**Launch of new YouTube channel**

**Developmental Disabilities India**

Started by Ummeed Child Development Center, Developmental Disabilities India is a new Youtube Channel dedicated to awareness about developmental disabilities for parents of children with disabilities and for professionals working with children with disabilities.

It will be a publicly available free resource and will host a range of explainer videos about disabilities and tips based videos for parents and professionals.

The first leg of the channel will see a gamut of 25 topics being covered in English and Hindi over the next 6 months. This first phase of launch videos will feature:

- Developmental Paediatricians from Ummeed
- Therapists from Ummeed
- Special educators from Ummeed
- Family Resource Center at Ummeed, a team of parents of children with disabilities from Ummeed
- External Parent Experts

Through this channel, Ummeed Child Development Center hopes to create a reliable space for information and conversation around developmental disabilities in India.

We encourage all parents to watch and share the videos and subscribe to the DDI YouTube channel.
Seema’s daughter Nehal (23 years) was diagnosed with Autism at an early age. Seema shares her journey with her daughter and how everyone in her family pitched in to support Nehal. She also shares how paucity of information on Autism in Hindi inspired her to write a book for other parents.

Could you tell us a little about your journey with your daughter?

As a toddler Nehal used to be quiet and happy to be by herself. We did feel that something was amiss but didn’t get any specific opinion from doctors in Indore. It was only when we shifted to Mumbai and happened to take Nehal to a doctor for a fever, that he suspected something and referred us to Dr Vibha Krishnamurthy.

Sure enough, Dr Vibha gave us the diagnosis of Autism for Nehal. At that time, in the early 2000s, autism was hardly known. When we researched on the Internet about it, the language and terminology used to describe autism wasn’t very positive. So, we were filled with anxiety, but we also knew that it was up to us to support our child in every way possible. We connected with organizations and individuals who were working in this field and did extensive reading and research. Of course, we also immediately started therapy for Nehal. The therapists would give us a home program that both my husband and I would work on, without fail.

Nehal benefited from therapy a lot because we had started it early. Also, we didn’t change our therapists, so consistency with the program also helped.

How was the schooling experience for Nehal?

There were ups and downs. It began with a terrible experience. We had enrolled Nehal in a renowned play group and we had shared with them that she doesn’t talk and might run around. One day I noticed something sticky on her legs and arms was shocked to hear from another child that the teachers used to bind Nehal with sticky tape while she was at school. We pulled her out of that playgroup immediately! We found a smaller, simpler playgroup and that really worked well for her.

Primary school was challenging as the staff there was unable to provide the necessary support & accommodations. We were told that our child is spotty & undisciplined and were asked to stay with her in school. My husband and I again split this responsibility and we used to alternately take ½ day leave from office to be in school.

Nehal then moved to GD Somani school and her upward schooling journey started there. The staff was supportive and encouraged Nehal to take part in all activities. Shadow teachers also helped a lot. When exams started in Grade 4, she got extra time and a separate place to sit. She was allowed to drop Hindi in 10th grade. As academics got tough, we started helping her with her studies. Sometimes I joke that I have passed 10th and 12th exams along with Nehal. After 10th she went to Gopi Birla School, which is a CBSE school. She good support from teachers there and scored 76% in her 12th boards.

While considering options for higher education, we were pleasantly surprised to learn that St Xavier’s College in Mumbai had lower cut-offs for students with disabilities, and she secured admission in BSc-IT there.

The only downside in Nehal’s school experience was that she didn’t have any friends. This changed when Nehal went to college. Since it was a mixed group of students who were all new to each other, Nehal was able to be part of a group of friends. She enjoyed her college life and also learnt to travel independently. The college was very inclusive and accommodating, for example, Nehal was allowed to answer in points rather than descriptive answers.

What is Nehal doing now?

Through FFA, we came to know that Ernst & Young (EY) was looking to hire neurodivergent employees. We helped Nehal prepare for the interview and after several rounds of selection, she got selected to work for EY. Apart from that Nehal also has a special talent in stone painting, which she loves doing and has a small business. She has delivered more than 1000 orders of stone painting and displayed them at exhibitions as well.

When we look back at our journey, we realize what a long way Nehal has travelled to be where she is now, and we really feel blessed about it.

One of the things that comes up a lot is how you and your husband were both equally involved in working with Nehal.

Oh yes! I had complete support from my husband. Anupam & I worked together on all the home programs, we took turns in being shadow teachers for Nehal. We never thought it was one person’s responsibility alone. In fact, our whole family has worked shoulder to shoulder in everything we did to support Nehal. We had our second daughter when Nehal was 6 years old. And Nehal immediately assumed the role of a protective older sister. We saw real love and attachment expressed so openly by her for the first time. And with that, she learnt to express love with others too.

Nehal learnt a lot of social skills in interacting with her sibling, Vaidicka, who not only loves her but also respects her.

You did not give up your career, despite all the work you were doing for Nehal. How did you manage it?

Yes, I continued working. It helped that I had a government job, so my hours were fixed. I am strongly in favour of both parents being equally involved in supporting the child. When mothers give up their careers to take care of their kids, it often happens that the father then doesn’t get involved, leaving it entirely on the mother to manage. Also, it can get monotonous for both mother and child to only interact with each other and sometimes the learning curve dips. Thirdly, one does need the additional income as therapies etc. are very expensive.

However, I don’t want to judge any mother who chooses to be with their child full time. Everyone takes a decision that is in their child’s and their best interest. But the only thing I will say is, don’t take on everything yourself, you must involve your husband in supporting your child.

What made you decide to write a book on autism?

