



Developmental
Disabilities Association



SPRING 2022

THE STAR



Developmental Disabilities Association is a community living agency that provides over 50 community-based programs and services to children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families in Vancouver and Richmond.

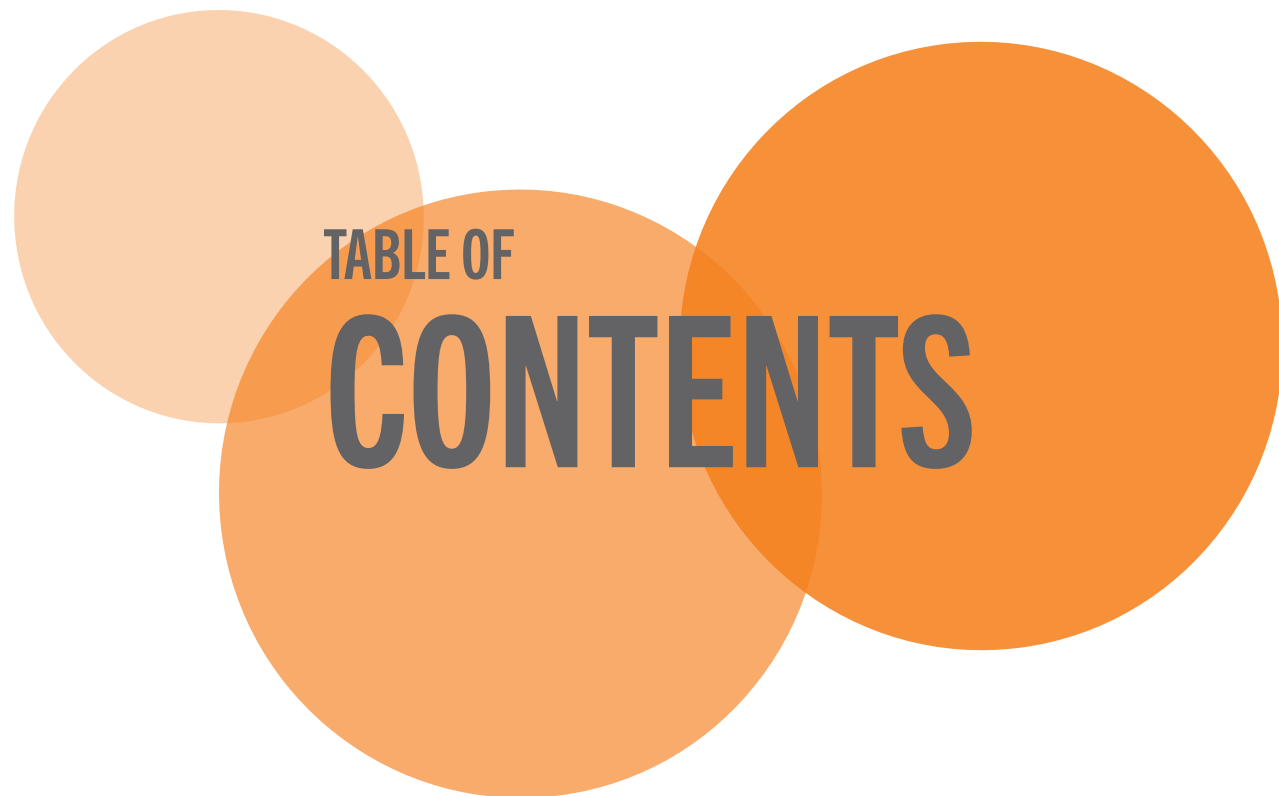


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THE REVERSE FLYNN EFFECT

BY: ALANNA HENDREN
DDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IQ or Intelligence Quotient scores are important for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities because they determine teaching strategies, special education assistant hours and whether or not adults qualify for CLBC supports since their mandate is people with IQ scores of 70 or less, but they have a long history.

