

# DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND NEWSLETTER



A monthly newsletter by The Autism Program at Boston Medical Center for families and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) & other neurodevelopmental diagnoses

## Happy February!

We hope that everyone has been settling into this new year! Although this year's Groundhog Day predicted six more weeks of winter, it is a pleasant reminder that nevertheless, winter is almost at its end.

### Black History Month

February is Black History Month! During this time, we encourage you to learn more about Black history and celebrate the experiences & accomplishments of Black individuals worldwide and within your communities. For example, feel free to check out this awesome list of Black neurodivergent role models

by Bridges Learning System! If you want to celebrate in-person, keep an eye out for the many events happening this month by visiting your town's website. For events in Boston, explore this list.

Wishing folks a month filled with lots of love and pride!



## Teens Engaged as Mentors (TEAM)

Last month, our TEAM participants had a blast with the energetic workout of **Drums Alive!** Bringing the beat, laughing, all while breaking a sweat - what a perfect way to kick off the new year. Alongside, participants also enjoyed crafting their own **Spin Drums** (hand-held percussion instrument that creates rhythmic beats with beads), as well as singing our hearts out with **Karaoke!**



Interested in our TEAM program? Contact us at [autismprogram@bmc.org](mailto:autismprogram@bmc.org).

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## Family Learning Opportunities

### 2/12 Supporting Siblings: Tips for Caregivers

**6:30pm** By The Lurie Center for Autism

During this presentation, we will explore the challenges and strengths of siblings to individuals with ASD over the life span. We will share tips and resources for various developmental stages and how the relationship, and possible responsibilities, may change over time. Presenters will include Todd Miller PhD, Susan Kessler MSW, LICSW, and Kirstin Birtwell PhD.

**Register for this event here!**



### 2/12 Understanding ADHD in Kids & Teens

**12pm** By Mass General Brigham McLean Hospital

Roberto Olivardia, PhD, explains how we can help support the kids and teens we look after who have ADHD, addresses the stigma associated with ADHD diagnoses, and answers audience questions about how having ADHD can have its advantages.

**Register for this event here!**



### 2/13 Lunch & Learn: What is ABA?

**12pm** By Shriver Center/Insurance Resource Center

Getting access to services can be complicated. Join to learn more about ABA services and the variety of providers in the field. Discuss some commonly asked questions: How do I find the best fit? Is this provider any good? What should I be looking for in a provider? Should my child be receiving services at home or at a center? Why is it taking so long for my child to be seen?

**Register for this event here!**



### 2/13 Social Emotional Learning

**6pm** By FCSN (Federation for Children with Special Needs)

This presentation provides an introduction to social emotional learning – what it is, why it's important, and what it may look like at home and at school. You will learn about how to help your child develop social emotional skills. and how to include social emotional learning in the IEP.

**Register for this event here!**



### 2/26 MassHealth 201: The Basics

**12pm** By the ARC of Massachusetts

Start your New Year on the right track with your healthcare needs. MassHealth 201 will do a deeper dive and cover topics such as Personal Care Attendants (PCAs), Adult Family Care (AFC), renewals, nursing supports, and other key areas.

**Register for this event here!**



# Author Highlight:



Meet **Kelley Coleman!**



## Pediatric Resources



Kelley's Website



Order the Book

**Chapter topics include:** diagnosis, working with your medical team, therapies, insurance, government benefits, IEPs, financial planning, future care plans & more!

**Kelley Coleman** is a feature film development executive turned author and advocate for parent caregivers and individuals with disabilities. Her book, *Everything No One Tells You About Parenting a Disabled Child: Your Guide to the Essential Systems, Services, and Supports* draws upon over a decade of advocacy, gained through her own journey parenting a child with multiple disabilities. This book is the guide to all of the paperwork and planning, so that caregivers can spend less time with the *stuff* and more time loving our kids exactly as they are.



“

*Parents of disabled kids need an alternative to 'go home, google, and cry,' which is how most of us enter into the parent-caregiver role. That was my story. And probably yours too. We deserve a path forward. I wrote this book to give parents that path forward that I desperately needed. And it's a weirdly fun read. **Let's do this - but let's do this together.***

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## Looking for more reading?

