



# OUR VOICE

# KOLAINU

WINTER 2019

A publication of Shema Kolainu - Hear Our Voices  
School and Center for Children with Autism

## OH THE PLACES YOU'LL GO

Fun Activities for Families of  
Children with ASD

## INSIGHT FROM OUR FOUNDER

Learning to Speak With Augmentative  
and Alternative Communication Systems

## SHEMA KOLAINU AUTISM WORKSHOP

Managing Emotions Through Movement

## ALSO INSIDE:

A Guide to Visiting the Dentist  
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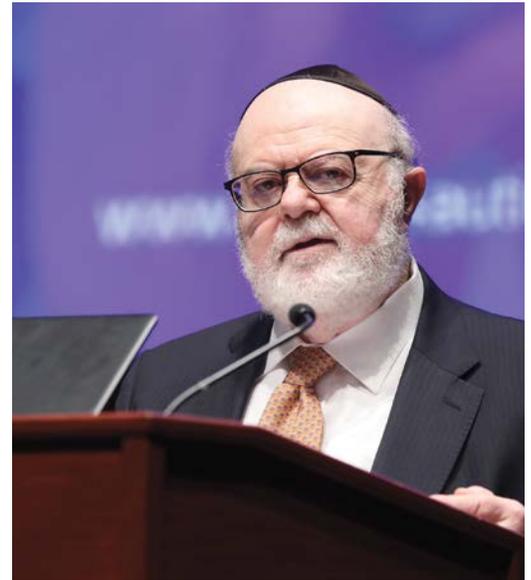
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## Dr. Joshua Weinstein, Founder & CEO shares a moment of inspiration:

Dear Family and Friends of Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices,

It's difficult to describe all the miracles that flow through the hallways of SKHOV from our children each morning as they enter our school. The love and support that our teachers give them is unmatched anywhere. They are cherished and a blessing to all of us.



Our outstanding therapists, teaching staff and their hardworking classroom assistants strive everyday to push them to new horizons and new achievements in their journey to help reach their full potential for independence, productivity, and inclusion in the community. We are so proud of our students and how far they have come.

At SKHOV, we endeavor to empower each child to discover his or her own unique voice, achieved through a closely monitored and individualized set of programs, such as Early Intervention, CPSE Pre-School, CSE School Age, Community Habilitation and Respite Programs. We also provide a free workshop series for parents, students, and other professionals working in the field that is open to the public and funded by the New York City Council Autism Initiative.

Shema Kolainu - Hear Our Voices is proud to declare that it is organizing efforts to expand the building. We will share more details in the future. Students have already begun interacting in outdoor activities with our teaching staff.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to enrich the lives of our students. These achievements could not be possible without the dedication of our outstanding teaching staff. This winter issue highlights a selection of successful stories, our program events, and useful topics for our community.

**Dr. Joshua Weinstein, Ph.D., MBA**

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# ICare4Autism

The International Center for Autism  
Research & Education



Joshua Weinstein, PhD, M.B.A,  
Founder & CEO of ICare4Autism



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“An integral component of ICare4Autism’s vision of a nationwide High School Apprenticeship Program is to promote well planned, comprehensive, personalized apprenticeships which will prepare all high school students with special abilities to confidently enter the workforce and expect to succeed”

- Dr. Joshua Weinstein

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# A RECAP OF SHEMA KOLAINU'S FIELD TRIPS

The teachers at SKHOV were excited to engage their students in outdoor play by visiting The NYC Brooklyn Bridge and Prospect Parks. Our teachers regularly encourage our students to work on their social skills by displaying kindness and civility to other children they meet at the playground.



**I**t was so wonderful to see the students interact with fellow classmates, release their energy by running around climbing, sliding and playing hide and seek! New York City's parks are a natural classroom and our students got to relish in the outdoor space where they can allow themselves to freely experience and get in tune with nature.

Bridges that connect the structures in the playground and slides offer a quick ride back to ground level. Tire

swings, sand, and plenty of flowing water added to the fun during those last few summer days.

The Brooklyn Bridge Park Pier 6 playground, which boasts the Water Lab (a stone-strewn area with water to splash in) was such a treat for the students to interact in, along with the Sand Village (a huge sandbox with large metal slides) and Swing Valley (Tarzan-style ropes).

Prospect Park has a newly installed one-of-a-kind romping spot made from trees that were downed during



“There is truly nothing more special than to see the excitement on their faces as they’re exploring all of the activities and interactions surrounding them.”



storms and other recycled natural materials collected in the park. There were plenty of activities for the children to climb, explore and manipulate. For city children, this fenceless, wooded environment feels like playing in a forest and encourages all kinds of imaginative play.

There is truly nothing more special than to see the excitement on their faces as they’re exploring all of the

activities and interactions surrounding them. Providing our students with fun environmental education and outdoor activities is perhaps one of the most important aspects to our students education. Regular visits to New York City parks is one of the ways our teachers take advantage in teaching our students the importance of interacting with nature and what their city has to offer.



