks after our finances. Another one of our directors is Pat Kelly; he keeps our Facebook and Twitter pages updated and is currently working on plans for our website.

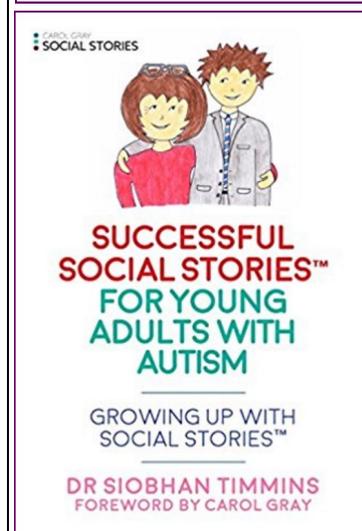
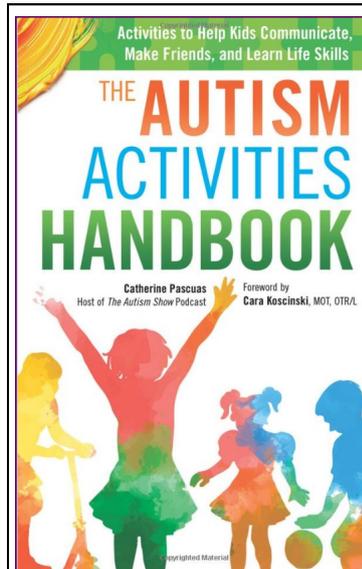
Then there is me, Liz Kelly, my role is planning our events and working closely with a number of organisations to ensure we can help as many young people and their families as possible.

Our current funding is limited however, because of the feedback we have received at our events from young people and their parents we are hoping to host events on social skills, sex and relationships, coping with anxiety and other mental health wellbeing in the future.

We would like to say thank you to everyone for their support so far. A Special thank you to Joanne Stokes for very kindly fundraising for Bridging the Gap Together! It is very much appreciated thank you so much.

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I, Lauren Smith*, aged 18, was diagnosed with High Functioning Autism in 2012. Before my diagnosis, I realised there was something different about the way my mind worked, but I couldn't ever fathom it out. This led to me feeling confused and very isolated. I knew I was different from my peers. I felt different. I stood out from the rest of the crowd. One vivid memory of my primary school life was standing in the lonely corner of the playground, observing everyone rather than participating in play. I was picked on for not acting similarly to my peers – I was baffled as to why I felt I couldn't just get involved. I was overwhelmed by the lack of support I received at school, especially when signs of autism became apparent, at the age of eight. Also, the difficulties understanding myself continued at home too. I often became extremely stressed, particularly when I started secondary school. My severe anxiety and continuous frustrations took a toll on the

whole family, causing numerous arguments. I would tend to be physically defensive when I was upset. The majority of the time, it was thought that I was having temper tantrums and had a bad 'attitude', however I now realise that what I was experiencing was an information overload and I just trying to communicate how troubling my world seemed. Mum, unfortunately, was on the edge of a nervous breakdown and Dad was totally clueless as to how to appropriately handle the situation.

Girls on the autism spectrum are often missed because they're mistaken for just being incredibly shy. After experiencing selective mutism for two years at primary school, an autism diagnosis was looked into. The journey to receive an official diagnosis was tough, exhausting and infuriating. However, I did eventually get told that my insecurities, stresses, anxieties and overwhelming sensations unleashed to an autism spectrum condition.

Upon receiving my diagnosis, I felt relieved; I could stop trying so hard to conform and focus on the path to self-discovery (an adventurous and anxiety-provoking journey!) I have researched the condition endlessly and raising awareness of it has now become one of my passions. Autism is my special interest! At times I still feel overwhelmed and frustrated at the lack of appropriate support, therefore, I am trying my hardest to change this by encouraging society to embrace our differences and welcome the autistic mind. Sometimes, I feel as though I stand out like a sore thumb, especially in mainstream college. I struggle to understand why I should constantly fit in with others; *why can't neuro-typicals see things from our perspective?* Despite still experiencing occasional depressive episodes, I have used my negative experience of other people's ignorance towards autism in a positive way. Learning more about autism everyday motivates me to pursue my dream of supporting others with the condition.

The main thing I've realised since my diagnosis is that having autism is inspiring. There is always hope; never lose sight and give everything your best shot! You are worth it! You are loved!

