



# Think Together Times

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter

## WHAT'S NEW?

We are excited to introduce several new programs to support our diverse community.

Our new Teen Club offers a safe space for teens to connect, build friendships, and participate in various activities, promoting social skills and personal growth—every Tuesday from 5:00 to 6:30 PM.

The Sibling Workshop supports siblings of neurodivergent individuals by providing a space to share experiences, express feelings, and learn coping strategies.

Our Equity in Education Workshop is available to schools and individuals, focusing on inclusive teaching practices and strategies to support diverse learning needs.

Join us in these exciting initiatives and help create a more inclusive community. Stay tuned for more updates from Think!



**Our team attending Bahrain Mobility International Center 2024 Conference**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- FREE Arabic Virtual Parent Support Group: Every Monday starting May 6th at 4:00 PM via Zoom
- Teen Club: Every Tuesday from 5:00 to 6:30 PM
- July 7th: Closed for Islamic New Year
- July 16th and 17th: Closed for Ashura
- July 21st-24th: Sibling Workshops
- July 24th: Splash Day
- July 30th: International Friendship Day
- August 19th: World Humanitarian Day
- September 5th: International Charity Day
- September 12th: Cheese Pizza Day
- September 22nd: International Peace Day



## FIELD TRIP FUN

- JULY: Art Gallery with Bahraini Artist, Abbas Almuswi
- AUGUST: Visit a Vet!
- SEPTEMBER: Ice Cream Factory

Stay tuned for dates!

## GAME TIME

Can you guess the quote?



"F\_i\_r\_e\_\_ d\_e\_ n\_t me\_\_  
e\_ery\_\_e get\_ \_he s\_me.

F\_ir\_e\_\_ me\_\_s e\_ery\_\_e  
g\_t wh\_t th\_y \_eed."

The answer is on the last page.

# THE POWER OF COLLABORATION: A SCHOOL'S SUCCESS STORY

July 2024



**Majd AlZaghal**  
Head of Learning Diversity Unit  
Ibn Khuldoon National School

When a crisis strikes, it's easy for panic and discord to set in. But I believe that the key to overcoming a challenging situation is to come together - not fall apart.

It all began when a student faced serious behavioral problems and learning difficulties that required specialized, one-on-one support. The student needed to be temporarily pulled from the classroom in an inclusive school to receive the individualized attention they required, provided by an external coach. However, some of the teaching staff met this decision with resistance.

"We were worried that taking this student out of the classroom would hinder their progress and social development," recalled the student's teachers.

Rather than forging ahead unilaterally, I knew we needed to involve everyone. We convened a meeting with the teachers, the outsourced specialist who would be working with the student, and the student's parents. It was time for some honest and open dialogue.

"I want my child to succeed, but I am worried that this would single them out and make them feel different from the other kids," said the student's mother.

However, as the meeting progressed, a sense of mutual understanding emerged. The teachers shared their concerns about maintaining a positive classroom dynamic. The specialist explained the student's specific needs and how the temporary pullout sessions could help them thrive. The parents expressed their desire for their child to get the support they required while also feeling included in the school community.

Through this collaborative process, the team was able to craft a plan of action that addressed everyone's needs. The student would indeed receive the one-on-one intervention they needed, but the

school and the specialist would work closely to ensure a smooth transition back into the mainstream classroom. A gradual reintegration plan was developed, with the student initially spending more time in the specialized sessions and gradually increasing their time in the classroom as their skills improved.

The results of this collaborative effort were truly remarkable. The student made significant strides in the areas he had been struggling with, and their classroom performance and social integration improved steadily. The teachers reported a more positive and engaged learning environment, and the parents expressed deep gratitude for the school's commitment to their child's success.

This case study serves as a powerful testament to the transformative power of collaboration. By setting aside their individual concerns and working together towards a common goal, the school community, parents, and the center that the coaches work at were able to navigate a challenging situation and achieve an outcome that benefited everyone involved.

## EXERCISE MAKES YOU SMARTER

Did you know our physiotherapist also works with children? She has a wealth of experience and can offer specialized services tailored to children. She can assist with motor skill development, posture improvement, coordination enhancement, and so much more.

