

Aiding Autism

What is iQ: smartparent?

iQ: smartparent is a multimedia television and web series designed for parents that will empower them with new knowledge, tools, and abilities to successfully guide their children through the changing landscape of digital media and technology. It is a growing community of caregivers, national experts, educators, and parent bloggers who want to understand the opportunities and challenges of media as it relates to the development of their children. *iQ: smartparent* was created by WQED Multimedia in 2012.

About this Episode

How can digital devices and new technology be helpful to children with autism and other special needs? Experts discuss which apps, games, and other forms of media can be beneficial in the classroom and beyond.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think are the positive and negative aspects of using technology to try to aid children on the autism spectrum?
2. What are some of the skills a child might gain from using personalized technology like an iPad or Romibo?
3. Have you used apps or other technology to help a child with learning differences? What was the experience like?
4. Do you think robots could help with the educational development of children, whether they are or aren't on the autism spectrum? How so?
5. Do you think social robots and similar technology are user-friendly and parent-friendly? What are some of your concerns about using technology?

About the Guests

Dr. Carla Mazefsky is a licensed clinical psychologist specialized in autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Dr. Mazefsky was the 2012 recipient of the Ritvo/Slifka Award for Innovation in Autism Research from the International Society for Autism Research. She is on the editorial board of the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Western PA Chapter of Autism Speaks. Dr. Mazefsky's research has been funded by the Organization for Autism Research and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. While most of her research to date has focused on high-functioning adolescents with ASD, she is now conducting research to better understand and improve outcomes for those most severely affected by the disorder.



Brett Spitale is the Executive Director of the Autism Speaks Greater PA Chapter. [Autism Speaks](#) is the largest national healthcare nonprofit organization dedicated to funding global biomedical research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a possible cure for autism. Autism Speaks aims to bring the autism community together as one strong voice to urge the government and private sector to listen and take action to address this urgent global health crisis. Prior to joining Autism Speaks,

Brett served as the Vice President for The Alzheimer's Association – Virginia Chapter and with the ARC of Virginia as the Development and Community Relations Director. Brett completed his Masters work in nonprofit management and public administration, and his B.S. in communications and interpersonal communications at George Mason University. Brett has been in the Pittsburgh area for just over a year and is married with two beautiful children.



Aubrey Shick is the founder and CEO of [Origami Robotics](#), a startup developing Romibo, a friendly social robot for special needs therapy and education. Romibo has shown to be particularly beneficial with children on the autism spectrum. Origami Robotics is a spin-off out of the Quality of Life Technology Center in the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University where she created and directed the project for three years.

Aubrey specializes in assistive technologies including wearable computers, with a focus on affective social robotics. Her work encompasses design research, product development, mechanical design, interaction design and STEM education and outreach. Aubrey completed both her Bachelors in industrial design and a Masters of Human-Computer Interaction at Carnegie Mellon. She is a Pittsburgh native recently relocated to Berkeley, California where Romibo is being developed for commercialization.

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Online Resources

Power Up! Apps for Kids with Special Needs and Learning Differences

<https://www.common sense media.org/guide/special-needs>

7 Apps to Help Your Kid Be More Responsible

www.common sense media.org/blog/7-apps-to-help-your-kid-be-more-responsible

6 Awesome Apps for World Autism Awareness Day

www.common sense media.org/blog/6-amazing-apps-for-world-autism-awareness-day

Games for Improving Memory and Concentration

<https://www.common sense media.org/lists/games-for-improving-memory>

How Special Needs Apps Can Unlock Learning

www.common sense media.org/blog/how-special-needs-apps-can-unlock-learning

Autism Speaks – Apps

www.autismspeaks.org/autism-apps

Autism Speaks – Technology and Autism

www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/community-connections/technology-and-autism

How These Social Robots are Helping Autistic Kids

<http://venturebeat.com/2014/03/08/how-these-social-robots-are-helping-autistic-kids/>

Robots as Autism Co-Therapists

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/science/science-news/robots-autism-co-therapists>

Three Great Parent Resources for Learning and Attention Issues

www.common sense media.org/blog/three-great-parent-resources-for-learning-and-attention-issues

NPR: Young Adults with Autism Can Thrive in High Tech Jobs

<http://www.21andable.org/npr-young-adults-with-autism-can-thrive-in-high-tech-jobs/>

Apps for Kids on the Autism Spectrum

<https://www.common sense media.org/blog/apps-for-kids-on-the-autism-spectrum>

Explaining Autism to Young Children

<http://autism.sesamestreet.org/see-the-amazing/>

What kinds of tech can help kids with special needs develop socially?

www.common sense media.org/special-needs/what-kinds-of-tech-can-help-kids-with-special-needs-develop-socially

How young is too young for my child with special needs to start using technology?
www.commonsemmedia.org/special-needs/how-young-is-too-young-for-my-child-with-special-needs-to-start-using-computers-or

My child with special needs is being cyberbullied. What should I do?
www.commonsemmedia.org/special-needs/my-child-with-special-needs-is-being-cyberbullied-what-should-i-do

Romibo

<http://www.origamirobotics.com/>

Best way to configure devices for children with special needs

- [commonsemmedia.org/special-needs/whats-the-best-way-to-configure-my-device-to-make-it-more-usable-for-my-child-with](http://www.commonsemmedia.org/special-needs/whats-the-best-way-to-configure-my-device-to-make-it-more-usable-for-my-child-with)
- [commonsemmedia.org/special-needs/what-accessibility-settings-on-my-devices-can-help-my-child-with-special-needs](http://www.commonsemmedia.org/special-needs/what-accessibility-settings-on-my-devices-can-help-my-child-with-special-needs)

Are there Positive Role Models for My Kids with Special Needs?

www.commonsemmedia.org/special-needs/are-there-positive-role-models-for-my-kid-with-special-needs

Digital-Media Tips for Parents of Socially Challenged Kids

www.commonsemmedia.org/blog/digital-media-tips-for-parents-of-socially-challenged-kids

Apps and Games to Spark Kindness and Compassion

www.commonsemmedia.org/blog/apps-and-games-to-spark-kindness-and-compassion

Sites and Apps that Teach Kids About Feelings

www.commonsemmedia.org/lists/sites-and-apps-that-teach-kids-about-feelings

Games that Promote Teamwork

www.commonsemmedia.org/lists/games-that-promote-teamwork

Autism and Daniel Tiger

<http://angelasclues.com/daniel-tigers-autism/>

www.ijournals.com/review-daniel-tigers-neighborhood-tv-show/

Books With Characters Who Have Physical or Learning Difficulties

www.commonsemmedia.org/lists/books-with-characters-who-have-physical-or-learning-difficulties

Video: Tips for Kids with Learning Difficulties

<https://www.commonsemmedia.org/videos/tips-for-kids-with-learning-difficulties>

Penn State Researchers Develop Computer Game To Help Autistic Teens Read Body Language

<http://news.psu.edu/story/327749/2014/09/25/research/computer-game-could-help-adolescents-autism-improve-their-social>

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