

# THE NETWORKER

a publication of matrix parent network & resource center • fall 2014

Matrix Parent Network is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1983 to serve families of children with special needs. We serve Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma counties.

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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

### Can You Hear Me Now?



The theme of this issue of the Networker is communication and mindfulness. As human beings we have all experienced situations when we were trying to share important information but it felt like the person to whom we were relaying that information was not paying attention or understanding what we were trying to say.

I would also guess that there have been occasions when we found ourselves distracted when someone was seeking our attention. Perhaps we were mentally reviewing our enormous “To-Do” list, worrying about some totally unrelated issue or even thinking the person speaking was completely wrong. So we “checked-out”... watching their lips move while really thinking about how we’d respond to them...before they even finished speaking. There is an old saying...

*“We were given two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we talk.”*

When we feel listened to and heard, it’s because our communication was purposeful, respectful, attentive, in the moment, and undistracted. We all want to be heard in this way, even though it’s sometimes hard to do. Have you considered what others might say about their communication with you?

Mindfulness and communication are especially important for us as parents of children who experience differences. So much depends on us being able to share critical information about our child to help others understand and respond appropriately. Is the doctor really hearing your concerns and aware that you’re not just over-vigilant or anxious? Are you able to share information with your child’s teacher about effective strategies that can help divert unwanted behaviors? Can you find the right words to respond to immediate family members who mistakenly think the challenges are caused by your parenting?

The first step in truly being listened to is to practice listening well yourself. It’s amazing how responsive others are when they feel they have really been heard. People so appreciate being heard.

We hope you will enjoy our Fall Networker and begin to see the connections between mindfulness and effective communication. I practiced mindfulness when writing this message today. I know I need to keep practicing!

*Nora*

Nora Thompson  
Executive Director

parent network  
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Matrix

# Communication & Mindfulness



# Development



## Interview with Nancy Petranto

*“Remember to donate to Matrix”*

### When did you first learn about Matrix, and what attracted you to the organization?

“It was over 12 years ago. I had heard about Matrix from the Resource Specialist at Marin Waldorf School where my daughter was going to school. She suggested that Matrix may be of assistance when I expressed an interest in having my daughter tested.”

### How has Matrix served you and your family?

“Matrix provided services initially through former Parent Advisor Megan Askim, who led a workshop on how to prepare for an IEP and provided me with general guidance on how to work with the Novato Unified School District. Subsequently, Lynne Wasley, former Senior Parent Advisor, assisted me in preparing for my daughter’s second IEP (as she headed into middle school) and third IEP (as she headed into high school) and facilitated the Adoption Support Group.”

Lynne was particularly helpful in analyzing the results of my daughter’s neuropsychological testing, indicating my daughter’s strengths and weaknesses and explaining the basis on which she was likely to receive services. From the Adoption Support Group, I received tremendous emotional support from others who were experiencing similar issues with their children with special needs.”

### Have these services met your needs and expectations?

“Yes. Lynne was astute in her analysis, realistic in what to expect from the school district, and strategic in how to advocate for my daughter. The parents in the Adoption Support Group provided amazing emotional support to each other, as well as an on-going resource for the services, both within and outside our community, available to our children and families. As our children grew older, the issues we confronted were always changing, but were being experienced similarly by many of us at the same time.”

### What are your goals and dreams for Matrix’s future?

“I hope Matrix will continue to support families of children with special needs by advising parents of the available resources in our educational, social, medical, mental health, and juvenile justice systems and teaching parents how to advocate on behalf of their children. Unfortunately, it is frequently very difficult for special needs children to get the services to which they are entitled, because there are insufficient resources allocated to provide those services.

I know that Matrix is always on a tight budget and looks to donors to maintain the services it provides to families. I hope that parents whose families have benefited from Matrix’s services will remember to donate to Matrix, when and as they are able. This will help Matrix to continue to provide its valuable services to them and other families in the future.”

### Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

“It’s a long journey...and it’s nice to have Matrix there along the way. My daughter is now 20 and just got her driver’s license. New issues continue to arise as she is trying to establish her independence and self-sufficiency by working and living on her own. Even as our special needs children become young adults, we as parents still have an essential role in their lives.”

## Monthly Giving



Matrix is excited to launch our new monthly giving campaign: “Our Kitchen Table”. Since kitchen tables are often the heart of the home where friends and family gather and feel welcomed AND since Matrix was founded at a kitchen table more than 30 years ago, we are offering you the opportunity to join us at Our Kitchen Table by becoming a charter member.

It couldn’t be easier—just go to our website, [www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org), and click on the kitchen table graphic. There you will see more information about how to find your seat at our table.

It’s always better when tables are crowded with family and friends. Will you join us at ours?







# Parent Services En Español

## Atención Plena y la Comunicación

La investigación confirma que los padres de niños con necesidades especiales experimentan niveles de estrés más altos.