Although humans tried to measure intelligence earlier, the first IQ test considered valid was developed by French psychologist Alfred Binet in 1904. The French government had just passed a law making education mandatory for all children and wanted to find a way to identify children who may need extra help to learn. Binet's test met the immediate needs of educators, but he warned that the test measured attention, memory, and problem-solving skills but did not measure other aspects of intelligence like creativity, emotional intelligence, or changes in IQ over time. The test yielded the 'mental age' of the individual by matching scores against the average age of people who had the same score.

Binet's test was standardized and better quantified in 1916 at Stanford University in California by psychologist Lewis Terman. Terman took the 'mental age' scores from the Binet Test, divided by the chronological age of the test-taker, then multiplied by 100. If a child's mental age is 5 and their chronological age is 5, then $5/5 \times 100 = 100$, so their IQ is 100. If a child's mental age is 11 and chronological age is 10, then their IQ is $11/10 \times 100 = 110$.

The Stanford-Binet test has been complemented by other more probing tests over time, but all are standardized so 100 is the most common score. Two-thirds of the population scores between 85 and 115, the 'normal range' of intelligence. The other third falls above or below the normal range in equal proportion.

In 1984, New Zealand educator, James R. Flynn researched how much average IQ test scores had increased over the 20th century and found they increased by an average of 3 points per decade. Flynn attributed this increase to better nutrition. Flynn continued his work and other scientists followed suit until they all noticed that children born in 1975 reached 'peak IQ' and average intelligence had been dropping ever since. This is called the 'Reverse Flynn Effect'.

No one knows for sure why IQs are dropping but a study by Norwegian scientists with access to 30 years of IQ test results for young adults determined that the drop was not due to genetics. The IQ scores of younger siblings dropped more than their older brothers and sisters, in spite of the same parentage and the trend was evident across age groups. This ruled out immigration, which was the most common theory about the cause of the Reverse Flynn Effect.

Genetics have a profound impact on our cognitive skills but humans are their genetics interacting with their environments and our environments have been getting progressively worse since 1975. Junk food showed up in a big way around 1975, along with massive amounts of chemicals in fertilizers and elsewhere, lead in decaying water pipes, radiation from nuclear-reactor accidents, and preservatives, dyes, and hormones in food. These chemicals are also thought to be responsible for the ballooning incidence of autism that started in the 1980s and continues today. The impact of the chemicals that surround us on developing fetuses and infant brains has never been tested.

Then there are all the post-modern problems caused by screens and cell phones – decreasing attention spans, multitasking, fake news, and so on, but a biological explanation makes the most sense. Some researchers have noted that IQ scores are dropping in the same populations where sperm counts are also decreasing, probably because of chemicals that leech from plastics or disrupt endocrine systems, poor diets, obesity and too much time spent sitting down. The world needs more research in this area.

Some of these causes are under our self-control but many are not. Our governments must take a more active role in regulating plastics use and make sure that chemicals are used safely in other industries. Municipalities need to ensure that common infrastructure is not leaching lead or other chemicals into the water people drink. Educators should teach all children about how eating could be hazardous to their health. This does not absolve families of their responsibilities to keep themselves healthy, but the Flynn Effect will likely continue to reverse until everyone agrees that action should be taken.



DDA'S BOARD MEMBERS

Over 6 years ago DDA changed its by-laws to incorporate terms limits for board members. Some of our dedicated board members had been serving for over 20 years and needed a break! We have been planning for their departure for several years now by recruiting new members who will approach DDA's destiny with equal vigor.

DDA offers a heartfelt thank you to our past president Ronda Karlner. Ronda had been actively involved with the Developmental Disabilities Association for many years, serving as president from 1999-2004 and re-elected president in 2017. As a nurse with an MBA and a mother of a son who has developmental disabilities, Ronda devoted much of her time to her work in long-term care. We are thrilled that she will continue with us as past president.

DDA welcomes Ian Tasker as our new board chair. Ian is a Certified Financial Planner and Chartered Investment Manager whose goal is to empower clients to make sound, simple, and educated decisions. He feels grateful and fortunate in life and feels the need to serve his community.

Ted Bruce and Julie Mantle, who had been active with DDA for several years, take over the roles of DDA vice presidents as Louise Huber and Sue Swayne had reached the end of their terms. Louise was first elected to the board in 1995, and had been vice president since 1997, and took a particular interest in transition issues in residential, vocational, and leisure activities. Sue had been a member of the board since 1998 and her involvement in DDA began with her daughter who was part of our Infant Development Program. DDA thanks them for their unwavering dedication to the community we support.