# Celebrating 20 Years

## SHEMA KOLAINU ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

In the ballroom at the beautiful new Williamsburg Hotel, local elected officials, community leaders and longtime supporters gathered to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Shema Kolainu - Hear Our Voices.

The annual legislative event was coordinated by The Friedlander Group ([www.TheFriedlanderGroup.com](http://www.TheFriedlanderGroup.com)) recognizing the achievements and progress made by Shema Kolainu. Dr. Joshua Weinstein thanked the audience and said:

"We have come a long way in becoming a model school and are honored to have so many wonderful years filled with growth."

Dr. Weinstein also announced that Shema Kolainu is teaming up with ICare4Autism to develop a high school apprenticeship program. This partnership was first introduced at the ICare4Autism conference held in Washington D.C. on October 10th at the Congressional Auditorium.

The legislative breakfast was once again emceed by Councilmember Kalman Yeger and Menachem Lubinsky. Former Governor of New York, David Patterson, spoke eloquently of his long support for the organization and elaborated on the difference of autism as its perceived and as it really is.

NY Attorney General-elect Letitia James took the stage and made a warming address, stating that we have an obligation and duty to support this wonderful organization who has set the standard in special needs education. Councilman Yeger then welcomed



L-R: Menachem Lubinsky, Dr. Joshua Weinstein, Peter Rebenwurz, Kathy Hochul, Councilmember Kalman Yeger, Ezra Friedlander



R-L: Ezra Friedlander, NYC Councilmember Kalman Yeger, Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, Peter Rebenwurz, Dr. Joshua Weinstein, Menachem Lubinsky



L-R: NYS Senator Simcha Felder, Ezra Friedlander, NYS Assemblymember David Weprin, NYS Senator Michael Gianaris, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., Menachem Lubinsky, NYC Councilmember Kalman Yeger, Founder of Shema Kolainu Dr. Joshua Weinstein, Former NYS Governor David Patterson, Shema Kolainu VP Peter Rebenwurz, NYS Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul, NY Attorney General-elect Letitia James, Queens Borough President, Melinda Katz, Brooklyn Borough President, Eric Adams



L-R: Menachem Lubinsky, Dr. Joshua Weinstein, NY Attorney General-elect Letitia James, Peter Rebenwurz, Councilmember Kalman Yeger, Ezra Friedlander



Speaker: Queens Borough President Melinda Katz

the Queens Borough President, Melinda Katz, who came bearing gifts of honor on behalf of the City of New York as she stated:

"At the end of the day, the kindness that we show other families today and the children today are priceless for the future of our city and are priceless for the future of the community."

Councilman Yeger presented a framed piece of artwork to Senator Michael Gianaris, made by a student at Shema Kolainu, calling it a view of the minds of children who we are working so hard to help.

Peter Rebenwurz, Vice President and Chairman of Shema Kolainu spoke kind words about the efforts of the school and praised Dr. Weinstein for his efforts. He then introduced Brooklyn Borough

President Eric Adams, who recently visited Shema Kolainu. Eric Adams recalled impressions from his visit and added:

"We can't be a city, a borough, or a nation where we judge ourselves by brick and mortar. We must also judge ourselves by building people. And the most important body of people to build is the children with special needs. These are not their children, these are our children."

Councilmember Kalman Yeger recognized participating elected officials, including NYS Senators Simcha Felder and Marisol Alcantara, as well as NYS Assembly member David Weprin, who was acknowledged along with his brother, Mark Weprin, both of whom were instrumental in funding the NYC Council Autism

Initiative.

Also present at the celebrations were Brooklyn DA Eric Gonzalez, Mayor Bill de Blasio, NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer, and Bronx Borough President Reuben Diaz Jr.

During his closing remarks, Dr. Weinstein thanked the staff of Shema Kolainu, saying:

"Our children continue to amaze us every day, accomplishing more and inspiring us all. These 'small miracles' as we call them, are major blessings. These achievements could not be possible without the dedication and support of our outstanding staff. We thank you for your continued support as we work together to stand behind our blessed children as they make new strides along their journey." 



## FUN ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH ASD

**SHEMA KOLAINU - HEAR OUR VOICES** understands the daily challenges that children and families with ASD face. As such we are always looking for ways to improve the experience and offer relief and resources in the best ways possible that parents of children with ASD can take advantage. Below we have compiled a comprehensive list of community activity programs servicing children and parents of children with ASD in the borough of Brooklyn. For parents who are looking for integrated, quality educational and social programs for their children, these centers would be a great start to engage and encourage their children to participate in their weekend educational community activities.

**Kentler International Drawing Space** is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing contemporary drawings and works on paper by emerging and under-recognized national and international artists to the public. K.I.D.S offers Drawing Together Family Programs every Saturday from 10–11:30 am. These collaborative workshops invite families with kids age 4+ to create fun, hands-on projects. Families discuss and respond to the artwork on view using unexpected materials and techniques. Each lesson is unique and families often go home with wearable, 3D, or large-scale drawings. Drawing Together is open to the public with a suggested donation of \$10 – \$15 per family.