La atención plena cultiva la calma y la estabilidad de atención lo cual puede reducir el estrés. Reducir el estrés puede mejorar la comunicación. La comunicación mejora cuando usted puede dar un paso hacia atrás y obtiene una perspectiva de lo que lo motiva, de sus esperanzas y temores.

Apoyar a nuestros hijos significa primero apoyarnos a nosotros mismos. Cuando reducimos nuestro estrés, podemos prestar más atención plena a lo que decimos y a cómo lo decimos. Esto se aplica tanto en reuniones de y planes sobre las necesidades de nuestros hijos con miembros confusos de la familia explicándoles de nuestra familia las formas de apoyar e interactuar con el niño con necesidades especiales, o en la comunidad si otros hacen.

### MENSAJE DEL DIRECTOR

## “¿Me puedes escuchar en este momento?”

El tema de esta edición del “Networker” (contactador) es la atención plena y la comunicación. Como seres humanos tenemos presente todas las situaciones que hemos experimentado cuando estamos tratando de compartir información importante, pero sentimos que la persona a la que le estamos transmitiendo esa información no estaba prestando atención o comprendiendo lo que estábamos tratando de decir.

También me imagino que ha habido ocasiones en las que nos encontramos distraídos cuando alguien busca nuestra atención. A lo mejor estábamos revisando mentalmente nuestra enorme lista “de cosas por hacer”, preocupándonos de algún tema completamente ajeno o incluso pensando que la persona que nos hablaba estaba completamente equivocada. Así que nos “desconectamos”... viendo como se mueven sus labios, mientras que realmente estamos pensando en cómo nos gustaría responderle... incluso antes de que termine de hablar.

**Hay un Viejo dicho..... “Nos dieron dos orejas y una boca para que podamos escuchar el doble de lo que hablamos.”**

Cuando sentimos que se nos escucha y se nos oye, nos indican que nuestra comunicación tenía un propósito, había respeto, atención, estaba en el presente y sin distracciones. Todos queremos ser escuchados de esta manera, a pesar de que a veces es difícil de hacer. ¿Ha considerado lo que los demás puedan decir acerca de su comunicación con usted?

### LOS 7 FACTORES ADICIONALES DE LA ATENCIÓN PLENA

de “Vida Completamente Catastrófica: Como manejar el estrés, el dolor y las enfermedades usando meditación de atención plena” (Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1990)

**Sin juzgar** – estar abierto a cualquier cosa que surja sin omitir juicio

**Paciencia** – estar en el momento, no apresurar nuestros pensamientos o acciones para el futuro

**Mente de principiante** – ver las cosas con ojos frescos que no se bloqueen por nuestras preconcebidas nociones

**Confianza** – en nosotros mismos y en los demás

**Sin esfuerzo** – no forzar u obligar un resultado

**Aceptación** – prestar atención a nuestras experiencias y las de los demás con claridad y amabilidad

**Dejar ir** – ni aferrarse, ni rechazar las experiencias

La atención plena y la comunicación son especialmente importantes para los padres de niños que experimentan diferencias. Mucho depende de que seamos capaces de compartir información crítica acerca de nuestro hijo para ayudar a otros a entender y responder adecuadamente. ¿Esta el médico realmente escuchando sus inquietudes y esta consciente de que usted no esta siendo exagerado en sobre vigilancia ansioso? ¿Es usted capaz de compartir información con el maestro de su hijo acerca de las estrategias eficaces que pueden ayudar a desviar los comportamientos no deseados? ¿Puede usted encontrar las palabras adecuadas para responder a sus familiares directos que piensan de forma equivocada de los desafíos de su hijo son causados por su estilo de crianza?

El primer paso para verdaderamente ser escuchado es practicar escucharse bien a usted mismo. Es increíble lo bien que responden los demás cuando sienten que realmente han sido escuchados. Las personas aprecian mucho ser escuchadas.

Esperamos que disfrute nuestra edición de otoño del Networker y comience a ver la conexión entre la atención plena y la comunicación efectiva. ¡Practiqué la atención plena al escribir este mensaje hoy. Yo sé que tengo que seguir practicando!

Saludos,





# The Early Edition

a publication of Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center • fall 2014

The *Early Edition* is a publication of the Matrix Family Resource Center (FRC) program — part of California's interagency system of early intervention services for children from birth to 36 months. Our FRC staff is here to provide information and support to help you care for your baby. Additional information and resources are also provided in a designated *Birth to 3* section on our website at [www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org)



## BIRTH TO 3

### Communicating Mindfully

**W**ith your babe in arms, you say good-bye as the Early Intervention Specialist (EIS) visiting your home leaves. You feel good now – you told the EIS all about last night: how your child was restless and crying non-stop, how frustrated you were because nothing you did helped, how the screams woke everyone in the family, how tired everyone is, how the dog finally was able to provide the comfort you couldn't, and on and on and on. Thank goodness today was the EIS home visit. She's a good listener, kind and caring.