Devinder Sekhon took over as board treasurer as Rob Bahd's term comes to an end. Devinder is a Chartered Professional Accountant, Certified General Accountant, Certified Health Executive and holds a Master of Health Administration. He is very passionate about social justice and quality of life and was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal for his involvement in charitable and community service activities. We also thank Rob, who had been part of DDA since 2000, for keeping track of all our money for so many years.

DDA would also like to acknowledge Nancy Pagani whose term as a board member comes to an end. She worked in the non-profit sector for over 18 years and is currently the Executive Director for Langley Hospice Society. Thanks, Nancy for all your work with us!

Sue Hargrave, L.J. Eiben, Julie De Cotiis, and Debbie Aarons remain directors of the board. We are excited about working with them to lead DDA into the future.

“ I choose to serve at the DDA because it gives me the opportunity to help protect and support vulnerable people in our community.

It is a privilege to be able to serve and it give me great pride to be associated with the DDA...a true "Global Champion"

I find my involvement with the DDA to be inspiring, educational, challenging and immensely fulfilling.

”

Ian Tasker



IAN TASKER
PRESIDENT



RONDA KARLINE
PAST PRESIDENT



JULIE MANTLE
VICE PRESIDENT



TED BRUCE
VICE PRESIDENT



DEVINDER SEKHON
TREASURER



SUE HARGRAVE
DIRECTOR



L.J. EIBEN
DIRECTOR



DEBBIE AARONS
DIRECTOR



JULIE DE COTIS
DIRECTOR

WELCOME AETHER 2.0

One of the problems facing long-term care of people with developmental disabilities is staffing.

DDA has always been an innovator the field of support and advocacy and sees the solution in care as being technological in nature. For a few years now we have been working with Jon Morris and JDQ Systems Inc. to develop a robotic assistant.

The idea is not to replace people, but to have an extra set of eyes that can roam around a group home and identify problems or issues such as a wet floor or if someone has fallen and needs assistance. As development moves forward 'Aether' will become more interactive, recognize staff and clients and even assist with medication scheduling and more.

This is Aether version 2.0. We are really excited about the development and hope to implement Aether in the very near future.



Jon Morris with the original concept and the inner workings of Aether 2.0



DDA FUNDRAISING IN ACTION

DDA fundraising in action!

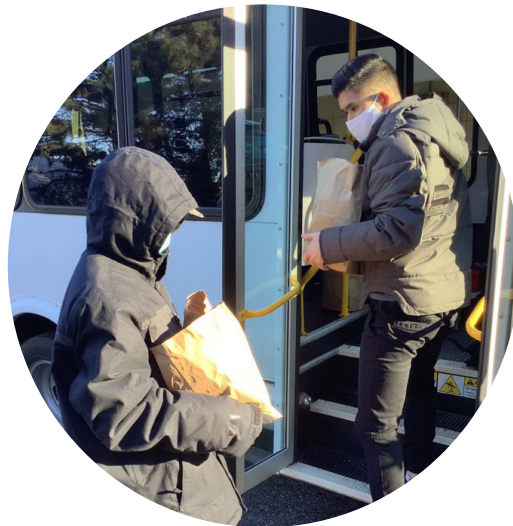
How are some of our charitable donations spent? This past holiday season, DDA's Family Support Program purchased 20 food hampers from Quest Food Exchange to help some of the families we support. Each hamper was a "Christmas dinner in a basket" and contained 2 chickens, stuffing and potatoes, gravy and cranberries, produce, and cookies. They also contained some additional canned food items and a \$5 Quest gift certificate.

We were able to distribute these to families who have faced multiple barriers throughout the year, but still continue to do the best they can for their children. We see you, and we recognize you! We felt so fortunate to be able to do this for some of the more vulnerable families we support. Special thanks to the Grandview Day Program participants and staff, who picked up all of the food, bundled together the hampers and helped with organization and delivery. With fresh food and only one day to pick up and deliver, it was a big job!

