

## Programs Resource Guide - April 2024

### April is Autism Awareness Month

#### Autism Awareness Day- April 2<sup>nd</sup>

What is Autism:

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is a developmental disorder and form of neurodivergence that can affect communication, social interaction, and behaviour. It is described by a wide range of characteristics, often including but not limited to difficulties in social interaction, repetitive behaviours, and challenges with verbal or nonverbal communication. Each individual with autism is unique.

What is Autism Awareness Day?

Autism Awareness Day is observed on April 2<sup>nd</sup> every year. It's a day dedicated to raising awareness about ASD and promoting acceptance, understanding, and inclusion of individuals with autism in society.

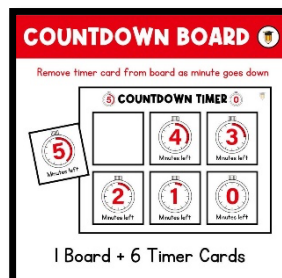
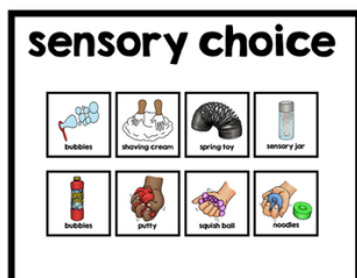
How can we create inclusivity in our classrooms:

- Ensure classroom set-ups accommodate sensory sensitivities, such as providing quiet corners and sensory friendly materials.
- Use visual schedules and picture cards to assist with transitions and communication.
- Use social stories and role-playing to help teach and promote social skills. Help children with autism understand social situations through the utilization of tools that support their learning.



Supporting Tools:

Visual Aids



## Social Stories

Stories can be individualized to support children with ASD in particular areas that they may have difficulty understanding. Social stories provide a visual of what to expect—whether it is to support a child through a new experience, or used with consistency to support transitions, sharing, or social interactions. Social stories can be shared with the children as a group or individually.

Social stories could be about:

- First Day of Kindergarten
- Hands are for..., Feet are for...
- Taking Turns
- Personal Space



## Sensory and Busy Bins



## Sensory Activities

- Set up sensory activities daily, encourage children to explore and discuss the sensory experience through texture, sounds and smell. Have opportunities for children to play in a group and in individual settings.
- Practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques such as deep breathing. Discuss how these techniques can help regulate emotions and sensory input.

## Empathy, Acceptance, Advocacy, and Action

- Encourage the children in your group to gather for positive discussions around ASD, read books with the children to help them understand and celebrate the differences.
- This is a great opportunity to celebrate and emphasize individual uniqueness and the importance of kindness to all.
- Invite the children to collaborate and brainstorm on a white board, or sheet paper sharing individual uniqueness' about themselves to see that we are all different and special in our own ways.

- Invite children to celebrate the children in their class by creating cards or letters to their peers, expressing appreciation for their unique qualities and interests.

#### Parent and Community Engagement

- Foster partnership and positive relationships with families by offering open-communication, welcoming and utilizing the parents approaches for consistency.
- Collaborate with the resource consultant to access additional resources and support for the children in your programs with ASD to ensure we have all necessary tools for the child's success.

#### Books and resources to use with Children in your programs:



#### **Vaisakhi (Sikh New Year) – April 13**

##### What is Vaisakhi?

Vaisakhi, also known as Baisakhi is the Sikh New Year Celebration. Vaisakhi is a significant festival celebrated mainly by Sikhs and Hindus. For Sikhs, it holds great religious significance as it marks the establishment of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. The celebration involves prayers, processions, and community gatherings. Hindus celebrate Vaisakhi as the Harvest festival and the beginning of the solar new year in some regions of India.

