

ilíocht

Celebrating Diversity in Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín



What's On: SPORTS THIS SUMMER

LUSK JUDO CLUB

Coach Jack Denis
01 843 8350

STAMULLEN MARTIAL ARTS

Sensei Seamus
085 280 4000

THE NATIONAL SPORTS
CAMPUS INCLUSIVE
SUMMER CAMP
01 646 4300

O'DWYERS GAA CLUB
01 841 3820

GLEBE NORTH
FOOTBALL CLUB
01 841 5106

BALBRIGGAN RUGBY CLUB
www.balbrigganrfc.com



Here Comes The Summer

Can you believe another school year is almost at an end!?

With rang a sé fast approaching for us, the journey towards transitioning to secondary school will really begin in September. Look out for lots of articles next year detailing that momentous journey!! The summer holidays can't come soon enough for this family – sensory systems are in turmoil and nerves are frayed (and that's just the parents!) The summer holidays, although longed for, does bring its challenges and the article *"The Energy Bank"* details an approach designed by a hero of mine, **Tony Attwood** that I'm going to be road testing this summer.

Although September is a long way off, preparation is key when it comes to preparing children for the return to school. You can find previous articles dealing with this issue on the school website by clicking **Ilíocht: Fáilte Ar Ais**.

So often we can focus on the challenges that conditions like Autism, ADHD, Dyspraxia and Dyslexia can bring. *"Stay foolish. Stay hungry. Dream"* looks at well-known people who have reached the pinnacles of their career, not just in spite of their challenges, but very possibly because of them.

As always, if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please get in touch by emailing celinecronan@gmail.com
Go raibh maith agaibh as ucht é seo a léamh agus biodh an-samhradh agaibh!

The Energy Bank

By Celine Ronan, ilíocht Editor

The summer holidays are fast approaching and it's the time of year that brings mixed feelings for many parents of children with special needs. On the one hand, our kids are soooooo ready for school to finish. They are on their last shredded nerve with even the most seemingly insignificant slight being enough to tip them over the edge. It feels like the first day of the holidays will never come.



On the other hand, the freedom and lack of routine that summer brings will often have exactly the same effect on their systems so the holidays are no sooner started and parents are counting the days until September. I've tried a lot of different things to help summer go a little more smoothly, with varying success. This year I'm feeling very optimistic about an approach Tony Attwood spoke about at the "Enabling Education" Conference. It's called "ENERGY ACCOUNTING".

The idea is centred on the fact that some activities really take it out of our kids, in the same way we take money from a bank account. In order for the "account" or child, to stay "healthy", there must also be "deposits" of activities that balance the withdrawals. The child gives a value to each withdrawal (from -1 to -100) and deposit (from +1 to +100) I'd suggest young children use a star system – up to 5 black stars for withdrawals and up to 5 green stars for deposits. To give an example, a shopping trip might be -50 and time doing a special interest might be +80. The idea is to make sure that there's always a positive amount of energy in the bank.

An example of common withdrawals and deposits might look like this:



WITHDRAWAL

- * Socialising
- * Changes in Routine
- * **Making a Mistake**
- * Sensory Sensitivity
- * Daily Tasks
- * Coping with Anxiety
- * **Over Analysing**
- * Being Teased

DEPOSITS

- * Quiet Time
- * **Special Interest**
- * Physical Activity
- * **Animals or Nature**
- * Meditation
- * **Nutrition**
- * Sleep
- * **Structure/Predictability**

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An example of common withdrawals and deposits might look like this:



WITHDRAWALS	AMOUNT	DEPOSITS	AMOUNT
Chores	-30	Snuggles	+70
Tesco	-50	Computer	+70
Teased by Sibling	-100	Petting Dog	+40
Car Journey	-70	Alone Time	+40
TOTAL	-250	+220	+220

I think that finding a balance is the answer to a lot of questions in life and, even if it’s of no other benefit, charting like this will make us more aware of what is difficult and what is calming for our children and to what extent. Often we can decide as parents what they find hard or easy and they can surprise us with their input.

As I said, I’m feeling pretty optimistic about this Summer (but ask me again come September!)

Stay Foolish. Stay Hungry. Dream.