We can seamlessly incorporate these physiotherapy services into regular ABA sessions, ensuring a holistic approach to your child's development. Our physiotherapist strongly advocates the idea that "exercise makes you smarter."

She emphasizes the importance of physical activity for cognitive growth.

Watch out for our upcoming group classes designed to boost academic performance through fun and engaging exercises. Stay tuned for more updates and opportunities to support your child's development!



**Madeleine Martin, B.Sc. PT**  
Physiotherapist



**Michael Mueller, PhD, BCBA, IBA**  
**Executive Director of International Behavior Analysis Organization (IBAO)**

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) has a long and important history in public school settings. Instructional methods based on ABA, such as Discrete Trials Therapy (DTT), were part of the early research that proved their effectiveness for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Lovass et al 1897). In the United States, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a broad Federal law supporting children with disabilities in public schools mandated the use of ABA when the act was reauthorized in 1997. The ABA-based behavioral assessment known as Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) is provided more often in school settings than anywhere else. Today, ABA is used in all school settings and by various professionals. Special education settings receive the most ABA support. However, schools are increasingly seeing the benefit of ABA methods used in general education, inclusive settings, and when focusing on traditional academic skills with neurotypical students. The International Behavior Analyst (IBA) certification shows that someone has received the proper training, experiences, and education in ABA to practice in a culturally sensitive and ethical manner. IBAs in school settings provide many necessary services to support students in all grades and settings. Everyday supportive activities by IBAs in schools include the administration of skills assessments such as the ABLLS-R or AFLS, conducting behavioral assessments such as FBAs, creating learning or behavioral support programs that can be implemented by teachers and other school staff, creating individual, class-wide, or school-wide positive behavioral supports, and much more. Often, the difference between a student being included with typical peers or being in a more isolated setting is the inclusion of behavioral and learning supports that an IBA can easily create. Through commonly used assessments, an IBA can create supports, train staff, and periodically oversee and review implementation so the supports can be modified or even discontinued when the student is successful in their inclusive setting. School inclusion typically refers to students being placed in the least restrictive environment possible. This philosophy allows students to be around their typically developing same-aged peers. Inclusion benefits social and emotional growth and well-being, increasing positive social and academic skills and reducing the stigma of children with differences. Inclusive practices are easy to create and support by collaborating with IBAs and a multidisciplinary team in school settings.

## NEUROAFFIRMING LANGUAGE

We are excited to introduce a new regular column dedicated to neuroaffirming language. As a community of parents and professionals, we must prioritize the use of affirming and non-offensive language when discussing neurodivergent individuals and topics.

Each issue will present a new neuroaffirming term to consider and an old term to replace. This practice is intended to foster inclusivity and respect within our community.

Term to Replace: "Autism Spectrum Disorder" (ASD)

Replacement Terms: Autism, Autistic, Autistic neurotype

Rationale: The term "Disorder" unnecessarily medicalizes Autism and perpetuates the notion that it needs to be fixed or cured. By using terms such as "Autism," "Autistic," or "Autistic neurotype," we emphasize the acceptance of Autism as a natural variation of human neurodiversity rather than a condition that requires treatment or correction.

Term to Replace: "Asperger's" or "Aspie"

Replacement Term: Autistic

Rationale: The term "Asperger's" is no longer used diagnostically, and its association with Hans Asperger's collaboration with the Nazis has stained its usage. Furthermore, using this term can reflect ableist attitudes. Referring to individuals as "Autistic" is more respectful and aligns with current diagnostic standards.

It is crucial to consider the preferences of neurodiverse individuals themselves. The terms and alternatives presented here are intended to foster inclusivity and reduce offense; however, the most respectful approach is to ask individuals how they identify and which terms they prefer. Self-identification empowers individuals and acknowledges the spectrum of perspectives within the neurodiverse community.

Let's strive to use language that promotes inclusivity and respect for neurodivergent individuals. By adopting neuroaffirming language, we can create a more understanding and supportive community for everyone.