**Alamo Drafthouse Cinema** is one of the most popular cinemas in the borough of Brooklyn, Alamo Drafthouse Cinema has a special movie program, Alamo for All - for young families and guests with special needs. Alamo for All offers the first showings of each film on Tuesdays following Alamo for All rules, with more shows on the weekends. Schedules may vary during holidays. At sensory-friendly Alamo for All shows lights are turned up and sound is turned down. All ages are welcome (including infants). Talking and noise is allowed and guests can move around. Latecomers are also admitted. Adaptive technology is welcome (but no other electronics).

**Extreme Kids & Crew** host 40 sessions of open play at their Red Hook location (71 Sullivan St., Brooklyn, NY 11231) every Sunday from 1pm-4pm. Each weekend from September to June, Extreme Kids & Crew open their doors to children with disabilities and their families, for the very popular Open Play. Children can play in the sensory gym on play equipment normally reserved for therapy. Parents play with their children in an accepting environment while socializing with other families.

**The Jewish Children’s Museum** is a place of learning and wonder. The Jewish Children’s Museum is a unique institution where children and their parents – from all segments of the community – can explore Jewish history and heritage in a stimulating and interactive environment. With hands-on exhibits focusing on Jewish holidays, biblical history, the land of Israel, contemporary Jewish life and more, the Jewish Children’s Museum celebrates and explores many aspects of Jewish culture. Through innovative multi-media technology, Jewish history, values and culture come to life at the Museum.



**Music for Autism / Third Street Music School** is a wonderful organization that has teamed up with Third Street Music School offering autism-friendly, interactive concerts developed specifically for individuals with autism and their families. The concerts feature professional musicians, including Tony Award winners, Grammy-nominated classical artists, and Pulitzer Prize winners. To ensure equal access for all, every Music for Autism concert is fully subsidized. While Third Street Music School is located in Manhattan, the monthly concerts are worth the trek to their downtown location.



**The Greenlight Bookstore** offers free book events and programming for children, teens and families in both of their store locations in Brooklyn. On Sunday mornings at 11:30 AM in Prospect Lefferts Gardens neighborhood families are invited to join the book-sellers of Greenlight for story time. Greenlight staff choose their favorite read-alouds to share with the youngest booklovers, with great books ranging from classics and award-winners to the best new releases and local favorites. Saturday Story Time (11:30 AM in Fort Greene, 1:30 PM in Prospect Lefferts Gardens) is geared toward kids ages 3 to 8 and their families. Authors and illustrators of picture books visit the store on Saturdays to present their new books with interactive readings and drawings, and often activities and crafts too.



**Brooklyn Conservatory of Music** offers a variety of free events ranging from free talks for parents of children with special needs, to free weekly music sets, it sure would be worthwhile to check their monthly calendar of events for upcoming free events. BCM often partners up with some of the most well know names in the music industry and are sure to impress with the musical acts they present to their visitors. All information can be found on their website at [www.bkcm.org](http://www.bkcm.org).

**Brooklyn Children's Museum** has something for children of all ages. With fun, educational exhibits that teach about world cultures, history, science and nature, including live animals and a collection of 30,000 historical artifacts, even parents will enjoy it. There's also a special area for children under five, with activities specially geared toward the youngest of youngsters and how they learn.

## At the library

At Shema Kolainu - Hear Our Voices we encourage our students to love books because the children who grow up loving books become better readers and writers. Our teachers take their students to the community Borough Park Public Library located on 12th Avenue and 43rd Street in Brooklyn, minutes away from our school.

Our trips to the library are an opportunity for our students to immerse themselves in the multitude of knowledge that is available to them. The Library offers an abundance of materials such as books, audio books, CDs, DVDs, computers, internet and much more.

Our outstanding teachers and staff teach their students on library etiquette such as the importance of being quiet at the library. In addition, they learn how to interact with the librarian, and ask questions about how to choose their own books that they are interested in reading. Using available computers in the library, they learn the process of reserving a book and



printing out a receipt once their reservation is complete. They also learn the importance of having a library card, how to obtain one and how to always be responsible for returning the books that they have borrowed from the library in a timely fashion.

Taking our students to the community library gives them the opportunity to have social interaction with the librarian, their peers and browse the library under supervision. Here at SKHOV we understand the great impact that books have on our students.

Broadening our students' love and knowledge for books is very important to our teachers and staff. A great way of doing that is by taking our students to visit the public library.

# FROM A PARENTS PERSPECTIVE:

## Integrative Medicine to Treat Conditions Associated with ASD & ADHD

by Ula Tinsley

Over the past several years, we have tried many different treatments for our son Michael, who was diagnosed with classic regressive, non-verbal autism and ADHD at the age of three. These various treatments included: intensive therapy programs (TEAACH/ ABA/ OT/ SLT), pharmacological treatments, natural supplements, GFCF (gluten free/ casein free) diet, you name it, we've done it!