By Celine Ronan, *ilíocht* Editor

We are all guilty, at times, of focusing on the things our children cannot do. It's natural enough given the fact that from the time we realise our child is not hitting milestones, right up to when a diagnosis is made (and beyond) it's all about the deficits. Therapists are busy listing the things the child cannot do. These are the things he can't do fast enough. And if you've got a close-minded therapist, these are the things he will never do (**NEVER put limits on what your child may be capable of!**). It's true that our children face a lot of challenges, and time and effort must be invested in addressing these challenges but we have to remember that these children have strengths which must also be nurtured.

“Playing sports has the added advantage of channelling that *endless energy* into a **positive channel.**”



I remember vividly a day during the assessment process for Autism where my child recited a 10 minute script from a cartoon word for word. I said to the therapist *“Isn't that amazing?”* and she replied *“Well unfortunately that's another red flag for Autism I'm afraid.”* I replied, *“He has memorised, word for word, a 10 minute script and he's 3 years old. Isn't that amazing?”*

His memory, like that of many children with Autism I know, is astounding when it comes to remembering information about subjects he is interested in. It's almost photographic.

His ability to remember and follow instructions on YouTube videos has led to a love of computer graphics and animation that may someday lead to a career in that area.

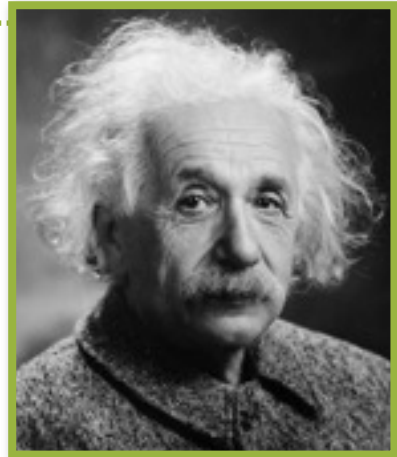
An estimated four to five percent of adults in America have ADHD. This statistic rises to an estimated **eight to ten percent of all professional athletes there** (additudemag.com). Experts agree it's no surprise that this statistic is so high. Most competitive sports operate in a high energy state – you need to take in everything that's going on around you and instantly react. To a neuro-typical child this can take practice but to a child with ADHD – well this is how they live every minute of every day. Playing sports has the added advantage of channelling that endless energy into a positive channel that can lead to raising bruised self-esteem and can help with concentration levels when the child does have to sit and work. Next are just a few examples of people who have excelled in their chosen field, maybe not just in spite of their disability, but because of it.

Stay Foolish. Stay Hungry. Dream. continued from page 4



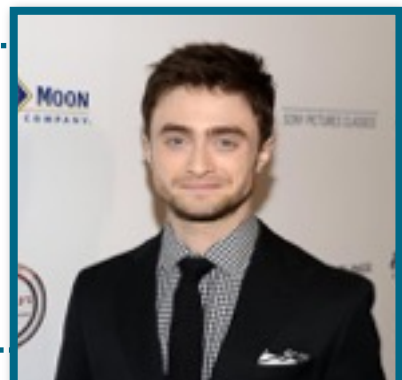
Michael Phelps is the **most decorated Olympian in history** with 28 Olympic medals (23 of them gold) and a holder of 7 world records in swimming. He also has ADHD. Michael was diagnosed at the age of 9 and amazingly he didn't take to water well at the beginning. He hated getting his face wet so his mother concentrated on teaching him the backstroke first. He soon showed he had a talent and progressed to learning the front crawl and everything in between. As he progressed she used his love of swimming to help him in his studies. When he struggled to stay focus in maths she would reword the question to tailor it to swimming; - "how long would it take you to swim 500 meters if you swim 3 meters per second?" When he complained about how bored he was with reading she would give him the sports section of the newspaper or books on sport to practice with.

Albert Einstein displayed many of the traits that we now associate with Autism. He was non-verbal in his early years and repeated sentences obsessively until he was 7 years old. Although he was passionate about political issues and often spoke out publicly, he struggled with small talk involved in small social exchanges. I think Einstein's own words make the best case for Autism; - "My passionate sense of social justice and social responsibility has always contrasted oddly with my pronounced lack of need for direct contact with other human beings..." Einstein had an intense intellectual interest in physics which led to a **Nobel Prize for Physics in 1921**. His formula for energy is known as the world's most famous formula - $E=MC^2$ and his theory of relativity is one of the pillars of modern physics.



Steven Spielberg is **probably the most famous filmmaker of all time**, Steven Spielberg struggled with undiagnosed dyslexia for many years. It took him more than two years to learn how to read and his problems with reading led to him being bullied. He made friends with a group of like-minded students who didn't quite fit in and this became his inspiration for "The Goonies".

