

About Us

The Pediatric Development Center provides speech therapy, occupational therapy and feeding therapy to children in Montgomery County, MD. Our team is composed of speech and occupational therapists, and specializes in the evaluation and treatment of a wide variety of communication, motor, feeding and sensory disorders of childhood.

Our quarterly newsletter aims to be informative. We provide tips and resources for families as well as programs available at the center.

Please feel free to contact Audrey Burns, our Client and Community Outreach Coordinator, at audrey@pdcandme.com with suggestions for how to improve our newsletter or interesting websites that you would like to share with other families. Ideas or tips that have been successful while working with your little ones are also welcome!

Stay informed!

Our website provides information about our services and the wonderful staff working with your family.

We are also on Facebook! On our sites you will find tips for helping your children at home, links to useful websites, and information about events being held in the area. Follow us now!

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Two PDC occupational therapists, Melissa Stapleford and Alexandra Himes, are now Certified Kinesio Taping Practitioners!

The Kinesio Taping® Method is a rehabilitative technique that is designed to facilitate the body's natural healing process while simultaneously providing support and stability to muscles and joints without restricting the body's normal range of motion. It also provides extended soft tissue manipulation to prolong the benefits of therapy administered within the clinical setting. It is a time-tested modality that enhances the function of many different tissues and physiological systems.

Latex-free, 100% cotton and wearable for 3-5 days at a time, Kinesio® Tex Tape is safe for the pediatric population. One (of the many) beneficial features of the tape is that the weight and thickness mimic skin; this allows the body to engage in natural movements while tape re-educates the neuromuscular system to optimize motor performance and assist in skilled, purposeful planning.

Our trained therapists will utilize a variety of specialized cuts and shapes of the tape, in addition to a specified directional pull and stretch, to tailor the Kinesio® Tex Tape to meet your child's needs:

Orthopedic Treatment – kinesio taping provides a complimentary treatment for children with orthopedic injuries, weak or underdeveloped muscles, gait abnormalities, paralysis – even poor posture. For children dealing with serious medical conditions, this is a colorful and painless treatment that can be worn for several days, even while playing and bathing; it can make a big difference in their comfort level.

Neuromuscular Disorders – Kinesio tape has proven effective to activate weak muscles and inhibit overactive muscles. With a simple and safe taping application, children suffering from neuromuscular conditions like Cerebral Palsy or Muscular Dystrophy could see improvements in symptoms and

movement ability. It has also been shown to improve muscle tone in genetic disorders like Down Syndrome and other conditions causing either spasticity, atrophy or poor muscle tone.

Sensory Processing - One challenge for many children is body awareness. Kinesio tape has a "proprioceptive" effect that allows for improved kinesthetic awareness of muscles and joints that will assist children to more efficiently navigate and interact within their environments. This leads to improvement on the playground, in age-appropriate sports, and in play and leisure activities.

If you are interested in learning more about how Kinesio Taping® can positively impact your child, please call the Pediatric Development Center and ask for Melissa or Alex to discuss potential evaluation and assessment.

Authors: Melissa Ann Stapleford and Alexandra Himes

"I saw two significant impacts with the application of the Kinesio Tape after leaving OT. The first was on the trampoline. Usually when he jumps, he jumps all over the place and is not able to control where he goes. I get nervous sometimes that he will fall off accidentally. With the tape, he was able to jump up and down in the same spot and perform straddle jumps and pike jumps with an extended back. He also jumped longer than usual, probably twice as long. The next time I saw it work was at the dinner table. Usually, he slouches and leans on his elbows for the entire meal. I have to tell him to sit up numerous times but, with the tape, he was able to sit upright almost the entire time. I think the tape gives him the input he needs to maintain good posture and it really helps control his movements."

A PDC Parent since 2009

Key Benefits of Kinesio Taping®

Kinesio Taping® may help address the various symptoms related to a variety of orthopedic, neuromuscular, neurological and other medical conditions seen in the pediatric population, such as:

- Down Syndrome
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Toe-walking
- Cerebral Palsy
- Hypotonia
- Developmental Delay
- Sensory Processing Disorder
- Poor Postural Control
- Developmental Coordination Disorder

Kinesio® Tape has a variety of performance improving benefits including, but not limited to:

- Promotes development of gross and fine motor skills, especially for children with low tone
- Decreases joint laxity; supports and optimizes joint alignment
- Promotes muscle re-education and strengthening; may decrease general muscle fatigue
- Increases range of motion
- Promotes the relaxation of spastic (tight) muscle tone
- Provides proprioceptive sensory input necessary for body awareness
- Provides input and organization for improved motor planning
- Stabilizes proximal muscles to promote distal control for fine motor skills (e.g. handwriting)
- Improves gross and fine motor self-help skills (e.g. dressing, feeding, grooming, hygiene, etc.)
- Promotes digestion



