



THE STAR

SUMMER 2023



Developmental
Disabilities Association

CONTENTS

DDA HAS A NEW WEBSITE!	3
OPTIMISM RENEWED	4
EAST 45 GROUP HOME – THE COURAGE TO TRY...CAN BRING UNEXPECTED REWARD!	6
DDA	8
VANCOUVER CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL	9
WELCOME TO THE EAST 16TH DAY PROGRAM	10
DDA CELEBRATES EARTH DAY	11
LEISURE FAIR	12
ROCKING AND ROLLING WITH THE MINORU HOUSE BAND	12
SIMON FRASER POW WOW	13
DDA DOCUMENTARY NOMINATED FOR SIX FILM FESTIVAL AWARDS	13
FROM DDA’S ENCOURAGING ABILITIES PODCAST	14
EASTER CELEBRATION 2023	16
VANCOUVER EARLY INTERVENTION NETWORK EVENT	17
TECH REVIEWS	18

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.

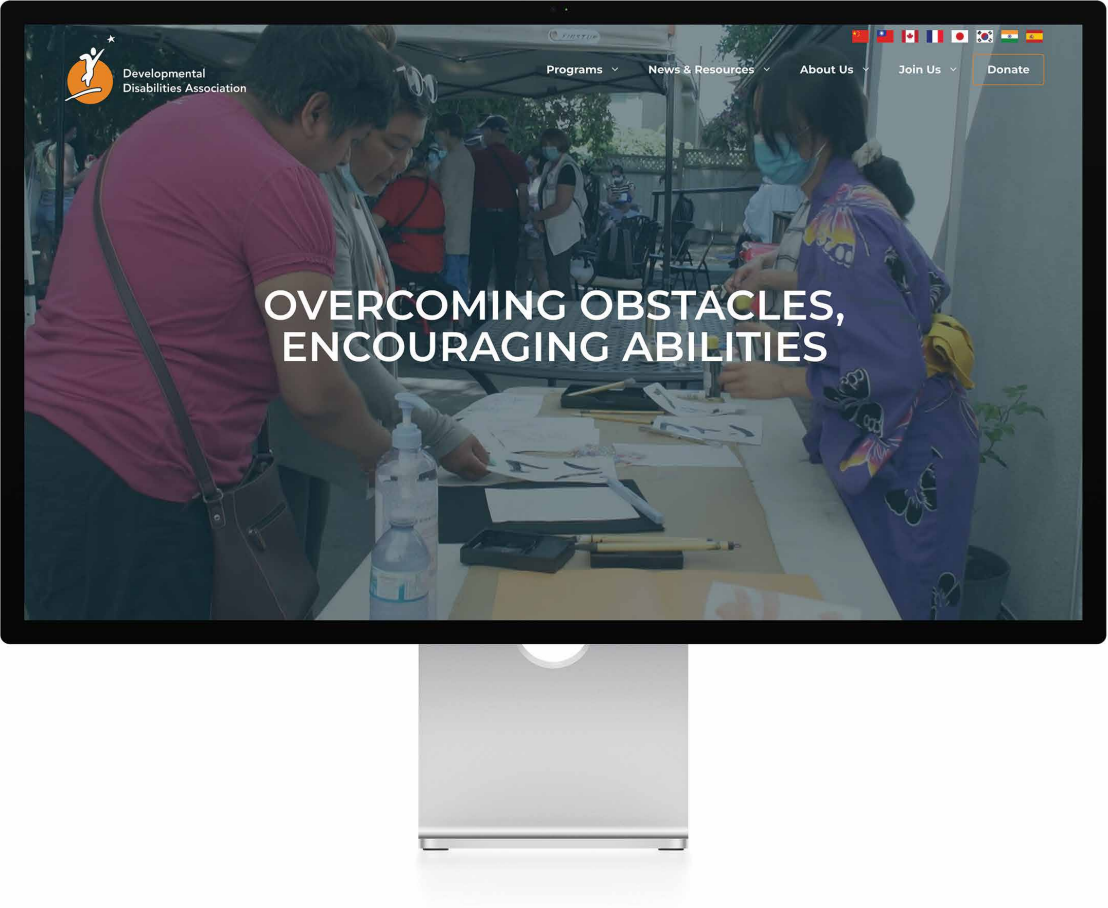
DDA HAS A NEW WEBSITE!

Every few years, organizations and companies update their websites to embrace a new look, feel, function, and form. The communications department hired a designer and programmer in late October of 2022 to create something new for the association. We are really happy with the result and we think it looks great! The website address remains the same; www.develop.bc.ca.

This time, we wanted to focus on the experience of our clients, the talent of our artists, and some of the communications vehicles we have been using to get DDA’s messages out. The new landing page has an auto-play video, a new space for podcasts, and highlights our award-nominated documentary, *Doing the Impossible – The Story of the Developmental Disabilities Association*.

Everything from About Us, to our Careers page has been updated.

It’s a very clean and polished feel that is easy to navigate. Please enjoy!



OPTIMISM RENEWED

BY: ALANNA HENDREN
DDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Spring 2023 launches another fiscal year of overcoming obstacles and encouraging abilities

Spring is finally here, reminding us that, like the universe, the earth operates in cycles of birth, death, and rebirth, just like the cycles of human lives and all of nature. Spring awakens us from winter's slumber and everything becomes possible again.

We are blessed at DDA. We are greater than the sum of our parts – all of the people whom we support, their families, our staff, board of directors, members, volunteers, employers, and other public providers who contribute to our mission. COVID taught us how difficult threats can be overcome when everyone pulls together and DDA is the sum total of so many exceptional people. In an individualistic world, the people at DDA think about others and work together toward a common goal. We hold together during dark times and hold on during times of growth and change.

The darkness comes when elderly people whom DDA has supported for over 50 years in some cases pass away but the light arrives with young people graduating from high school and going straight to community jobs. The education system in B.C. is not perfect but teens with developmental/intellectual disabilities graduating from high school today have skills and abilities that are far beyond those of 18-year-olds a generation or two ago. We are grateful for the work of teachers who develop the potential of all their students so we can continue when they graduate.

We are also grateful for the government's massive investment in child care and early learning. Ten-dollar-per-day childcare will allow parents to work with peace of mind, knowing their infant or toddler will be learning from skilled preschool teachers and other children in pleasant, well-equipped environments. Since we now know so much more about how infant and toddler brains develop, we can accelerate and nurture learning at a time of the greatest brain development.



We are always in a state of development at DDA – we can always be more effective and efficient, work smarter, not harder and make sure everyone has access to the information and communications they need when they need them. Our communications department has opened multiple media channels but we still need to increase engagement. Last fiscal year we ventured into the world of film-making and told our story so well that our documentary “Doing the Impossible” has been nominated for six film awards – Best Documentary and Best Documentary Research at the Yorkton Film Festival and four more including Best Short Documentary by the Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Association of B.C.

Audiences were surprised they’d never heard about the history of people with developmental/intellectual disabilities in B.C. and around the world. Public education and community awareness are always on DDA’s list of goals, so this is a success that we savor.

And that is what DDA is – the sum of all the successes of each individual who receives support supports others, and reaches higher – all of us who are a part of DDA’s ongoing story.



EAST 45 GROUP HOME – THE COURAGE TO TRY...CAN BRING UNEXPECTED REWARD!

BY CAROLYN KOEHLE
MANAGER EAST 45TH GROUP HOME

Group Living situations or Group Homes for individuals with Developmental Disabilities sometimes have a stigma that assumes that they are only for extremely difficult individuals, with high support needs and tend to not have or be much fun. However, we work hard to ensure that our group homes are comfortable, active, fun, and a place to experience the gift of belonging and home. We pride ourselves that our residents are continually learning and experiencing new things, and enjoying a high quality of life. This is the story of two individuals that reluctantly decided to try group home living and their unexpected experience with it.

Joan is well known to DDA as she has been attending CORE for over 20 years. She was hesitant at first to move into a group home because of previous negative experiences but agreed to a temporary placement at E45 while CLBC looked for a more suitable home share.

A few days after Joan was settled in the home, she said she needed to talk to the manager. She then blurted out spontaneously, "I'm really happy!" Do I have to move? I don't want to move!"

Joan also shared this with her family, who were at first cautious about Joan's sudden change in attitude toward group living. But she kept on asking to stay. So it was agreed that she would make East 45 her home. Joan is so happy since moving in last November!



Doug moved into E45 in January. He used to live in a more independent living situation and knew his local community well. The manager at East 45th visited him in January and talked about the possibility of moving, explaining that he would have more support for his increasing healthcare needs.

He was not open to moving at all, declaring,

"I have a home! I like it here! I'm not a baby needing a group home!" Eventually, he agreed to visit East 45th and he really enjoyed joking with the three women who live at E45.

He decided to give it a try, and he initially seemed ok with it but was still a little reluctant. After a couple of weeks, Doug really enjoyed his new home and new neighbourhood community. He loved feeling like the "man" of the house and hung out with Joan, Linda, and Sally regularly. He and Linda would banter back and forth like siblings and they would laugh and joke around. One week when he went for an appointment, he was excited to share his new living arrangements with his doctor. He shared all about his new roommates and how much he loves living there. And now he still gets to visit his old friends and meets them for lunch, and sees them at church, and at parties. It's the best of both worlds!

Joan and Doug share the upstairs. They get along so well, even though she is a little bit Country and Doug is a little bit Rock and Roll. They compromise on the music they listen to. Joan has little names already for Doug – whether it's Papa, sweetheart, or Dougie! Their friendship is heart-warming. The perfect match!

These situations couldn't have turned out any better. It goes to show that you don't always know what you need or want until you have the courage to try something new and refuse to let negative stereotypes get in the way.

DDA ART



Main St. Drop-In

Ana Vinokour
Cindy Saul
Frank Spatari

West 8th

Mark Li
Kevin (Kevo) Lee
Matthew Tom-Wing

CORE:

Drew Steele

Grandview:

Calvin Ho

Fraser:

Shirley Tam
Lisa Poon
Nana Yu

CAP:

Andrew Cathers
Andrew Jackson
Aileen Leong
Jamie Dri

Victoria:

Simon Gardiner



One of the things our residents do best is create amazing works of art. With Covid less of a concern, we are now entering art shows like we always have!

Art in the City was a big one this year with 16 DDA artists taking part. Naturally, a bunch of DDA residents went out to support and check out some of the amazing art!

This year we also participated in the show Community Longing and Belonging at the Vancouver Jewish Community Centre where Julie Huber took part, and the art show Amplified Voices at the Italian Cultural Centre which featured Kevin Lee and David Purkis.

Here is a list of all the amazing DDA artists who took part in Art in the City. We could not be more proud of our residents and their wonderful talents!



VANCOUVER CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

BY SHIERYL SANGALANG
DARTMOOR HOUSE

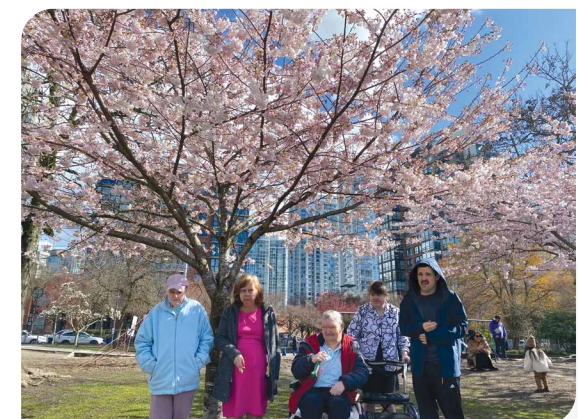
Every spring, Vancouver transforms into a spectacular sea of pink, and we celebrate the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival, one of the most beautiful times of the year. Tens of thousands of cherry blossom trees bloom around the end of March, giving Vancouverites the ultimate reason to dress up and go on long, leisurely walks.

The festival not only commemorates the beauty of the trees themselves but inspires local art every year. And best of all, everyone is encouraged to participate. This big picnic is a free cherry blossom event. This year the Big Picnic took place on Saturday, April 1st. It happened at David Lam Park in Vancouver.

"Hanami" is the Japanese traditional practice of gathering with friends and family in parks under cherry trees and admiring the blossoms while eating and drinking. At the big picnic event, there is live entertainment. There are also free outdoor sessions of yoga and a small number of food trucks most years.

In total, we estimate that between around 500 and 1000 people at the picnic at any given time. It's not a huge event, but it is free and a fabulous time to check out the park's cherry blossoms.

The flowering cherry blossom tree is an important image in Japanese culture. Cherry Blossom or Sakura, represents a time of renewal and optimism. The pops of pink mark the ending of winter and signify the beginning of spring. Due to their quick blooming season, cherry blossoms also symbolize the transience of life, a major theme in Buddhism. The blooming of these legendary trees represents a time of renewal, feminine beauty, and the fragility of human life. It provides us with a moment to reflect upon the fleeting nature of life. The Sakura's cycles offer nobility and radiant energy to all those lucky enough to witness its graceful dance. It is my honor to celebrate together with our DDA residents to join this prestigious event of the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival.



WELCOME TO THE EAST 16TH DAY PROGRAM

BY JACKIE LANZ

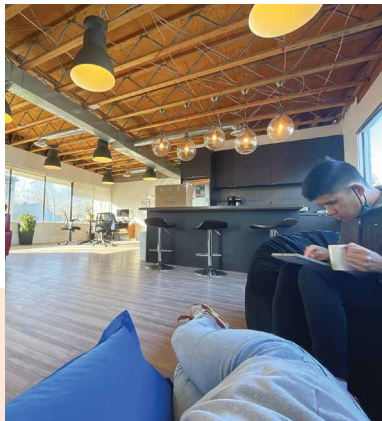
Grandview Day Program has a new home and a new name!

I can hardly believe that the time has come to finally share our new day program with our DDA family.

The Grandview Day program happily resided at its previous location on Grandview Highway for over 20 years. When the building was sold we were evicted, however, we didn't have a new site to move into at the time. Fortunately for us, we were able to take up a small space next to DDA's Kaslo hub and did so until February 2023.

Despite what felt like an endless property search, we finally found a space that felt like it could be 'the one'. I would soon find that navigating the building permit process and working on a project during a pandemic would come with many challenges; including no face-to-face contact, supply and demand shortages, and endless delays.

February 21st, 2023 was the big day (the move-in), the day that felt like it was never going to come had finally arrived. The dreams and sketches of all involved in the design collaboration had finally come to life. The East 16th program is a light-filled, spacious 2-story site, now fully equipped with an elevator, snoezelen room, and indoor/outdoor multiuse spaces for all of our current and future programming needs.



A special thank you to everyone who helped make this happen. To DDA's Board of Directors for granting us \$120,000 for site upgrades. To the East 16th team, we could not have gotten to the finish line without you. To our clients who were resilient through the moves, and to DDA's Kaslo family who provided us with a welcoming space when we were in need.

Please stay tuned for the grand opening celebration details.



DDA CELEBRATES EARTH DAY

DDA residents celebrated Earth Day on April 21, 2023. Many of the programs participated in the event. 99C/55C Arlington and Worthington hosted the event. Each site brought their own picnic lunches.

People discussed the importance of Earth Day. We talked about the impact of climate change and how we each can make a difference when practicing the three R's by reducing waste, reusing and recycling:

- Recycling plastic containers, cardboard and paper
- Using the reusable drinking containers and bottles
- Reduce plastic waste and reduce paper
- Using reusable bags to reduce the plastic bags in the landfill

This year the theme was ocean blue. Each home brought a plant to symbolize Earth Day. The guests enjoyed the arts, crafts, singing, and moving to the beat of the music. At the end of the celebration each home was gifted a different plant to care for.

More than a billion people celebrate Earth Day to protect the planet from things like pollution and deforestation. By taking part in activities like picking up litter and planting trees, we're making our world a happier, healthier place to live.



LEISURE FAIR

After a 3-year hiatus, DDA was proud to co-host the 2023 Leisure Fair with the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. We had such a great turnout, perhaps because Covid took this event away from us from 2020-2022.

The environment buzzed with inquisitive families, musical notes from music therapy vendors, crafting tables, and a mini obstacle course for the little ones to test their agility! We were delighted that nearly 150 people attended the Leisure Fair this year.

We hosted 25 community organizations, all of which focused on social and recreational programming for children and youth with developmental disabilities.

Among our human vendors, we also had a few canine hosts. We were pleased to welcome 5 new vendors this year, and welcome back 20 returning vendors from years past. We appreciate everyone's interest and continued support.

For a full list of the vendors who attended, and to stay in the know about the 2024 event, please see our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/leisurefair

We look forward to seeing you all next year!www



SIMON FRASER POW WOW

On April 22nd, Simon Fraser University held a traditional Pow Wow where they honoured indigenous students. Many of our residential clients took part in the educational event and enjoyed traditional drumming and dancing. They got to meet many indigenous people and loved the clothing and art!



ROCKING AND ROLLING WITH THE MINORU HOUSE BAND



Sometimes all you need is a little music. DDA's Minoru manager, Bill McLellan, who happens to be a musician, got together with Blain, Paul, and Dan to form the Minoru House Band. Together they compiled 17 songs and love playing whenever they can. DDA's filmmaker, David Ozier, even made a video about them.

You can see it on DDA's YouTube channel, or copy this link into your browser: <https://tinyurl.com/5fhur9k4>

We would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to Bill for all the work and dedication he brought to DDA over the years. 2023 was his last year with the association. Happy retirement Bill!



DDA and its filmmaker, David Ozier, recently learned of two nominations at Saskatchewan's highly regarded Yorkton Film Festival. **Doing the Impossible - The Story of the Developmental Disabilities Association** has been nominated for Best Documentary History & Biography and Best Research. Winners will be announced on May 25 – 27th, so as of printing we don't know if we won.

The documentary has also been nominated for 4 Leo Awards from the Motion Picture Arts and Science

DDA DOCUMENTARY NOMINATED FOR SIX FILM FESTIVAL AWARDS

Association of BC. Alanna Hendren and David Ozier are both nominated for Best Short Documentary, Best Screenwriting, Best Editing, and Best Direction. Winners will be announced on July 8/9.

We are extremely proud of the work David has done to shine a light on the history of our organization and the amazing fight for inclusion that continues today.

FROM DDA'S ENCOURAGING ABILITIES PODCAST

Creating an Inclusive Community through Martial Arts

In DDA's latest podcast, we talked with Master Michael Sirota, an expert in martial arts who provides services for nearly 800 students in Vancouver and Richmond.

Master Sirota owns and operates Sirota's Alchemy, a martial arts dojo that trains students in the styles of Taekwondo and Hapkido.

They currently have two dojos, one in Vancouver and one in Richmond. Since 1983 he has immersed himself fully as a martial arts practitioner, athlete instructor, coach, global pioneer of therapeutic martial arts, and facilitator of global empowerment for the disability community.

Master Sirota holds an 8th-degree black belt in Taekwondo, a 5th-degree black belt in Hapkido, an instructor license, and a black belt with the International Disabled Self-Defense Association. He has received many awards for his efforts in the community and with the Paralympics and the Autism Community.

Why did you get into martial arts?

"While I was a child, like most kids I had low self-esteem, no. I needed something and I started with martial arts at that time I really didn't know anything about it and I just kept going and never stopped. I just fell in love with Taekwondo."



You offer a lot of options for people with disabilities, why is this important to your organization?

"I believe that's what I'm here to do. When I was much younger I never really thought about how I didn't know anything about the disability community or what autism is, or what spinal cord injuries are. We had some kids in our classes that I felt had some challenges and they needed extra support but I didn't know what kind of support and then I was really oblivious to all of that I never had any exposure but I just knew that martial arts is really beneficial for them."

You are very much a pioneer in therapeutic martial arts. How are you taking it around the world?

"I have traveled to various countries and I have taught and certified others on how to teach therapeutic martial arts. I even offered an online certification program and we would probably have people from 30-plus countries taking our courses and then they are teaching our philosophies and methodologies. It's so weird there's nothing global other than what we offer."

To listen to the complete podcast with Master Michael Sirota use this link:
<https://tinyurl.com/3djvxhc5>



EASTER CELEBRATION 2023

BY LORNALE MONTECLARO & AZURE MANAGER



The Residential homes celebrated the Easter Hunt Party at King George Park in Richmond. Our theme this year was "Helping the Hungry and Homeless people in our community." DDA staff and individuals donated food, slightly used coats, and clothing and delivered them to the Easter Hunt Party.

DDA's Azure group home collected canned food and non-perishable items for the Richmond Food Bank. On April 14, 2023, George, Arthur, Socrates, and Rafael along with staff brought the donated items to the Food Bank and Salvation Army.

The donations were greatly received and appreciated by both organizations!

A job well done and a big THANK YOU to these hard-working men from Azure House for volunteering their time to help those in need in our community.

To all the residential clients and staff who donated all the canned goods and clothing to this event, I want to say THANK YOU so much for your contributions. The teams worked together and had fun contributing to this important cause. At this special time of year, we are thankful.

VANCOUVER EARLY INTERVENTION NETWORK EVENT

The Vancouver Infant Development Program (IDP) and The Fostering Early Development Program (FED) are part of the Vancouver Early Intervention Agency Network (VEIAN). A committee of team leads from the 9 member agencies meet monthly from September to March to plan a city-wide education and networking event that takes place in April each year.

This year, our VEIAN event took place on Wednesday, April 19, 2023, at the beautiful Heritage Hall on Main Street. We had over 160 early intervention professionals from over 9 agencies, including DDA, BC Centre for Ability, The Family Support Institute (FSI), The PACE Program, Vancouver Coastal Health, VSB, Mosaic, and Indigenous Early Years. It was the first in-person event held since 2019.