Daniel Radcliffe is a **very successful actor and star of Harry Potter** struggled with handwriting at school and still finds tasks like tying his laces extremely difficult as a result of Dyspraxia. He attributes his successful career to dyspraxia as his mother suggested auditioning for a play as a way of boosting his confidence. He's said to have a net worth of over 17 million pounds.



Stay Foolish. Stay Hungry. Dream. continued from page 5



Temple Grandin is probably one of the most famous, and outspoken, women with Autism. She was non-verbal until three and a half years old and she struggled with the social and sensory aspects of school. This led to her expulsion from school at one stage. A summer of her aunt's farm had a huge influence on her and led her to eventually receiving a doctorate in animal science. Her ability to "see in pictures" allowed her to see the cattle industry through the eyes of the cow. She discovered that cows that are calm gain more weight and she set about designing a system to keep them calm in all stages of the slaughterhouse process. **She has**

written or co-written over 60 peer reviewed papers on animal science and her "curved shutes" and restrainer systems are used in the cattle industry across America.

Kiera Knightly is one of Hollywood's highest paid actresses but Kiera was diagnosed with Dyslexia when she was 6. Her mother used Kiera's love of acting to motivate her to read, often using movie scripts to encourage her to practice. She struck a deal with her parents that in return for her practicing every day they would hire her an agent. The rest is history!



Justin Timberlake is a Grammy award winning singer, actor, and entrepreneur Justin Timberlake never let his ADHD hold him back. In fact his ability to take risks with his music is said to be one of the reasons he is such an innovator. He talks candidly about being called "different" and "weird" in school and says that he mother instilled in him the belief that only those who are different can truly make a difference. The star of Trolls, The Social Network, and Shrek 3rd recently said "If you're a young person being called weird or different, I'm here to tell you that your critics do not count. Their words will fade. You will not. **Stay foolish. Stay hungry. Dream.**"

Support Groups

DCA WARRIORS is a closed Facebook group and an invaluable source of information on applying for Domiciliary Care Allowance
<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=dca%20warriors>

REMEMBER US are a Balbriggan based group which caters for children and young adults with special needs. They organise fun activities like baking, crafts etc. at their premises in addition to days out and respite breaks for the whole family. They also include siblings in their activities. They can be contacted at
<https://www.facebook.com/FingalRememberUs/>
 or contact **Nora or Anne 086 045 7003**.

FRIENDS OF AUTISM/ADHD provide an Advocacy Service available to anyone who has any questions about anything to do with Autism or Attention deficit disorders. They also organise psychological assessments for those in need of them, in addition to running respite breaks once a year for siblings of those with autism/ ADHD in their family. We run education and awareness courses for carers and teachers such as Aspergers teacher training, talks on managing behavioural issues, mindfulness courses etc. They can be contacted at **102 Strand Street Skerries Co. Dublin** or contact **01 8495670 / 087 2780899**

THE BALBRIGGAN BRANCH of the DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND runs a Workshop on Tuesday evenings from 5.30pm to 7.30pm in St. Mologa's National School, Balbriggan. The workshop is for children and young people who have been assessed as having dyslexia. The aim of the workshop is to offer specialised tuition for students and also to provide support and information for parents and families. All tutors in at the workshop are fully qualified teachers who have had special training in helping students with dyslexia. For more information please contact the Branch Coordinator for the Balbriggan Branch: **Colin Leonard, balbriggan@dyslexia.ie, 087 149 9870** (after 3pm).

SPECIAL NEEDS PARENTS ASSOCIATION is an organisation set up by parents to give support and information to other parents. They regularly consult with Government on policy changes and provide an excellent source of information on what's happening in regards to special needs legislation. They can be contacted on <http://www.specialneedsparents.ie> or info@specialneedsparents.ie

SNOWFLAKES AUTISM SUPPORT is a Swords based group that provides support to parents and organises therapies at reduced fees and fun days out for children, including siblings. They can be contacted at info@snowflakes.ie or www.snowflakes.ie

ABACUS DROGHEDA is a school for children with ASD but under the banner of Louth/Meath Autism Support they organise a youth club for children with Autism and sibling workshops, all of which include children not attending the school. Contact them at <http://www.autismsupportlouth.com/contact/>
 Mobile: **087 240 7431** Email: jacintawalsh1@gmail.com

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