*I have now set up my own Facebook page (My Rainbow Life) and have attended events at local schools to raise awareness of Autism. I have had a few of my poems published on websites and in magazines. I hope to create my own website and start public speaking to share my personal experience of living with High Functioning Autism (a battle; a rollercoaster!)

What you should know about panic attacks

By Tiernan Kelly

Panic attacks can be some of the most stressful things that can happen to anyone, so understanding of what is happening is the best way to help, ask if you can help, ask if there is anything you can do, don't assume you know what to do and perhaps most of all, don't be surprised if they aren't able to communicate during one.

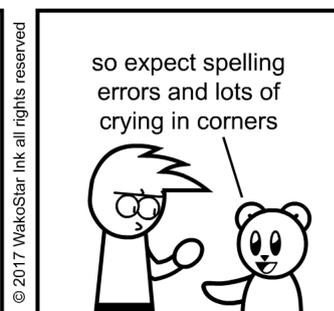
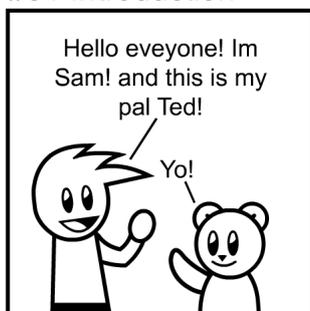
The first and perhaps foremost thing you should know about a panic attack is that they are generally unpredictable; while they do have a trigger and understanding that trigger is important, these triggers can be from weeks or even years back and therefore can be confusing to try and determine.

Secondly, the symptoms of a panic attack are different for different people; for example, one person may end up sweating and having chest pains alongside nausea, whereas another could have trouble breathing, be trembling and may ever have a fear of losing control during the attack, while yet another might not be having any obvious symptoms. Recognising what the symptoms are for the specific person can help that person tremendously.

Thirdly, even after a panic attack, there can be some residual anxiety related "after effects" which can last for several hours after a panic attack; I myself end up becoming mute for several hours after a panic attack. It should also be noted that not all people who have panic attacks have any after effects and if they do have them, they will of course be different for different people.

The last point I have to make links in with my first point; panic attacks can happen at any time and perhaps more importantly, anywhere. This can further add to the unpredictability of a panic attack but it's not so much the when or where that's important, rather it's to remember what the trigger is which can help with understanding it should another one occur, which can then help the person to get through it.

#01 Introduction



Facebook

events@bridgingthegap.ltd



Twitter

WHAT'S ON PAGE

My name is Shane and I am your What's On Editor, my picks for this month include something for all ages.... Hope you have a great summer!

ALL THE FAMILY:

Court Farm Country Park,

Family farm fun with a chance to meet the animals and indoor and outdoor play facilities Court Farm is simply a great family day out. There are many farm favorites and a range of great play facilities that can tire out even the most energetic of kids (and adults). There is a seasonal maize maze There are interactive talks and demonstrations throughout the day to entertain all ages. There is a café and shop on site as well as lots of free parking.

Opening times: open all year except main bank holidays - see website

Entry charge: entry charges apply

Weather: indoors and outdoors

Accessibility: some restrictions - check website

Pet friendly: check website for more details

Approximate visit time: up to a whole day

Court Farm Country Park

Wolvershill Road, Banwell. BS29 6DL

Tel: -01934 822383

<http://www.courtfarmcountrypark.co.uk>



Rainy days and historical tours. Struggling for something different why not try the Curzon Cinema in Clevedon? Historical tour rounded off with the latest film

Something for everyone, including popcorn, One Saturday every month they offer Autism Friendly screenings check here (<https://www.curzon.org.uk/listings/filter/autism-friendly>) for more details

Curzon Cinema 46 Old Church Road Clevedon BS21 6NN 01275 871000

How about something really different for all the family why not get fit for the summer together?

How about Tae Kwon -Do where the family can train and get fit together or just the young ones. Can also improve your mental focus and self-esteem. The instructors are very understanding and patient



The introductory period is one month, during that time you need pay nothing; if you wish to continue after that it's a simple fixed monthly fee.

Contact Simon Lambert

Club Manager

6th Deoree Master <http://www.weston-tkd.co.uk> info@weston-tkd.co.uk or 07709 442104



Why not take a free day out to visit Isambard Kingdom Brunel's world famous suspension bridge and its visitor centre We also support the [Max Card](#), making great attractions across the UK more accessible to looked-after children, their friends and family.

Open most days throughout the year 10:0-0am to 5:00pm

<https://www.cliftonbridge.org.uk/visit/visitor-centre>