But, as you close the door you realize you forgot to ask how to fine tune that new exercise you were to do with your child and about that feeding issue that emerged last week. You slowly realize that you took too many precious moments with the EIS venting and not enough time getting other help you needed. Suddenly you don't feel so good anymore – in fact, you feel guilty. Guilty, tired, stressed, spent – and as if on cue, your child starts crying.

You know only too well how stressful life can be when caring for a little one with special needs. Exhaustion, anxiety, and tension can work together to trip you up when you're trying to effectively communicate with your early intervention providers.

Parenting a child with a disability is certainly not easy. We at Matrix are here to help. We are all working to use our 'wise mind', and to balance our emotions with our intellect. This helps us with effective communication, not only with our child's therapeutic team, but with everyone in our lives.



We can help with transition to preschool.  
call 800.578.2592

#### PERHAPS THESE TIPS MAY HELP:

Balance talking and listening during your child's sessions.

Make a date with a close friend.

If you need to vent (and we all do!), call our Early Years Parent Advisor at Matrix or consider seeing a counselor.

Keep a list of questions for the Early Intervention providers.

Write questions down when you think of them. Don't wait – you're liable to forget them. Keep the list handy, in either a notebook or even on your phone, so you have easy access to it during the specialist's visit.

Consider what you really need to know vs. what you want to know. Sometimes an overload of information can bury and distract you.

Get Organized. Create a one page information sheet about your child to bring to new medical or therapy appointments; keep your child's records, evaluations, assessments, etc. organized and updated (see Matrix packet "Getting Organized – Early Years").

Be Mindful. Experts say that balancing your emotions with your intellect helps communication – easier said than done on two hours sleep! Try to be mindful about the best use of your time at any given moment. "Be here now" is a positive mantra to keep you focused on the task at hand.



# La Edición Temprana

a publication of Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center • Otoño 2014

La edición temprana es una publicación Matrix Centro de Recursos Familiares (FRC) programa como parte del sistema interinstitucional de los servicios de la intervención temprana para niños de California desde el nacimiento hasta los 36 meses. Nuestro personal del FRC esta aquí para proporcionar información y apoyo para ayudarle a cuidar de su bebé. Información adicional y recursos también están proveídos en un área designada en la sección recién nacido a tres en nuestro sitio de web [www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org).

## BIRTH TO 3

## Comunicándose con sus proveedores de Intervención Temprana

Con su bebé en los brazos, usted se despidió del Especialista de Intervención Temprana (EIS) que estaba visitándolo en su casa. Se siente bien ahora - le dijo a la EIS todo lo de anoche: cómo su hijo no paraba de llorar y lo incansable que estaba, lo frustrado que estaba porque nada de lo que hacia ayudaba, cómo los gritos despertaron a todos es su familia, lo cansado que esta todo el mundo, cómo el perro finalmente fue capaz de proporcionar la comodidad que usted no pudo dar, y sigue y sigue y sigue. Gracias a Dios que hoy fue la visita del EIS. Ella es un buen oyente, es amable y cariñosa.

Pero, al cerrar la puerta, se da cuenta de que se olvidó de preguntar cómo afinar ese nuevo ejercicio que tiene que hacer con su hijo y sobre esa cuestión sobre la alimentación que surgió la semana pasada. Usted poco a poco se da cuenta de que se tomó muchos momentos preciosos ventilando con la EIS y no consiguiendo otra ayuda que necesitaba. De repente usted ya no se siente tan bien - de hecho, se siente culpable. Culpable, cansado, estresado, gastado - y como si fuera una señal, su hijo comienza a llorar.

Usted sabe muy bien cómo la vida puede ser de estresante cuando se esta cuidando a un pequeño con necesidades especiales. El agotamiento, la ansiedad y la tensión pueden trabajar juntos para dispararle hacia arriba cuando usted está tratando de comunicarse eficazmente con sus proveedores de intervención temprana.

### TAL VEZ ESTOS CONSEJOS PUEDEN AYUDARLE:

**Balancee lo que habla y cuanto escucha** durante las sesiones de su hijo.

**Si necesita descargar** (¡y todos lo hacemos!) haga una cita con un amigo cercano, llame a nuestro Asesor de Padres de Edades Tempranas de Matrix o considere ver a un consejero para usted mismo.

**Mantenga una lista de preguntas para los proveedores** de intervención temprana. Escríbelas cuando piense sobre estas. No espere - es probable que usted olvide. Mantenga la lista a la mano, ya sea en un portátil o incluso en su teléfono, para que tenga fácil acceso a esta durante la visita del especialista.