Check out the following online catalogs for a list of books written by, about, and/or for the neurodiverse community:



▶ **Autism Books by Autistic Authors Project**

Online catalog of all books written about & related to autism by Autistic authors.



▶ **Disabled, Not Unable: 75 Books for Children, Teens & Adults**

List of books for all ages about the diverse experiences of disabled/neurodivergent folks.



Pediatric Resources

Seeking Research Participants

### Conversations Study:

Seeking children ages 9-17 with an autism diagnosis to:

- Watch a 2 minute video
- Talk with another child about video
- Answer questions about the conversation

Participants will wear eye-tracking glasses during the study to track eye-movements during conversation.

Interested? Contact: [facelab@emerson.edu](mailto:facelab@emerson.edu)

FACE Lab at Emerson College

Researcher: Ruth B. Grossman, Ph.D. CCC-SLP

The **FACE Lab** at **Emerson College** is currently recruiting autistic children (ages 9-17) to be a part of their Conversations Study! Participants will have one in-person session at the lab and two online sessions via Zoom. The study will track eye movements during conversations with other children their age through the use of eye-tracking glasses. Participants will be compensated with Amazon gift cards.



▶ If you or someone you know may be interested, please contact [facelab@emerson.edu](mailto:facelab@emerson.edu) or fill out this brief form to register!

Registration Open for Little Beavers

Little Beavers Running Club

### CALLING ALL YOUNG ATHLETES:

Sign up to be a Little Beavers Athlete this spring!

We mentor and empower young athletes on the spectrum

**OVERVIEW**  
Each Sunday for one hour, MIT student athletes connect with children and young adults on the spectrum through running, playing games, and staying active together! Siblings and families are also welcome!

**WHEN AND WHERE?**  
Sessions are Sundays 11am-12pm or 12:30pm-1:30pm on MIT's campus.

Spring 2025 Dates:  
March 9  
March 16  
April 6  
April 13  
April 27  
May 4

Scan Here to sign up

Contact Us!  
Email: [mitlittlebeavers@gmail.com](mailto:mitlittlebeavers@gmail.com)  
Please reach out with any questions!

Little Beavers Instagram  
[@littlebeaversrunning](https://www.instagram.com/littlebeaversrunning)

SPRING '25  
**LITTLE BEAVERS**  
SIGN UP NOW!

The **Little Beavers** is a **mentoring sports program** offered by **MIT**. In this program, MIT student athletes connect with children & young adults on the spectrum through running, playing games and staying active together! Their 2025 Spring season is now open for registration and will run from March 9<sup>th</sup> to May 4<sup>th</sup> (total of six Sundays) at the MIT campus.



▶ If you are interested, please contact them at [mitlittlebeavers@gmail.com](mailto:mitlittlebeavers@gmail.com) with questions and/or fill out this form to sign up for the Spring season!

Connect With Us!

Are you seeking to spread the word about your upcoming events, services and/or programs for individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders? Reach out to [autismprogram@bmc.org](mailto:autismprogram@bmc.org) to inquire about being featured on our monthly newsletter.



# Cooking Together



This month, we hosted another exciting **virtual cooking class** for BMC's autistic youth (between ages 12-22) in collaboration with the BMC Teaching Kitchen. Our class participants gathered together just in time for dinner with Paige Rizzuto (MPS, RDN) from the Teaching Kitchen.



Menu of the day? **Scrambled eggs (or tofu) with vegetables & toast!**



We know that cooking is not easy, especially if you are just beginning to learn. So to break it all down, students received helpful visuals prior to the event containing the ingredients, tools, and steps that are needed to make the dish (see below).

With all the preparations set up, we were ready to get cooking! During the class, Paige guided the group step-by-step through this delicious and versatile recipe. We also learned some important kitchen skills about safety and hygiene (see right). It was a night filled with lots of great questions, delicious sights, and smiles.



Check out this delicious plate of scrambled eggs and toast made by Holden - yum!

## What did we learn? ★

### Kitchen safety & hygiene

- **Start out with clean hands!** Wash your hands with soapy water for 20 seconds - how about singing Happy Birthday two times? Also remember to wash your hands after handling any raw ingredients, such as eggs and meat.
- **Knife safety:** keep your fingers curved (think of "bear claw" hands) - make sure that knuckles are out to protect our fingers! Then use "back and forth" rocking motions to cut your ingredients.