Let's talk about "Executive Functioning"

By Melissa Ann Stapleford, MOT, OTR/L, CKTP

In the past six months, have you noticed that your child:

- Has difficulty paying attention and/or is easily distracted
- Requires many reminders to stay on task
- Seems to struggle with making decisions
- Has trouble identifying where to start on assignments
- Has difficulty getting started on tasks, often seems to procrastinate
- Struggles to comprehend how much time a project will take to complete
- Takes longer than peers to complete homework and other tasks
- Needs numerous prompts from adults to stay on task
- Loses track of time or assignment due dates
- Forgets to turn in completed work
- Struggles with keeping track of needed materials; leaves materials at home/school
- Finds checking his/her work very difficult (and may not do it at all)
- Has trouble following multiple-step directions
- Forgets what he/she is saying or doing in the middle of a task
- Forgets the details of a text while reading or soon after finishing
- Gets frustrated with changes in schedule or usual routines
- Has difficulty shifting from one activity to another (i.e. when task demands change)
- Struggles with shifting between information (literal vs. figurative, past vs. present)
- Gets stuck on parts of tasks and can't move forward
- Seems to have difficulty controlling impulses—will say or do things without thinking
- Is easily frustrated
- Often talks out of turn and/or interrupts others' conversations

If so, your child may be struggling with executive functioning (sometimes referred to as "executive dysfunction").

Although this list does not diagnose a specific problem, it can help you, the parent, hone your observations so that you are able to identify areas of concern and begin a conversation with your child's school personnel or other professionals, such as a speech or occupational therapist, educator or psychologist. Executive function is a type of higher level thinking that can be organized into three main categories: learning; behavior and emotions; and social situations and relationships. These skills help connect past experiences with present performance and allow us to retain and work with information in our brains, focus our attention, filter distractions, initiate and switch mental gears.

There are three basic dimensions of these skills:

- Working memory — The ability to hold information in the mind and use it efficiently
- Inhibitory control — The ability to master thoughts and impulses to resist temptations, distractions, habits; to pause and think before acting
- Cognitive flexibility — The capacity to switch gears and adjust to changing demands, priorities, or perspectives.

Ultimately, children establish executive functioning skills through engagement in meaningful social interactions and enjoyable activities that draw on self-regulatory skills at increasingly demanding levels. These skills allow them to plan, organize, strategize, attend to and recall details and manage time and space. Now, while most children do struggle with planning, organizing or follow-through at some point, undiagnosed learning and attention issues can complicate their development. Children with diagnosed LD or ADHD nearly always have difficulty with one or more executive skills, which can lead to obstacles with learning. As each school year becomes increasingly more difficult and when children are required to be independent learners, those with executive dysfunction are more likely to fall behind. Not only do they feel anxious about what to do and how well they are doing it, but they will eventually become overwhelmed, exhausted, insecure and will begin to feel completely 'out of control' - not an ideal combination for building self-esteem! If this sounds like your child, please contact us to find out how we can help you help your child develop these skills so that they can perform to the best of their abilities.

The Lollipop Foundation

Recently we met up with a family foundation whose mission is to promote literacy and academic success for children from low income families. The response from the community has been tremendous. As a result, we are connecting with other organizations and foundations that share similar or parallel causes, and we are learning about the related obstacles that are faced by the families. One of the foundations we are working alongside and hope to offer a reading program to is the Lollipop Foundation (lollipopkidsfoundation.org).

Lollipop Foundation's Mission

Children with disabilities have the right to be given opportunities that allow them to live to their fullest potential. Too often, parents raising these children feel isolated socially and burdened financially, emotionally and physically. They are forced to make hard decisions and sacrifice substantially in areas that most could not imagine. The Lollipop Kids Foundation exists to combat social stigmas, ease the financial burden placed on these families, offer emotional support and provide a brief respite so that every child with a disability has access to a hope and a future.

Love encourages and inspires. Children with disabilities encounter prejudice at every turn. Love empathizes and resists the desire to look away. The Lollipop Kids Foundation believes that love discovers a passion within that fosters understanding and creates a desire to help.

Faith implies complete trust. Every child with a disability must have faith in himself or herself. Faith strengthens self-esteem and confidence. The Lollipop Kids Foundation believes by building the faith children with disabilities have in themselves and their environment, we empower them to prosper.

Without love and faith, there is no hope. Hope sustains and motivates, it enriches outcomes. Hope helps each one of us say no to despair and yes to endurance. The Lollipop Kids Foundation wants to give each child with a disability the gift of hope.