I am from Bhopal, and I once organized a meeting there, of parents of children with autism. I sensed that they felt helpless and didn’t see much hope. There was a lack of information & resources and a lot of the mothers expressed that their in-laws don’t understand autism and blamed them for their child’s behaviour. I then realized that most of the information on autism is in English. What was needed was information in hindi and in simple language that can be read by the whole family. That’s when I decided to write a book on my own journey along with all the lessons I learnt.

My book is titled ‘Sangharsh….Sang Harsh’ – ‘sangharsh’ (struggle) ‘sang harsh’ (with a lot of joy). It will be available on Amazon by end of the year and all proceeds from the sale will go to Sangati Foundation, who is also publishing the book.

Any advice you would like to give to parents of special needs children?

Stay positive and don’t lose hope. Our energy is sensed by our kids. Never talk negatively in front of your child. And never, ever hit the child.
Expressions

Mihaan Gandhi Dhall
18 year old Mihaan loves solving the Rubik’s cube. He shares how he started and how he’s challenging himself to learn more.

Creative Corner

The Walk-in Family Support Group brought in the festive spirit of Diwali by getting together at Ummeed center. They created beautiful Diyas, Kandeels and Rangolis and had a lot of fun as well! We share the colourful creations made by the caregivers and children together!

Seema can be reached at 9863004567 and Nehal’s work can be viewed at https://stonepainting-nehal.com and on Instagram https://instagram.com/stonepainting.mumbai

Hey guys!

One of my hobbies is solving the rubric cube. I like solving the Rubik’s cube because it’s a lot of fun since I like solving puzzles.

When I was small, I used to have a collection of many Rubik’s cubes but I never knew how to solve them so my dad and sister taught me the first side, first layer and the second layer. I still wanted to learn more since in total there’s 3 layers and 6 sides, so I went on to YouTube and I searched up videos on how to solve the last side and the last layer.

After all was done, I started practising every day and one day I became good at it, and I showed it to mom and dad and they were both impressed!

After many days, weeks, months and years that passed I later taught myself something new – Rubik’s cube tricks. And after practising for many days, weeks, months and years I became good at that too and I know many speedcubers solve it very quickly and they go into tournaments so the thing I’m practising now are my timings - I’m trying to solve it in less than 2 minutes then in less than a minute.

Thanks for your time!
# Upcoming Events at Ummeed

Please visit our website [https://ummeed.org/training-calendar/](https://ummeed.org/training-calendar/) for more details on program overview and course content.

Please follow us on Instagram and Facebook on [@UmmeedTrainingUpdates](https://www.instagram.com/ummeedtrainingupdates/) for information on all upcoming trainings.

Contact us at [training.ummeed.org](https://training.ummeed.org) for any queries or message at 85932 91603 (9am-5:30pm). No calls, WhatsApp only.

For Fun Clubs, please contact 9920065662 or write at [scheduling.team@ummeed.org](mailto:scheduling.team@ummeed.org)


## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

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<tr>
<td>Know Your Rights</td>
<td>2nd Oct</td>
<td>26 Nov 10 am - 1 pm</td>
<td>23 Dec 10 am - 12 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Know Your Rights - Marathi</td>
<td>21 Oct 10 am - 12 pm</td>
<td>19 Nov 10 am - 1 pm</td>
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<td>Know Your Rights - UDID Step by Step Application Process</td>
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## PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS - Open Support groups for parents of children with disabilities

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<tr>
<td>Tea &amp; Talk (English)</td>
<td>1 Oct 3.30 pm - 5 pm</td>
<td>5 Nov 3.30 pm - 5 pm</td>
<td>3 Dec 3.30 pm - 5 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walk-in Family Support Group (Hindi)</td>
<td>15 Oct 3.30 pm - 4.30 pm</td>
<td>19 Nov 3.30 pm - 4.30 pm</td>
<td>17 Dec 3.30 pm - 4.30 pm</td>
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## AUTISM FOCUSED WORKSHOPS

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<tr>
<td>Let’s Get Started Workshop for newly diagnosed families of children with autism</td>
<td>7 Oct 10 am - 12 pm</td>
<td>4 Nov 10 am - 12 pm</td>
<td>2 Dec 10 am - 12 pm</td>
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## IMPARTING SPECIFIC SKILLS

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<tr>
<td>Toilet Training Workshop</td>
<td>5 Nov 10 am - 2 pm</td>
<td>16 to 18 Nov 1 pm - 4 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaviour Workshop</td>
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## MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS

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<tr>
<td>What is Mental Health? Well being of caregivers</td>
<td>29 Oct 2 pm - 5 pm</td>
<td>5 Nov 3 pm - 5 pm</td>
<td>10 Dec 3 pm - 5 pm</td>
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<td>Books and Child Development</td>
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## FUN, LEISURE

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<th>OCTOBER</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fun Club Fun activities for kids of different age groups</td>
<td>28 Oct 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm</td>
<td>18 Nov 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Winter Fun Club Dec 21 - 23</td>
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<td>Age 4 - 8 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age 8 - 12 years</td>
<td>1 Oct, 22 Oct 1 pm - 2:30 pm</td>
<td>5 Nov, 26 Nov 1 pm - 2:30 pm</td>
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## Upcoming Event - Meet the Expert

Meet the Expert is a webinar series in which a well-known medical expert, a parent expert and a self-advocate answer questions from parents or professionals, on a developmental disability or associated condition.

The first in this series is on ‘ADHD’ with the experts Dr Vibha Krishnamurthy, Gauri Kirtane and Anant Purushotam on November 12, from 3 - 4:30 pm.

Contact the training team for registration.

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**Did you enjoy reading this newsletter?**

We would love to hear from you and welcome your feedback, comments, suggestions and ideas.

Please write to us at frc@ummeed.org or send us a message on 8591850804.