Created by BMC's Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics (DBP) and The Autism Program.

### Scrambled Eggs, Sautéed Vegetables and Toast

**Ingredients:**

- 1 teaspoon butter OR cooking oil
- 2 large eggs
- salt and pepper (to taste)
- 1/2 cup diced vegetables of your choice (bell pepper, broccoli, spinach, etc.)
- 1 slice whole-grain bread (or other bread type)
- OPTIONAL: 1 tablespoon milk
- OPTIONAL: cheese

**Virtual Cooking Class Set-up**  
BMC Teaching Kitchen  
BMC Recipe Set-up: Scrambled Eggs with Vegetables & Toast

**Equipment You May Need for Class:**

1. Dishcloth or towel
2. Dish soap
3. Paper towels
4. Dish brush
5. Dish rack
6. Paper napkins
7. Paper plates
8. Paper cups
9. Paper napkins
10. Paper plates
11. Paper cups
12. Paper napkins

*Interested in making this dish at home?*

*Follow the simple & healthy recipe from **BMC Teaching Kitchen** by clicking the plate or scanning the QR code.*



**To register for our next cooking class,**

**please contact our Transition Specialist:**

- [katie.campbell@bmc.org](mailto:katie.campbell@bmc.org)
- (617) 414-7947

Special thanks to Paige from the Teaching Kitchen, BMC Transition Specialist Katie Campbell, and all our participants for another wonderful class! For those of you who missed it, no worries - this class will be held every month. Don't hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or to register for our future events! We look forward to cooking together again during our **next class on March 5<sup>th</sup>**.

## Connect with us!

Cooking is a life skill that many young adults are learning when transitioning to adulthood. **We would love to hear feedback** from autistic folks about their experiences in learning how to cook, as well as what supports might be helpful in building cooking skills. Please feel free to share your thoughts with us at [autismprogram@bmc.org](mailto:autismprogram@bmc.org)



## Up next: Veggie Quesadillas

*Boston Medical Center's Teaching Kitchen presents:*

### Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics Virtual Cooking Class

Open to all DBP Patients Ages 12-22



- Wednesday, March 5th**  
5-6 pm
- Zoom**  
link provided upon registration
- Recipe**  
Veggie Quesadillas
- Skill Focus of the Class**  
Reading and following a recipe

Join us to expand your cooking skills and learn a new recipe! No previous cooking experience is required to join.

**Visual supports** for the ingredients, kitchen tools and recipe steps will be provided prior to the class.

Participants are responsible for **purchasing the ingredients** and kitchen tools needed for the class.

**Family members are welcome to join** their participant during the class to provide support and join in the fun.

**Let's get cooking!**

#### Registration is Required:

To register contact BMC DBP's Transition Specialist via email or phone:

[katie.campbell@bmc.org](mailto:katie.campbell@bmc.org)

(617) 414-7947



### BMC Teaching Kitchen



**BMC Teaching Kitchen** is a dynamic program that offers interactive, patient-focused nutrition education through hands on learning. Visit their website to sign up for free cooking classes, view a library of healthy recipes, and more!



# Interested in Learning Cooking skills?

Cooking is an important life skill that can help individuals gain independence, confidence, fulfillment and health. At the same time, it is definitely not an easy skill to learn! The right type of support and guidance may be essential. Read on for our tips & resources that may be helpful.

## Include it in the IEP

If you or your loved one is attending school with an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), you can request to have **cooking skills be a part of the curriculum**. Talk to the school to identify & develop a plan of what cooking related skills should be taught and how.

Specifically targeted goals can include:

- Learn about and practice the use of appropriate cooking utensils, equipment and appliances
- Learn about how to approach and navigate a multi-step recipe
- Practice creating a grocery list with personal dietary preferences or restrictions in mind
- Learn about cooking safety & hygiene
- Learn about balanced nutrition

Feel free to visit the following websites for more potential IEP goals related to cooking.