Of course, every person on the spectrum is different, therefore there is no "one-treatment-fits-all" solution. We needed to find an effective treatment that would work for us to help our boy, so we searched and tried everything we could. I always knew that Michael's case was more complex and required an integrative medicine approach in order to cover all his neurological, emotional, physiological, and psychological needs. I often had to fight with pediatricians, insisting on running allergy tests, checking for parasites in stool, heavy metals in blood, etc.

Even though these tests were pretty basic, we got confirmation that our son suffered from many food and airborne allergies and his blood carried some



Michael at home playing with an iPhone.



heavy metals. My instinct was right! In my own investigation, I came across many fascinating research studies by world- renowned doctors, and learned about:

**Gut and Brain Correlation**, focusing on imbalanced bacterial ecosystem within the GI tract;

**GcMAF (Gc Protein derived Macrophage Activating Factor)** and the role of macrophages in our system;

**Glutathione**, which acts as an important antioxidant in our bodies;

**ABA (Gamma-Aminobutyric Acid)** – a supplement, which helps with anxiety and hyperactivity. It calms the central nervous system;

**Neuro-acupuncture** - a fairly modern technique, integrating traditional Chinese acupuncture with Western biomedical neurology, proven to be effective for treating many neurological disorders, including Autism.



Michael responded astonishingly well to the neuro-acupuncture – his speech and language improved, he was more attentive and aware of his environment and other people, having social interactions with his baby sister and other family members.

It seems so hard to find a trustworthy source of information and “nonconventional thinking” guidance these days. My husband and I often felt like we were walking blindfolded, constantly hitting a brick wall. But we continued to hope for the best, and after a long search for a knowledgeable, integrative medical professional, we finally found one.

He was able to explain all of the above treatments and how each of them could or could not benefit our son, and why. Our new doctor spent hours educating us on different

medical conditions associated with ASD and ADHD, specifically related to our son’s case and his medical history. Before he recommended any medical protocol, we were advised to do very thorough laboratory testing, (alas, not covered by insurance, but worth every penny!)

Let me tell you, this new testing was a life-changing revelation. I didn’t even know such tests existed. You have to list all the food you eat frequently, as well as other potential allergens, like animals, trees, plants, dust, mold, chemicals, etc. These labs used IgE/IgG as well as IgG4, which shows immune response to delayed food reactions. That was an eye opener! Standard blood allergy tests show only immediate reaction to a specific allergen.

For example, if you were allergic to peanuts and ingested one, your body would respond within a few minutes, sometimes seconds, throwing your system into an anaphylactic shock. That’s a response that IgE/IgG test would show in results. IgG4 however digs deeper, and tests your body’s

response to allergens that may ignite a reaction a few days after you ingest, or have contact with a specific allergen. We found out that our boy’s GI flare-ups were often caused by “healthy food” he was eating, like bananas, yogurt, grapes, honey, etc. IgG4 tests results helped us readjust our diet and abstain from foods and spices that Michael was sensitive to. We also tested his microbiome and did a full blood count. It revealed that the minerals and certain pro and prebiotics, I thought he was efficient in, were below normal level, and vice versa. Then our doctor explained why his body was incapable of absorbing many of them, even when given specific supplements. It was due to a leaky gut syndrome. I need to put a disclaimer here: before you try any treatment, (pharmacological or natural) always consult your physician and do these detailed tests first! Just because something is available without prescription doesn’t mean is safe. The more you know about your child’s system, the more you can help to treat and cure certain conditions, including anxiety, hyperactivity, IBS, leaky gut, insomnia, and many more. 🌸



**Ula Tinsley** is a passionate autism advocate, featured writer at [www.icare4autism.org](http://www.icare4autism.org) and a talk show host on Autism Mama Bear Talk. She’s been raising autism awareness on a local and national level since 2010, when her son was diagnosed with a regressive form of autism. After gaining more experience and knowledge about different ways of treating ASD, she’s been supporting and consulting other families living with autism. Her latest project, Autism Mama Bear Talk, is a fast-paced interview show bringing informative and everyday inspiring stories from leading autism advocates, self-advocates, parents and medical experts.



# Augmentative and Alternative Communication Systems for Children with Autism: Practical Implementation

By Dr. Joshua Weinstein

Our understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) has rapidly advanced in recent years. ASDs are a family of neurodevelopmental conditions which are characterized by unusual patterns in social interaction, communication, and range of interests and activities. At the age of three, most children have passed predictable milestones on the path to learning speech and language. By the first birthday, a typical toddler says words, turns when hearing her or his name, points when she or he wants a toy, and if given something distasteful, she or he will make a definite “no” expression.

However, in children diagnosed with ASD, the ability to communicate their responses to the environmental stimuli is absent, and in many cases, these children remain non-verbal throughout the entirety of their lives. Although infants who later show signs of ASD can babble during the first few months of life, later they may stop. Others may be delayed, developing language as late as at the age of 5 to 9. Children may also learn to use communication systems such as pictures or sign language. The body language of ASD children is also difficult to understand. Facial expressions, movements, and gestures rarely match what they say. For instance, a tone of voice fails to reflect their real feelings. As a result, ASD children have great difficulty in learning how to express their needs. In recent years, however, studies have shown that augmentative and alternative devices can be of great help in fostering language in children with autism and other disabilities, achieving remarkable results on practical grounds.