**Zahraa Dhaif, RBT, IBT**  
**Behavior Technician**

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a scientific approach to understanding and modifying human behavior. ABA focuses on changing behaviors and seeks to empower individuals, foster independence, and improve their quality of life in various settings, including schools, homes, and communities.

Providing ABA services within a school environment presents unique challenges that necessitate careful consideration. The first step is to obtain approval from the school administration to provide services during school hours. However, each school has its distinct perspective on ABA. While some schools are more hesitant to embrace behavior therapists and analysts, others readily welcome us, displaying enthusiasm to learn and implement ABA strategies within their classrooms.

Yet, conflicts and disagreements may arise as some strategies of ABA quite openly contrast with strategies used by educators in school settings. For instance, where a behavior therapist might ignore a client's attention-seeking negative behavior, as is advised to decrease such occurrences of the behavior in the future, a teacher might address this behavior vocally and publicly in front of the entire class. Thus, fostering an atmosphere of open communication between therapists/analysts and the client's teachers at school is imperative to convey the necessity of maintaining consistency with implemented strategies.

Another challenge in providing ABA services in a school setting is to find the right balance between standing out and blending into the environment. Students swiftly discern the connection between a behavior therapist's presence and a specific classmate. This can lead to a friendly interrogation



that includes questions such as, "Why are you here?", "Are you a teacher?" "Are you (client's name) teacher?" and, funnily enough, "Why are you following him/her around?" Preserving the client's privacy is of the utmost importance; however, fostering positive relationships with the client's classmates holds equal significance. This becomes particularly important when the client's in-school program focuses on developing social skills. Cultivating a positive and friendly rapport with the client's peers increases the likelihood of their responsive engagement when prompted to interact with the client, and it will make it easier to set up the environment to encourage your client to interact socially with peers. Therefore, a behavior therapist's role in a school setting extends beyond serving the client exclusively. Instead, it encompasses curating the best environment conducive to the client's growth and success.

ABA can be implemented in various settings, including clinics, schools, homes, and the broader community. However, incorporating ABA techniques into a mainstream educational environment may present multiple obstacles. Hence, it is imperative to cultivate open communication channels, foster amicable relationships with peers and educators, and maintain strict adherence to professional and confidential protocols. By establishing such an environment, clients can receive the most optimal advantages from ABA services provided within a school setting.



Layla Alnajjar, RBT, IBT  
Behavior Technician



**Schedule your  
FREE CONSULTATION  
on our website  
[www.thinkinc.me](http://www.thinkinc.me)**

# COMMUNITY INTEGRATION



**Batool Ahmed, BS, BCaBA, IBA**  
**Clinical Supervisor**

Community integration is the opportunity for individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders to live in the community and be valued for their uniqueness and abilities to the same extent as neurotypical individuals. This requires active work to not only bring individuals into the community but also ensure that they are able to contribute to its development and feel like they are an integral part of it.

High levels of community engagement lead directly to these indices of quality of life, allowing for social inclusion, enhancing social well-being, and increasing happiness. Being a true part of one's community also provides many more opportunities for choice, control, independence, and self-determination. Integration includes a range of activities that aim to support the individuals, including learning to navigate the community, developing social networks and relationships, developing skills necessary to pursue competitive integrated employment, and participating in community activities and volunteering or learning opportunities.

At Think, we strive to increase individuals' opportunities for meaningful personal relationships and community involvement through community-based intervention. This includes support programs in schools, malls/shops, restaurants, play areas, barbers/spas, clinics/hospitals, group leisure activities, and many more community contexts.

In addition, we continue to increase awareness and collaborative efforts to promote acceptance, understanding, and empathy among neurotypical individuals to break barriers and create a more inclusive and compassionate society.

Throughout this year, we had the pleasure of collaborating and conducting several workshops for salons (Purple Pachuli) and different schools in Bahrain (Kipina Nursery and Pre School, St Christopher's School, British School of Bahrain, Britus,



Ibn Khuldoon National School, and others). Additionally, we offered volunteers and coaches at Wonder Fitness Center workshops to better understand neurodevelopmental disorders and help them implement ABA strategies while exercising to promote participation and social communication. Moreover, as part of our ongoing collaboration with the University of Bahrain (UOB), we welcomed the Special Education Diploma Program students and introduced them to the center's programs and services. We also provided them with insights into our vision, age of clients, type of conditions, enrollment procedure, employee qualifications, and available training programs. We would love to continue collaborating with UOB and provide special education teachers with hands-on training to better support students in their inclusive classes.



