Hello! Welcome or welcome back to the Autism Caregiver Group newsletter. If this is your first time reading, we are so glad you joined us for this month and we hope you continue to stay engaged in our group! With winter still in full swing, our theme of the month is “Cozy.” Our activities are centered around being cozy during winter.

Resources for Families

Our featured resource of the month is from the Autism Research Institute. We chose a webinar discussing recent research about depression and its relationship with autism spectrum disorder. The recorded webinar runs for a little over an hour.

HTTPS://WWW.AUTISM.ORG/DEPRESSION-IN-ASD/
Pen Pals
If your child(ren) would like to have a pen pal with a student from the NIU communicative disorders student association (undergraduate speech pathology and audiology students) please send an email to Dr. Gladfelter (agladfelter@niu.edu) to get paired with a student! Be sure to send how many kids will be writing, their names, and ages! If you are interested in learning more details, please email Dr. Gladfelter (agladfelter@niu.edu)

ACTIVITIES

What’s a snowman’s favorite food? --"Ice" Krispy Treats!!

Caregiver Coffee Chat
The NIU Autism Caregiver Group is virtual this year! If you would like to join our Caregiver Coffee Chat, please RSVP by emailing Allison Gladfelter at agladfelter@niu.edu to receive the private Zoom link. Our January Caregiver Coffee Chat will be on Monday, January 25th, from 1:00 - 2:00pm.

Mark your calendars for Caregiver Coffee Chat! Monday 1/25 at 1pm

Featured exercise activities of the month:
GoNoodle -Yes! I Want to Build a Snowman: http://go.niu.edu/0sl3yk
Winter Wonderland Super Yoga: http://go.niu.edu/1rra44
Snowman Freeze: http://go.niu.edu/u98liz

Featured book read alouds of the month:
Do Frogs Drink Hot Chocolate?: http://go.niu.edu/aku38o
The Biggest Bear: http://go.niu.edu/2egpax
Cozy: http://go.niu.edu/sv8k2t

Featured craft activities of the month:
Our craft activities are included in the later pages of the newsletter!

For more information about our group, please visit our website: http://go.niu.edu/zy2db1
**Hot Chocolate Sensory Craft**

**Materials:**
- Hot chocolate mix or powdered chocolate milk mix
- Hot chocolate Printable – [Link here](#)
- Sugar
- Glue (glue sticks or liquid glue)
- Scissors
- Cotton balls

**Instructions:**
- Download and print the hot chocolate printable.
- Cut out the mug.
- Color-in the mug with markers or crayons.
- Apply glue to the top of the mug.
- Sprinkle hot chocolate mix (or chocolate milk mix) over glued area and shake off excess.
- Cut out the marshmallows.
- Apply glue to marshmallows and sprinkle sugar over glued area. Shake off excess sugar.
- Pull apart cotton ball until it is loosely held together.
- Top your hot chocolate with “whipped cream” by gluing the cotton ball on top!
- Let dry and your hot chocolate mug is complete!
Decorate your own Pajamas!

What shapes and colors will you use?
**Cozy Winter Hats**

**Materials:**
- White crayons or oil pastels
- Watercolor paint
- White cardstock paper
- Cotton balls or yarn for pom poms.
- Paper towel
- Scissors

**Instructions:**
- Print out the hat template and outline onto cardstock paper, or print template out on cardstock paper. (If you don’t have any cardstock paper you can use regular printing paper but the paint might soak through a bit.)
- Grab your white crayon (or oil pastel) and start drawing a pattern onto the hat. (Snowflakes, swirls, lines, dots, zig-zags etc.)
- Use any watercolor paint and begin to color the whole hat, color over the crayon marks and watch the hidden pattern magically appear!
- Cover the hat with a piece of paper towel and pat down softly with paint brush. (This will absorb extra watercolor and it will create a nice texture on the hat!)
- Create a pom pom at the top of the hat by adding cotton balls or create a pom pom out of yarn!
- When dry, cut out your hat and you’re all done!

- How to make pom poms out of yarn: [http://go.niu.edu/7z6478](http://go.niu.edu/7z6478)
- Hat template: [Link to hat template](http://go.niu.edu/7z6478)