Augmentative communication embraces all ways how we communicate, including enhancing speech. The wide spectrum of augmentative communication can include gestures, sign language, vocalizations, facial



expression, communication displays (boards), and communication devices (e.g., simple, notebook-size plastic boxes, high-tech devices that resemble an iPod or tablets), which have been developed to help those with autism in expressing their needs. Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices are tools to allow individuals with severe or significant speech impairments to express themselves and develop functional language skills. These tools serve as a valuable communicator mechanism that enables children to express their feelings, thoughts, ideas, which in turn ensures that their needs are fulfilled and understood by the environment.

Regardless of how technologically advanced these systems are, still some questions need further research. Specifically, the most critical aspects of inquiries should surround the suitability of AACs devices. Can the person say precisely what she or he intends to say while using an AAC device? Can the person say something quickly without being delayed by the processing time of a device? Both, the intention and the speed/processing might be worth considering while designing AAC devices for children with autism and related developmental disabilities. 



# All About Me Unit: Importance of Self-Care

“Head, shoulder, knees and toes” is our students' favorite sing-a-long song for their All About Me Unit. For this unit, they learn about their physical appearance, such as the color of their eyes and hair, and the importance of self-care.

Our teachers and staff work with our students to create colorful posters highlighting important daily tasks and routines done to enforce self-care habits. Tasks include a morning routine (washing their face, hands, brushing their teeth, dressing for school etc.), after-school routine, and bedtime routine.

Teachers break down the daily tasks into smaller manageable parts so that the students do not feel intimidated. This allows the teachers to better

monitor their progress as they adjust to the idea of grooming and personal hygiene. Self-care skills are one of the first ways that children develop the ability to plan and sequence task performance, organize the necessary materials and to develop the refined physical control required to carry out daily tasks (e.g. opening lunch boxes, drawing or standing to pull up pants). Self care skills act as precursors for many school-related tasks as well as life skills.

All About Me Unit also highlights what type of foods and toys they like, and how they should share personal information such as their name and home address. Learning and being aware of their personal tastes is an important aspect of building their identities which will serve them as



they get older. Skills that encourage good hygiene and healthy habits are vital to the child's road to self-sufficiency and independence. These simple routine daily tasks are as every bit important to the future of their well-being. 

## “Kids ‘n’ Action”

### Indoor Jungle Gym & Fun Physical Activities

Located in the Borough Park neighborhood in Brooklyn, Kids 'n' Action is a learn and play space containing a large,



two-level soft-play structure with ramps, slides, passageways and other activities. Shema Kolainu students enjoyed a ride on a tiny train, which snakes under the large play structure. Our older/taller students found their entertainment by playing on the many arcade and carnival games the indoor jungle gym had to offer. Given the plenty of room to roam and run around, our students had no shortage of excitement and energy flowing through their bodies.

Active play is the name of the game at Kids 'n' Action and our students wasted no time immersing themselves in this truly interactive indoor amusement center. With

balls to bounce and castles to bounce on, obstacle course, foam pits, and more fun, our students indulged in every activity available to them. This activity zone was an immediate attraction for our students.

Our teachers continuously stress the importance of physical activity to fostering the development of good healthy habits early on to achieve and maintain a healthy weight while building strong bones and muscles. Visits to indoor amusement centers such as Kids 'n' action is one of the ways Shema Kolainu demonstrates its pursuit to keep our students physically healthy and active. 



# VISITS TO THE DENTIST:

## A guide to the challenges of taking your child with ASD to the dentist

Preparing your child for a visit to the dentist is an important task. There is a lot of training and preparation that goes into it, and one negative experience can undo all of this work. Preparing for a dentist visit can ensure that it goes smoothly.

The first step is having the right dentist. Pediatric dentists are trained to care for children with ASD and special needs and will, in some cases, continue to see this patient into adulthood. Seeing the same dentist consistently will ensure they learn your child's dental history and be able to accommodate his or her needs.

Before a visit, always call ahead. Calling the dental office ahead allows for the staff to be prepared to cater to your child's needs, giving your child the opportunity to be more relaxed and comfortable during their appointment.

There may be special procedures offered to optimize each visit. This includes a shorter wait time, the ability to accompany your son or daughter in the room during the exam, or scheduling when your son or daughter is feeling their best.

For day-to-day dental care, an occupational therapist may be able to help. Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices provides occupational therapists as well as autism behavioral professionals to teach children good oral hygiene habits. These habits are practiced and reinforced through daily instruction and visual routine to teach students the importance of brushing their teeth.

Sensory challenges at a dentist's office are probably the toughest for your child to make adjustments to.

There are many unfamiliar sights, sounds, and tastes that accompany a dentist visit. While it may take some time and multiple dentist visits before your child is desensitized to the experience, it is good to identify the factors that could potentially make your visits to the dentists difficult and address them right away. Electric toothbrushes offer a wonderful way of getting your child comfortable with the vibration sensations that they can expect at the dentist.

