

# connecting the dots

West Virginia Birth to Three RAU-1 Newsletter • Spring 2021

## A Note from Our **Parent Partner**

Hello! My name is Jade, and I'm the Parent Partner for Region 1 and the "editor in chief" of our quarterly newsletter. I'm also a self-proclaimed Mama Bear to two kids, including my seven year old son, who is a graduate of our Birth to Three program.

Hello, 2021! It's a new year and we couldn't be more excited to welcome it. While we're still living in the midst of an unprecedented, ever-changing time, I can't help but be excited for the new year and look at spring as a season of hope, renewal, and appreciation. Spring has always felt like the season where everything is shiny and new – it's a new year, and I'm looking forward to the warmer weather and the beauty of blooming trees and flowers. I feel excited and ready to take on the new personal goals that I've set for myself – "new year, new me!" And although on the surface 2020 didn't give us much to feel thankful for, I have a deep appreciation for the little things from last year – more time with my family, more cuddles from my kids, and a deeper appreciation of yoga. What hidden blessings can you think of from 2020?

**Are you interested in having your family's Birth to Three story appear in a future issue of our newsletter? I'm here to help you write your story! If you are interested, please contact me or let your Service Coordinator know.**

From all of us at Birth to Three, we wish you a happy and safe holiday seasons. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at **(304) 214-5775** or via e-mail at [jjeffers@ccwva.org](mailto:jjeffers@ccwva.org), and please follow us on Facebook at **West Virginia Birth to Three RAU-1, Catholic Charities** for the latest program updates, new resources, and activities for you and your family.

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## Liam Learns to **l a u g h**

When little Liam was just 18 months old, his mom Kaitlynn decided it was time to refer him to West Virginia Birth to Three. “His pediatrician mentioned that if things didn’t improve by his second birthday, he would refer us. But I called in April of 2019 when he was about 18 months old.” said Kaitlynn. “I spoke to Melinda Graham, and she was such a relief to talk to! At that time, I noticed that Liam wouldn’t respond to his name, point, or even really babble. He had no interest in sitting to listen to a book being read, and I noticed that he would get frustrated when he needed something but couldn’t communicate it by pointing or leading us to it.”

Melinda, an Interim Service Coordinator, guided Kaitlynn through the eligibility process and choosing a team for Liam. “I could tell from my very first meeting with Kaitlynn that they having a very loving family and are very dedicated to Liam,” remembers Melinda. “Liam’s family was one that I had an instant connection with.”


“We got through our evaluation process and started actual visit in June of 2019,” said Kaitlynn. “Alyssa was our Occupational Therapist and she was the first practitioner to come to us. Alyssa had weekly visits with Liam.” Liam’s team also included a developmental specialist who provided services bi-weekly and a speech therapist who provided services once per month. As Liam progressed in the program, Kaitlynn was able to adjust Liam’s team to meet their family’s needs. “We wouldn’t have dropped any services, but we noticed that when Alyssa was here, she was working on all areas with Liam. Liam had a very instant connection with her, and she could get him to do things that his Dad and I couldn’t even dream of getting him to do. He was never hesitant with her and there was no ‘warm up’ period, something when had never seen before, even when having him around some of our family members.”

Liam’s progress in our program has been nothing short of amazing! “We have went from non-verbal to probably 300-400 words, maybe more, and he can sing full kids songs. He knows all of his ABCs, even by visual recognition if you mix them up, and he can count to 30 and backwards from 20. He knows all of his shapes and colors. He went from screaming during a bath while washing his hair to allowing you to wash his hair or even washing it himself.”

Liam will be receiving services through the school system next year, and BTT was able to help Kaitlynn navigate the transition easily. “They practically did everything,” stated Kaitlynn. “The set up the enrollment and everything.”

When I asked Kaitlynn what her favorite part of our program was, she didn’t hesitate to praise our practitioners and their connection with Liam. “Watching Liam’s connection with Alyssa. As an autistic child, Liam is very reserved and was very withdrawn. We had barely even heard his laugh before. And she was able to get him to laugh in one of her first visits! You think as a parent that no one will care about your child or connect with your child as much as you do, but I was so wrong about that. Alyssa was able to push him to his full potential, without pushing too hard and causing meltdowns. She could get him to do things that we couldn’t do, and she trained me the whole way so that when she wasn’t there, I could continue to work with him in the way that she did.”

BTT was able to support Kaitlynn as well. “Alyssa helped me to understand sensory issues and autism. Back when Liam was nonverbal, I would cry over the fact that I couldn’t tell what he needed because he couldn’t verbally tell me, and that he may never be able to tell us he loves us. But she taught me how to listen to him through watching signs and body language and that was a huge breakthrough for me. It helped me to even be a better parent to my other children by watching their signs and body language as well.” said Kaitlynn.





Although COVID-19 did impact how Liam received services through BTT, our practitioners stepped up to continue to support Liam and his entire family. "Tammy was huge for resources for me, she could give me websites and other resources that could help me with Liam and things I could read and study in my downtime that also were a huge help," stated Kaitlynn. "Through COVID when in home visits were cancelled, Alyssa spent months working on a busy binder for Liam, and it's seriously one of the most amazing things I have ever seen! You can tell how much she knows Liam by looking at the binder because she included all of his favorite things. We take it with us everywhere and he uses it every day."

"I couldn't be more happy with our experience with Birth to Three!" said Kaitlynn.

## A "heart attack" for Kids

Every day from February 1<sup>st</sup> to February 14<sup>th</sup>, leave a heart on your child's bedroom door to tell them how much you love them – a "heart attack!" – [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)

**Please remember that all activities require adult supervision and participation. Please be aware of small parts and allergies.**



## Jumping Hearts **g r o s s m o t o r** Game

Movement paths are a fantastic way for our little ones to learn new gross motor skills, practice their existing skills, and have fun at the same time! This fantastic activity only requires one thing – about ten hearts, either made of construction paper or felt (your preference)! Pre-cut hearts can easily be found at many dollar stores.



The possibilities are endless here!

- ♥ Place the hearts so your child has to jump over objects to get to the next one.
- ♥ Make it a race between kids to see who can make it through the jump sequence without falling off their hearts.
- ♥ Play hopscotch!
- ♥ Use all of the cards together to create a giant, jumping obstacle course!

**Please remember that all activities require adult supervision and participation. Please be aware of small parts and allergies.**

Adapted from <https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/jumping-hearts/>



## Holiday **Celebrations** with COVID-19

The holidays will soon be here and you are probably wondering how to plan for those important and exciting family times and keep one another safe. Please be watching for recommendations from your local and/or state guidance but these are points to consider as you are preparing.

If you are hosting the gathering –

- ♥ Plan for outdoor activities rather than indoor. If outdoor is not possible, avoid crowded, poorly ventilated or fully enclosed indoor spaces – open the windows and doors if it is possible.
- ♥ Keep your guest list small and limit it to people you know from your local area.
- ♥ If you decide to have any rules in place related to COVID-19 precautions during the celebration, share those with your guests prior to the celebration. This would include the wearing of masks, hand sanitizer, tissues, etc. You might even want to ask your guests to avoid contact with people outside of their household for 14 days prior to the gathering.

If you are attending a gathering at another home –

- ♥ Remember, outdoor activities are safer than indoor.
- ♥ Check with your host for information on any COVID-19 safety guidelines they have in place.
- ♥ Bring supplies you need to stay healthy (i.e., masks, hand sanitizer, tissues).
- ♥ Consider avoiding contact with people outside of your household for 14 days prior to the gathering.

If you will be traveling –

- ♥ Check with your method of public transportation (i.e., train, plane) to learn of safety guidelines they have in place.
- ♥ Wear a mask in public settings and during events, gatherings.
- ♥ Social distance – keep yourself in a 6-foot bubble from anyone not in your household.
- ♥ Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer.
- ♥ Avoid contact with someone who is sick, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

During the celebration –

- ♥ Social distance and limit close contact.
  - ♥ Maintain distance of 6-feet from people you don't live with.
  - ♥ Avoid using restroom facilities at high traffic times.
  - ♥ Avoid busy eating areas during high volume mealtimes.
  - ♥ Avoid shaking hands, bumping elbows, or giving hugs. Wave and greet others verbally instead.
- ♥ Wear masks.
  - ♥ At all times when you are around people not in your household.





- ♥ Avoid singing, chanting or shouting, especially when not wearing a mask and within six feet of others.
- ♥ Limit contact with commonly touched surfaces or shared items.
  - ♥ Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces between each use.
  - ♥ Use touchless garbage cans. Use gloves when removing garbage bags or handling/disposing of trash. Wash hands after removing gloves.
- ♥ Wash hands.
  - ♥ With soap and water for at least 20 seconds after being in a public place, blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
  - ♥ Hand sanitizer should be your second choice when cleaning your hands. Be sure to cover all surfaces of your hands and rub until they feel dry.
- ♥ Keep safe around food and drinks
  - ♥ Be sure everyone washes their hands with soap and water before and after preparing, serving and eating food. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
  - ♥ Instead of potluck style gatherings, encourage guests to bring their own food and drinks for members of their household only.
  - ♥ Limit flow of people through areas where food is being prepared.
  - ♥ Wear a mask while preparing food to serve to others not living in your home.
  - ♥ If serving food, have only one person serve food to keep the numbers of individuals handling food to a minimum.
  - ♥ Use only single use options or identify one person to serve sharable items (i.e., salad dressings, food containers, plates, utensils, and condiments).
  - ♥ Avoid any self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets, or buffet-style potlucks, salad bars, and condiment or drink stations.
  - ♥ If you choose to use items that are reusable (i.e., seating covers, table cloths, linen napkins), wash and disinfect them after the event.

After the celebration –

- ♥ Stay home as much as possible for at least 14 days.
- ♥ Avoid being around people at increased risk for severe illness.
- ♥ Consider being tested for COVID-19.

For additional information and ideas for specific holiday celebrations, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>.





## **g****r****o****u****n****d****i****n****g** Techniques for Relaxation for Adults

### SIX WAYS TO PRACTICE GROUNDING

with anxiety + intense emotions



#### body

lay on the ground,  
press your toes into  
the floor, squeeze  
playdough



#### 5 senses

wear your favorite  
sweatshirt, use  
essential oils,  
make a cup of tea



#### self- soothe

take a shower or  
bath, find a  
grounding object,  
light a candle



#### observe

describe an object  
in detail: color,  
texture, shadow,  
light, shapes



#### breathe

practice 4-7-8  
breathing: inhale  
to 4, hold for 7,  
exhale to 8



#### distract

find all the square  
or green objects in  
the room, count by  
7s, say the date

Please be sure to read the guidance for use provided with essential oils prior to using.

[www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)





## Region One RAU **i**n**f**o**r**m**a**t**i**o**n**

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2000 Main Street, Suite 222  
Wheeling, WV 26003  
(304) 214-5775

Is your child moving, hearing, seeing, learning and talking like other children their age?  
If you have any questions, please give us a call!

West Virginia Birth to Three Region 1 RAU is a program of Catholic Charities WV. West Virginia Birth to Three services and supports are provided under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It is administered through the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health.

1-800-619-5697 • [www.wvdhhr.org/birth23](http://www.wvdhhr.org/birth23)

Find more COVID-19 resources on our website!  
[http://www.wvdhhr.org/birth23/covid19\\_resources.asp](http://www.wvdhhr.org/birth23/covid19_resources.asp)