Book Review: Playful Parenting

Review by Cathy Kusmin, M.A., CCC-SLP

Do you feel that life with your kids focuses on therapy, medical appointments, IEP meetings, and/or power struggles? Has the fun gone out of family life? Would you like to find a way to get that connection back and have fun with your child no matter what his or her challenges may be? According to psychologist and author Lawrence J. Cohen, PhD, "Playful Parenting is a way to enter a child's world, on the child's terms...to foster closeness, confidence, and connection." In his book "Playful Parenting", Dr. Cohen states that play is the work of children and is "children's main way of communicating, of experimenting, and of learning" as well as a way to "recover from emotional distress" (such as a rough day at school, a scary experience, a family struggle).

Dr. Cohen talks about the power of play to increase children's feelings of confidence and of connection to the most important people in their lives (their parents). Playing games such as peek-a-boo, hide and seek, and tag increases connections and decreases feelings of isolation and lack of power. He encourages parents to join children in their world—games and activities that they enjoy—and let go, at least for a while, of competition, control, and perfection or correction. Take a chance and get over your embarrassment at being silly and goofy with your child even if it takes some practice. Get down face to face on eye level with your young children or meet your tweens and teens where they are most comfortable. We are always challenging them to learn and grow; let them see you take on the same challenge!

Tune in to what your children are interested in; let them be the ones who know how rather than the ones who always need help. Let them show you how to play their favorite video game, have them help you remember the words to a song, or read a story correctly. Let your young child help you remember how to get dressed when you can't quite remember where that sock is supposed to go, how to put a shirt on, or whether you should tie your shoes together!

Dr. Cohen encourages the active involvement of fathers with their children and discusses the value of roughhousing playfully. "When we see lion cubs play fighting, we assume they are practicing...hunting and fighting skills. What we may not see is that they are also learning how to control their aggression, how to modulate it." Physical play—not just roughhousing-- also offers benefits in self-soothing, motor planning and sequencing, impulse control, and paying attention. Dr. Cohen reminds us that behavior has meaning. Your child is not just having a tantrum or meltdown because he or she wants to drive you crazy. As your speech pathologist will tell you, behavior is communication—and for children without language or with overwhelming emotions, it may

be the only form of communication. So, try to figure out what the behavior is telling you (we are here to help). Is your child requesting something, refusing something, or letting you know that he/she is tired, hungry, frustrated/overwhelmed, or sick/hurting? Be willing to accept strong feelings (both your child's and your own). We can help you help your child move from acting out emotions to expressing them through play to verbalizing them (if possible).

Finally, Dr. Cohen encourages parents to follow their child's lead, imitating their actions, joining in their play and taking charge as needed to insist on connection and add new challenges to play. Most of all, play should be fun; smiles, giggling, and laughter are signs that you are on the right track! You can also check out Dr. Cohen's website: www.playfulparenting.com.

If some of this sounds familiar, it should because Dr. Cohen's approach shares many similarities with Floortime and with the Hanen More Than Words and It Takes Two to Talk programs. Furthermore, I have seen some of these techniques work in my previous job working with two-year-olds, with my own children, and with clients here at PDC!

Upcoming Events

Class Helps Parents Exercise While Kids Get Creative

Parents will have the chance to work out this winter while their children create crafts. This 6-week program -- called ARTbeat -- is offered by the Lollipop Kids Foundation for families with special needs. Caregivers will participate in a core strengthening exercise class led by Monte Johnson, a certified personal trainer and owner of Creative Bodies Inc. The class will focus on strengthening muscles, improving posture and preventing injuries related to caregiving tasks.

While the grown-ups work out, kids will be enjoying art projects led by volunteers. Each craft is designed to spark creativity, provide a sensory experience and promote fine motor skills. Adaptive art tools will be used to help everyone participate, and there will be songs and stories too. The crafts and activities were developed by The Pediatric Development Center's occupational therapy team.

ARTbeat will take place every other **Saturday from Jan. 16 to March 19. The cost is \$100 per family.** Classes will be held at the Lollipop Kids Foundation headquarters: 20 Southlawn Court, Suite D, Rockville, MD 20850.

For more information, contact Debbie Sahlin at debbie@lollipopkidsfoundation.org or (202) 640-2035. Be sure to also check out lollipopkidsfoundation.org for information about all of the foundation's programs.

Do You Know The Importance of Sensory Integration To Your Child's Development?

This fun and informative workshop will include information on how sensory integration skills are developed, the importance of sensory integration to childhood development, signs your child may face challenges with sensory integration, the impact of sensory integration challenges, and fun activities you can do to promote sensory integration.

Presented by Tracy Wilson, OTR/L at The Arc Montgomery County, 11600 Nebel Street, Rockville, MD 20852

Please call or email to register for this free presentation Haydee De Paula 301 984 5777 haydeed@arcmontmd.org

Executive Functioning Group for Boys Age 6 - 10 years. Please email Jennifer Draiman at jennifer@pdcandme.com for further information.

Workshop on Kinesio Taping in February. For further information please contact Audrey@pdcandme.com