If your child has other sensitivities, share them with the dental staff before your visit so that they are aware and can collaborate with you for. Their assistance and teamwork can certainly help in turning trips to the dentist into a successful ordeal.

Other ways to add comfort to your child's visit include having the dentist

lean the chair back before the child sits to avoid triggering any harsh or unpleasant movement for them. You may also consider applying deep pressure before the visit to help with calming. Wearing sunglasses can also help dim the bright lights that could cause discomfort.

While some dental offices provide their own new toothbrushes and toothpastes during your child's visit, your child may be accustomed to their own. Bring it along and ask if they can use it during the visit.

Communicating with the dentist's office is vital to the smooth transitioning of your child's successful visit. Dental offices are often very accommodating but taking the time to search for a good practice is imperative to finding the dentist and dental office that is best for your child. 





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# Unnamed Superhero By Gili Rechany

**“As our founder Dr. Weinstein strongly reminds us on a regular basis: the key most important factor of our life is faith. If you believe, it will happen.”**

**AS** I reflect back on my experiences for the past 15 years at Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices, I can't help but highlight the unnamed superheroes. I've met many parents that acted as guardians, advocates, cheerleaders, fighters, and all around superheroes. Constantly pushing barriers, and defying all odds in the journey, the journey to maximize their child's potential.

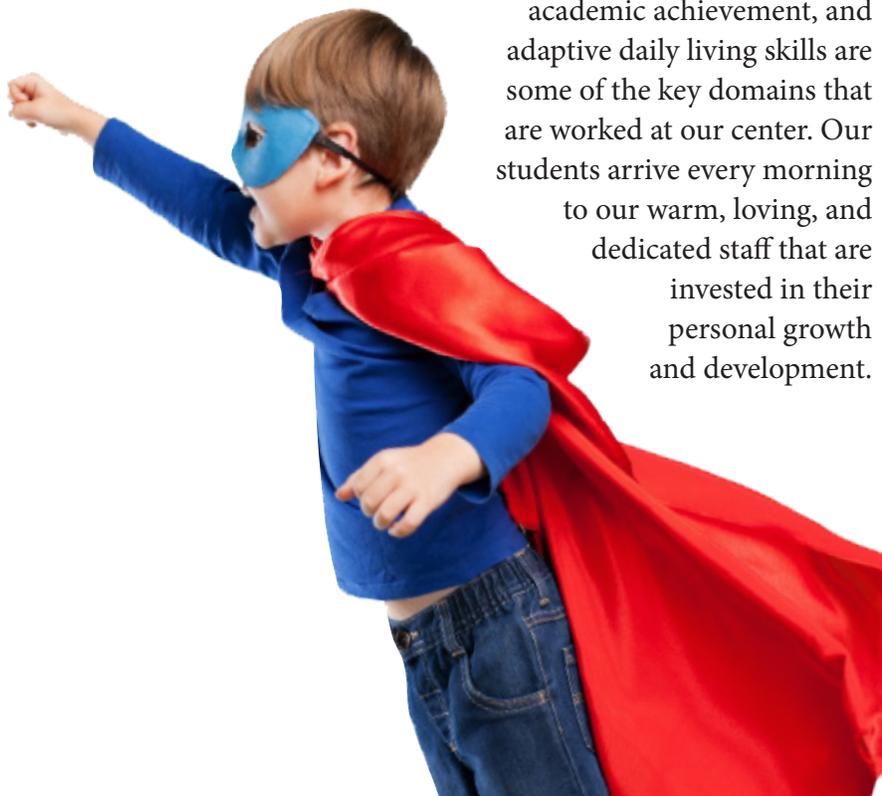
As parents, we all have dreams, some of our dreams for our children come true and some seem so farfetched. As our founder Dr. Weinstein strongly reminds us on a regular basis: the key most important factor of our life is faith. If you believe, it will happen.

Socialization, communication, academic achievement, and adaptive daily living skills are some of the key domains that are worked at our center. Our students arrive every morning to our warm, loving, and dedicated staff that are invested in their personal growth and development.

At SKHOV, We try to maximize the level of instruction throughout the day and ensure that every child's individual goals are being met. At the end of the day, the students get on the bus and go home to a place where their superheroes await them and a different part of their day begins.

Parents are expected to know how to do everything a trained professional does and more. This includes toilet training, feeding, communication training and sensory activities. With limited support, they coordinate the families' schedule that is usually centered on therapy schedules, medication and other additional consideration. In my years of consulting I've rarely heard a parent of a child with special needs say I don't have time, I can't, not possible, I'm tired. Most of the time I am asked what else can we do, where else can we go, what services are available and how high can we reach.