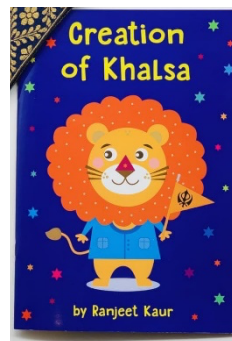
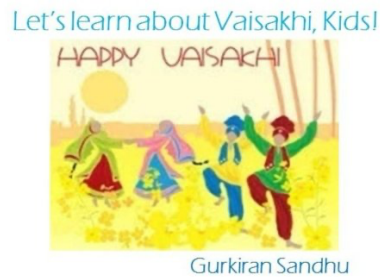
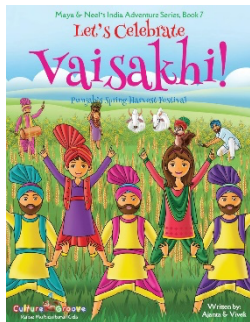
##### How to celebrate in our programs:

- Invite the children to make Kites – Vaisakhi has traditionally been a time where children made their own kites and flew them. Encourage the children to think creatively with their design, materials and colours.



- Creative, process art invitations – The colour orange plays a large part in Vaisakhi celebration

Books to use in our programs:



## **Earth Day – April 22**

What is Earth Day?

Earth Day is celebrated every year on April 22 to raise awareness and support for environmental protection.

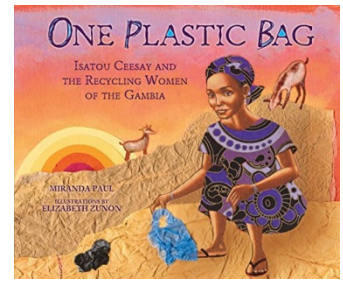
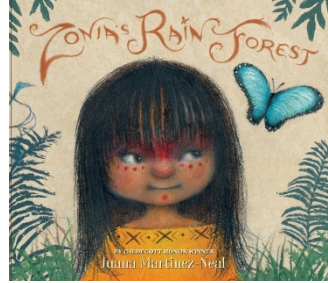
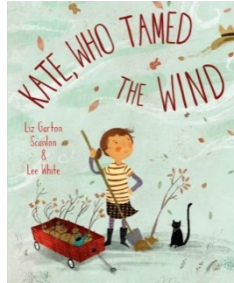
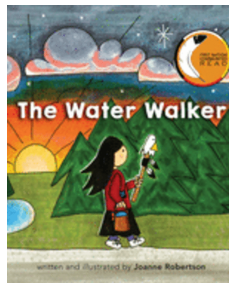
How to celebrate earth day in programs?

- Educate children about environmental protection and the importance of sustainability. Talk to children about the importance of composting and sorting recycling. Share knowledge with children about the importance of not littering on our beautiful earth.
- Go for a nature walk and encourage children to connect with nature and inspire them to take action to protect the environment.
- Invite the children to collaborate on a classroom garden or miniature green house. Start small and plant individual seeds and care for them as they grow.
- Invite the children to collaborate on an earth day pledge – take a moment to brainstorm ways that the children in the classroom can care for our planet. Some thought starters are: turning off the lights, not leaving water running for too long, not being wasteful with consumables.
- Encourage children to express their ideas and concerns about environmental issues through art, activism, and community action.
- Research about endangered animals due to deforestation, harmful pesticides and climate change. (examples: polar bears, bees, rhinos etc.)
- Invite children to create an on-going beautiful junk creation project using items such as pop bottles, bottle caps, wine corks, loose springs, paper towel rolls etc.
- Earth Day STEAM activities
  - Build a habitat
  - Design a wind powered vehicle



- Introduce Biomes to your group, what biome do we live in? Learn about the world's different biomes and what makes each one unique.

Thought provoking books for Earth Day:



## **Pesach (Passover) – April 22-29**

### What is Pesach (Passover)

Around the world, Jewish families will be simultaneously celebrating Passover and commemorating the Israelites' journey from slavery to freedom. Although Passover is celebrated at the same time the world over, people in different countries practice different customs and eat different types of foods.

Books to use in our programs:

