

WOW

Factor recap



Welcome to the WOW Factor Recap

June brought summer energy to every corner of ABS Kids. Spirit weeks, pool days, and community events filled our centers, while our teams showed up for one another in conversations that mattered: celebrating Pride, honoring Juneteenth, and recognizing the people who make this work possible.

This month reminded us that culture is not built in a single moment. It has been built over the last 15 years in the everyday choices to include, to celebrate, and to show up fully.

Every WOW matters, the loud ones and the quiet ones.

Building Little Moments Into Big Breakthroughs



📍 Sensory Friendly Summer Fest - Bountiful, UT

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS MONTH



PODCAST HIGHLIGHT

When Water Becomes Dangerous



PRIDE MONTH ENGAGEMENT

What does Pride mean us at ABS Kids?



Hear From Our Psychologist

Dr. Omar Renteria on Anxiety & Autism



July Upcoming Events

July 1
Busy Bees: Little Bee
Sensory Playhouse
Lexington, SC

July 3
Independence Day Celebration
Fort Mill, SC

July 9
Show Up for Teachers Conference
Sandy, UT

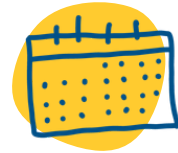
July 11
Sensory-Friendly Fun in
the Sun
Fort Mill, SC

July 16
Sensory-Friendly Pool Party
Gallatin, TN

July 25
Sensory Summer Splashdown
Rancho Cucamonga, CA

July 28
Sensory-Friendly Tuesday Evening
St. George, UT

July 31
2026 SCAAP Annual Meeting
Hilton Head Island, SC



 **Berry Special Festival - Pleasant Grove, UT**



 **Family Festival Born - Salt Lake City, UT**

Message for Pride

This June, we asked our team what Pride Month means to them. What came back was honest, personal, and exactly why we believe whole-person care starts with the people delivering it.



For some, it means belonging. Knowing that every employee can walk through our doors as their full self, and bring that same openness to the families they serve.

For others, it shows up directly in care. One of our RBTs used a simple, thoughtful conversation about identity, with a family's blessing, to help a child and their parents begin recognizing and celebrating inclusion in everyday life.

And for parents of children who are both autistic and part of the LGBTQIA+ community, it means having a team that sees their child completely, and stands with them without hesitation.

Research shows LGBTQIA+ individuals are diagnosed with autism at higher rates. Many of our clients and families live at this intersection every day. We don't treat that as a footnote. We treat it as a reason to show up better.





Water Safety Tips for Families This Summer

- ✓ **Never leave a child** with autism unsupervised near any body of water, including pools, bathtubs, buckets, and decorative fountains. Drowning can happen in seconds and in very little water.
- ✓ **Install door alarms**, window locks, and pool fencing with self-latching gates. Children with autism who wander are at the highest risk.
- ✓ **Enroll your child** in swim instruction designed for autistic learners. Traditional group lessons may not be the right fit. Look for one-on-one, sensory-informed programs in your area.
- ✓ **Teach your child** to recognize water hazards, not just enjoy them. Use visual supports, social stories, and repetition to build awareness.
- ✓ **Make sure your child** wears a life jacket near open water. Swimming ability does not eliminate risk.
- ✓ **Share water safety plans** with everyone in your child's circle, including family members, caregivers, and neighbors, not just their clinical team.
- ✓ **Talk to your BCBA or OT** about incorporating water safety goals into your child's treatment plan. This is a life skill, not a separate conversation.
- ✓ **If your child is drawn to water, lean into it.** Use that motivation to build safe water habits rather than avoiding water altogether.
- ✓ **Know the signs** of silent drowning. Struggling in water does not always look like what you see in movies. Children may not be able to call for help.
- ✓ **Keep a phone nearby** but eyes on the water. Drowning happens fast and quietly.



**WATER SAFETY
IS EVERYONE'S
RESPONSIBILITY.**

Stay close.
Stay alert.
Stay safe.

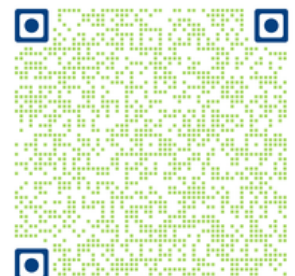


Episode #233

When Water Becomes Dangerous: Autism, Drowning, and the Program Built to Prevent It

Host Jeff Skibitsky sat down with Dr. Tana Carson, Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy, and Dr. Tania Santiago Perez, Associate Teaching Professor in Recreational Therapy, both at Florida International University. Together, they are doing something that has never been done at this scale: building an evidence-based swim instruction program designed specifically for children with autism and training the next generation of therapists to deliver it.

Drowning is a leading cause of death for autistic children, which makes this work urgent. The conversation covers why traditional swim lessons fall short, what makes their approach different, and how families can find water safety resources.





Hear From Our BCBA/DAS: Jeffrey Hawkins



Jeffrey Hawkins is a father of five first, and that shapes how he shows up for the families he works with every day. Outside of work, Legos, video games, and biking with his kids take up most of his time. Inside work, he brings that same patience and attentiveness to every child on his caseload.

Jeffrey's path to ABA was not a straight line. After returning from a church mission, he expected to land in something analytical, maybe engineering. Instead, he found himself drawn to helping people live their best lives, a calling that led him through a psychology degree and into a career as a BCBA. Today he serves as a Director at our Layton, UT center, having worked in homes, in centers, and now in leadership.

Why Personalized Care Matters

One of Jeffrey's earliest WOW moments came as an RBT, working with a nonverbal child who relied heavily on a comfort item. As the team worked thoughtfully to reduce that reliance, something remarkable happened: verbalization increased. One word, then two, then more.

More recently, Jeffrey worked for months with a minimally verbal child whose family was not confident progress was possible. Then her father shared something that stayed with him. Driving in the car one day, he asked his daughter how her day was, and she told him. He never imagined that moment would happen.

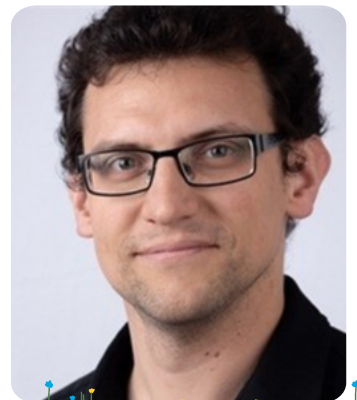
For Families Who Are Unsure

Jeffrey understands hesitation. Many parents arrive having read difficult stories online about ABA, and it is natural to feel cautious before trusting a new provider with your child. His answer is not to convince families with words. It is to show them. When a program is built specifically around a child's needs, interests, and family dynamic, that is when ABA does what it is meant to do. The instances people read about online that sound concerning are almost always cases where care was not individualized.

Jeffrey's philosophy guides every program he oversees: meet each child exactly where they are, and build forward from there at a pace that feels safe, not overwhelming.

Join a Team Like This

If Jeffrey's approach to care sounds like the kind of team you want supporting your child, or the kind of team you want to be part of, learn more about opportunities at ABS Kids on our [careers page](#).



Hear From Our Psychologist: Dr. Omar Renteria

Dr. Omar Renteria will tell you he hasn't been a doctor for long, but the work he's doing in San Diego already speaks for itself. As a postdoctoral psychologist working under the supervision of licensed psychologist Dr. Nicole Young, Omar conducts evaluations at the Camino del Rio Psych Center, where he brings something to the table that is not easy to find: fluency in both language and culture for the Spanish-speaking families he serves.

Outside of the office, Omar is a performing arts devotee, involved in choir, a regular at concerts and musicals, and a self-described Disney adult currently mid-trip-planning. His office decor is Avatar: The Last Airbender themed, which tells you everything you need to know about how he shows up, with enthusiasm, personality, and no apology for it.

Meeting Families in Their Language

In San Diego, Omar can go an entire week where every appointment is conducted in Spanish, English, or a mix of both. That is not just a language accommodation. It is a clinical necessity.

When a family walks in without someone who understands both the language and the culture, Omar is direct about what gets missed. Misdiagnosis is a real risk. Nuance disappears. The child pays the price. His ability to bridge that gap, as a Mexican-American clinician who holds both the cultural and linguistic context, is something he describes simply as rewarding, though the impact runs much deeper than that word lets on.

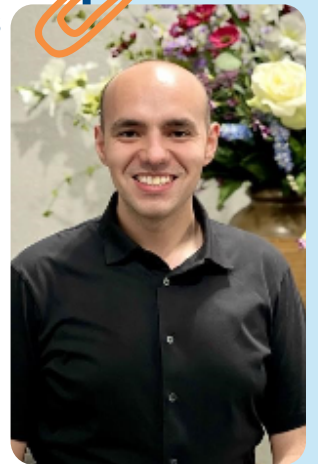
Advice for Families Who Are Unsure

When asked what he would say to parents sitting with developmental concerns and not sure where to turn, Omar's answer covered both the child and the caregiver.

Start. The resources available, including ABA therapy through ABS Kids, are backed by sound research, and the results are real. Omar has watched children go from evaluation all the way through ABA and seen the growth firsthand.

But his advice did not stop there. He also encouraged parents to seek their own support, whether through therapy or community groups, because carrying a more complex diagnosis as a family is heavy, and that weight deserves attention too.

It was a perspective that stood out. The child's progress matters, and so does the parent who shows up for every session.





Terra Vista Kicks Off Summer in Style

The team at our Terra Vista center welcomed summer the right way. Spirit Week wrapped with a tropical-themed celebration, complete with flamingos, leis, and a whole lot of joy.

The people who care for your children bring that same energy and intentionality into every session. A team that shows up for each other shows up for your family too.



Rancho Represents on Game Day

The Rancho team brought the energy on game day, repping El Tri and ready for anything. From the office to the pitch, they showed that showing up fully, for your team, your culture, and your community, is just part of who we are.

We love a team that celebrates what matters to them.



Celebrating Dads and Father Figures

This Father's Day, we recognized the dads, granddads, uncles, and father figures raising children with autism every single day.

The patience, advocacy, and love you bring to your child's journey makes a difference far beyond what any single day can capture. Thank you.

Honoring Juneteenth

On Friday, June 19, ABS Kids observed Juneteenth as a company-recognized holiday, marking the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States.

At ABS Kids, the values we hold show up in how we operate, who we hire, and how we care for every family that walks through our doors.





This month, families across our centers shared what their experience with ABS Kids has meant to them. These are their stories.

Nashville Lebanon

ABS Kids is a Godsend. My son is non-verbal, level 3 autistic. Since my son has been in therapy with them there has been marked improvements. He speaks more and has even said his first complete sentence. They have taught him coping mechanisms to control his outbursts.

His Behavioral Analyst has monthly parent meetings to show us my son's progress and even helps us with how to successfully help our son. She asks what areas we would like them to work on.

If you have a child on the spectrum, I highly recommend ABS Kids. They have a caring, dedicated team that wants only the best for your child. They walk alongside you and celebrate every success.

Charlotte Randolph Psych

This was a very good experience. The doctor was extremely kind and patient with my son. Very responsive staff. Very knowledgeable and answered any questions I had. I feel confident in knowing I came to the right place

Bountiful South Main

The staff members are absolutely phenomenal, very attentive, supportive, and kind. I have noticed a tremendous difference for the short amount of time my child has been attending. I have noticed a significant difference in how he follows directions and listens to what he is being told. I also really appreciate how kind all of the staff members are to him so welcoming and truly caring towards him.

I would highly recommend ABS Kids.

San Diego Activity Road

Hi I am so glad my daughter is attending ABS Kids therapy school. It has helped her a lot. When she first started she wasn't speaking a lot she has only been there less than 6 months and her vocabulary has increased. The employees are great and very dedicated to their jobs they are all doing an amazing job! Thank you.

WHAT'S YOUR WOW

CHECK OUT OUR WOW
MOMENTS FROM JUNE!

Cierra Teichert

After just two weeks with a new client, Cierra faced a tough challenge. Her client wasn't allowed to play with the water toys at the sink, but turning the water off triggered tantrums, and she was getting hit every time she stepped in.

Instead of forcing the issue, she watched and adjusted. She noticed he did better with priming, so she started letting him melt an ice cube under the running water before transitions. Then came the breakthrough. When he filled a cereal bowl at the sink, Cierra calmly narrated the plan: when the water overflows, we dump it and turn it off. As it reached the top, he turned the water off himself, without waiting for her to do it.

That is a WOW moment in its purest form. Patience, creativity, and trust turning a daily struggle into a moment of independence.

Congratulations, Cierra!

Alyssa Phifer

Alyssa was assigned a high-behavior client whose tantrums typically lasted anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour. Within a week of working together, those episodes had dropped to under 10 minutes.

Then came the real milestone. Her client had no tantrums at all, and for the first time since they started, they were able to run targets together.

As Alyssa put it, progress is not linear, but this was a big step in the right direction. Moments like these are exactly why the work matters.



WOW FACTOR