For the superheroes that I've met and for those who I have yet to meet I want to salute you and acknowledge your strength, your drive and your undeniable faith in what the future will bring. At the same time I want to say that it is also OK to feel defeated at times, to feel tired and scared and to ask for help. It is important to acknowledge the small wins and well as the big ones, every step toward the dream is important and should be celebrated. 🌟





## Shema Kolainu Autism Workshop:

# Managing Emotions Through Movement

**O**n November 27, 2018, Shema Kolainu - Hear Our Voices kicked off their free workshop series funded by the Autism Initiative of the NYC Council. The first workshop was about managing emotions through movement. The speaker, Ms. Alexa Moses, MS, OTR/L at Shema Kolainu, shared her insights on how children with autism process and learn the emotions of self and others. She also discussed the benefits of movement and how it could help children with self-regulation.



Alexa Moses presenting her section on Managing Emotions



The workshop, which had over 120 participants brought together an enthusiastic, vibrant and diverse collection of voices, including professionals, therapists, educators and scholars, caregivers and family members of individuals with autism.

Ms. Moses started her presentation by emphasizing the complex nature of emotions. To explore more, the audience was asked to take a quick interactive



activity in which participants had to list emotions by looking only at the other person's eyes. In her thematic spectrum, Ms. Moses included the linkage between autism and emotions, highlighting the existence of generalization in the ways people understand the expression of emotions by children with autism. She further underlined that it is a myth that children with autism do not experience emotions, asserting, "Autistic children may become emotional for different reasons or express their emotions differently, but they have just as many feelings as anyone else. They might need help in letting their emotions out in a more productive manner."

Ms. Moses also suggested the ways of integrating modern technology into treatment sessions, and specifically, proven movement-based techniques and programs to enhance communication among children with autism. She showcased how techniques such as 7-minute high-intensity interval training (HIIT) for self-regulation, yoga, mirror therapy, dance movement therapy, or the popular mobile application Snapchat could be used as alternatives for activities.

The workshop was concluded with the participatory interactive session. Participants were divided into groups and worked actively toward learning and sharing their solutions on how a particular situation involving the individual with autism should be resolved. Members of the audience were engaged in discussion and collaborative dialogue. This interactive session also enabled to explore various ideas and methodologies, which often were delivered in the form of reflection from personal or professional experiences. 



# Shema Kolainu Welcomes Guests from Armenia

“It’s nice to be here again, we missed you!”

Shema Kolainu recently met with their Armenian friends and partners for updates on their Center for Autism and to discuss joint plans for the future.

Joined by our CEO Dr. Joshua Weinstein, Educational Director Gili Rechany, and Program Director Suri Gruen, the directors of the International Child Development Center (ICDC) and Autism International Foundation revealed to Shema Kolainu all of the progress their school has made thanks to six weeks training they received from us in the summer of 2016.

It was then that they got the chance to see how our school operates and caters to our students. They liked our Educational System so much that they decided to use it for their center. “Your model of the school is now ours,” says the General Director, Narine Vardanyan, smiling.

The first time Ms. Vardanyan and her Educational Director, Marine Yengoyan, were in New York was in 2015 for the ICare4Autism Conference. It was there that she had the chance to meet Dr. Weinstein for the first time. He ended up taking her on a tour to see Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices, a model school for ICare4Autism, revealing the many ways in which our school specializes to the special needs of our students.



Educational Director Gili Rechany, Marine Yengoyan, and Narine Vardanyan sit and join Dr. Weinstein to discuss plans for conferences overseas and continuing SK’s international partnerships.

Ms. Vardanyan was glad to share that today, ICDC services 180 students starting as young as 1-year-old up to adults. 100 of those children are under the age of 12, whereas the rest of the students are in their lifelong program, which begins at age 14. The lifelong program is in place to help the children transition into adulthood.

Ms. Vardanyan was also excited to report a planned expansion of their center. Currently, they provide their students with part-time care on a rotation of half-day programs. The other portion of the time they attend a mainstream school.

“In Armenia, even if the child goes to one of the best centers, parents want them to go to mainstream school, to kindergarten, and that’s why we cannot accept them for full days every day.” Narine, director of the school explained.

She says when they are present in these mainstream schools, they often have a specialist assistant. These specialists are paid for by the children’s families, not funded by the state.

“In Armenia things are quite different.” says Narine, referencing the differences between the our school system and theirs.

At Shema Kolainu, we are devoted to providing full-time care for our students. We believe that the exceptional attention to their needs will better equip them for adulthood, whereas a mainstream school won’t be able to provide the support and attention they need.

In sharing this in our conversation with ICDC, they’ve ensured us that getting to that point is their goal. They have two new buildings under construction which are intended to teach and support their students with disabilities for full days, all week.

As for right now, they have created an integrative school program to do what they can while their students are in a mainstream school. They work with



Marine Yengoyan, Educational Director and Narine Vardanyan, General Director of ICDC in Armenia, and Dr. Joshua Weinstein, Founder of Shema Kolainu.

one school in particular that has a designated resource classroom to meet these needs. Narin says it's close to our school model.

These children start their day in the resource classroom and get time with therapists. When it's time to have them join the classroom, in-school therapists visit the children less with hopes of involving them in the mainstream classroom and getting the teachers to acquaint them with the rest of the class.