Autism Grown Up



Adulting Made Easy

## Are you seeking a future in the culinary world?

If you are an individual who wants to become a culinary professional one day, you may be wondering where to begin your journey. There are many ways to learn and experience the wide range of things that can help you become a culinary professional.

A great way to start is by connecting with a program that offers **vocational training and support**. They can provide you with individualized coaching for job related skills, connect you to helpful experiences, and much more!

If this sounds interesting, we recommend that you check out these programs:

- **AANE's LifeMAP**
- **MassAbility's Next Gen Careers**
- **TILL's Vocational Training**



AANE LifeMAP



MRC Next Gen Careers



TILL Vocational Training

## Recipe of the Month: Chocolate Strawberries



This easy recipe from **Boston Medical Center's Teaching Kitchen** is the perfect treat for Valentine's day (as well as every other day of the year). It only takes 10 minutes to make and will quickly fill your heart with sweetness!



## Adolescent & Adult Resources

# Attend cooking classes in your community

There are various organizations that host cooking classes for individuals in the community. Classes can be geared towards certain skill levels, dietary preferences, types of cooking, and more! Some may be held virtually while others may be held in-person.

To explore cooking classes near you, we recommend checking out:

- Local libraries
- Family/Autism Support Centers
- Online resources

*For example, this website called "Local Cooking Classes" will provide you with a list of options based on your town!*



Local Cooking Classes

# Make cooking easier

It's easy for cooking to feel complicated, overwhelming, and confusing! We recommend trying out different ways to make the cooking process and environment as straightforward as possible.

For example, you can consider looking for **easy-to-follow recipes** that provide visuals of each ingredients & steps, as well as the exact measurements. You can also explore **adaptive kitchen tools** that exist to make cooking more accessible and safe.



Accessible Chef

Check out **this article by Accessible Chef** for a list of some great adaptive cooking tools!



### BMC DBP Virtual Cooking Class

Open for all patients of BMC's Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics (ages 12-22). No previous cooking experience is required! Visual supports for the ingredients, kitchen tools and recipe will be provided. Contact DBP Transition Specialist at **katie.campbell@bmc.org** or **(617) 414-7947** to inquire about joining the next class.

### Culinary Travels

This free cooking program by the Charles River Center is for adults (ages 22-27) with developmental disabilities. Their February event will be held in their Needham center on **2/18**. Please call **(781) 972-1000** or visit their website to inquire about the program and to register.



**This cookbook** was created by Lydia Wilkins for autistic adults & teens. With recipes to suit any occasion, this book is written in clear, jargon-free language which makes "the obvious" obvious.

### Websites with visually clear & straightforward recipes:

- Accessible Chef
- Cooking for Engineers
- Budget Bytes
- SuperCook
- CuliKids




## Resources



The Autism Program continues to support families in many ways both inside and outside of Boston Medical Center. Check out our website to learn more about the services, supports and programs we offer including our Autism Friendly Hospital Initiative, Teens Engaged as Mentors (TEAM) program, and our training offerings. We also have a huge resource library where you can access free information on a variety of topics such as safety, behavioral support, transition to adulthood, insurance and more!



 [www.bmc.org/autism](http://www.bmc.org/autism)  
[Autismprogram@bmc.org](mailto:Autismprogram@bmc.org)

 The Autism Program

 @BMCAutismProgram

## Clinic

Our DBP clinicians are available for developmental evaluations, assessments and follow up. To connect with the clinical team, please call 617-414-4841 and follow the prompts for Developmental Pediatrics.



### Our Clinicians

Marilyn Augustyn, MD

Arathi Reddy, DO

Rachel Amgott, NP

Christina Lazdowsky, NP

Mei Elansary, MD

Audrey Christiansen, MD

Sarah Canale, MD

Mary Ellen Killion, NP

Arielle Spellun, MD

Bridget Poznanski, PhD

Rachel Vuolo, MD

Selcen YarogluKazanci, MD

## ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

*Development and Beyond* is brought to you by the Autism Program at Boston Medical Center, a family support program of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics. **To join our mailing list for future newsletters, community resources and more, scan the QR code to the right!**



**Do you have an idea for a future newsletter?**

**Email us at**

**[autismprogram@bmc.org](mailto:autismprogram@bmc.org)**

**with your suggestions!**