Who is Quest, you might be wondering? Quest Food Exchange is an outreach society with the vision "to disrupt the cycle of poverty through access to healthy and affordable food that is sourced sustainably" [<https://www.questoutreach.org/our-story/>]

We are also grateful to St. George's School and Cause We Care who also provided an assortment of gifts for families in need.

We appreciate your support.



WOMEN'S VIGIL

Last December a number of DDA staff and clients took part in a vigil held at Vancouver City Hall to remember the 14 women murdered at the l'École Polytechnique de Montréal in 1989. Since that day, December 6th was established as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. A national day to reflect on gender-based violence.



PROJECT 7 DANCEATHON

Once again DDA clients and staff put on their dancing shoes and took part in The Project Y Dance-a-thon held on February 2, 2022.

This was the second annual dance-a-thon sponsored by the Y and Pacific Blue Cross. The monies raised are to help women and local families thrive.

This year's dance-a-thon was so much fun!! Our Shiamak Bollywood instructor, Yeshvi Mehta did a BollyLatin Fusion workshop.

See you next year!





CHRISTMAS 2004



CHRISTMAS 2011



CHRISTMAS 2014



CHRISTMAS 2015



CHRISTMAS 2016



CHRISTMAS 2021

20 YEARS AS SANTA

BY: COLLEEN THOMAS

Despite how challenging 2021 had been with Covid, and changes that we had all weathered so well, I was honoured to share my 20th year as an employee within DDA. This past holiday season also marked the twentieth year my father has visited as Santa to our child development centres.

It all began in 2001 at Waterside, our previous toddler care centre in the downtown eastside of Vancouver. This was my home and where Santa enjoyed turkey dinners for 15 years. My first few holidays were also before I became a mum myself. The teachers, at the time, would all bring their own children to our family potluck nights. We would all share good food, laughs and a visit with jolly Mr. Clause. Leanna Logan, now the manager at Fraserview CDC, always hosted a good party. Anyone and everyone was welcome.

As time passed, I had my first child and he would often attend our family nights. He was not a fan of Santa in his first few years, like so many children. He did grow to love him and the year he realized that Santa was grandpa was pure magic. He literally saw grandpa as a celebrity and my

son became one to keep the magic alive for the toddlers in our care. We repeated a very similar narrative with the arrival of my second son. My career eventually moved to Champlain. Again, we welcomed families – the ones we serve, as well as our own- to our winter potlucks and Santa was more than happy to move with me.

Over these last years, we have had to adjust our gatherings and it meant Santa visited us during the day where we kept distance and wore masks, as we ensure everyone's safety with COVID. My own children have grown and do not attend as they once did. This year my family welcomed Ollie, the rescue pup, and he was a very helpful elf. With these changes, the children still felt the magic and I know a lot of that is because of my dad. To hear over the years from other staff, and so many families, that he brought so much joy is exactly why he does it. Being Santa is not an easy job, there are sometimes tears and screams amidst the joy, laughter, curiosity and excitement.

A big thank you, Des Burke, aka my dad for enjoying all these moments, taking it all in stride and giving so much of your time. It's all been very appreciated.

We always say how hard it is to believe that time passes so quickly. The amount of memories over the holiday season that I have shared with many staff, families and my own family will always be well cherished. I am forever grateful to work for an association that values volunteer work, and staff sharing our work with our own family.

I believe the association is an extension to all of us, and not only at holiday time.

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Connecting Globally on Zoom for the Year of the Tiger!

DDA clients and staff celebrated the Chinese New Year, 'Year of the Tiger' with family members from Hong Kong.

This year, we invited our new immigrant staff member, Yui Gordon Choy's family from Hong Kong to join us on Zoom to show us how they celebrate Chinese New Year and the meaning of the 'Year of the Tiger'. We saw several colorful dances happening in downtown Hong Kong.

The celebration brings people together and they all wish good luck and happiness in the New Year to friends and families.

All our friends from different homes joined us in the Zoom celebration. It was a fun party time as well as interesting and educational. We thought we were in Hong Kong celebrating with our staff Yui Gordan Choy's family!