The plan for them is to move the older children into the new building once construction is complete so that there is more space to accommodate the younger children for more of the day. For now, they are doing their best to serve these children often. They're working on testing between programs that are half a day or 3 times a week to get the most effective results for their students.

They have work to do on their own as well. As the leaders in the school, they're working on improving their own set of skills. The new year will bring them to the final stages of their Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) training. The test will follow shortly after, completing their certification.

New York winters are especially cold for them, but their visit this December has been a great success. They've

## Shema Kolainu Curriculum Day 2018

On December 10th, Our CEO Dr. Weinstein presented to our staff a recap of the latest accomplishments that have been made at Shema Kolainu.

During the presentation, he highlighted:

- the school's mission, emphasizing our commitment to independence, productivity, and inclusion of our students.
- how these goals manifested into accomplishments, including this year's ICare4Autism Conference in Washington, DC, and plans for next year's conference
- Autism Workshop (page 19) focused on Managing Emotions for Children with Autism presented by Shema Kolainu teacher Alexa Moses, MS, OTR/L
- the school's values, including respect, teamwork, and passion. At our school, we think first of our students, then of their parents, and then can consider ourselves.

This high commitment to professionalism has given the school its reputation for superior treatment of autism. 



gotten a chance to revisit Shema Kolainu and reveal how our school has inspired their work at home.

They plan to return to America in the future for ICare4Autism's 2019 Conference. Dr. Weinstein also wants to extend the brand over the Atlantic and bring a 1-day conference to Armenia. These friends from ICDC have proven that children with autism are having their voices heard around the world, and it's through our partnerships that we can continue to extend our reach. 

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# For 20 years,

# Shema Kolainu

HEAR OUR VOICES

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School & Center for Children with Autism

We provide services to children and families in all **five** boroughs in New York City.

Our school and center has been improving the lives of children diagnosed with autism and other developmental disabilities in a warm and nurturing environment.



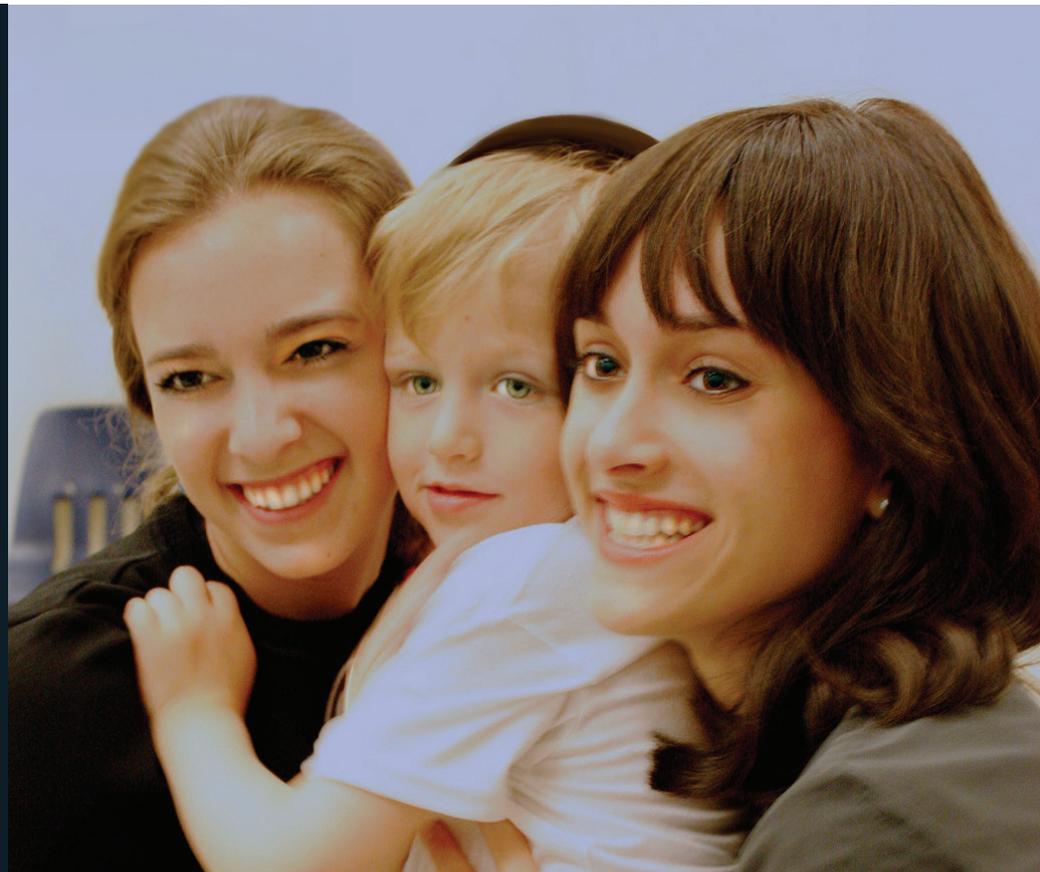
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