**Amanda Gilbertson, Behavior and Educational Consultant, presenting to mainstream private schools on inclusive practice.**

## Tariq Yusuf Fredericks



Hi, my name is Muhammad Tariq Yusuf Fredericks, but you can just refer to me as Tariq. I was born in the UK in 2001 to an English, Malay, and Cape Malay/South African family. I was diagnosed with Autism at age 3, but that HAS NOT STOPPED ME from achieving my goals and helping others who need support! In my free time, I love sports, making friends, spending time with animals (mostly dogs), cooking (especially experimenting with vegan food, although I am not a vegan yet), using the computer, creating art (mostly drawing, painting, and digital art), exploring different places, taking pictures, and helping others.

Since there have been a lot of stereotypes out there about neurodiverse people, we can help make a difference. How is this possible, you may be asking? First off, it's important to make anyone who's on the spectrum or has other special needs feel welcomed and not pressured or judged. They should feel people are there to help them get to where they want or need to be. Next, make sure not to mislabel us without knowing our capabilities. Someone might be surprised if we prove them wrong by showing that we can do more than just simple things and that maybe we can even perform as well as neurotypical people. Neurodiverse people might notice important details that others miss, or they might come up with unique ideas that make normal work routines easier or more effective.

Working with neurodiverse people might bring big benefits to a business, but it can benefit us a lot too. I personally have been exposed to working with many differently-abled people. This has helped me to understand their environment and how to meet their wants or needs. My own work experience has also been a good opportunity for me since it has helped me understand how to share ideas with others and work smarter and more strategically. It has helped me learn to do my best and try to get work done quickly; something about that just feels rewarding. I actually love volunteering since it feels like I am getting practice in the working environment. Not only that, but it boosts my motivation to work, be more open, socialize even more, and listen to other people's opinions.

It's important for all of us to remember that we can make a difference! All over the world, there are people in different communities who suffer from discrimination and inequality. Just because someone is different DOES NOT MEAN they cannot achieve their goals and improve other people's lives. In the end, everyone should be treated equally and fairly regardless of who they are!

If everyone actually took the time to think about it, they might realize that those with special needs and who are neurodiverse are NO DIFFERENT! My goal is to keep proving that and making a change for the better!

**If you would like to submit an article for Autistic Voices,  
please contact us at [info@thinkinc.me](mailto:info@thinkinc.me)**



**Join our  
WhatsApp Channel  
for updates and resources!**

## Ola Hashim, Mother and Hero



My world turned upside down when my little Maria, barely a toddler, started losing the skills she once had. Doubt and blame filled the air, but I knew in my heart something was terribly wrong. The first doctor's words were a hammer blow .....autism. The recommended treatment felt barbaric, and Mama Bear took over. I couldn't subject my precious child to that. Our search for answers led us down a winding path. One doctor offered a strange diagnosis; another dismissed Maria's struggles entirely. Yet, through it all, a flicker of hope remained.

The funny thing is that the algorithm of social media started to read my mind. I found a page that posted, "You may be an autism parent if ... and actually, we checked every point on their checklist. Our living room has a trampoline, and our water bill is very high.

Then came the lockdown, a year and a half of chaos that pushed us to the brink. But amidst the storm, an angel appeared - Maria's speech therapist. Her daughter became Maria's friend and gently advised me to get a consultation for ABA therapy. However, there were many different opinions about ABA. I was in denial; I was focusing on the diagnosis more than how to help my child. I have heard it was very expensive, and we cannot afford it as a family. What if it wasn't enough? What if I'd already lost precious time?

The guilt was a heavy weight, but I clung to the hope that ABA therapy offered. The early days were agonizing. Seeing Maria struggle was heartbreaking, but I held onto believing this was our path forward. At that time, I lost my job, and we didn't have the money we needed. Plus, we weren't sure if it was the right thing to do.

But we agreed that we could make money again, but we would never get her early years back; we could not reverse time.

Slowly, ever so, things began to change. Maria's sleep improved, granting me stolen moments of self-care. I

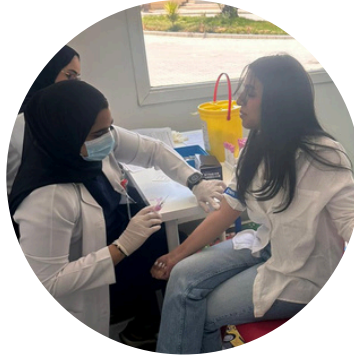
completed my degree, a small victory that felt monumental. As Maria grew, her intelligence, kindness, and honesty shone brightly. These were the moments I cherished, the moments that mattered more than anything else. This journey has been a rollercoaster of emotions, fear, doubt, frustration, and, ultimately... fierce love. Maria's autism is a part of her, but it doesn't define her. She is capable of incredible things, and it's my job as her mother to help her reach her full potential.

Now, as we embark on the next chapter, I have found another and better job. I finished my MBA and took a certificate in ABA to better understand it.

Searching for the right school where Maria can thrive and flourish isn't easy; my heart overflows with hope. Maria's future is bright, and I will be by her side every step of the way, cheering her on and celebrating her every accomplishment. I believe she can teach herself if we just give her the ability to read. The world is very big, and if we are not accepted in one place, there are infinite options. In my imagination, I'm focusing on her future career, not insisting on the mainstream education path. Maria, the tall, thin girl with big, wide brown eyes and curly, messy hair with a bow, is my whole life. She changed me, and I am becoming a better person because of her. She can be anything. She can be a model or an Olympic champion; there are infinite possibilities.



**If you would like to submit an article for the Parent Corner,  
please contact us at [info@thinkinc.me](mailto:info@thinkinc.me)**



**Dr. Fatima Marhoon, an Autism Parent and Advocate, visited us to discuss Bahrain's National Genome Project and consult on specific cases.**



**Field trip to visit Dr. Mariam Murad, Pediatric & Special Needs Dentist.**



**Our Clinical Director presented at Britus Special Education School's weekly Parent Workshop.**



**Our Behavior Technician, Layla Alnajjar, presents to the team on anxiety disorders and how to incorporate procedures into our regular practice.**



**Attending Britus Special Education School's Autism Run**



**Staff get together to celebrate multicultural day and farewell and happy retirement to Fatima Alsawad.**



**Our Founder, Ingy Alireza, and team working in the play area!**



**Dino Day visitor!**



**Splash Day Fun!**



**Our Clinical Director and Educational and Behavior Consultant ready to spread the Importance of Inclusion to Mainstream Private Schools!**



**World Bee Day Activities**





Try these awesome indoor games to beat the heat. And even better, they require few materials, no screens, and little parental effort!!! Enjoy!

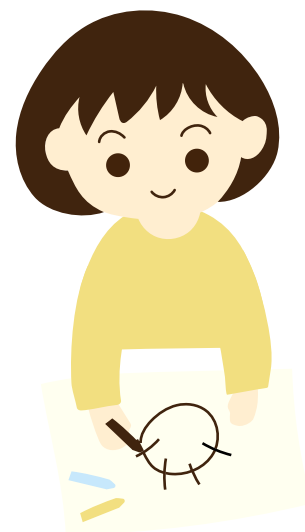
The Beach: Grab your pretend sunscreen, a hat, and a towel. If you have an umbrella, throw it in, and you can “sunbathe” while they play next to you!!



Sleeping Dragon: Parents lie with their eyes closed, and kids try to sneak up without waking the dragon.

Break Out: Their job is to keep you in the cage with many pillows, blankets, and cushions. Then, occasionally, you will yell, “BURSTING OUT,” and the pillows and blankets will go flying. They will have to rebuild to put you back in the cage!

Draw a Picture: Have your child draw a picture on your back, and you guess what they are drawing.



**Answer: “Fairness does not mean everyone gets the same. Fairness means everyone gets what they need.”**