Thanks to Yui and all our staff members for organizing this event!



PINK SHIRT DAY

Every year DDA takes part in Pink Shirt Day to celebrate diversity and inclusion. Clients and staff gather in pink shirts, have picnics and pizza parties, and have a great time! This year, despite the cooler weather, we bundled up and headed to the park at Cambie and King George in Richmond.

Pink Shirt Day began in Nova Scotia in 2007 when two boys in grade 9 came to the support and advocacy of their classmate. The following is from a Globe and Mail article:

“David Shepherd, Travis Price and their teenage friends organized a high-school protest to wear pink in sympathy with a Grade 9 boy who was being bullied [for wearing a pink shirt]...[They] took a stand against bullying when they protested against the harassment of a new Grade 9 student by distributing pink T-shirts to all the boys in their school. ‘I learned that two people can come up with an idea, run with it, and it can do wonders,’ says Mr. Price, 17, who organized the pink protest. ‘Finally, someone stood up for a weaker kid.’ So Mr. Shepherd and some others headed off to a discount store and bought 50 pink tank tops. They sent out a message to schoolmates that night, and the next morning they hauled the shirts to school in a plastic bag. As they stood in the foyer handing out the shirts, the bullied boy walked in. His face spoke volumes. ‘It looked like a huge weight was lifted off his shoulders,’ Mr. Price recalled. The bullies were never heard from again.”



VSB TRANSITION FAIR

On February 24th, DDA was an exhibitor at the Vancouver Board of Education Transition Information Fair at Magee Secondary School.

The Fair provided information regarding options that include post-secondary education, employment, and community inclusion for neurodiverse students, parents, teachers, support staff, and community-based support staff. Our staff had the opportunity to speak with students about DDA services, including Family Support and Jobs West Employment.

An early congratulations to students who will be graduating this year, we wish the students luck as they transition into adulthood!



DDA'S TAX UPDATES

Disability tax credit (DTC)

Eligible individuals with a disability or their supporting family member may claim \$8,567 per year as a non-refundable tax credit. Persons under 18 years of age at the end of the year may also be eligible for an additional amount of up to \$5,003 per year. For more information about the DTC, go to canada.ca/disability-tax-credit.

Being eligible for the DTC can open doors to other programs.

Canada workers benefit disability supplement – up to \$713 per year if you are eligible for both the DTC and the Canada Workers Benefit.

Child disability benefit – up to \$2,915 per year for families with a child under the age of 18 who has a severe and prolonged impairment in physical or mental functions.
Home accessibility tax credit – non-refundable tax credit for eligible renovations to improve the accessibility of your home. A maximum of \$10,000 per year in eligible expenses can be claimed.

Home Buyers' Plan – withdraw up to \$35,000 from your Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) to buy or build a home that fits your needs, or those of a related person.
Home buyers' amount – claim \$5,000 for the purchase of a qualifying home in the year. You do not have to be a first-time home buyer to claim the amount if you, or the relative you acquired the home for, are eligible for the DTC.
Registered disability savings plan – helps parents and others save for the long-term financial security of a person who is eligible for the DTC.

Canada caregiver credit – non-refundable tax credit that may be available to you if you provide support to a spouse, a common-law partner, or certain other individuals with a mental or physical impairment.

You may also be eligible to claim medical expenses, the disability supports deduction, and the refundable medical expense supplement.

Do you need help? Get your taxes done for free!

If you have a modest income and a simple tax situation, you may be able to get your taxes done by a volunteer for free. To learn more, go to canada.ca/taxes-help or call the CRA.

Do your taxes online!

You can do your taxes online with NETFILE or a variety of tax software packages and web apps are available, some of which are free. For more information, go to canada.ca/netfile.