**Considere lo que usted realmente** necesita saber contra lo que usted quiere saber. A veces una sobrecarga de información puede enterrarlo y distraerlo.

**Cree una página de información hoja sobre su hijo** para que la lleve a las nuevas citas médicas o terapias; mantenga los registros, las evaluaciones, y otras pruebas de su hijo, organizadas y actualizadas (vea el paquete de Matrix Organizarse - Primeros Años

**Los expertos dicen que balancear de sus emociones** con su intelecto ayuda a la comunicación. Es más fácil decirlo que hacerlo cuando solo se tienen 2 horas de sueño. Trate de prestar



## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

# Matrix Seeks Parents, Community Leaders to Join Board

*“We are looking for motivated individuals who want to help improve community awareness about the programs Matrix provides.”*



## HIGHLIGHTS

### BIG TENT

Our online support group has moved to Big Tent. Visit us at [www.bigtent.com](http://www.bigtent.com).

### MORE TRAININGS

Matrix is now offering trainings in Sonoma County.

### WATCH FOR OUR NEW WEBSITE

### NEW OFFICE

Visit us in Fairfield at 817 Missouri Street, Suite 2.

One sure sign of fall is the volunteer sign up – PTA committees, team parent, coach. Yes, there are many school and community outlets vying for our volunteer hours and, with each project we undertake, we leave our marks on those we've helped.

Right now, we are actively building our board and hoping to increase our size to better shape the future of Matrix. We are looking for motivated individuals who want to help improve community awareness about the programs Matrix provides. This will expand our ability to help families get the information and support they need to become strong advocates for their children with special needs. We are especially looking for people who live or work

in Sonoma and Solano Counties so that Matrix can better serve these communities.

Who makes a good board member? Anyone who shares Matrix's commitment to families with children with special needs. Parents and family members make great directors because they understand what our clients benefit most from; so do business leaders, community organizers, and educators. Maybe you have financial expertise or can put together a team of enthusiastic volunteers. If so, you can make an impact as a Matrix board member.

When I was invited to join the board, my first reaction was, “Me? I'm just a stay-at-home mom. What could I possibly bring to the board?” While I didn't bring a wealth of business experience or a list of rich

donors to the board, I, like most of you, know what makes a sound budget or when a strategic decision makes good sense. Most of all, I wanted to help other families. Being a director has been a great way for me to feel like I have “given back” to the organization that helped me to become a strong advocate for my daughter. Now, it's your turn. You will surprise yourself once you realize just how much expertise you have to share.

Be the parent that helps make Matrix a stronger force for our families. Go to our website, [www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org), for a job description and application or just email me at [rhandad@matrixparents.org](mailto:rhandad@matrixparents.org).

Thank you,  
*Rhanda Dunn, Board President*

## NEW HIRES AT MATRIX



Beth



Angela



Claudia

**Beth Eiess** joined the Matrix Parent Network family as the new Office Manager in August. She most recently worked as the Communications Coordinator for the Alzheimer's Association Southeastern Virginia and brings a wealth of experience.

**Angela Dowd** is our new Communications Coordinator. Besides contributing to graphic design and communications as part of our Matrix team, Angela also works as a designer at ACDowd Designs.

**Claudia Gomez**, is our new Bilingual Parent Advisor. She answers the Helpline and works with Solano County families. Her experience as a mother of three boys, one of whom is autistic, is essential for this role.

## NEW ROLES

**Tony Darren**, who has been an invaluable asset to Matrix as Office Manager, has shifted positions to become our new Region 6 Technical Assistance Coordinator, joining Deborah Daniels-Smith.

**Kristie Anderson**, who has been our Media & Publications Coordinator/Parent Advisor extraordinaire is now our Outreach Specialist/Parent Advisor.

parent network  
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## NETWORKER

### Communication Issue • Fall 2014

**Our mission:** To empower families of children with special needs to successfully understand and access the systems that serve them.

**Nuestra misión:** Capacitar a las familias de niños con necesidades especiales para entender y acceder a los sistemas que los sirven.

**If you would like to reprint an article:** We ask that you give credit to Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center as your source of information. This includes articles which we have adapted from other sources.

If you have any questions regarding our policy, please contact us at 800.578.2592 or email us at [info@matrixparents.org](mailto:info@matrixparents.org).

### Upcoming Matrix Events

#### NOVEMBER

Coffee, Conversation, & Companionship:  
Riding the Roller Coaster of  
Worry, Calm, Worry, Calm

November 8th

Special Education Rights and  
Protections Training

November 13th, 15th, 20th and 21st

#### DECEMBER

Special Education Assessments  
& Educational Benefit Training

December 4th, 18th, and 19th

Coffee, Conversation, & Companionship:  
What about Me? Siblings

December 11th

**Watch for our new website!**  
It's updated, improved and  
more accessible for parents.



Like us on  
FaceBook!!