For more information, go here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/segments/tax-credits-deductions-persons-disabilities/disability-tax-credit.html>



TECH REVIEWS

BY: KEEGAN NEWBERRY
LOOP EARPLUGS

PRODUCT Loop Earplugs (or Loop) **PRODUCER:** Loop Earplugs (or Loop) **COST** ~ \$22.00 - \$51.00 **COMPATABILITY** N/A

Loop Earplugs are advertised sound-filtering earplugs which allow the user to experience sound without background noises, as well as reducing the overall decibel level. Loop offers 3 different styles of earplugs with a 'help me choose' feature available on their website (<https://www.loopearplugs.com/pages/quiz>). Each of the 3 styles are designed to provide the best performance within differing environments or for specific activities: concerts, general noise sensitivity, construction or traffic sounds, sleep, studying, etc.

Loop Quiet are targeted towards users who are seeking to reduce sound levels for sleep, noise sensitivity, or to focus. This is the strong sound-filtering level offered and is advertised as reducing noise by 27 decibals – or muffling most sounds and voices. Loop Experience are targeted towards users who are seeking to reduce sound levels for parenting, noise sensitivity, or live events. This designed is advertised as reducing noise by 18 decibals – or allowing the user to hear everything, but just a bit less.

Loop Experience Pro are the most expensive of the 3 options and are targeted towards users who are seeking to reduce a range of sound levels from traffic sounds to general noise sensitivity. This option uses the Experience design, giving a base level noise reduction of 18 decibals, and includes a 'mute' which can be added onto the earplugs to further reduce noise up to 27 decibals.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Personalization – each style comes with 4 sizes of ear tips to ensure best fit, with ear tips, earplugs, and mutes available in a variety of colours;
- Loop Quiet is made of soft silicone, as well as the ear tips for all styles, that fit comfortably in the ear – even with extended wear;
- Loop Experience/Pro use a firmer design to allow for easy sounds adjustments by adding or removing the Loop Mute; the firm circular design also gives a solid grabbing point for insertion and removal.

LOWLIGHTS

- Easy to lose – as with all earplugs, when not in use they can be easily dropped or misplaced which can add up to a significant expense to replace;
- Not appropriate for independent use by individuals with fine motor impairments – both the initial fitting, on-going adjustments with Loop Mutes, and regular insertion require significant fine motor control;

STAR RATINGS

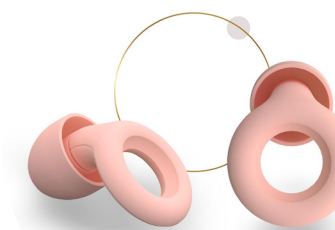
Ease of Use: Grab and Go ★★★★★★

Adaptability: Wide Variety of Settings Available ★★★★★★

Accessibility: Broad Range of Users Served ★★★★★★

Cost vs. Value: Worthwhile Expense ★★★★★★

Overall Rating ★★★★★★



FINAL WORD

Though the Experience Pro model is advertised as being able to provide the experience of both the Experience and the Quiet versions, there is a noticeable difference when it comes to side-by-side comparison:

The Quiet model is very well designed for significant sound reduction and is by far the most comfortable reusable earplug for sleep that I've tested. Loop describes the sound quality of this model as, "muffled" which is a very accurate description. For sleep, noise sensitivity, or focusing in loud environments, Loop Quiet works exactly as advertised. As a safety note: for individuals wishing to use these in public spaces, be aware that the sound filtering level is sufficient to pose a safety concern if the user is not paying attention to their surroundings. This model is not recommended for use by those with poor safety awareness skills.

The Experience model is a better option for use in community, where safety is a concern. This noise-filtering eliminates most of the extraneous background noise (i.e. fluorescent lights, high pitched buzzing from appliances, etc.) with very little impact on voices or other intentional sounds. However, the firmer design which allows for the addition of a Loop Mute, makes this style less comfortable for long-term wear (+1 hour) and is not recommended for sleep use. When tested, the Experience Pro (Experience + Mute) does not provide the same type, nor the same level of sound filtering, as the Loop Quiet model – as is advertised.

Overall, Loop has created a quality product that can meet the needs of both the neurotypical and neurodiverse communities. Their product is well made and applicable for a range of environments, activities, and users. For the most comprehensive experience, purchasing both the Quiet and the Experience Pro styles will ensure that the user can personalize and adjust their Loop Earplugs to meet the majority of their sound-filtering needs.

NEWSLETTER

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