It was a wonderful afternoon of in-person networking, and learning more about the programs our agencies offer, including a presentation by the Family Support Institute. Wendy Maclean, Assistant Director for IDP, and Amy Ris, Program Coordinator for FED, sit on the VEIAN executive committee and helped to coordinate the events of the day, with Wendy serving as MC for the afternoon! A special shout out to Evan Kelly from DDA Communications who sourced and set up our sound system.

We look forward to coming together again next in April 2024.



TECH REVIEWS

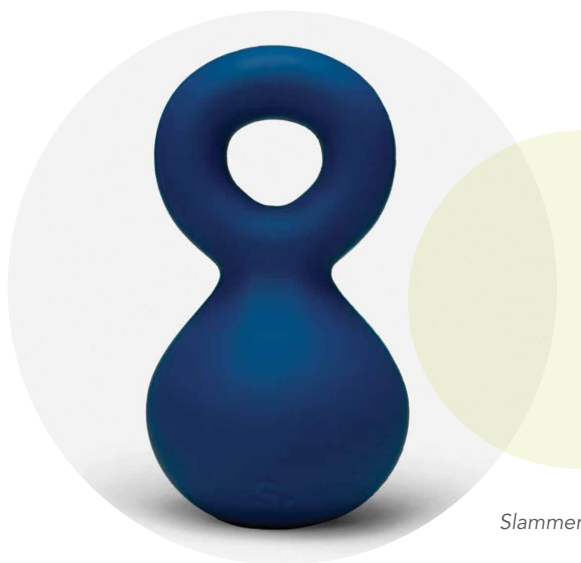
BY KEEGAN NEWBERRY

Product: Blots Silicone Stress Balls

Producer: Speks

Cost: ~\$35 CND (Varies by vendor)

Blots Silicone Stress Balls are produced by Speks – a company that has provides a series of stress-relieving desk toys. Speks advertises the Blots series as “satisfyingly squeezable desk toys” with the intent that they are to be moved and manipulated as a strategy to reduce stress. Blots are referred to as desk toys, stress balls, and fidget toys on the product website with the perceived target demographic being neurotypical users (or undefined users) needing a tool for stress and anxiety relief. Blots are made of 100% soft textured silicone and come in 3 different shapes: the Slammer, the Splotch, and the Splatter.



Slammer



Splatter



Splotch

Star ratings

Ease of Use: As a sensory tool, this is as simple as it gets – there is no right or wrong way to use a stress ball.



Adaptability: 3 versions of Blots are available in different shapes, but all are produced with the same materials and are approximately the same size



Accessibility: Blots do not pose a choking hazard and are easily cleaned using a clean, damp cloth. They may not be a preferred sensory experience for all users, but they do not have any obvious barriers for use.



Cost vs. Value: As a sensory tool, Blots are on the more expensive end of the typical price range but are extremely high quality and have stood up to intensive testing



Overall Rating



Final word

Blots are unique in the way Speks has primarily advertised a sensory tool to a mainstream, neurotypical audience. Sensory supports can be a useful resource for anyone – we all have sensory systems and sensory needs! However, the language used to describe Blots (as stress balls and fidget toys) implies use for specific purposes. Stress balls typically are squishy, manipulable items designed to be pressed and squeezed to relieve stress through the release of serotonin. Fidget toys can come in a wide variety of forms but are generally interactive in nature and meant to reduce anxiety and restlessness – typically advertised for use by youth or individuals with ADHD. Sensory tools or items are intended to stimulate one or more sensory system (ex. touch or sight) and are most often designed as self-regulatory supports for neurodivergent individuals. But there are no significant differences between any of these 3 categories other than the implied intended user – sensory supports can be used by anyone, including Blots.

The Slammer is teardrop-shaped with a loop on the top. It is great for users who like a firm squeeze or to bounce this Blot against the palm

of their hand for more intense proprioceptive (pressure) input. Out of the 3 Blot designs, the Slammer is best suited for individuals with poor fine motor control who may have difficulty holding an item while manipulating it. The Splotch can best be described as a wiggly, 6-spoked cogwheel around a central sphere. It fits well in the palm of the hand and can provide gentle tactile input between fingers. It can also be used for visual/kinesthetic input by holding a single spoke in each hand and rotating the Blot forwards and back using its own momentum as a driving force. The Splatter gives the greatest variety of input. It is designed as a central sphere with 32 short arms splattering outwards in all directions. Spin it, squish it, pull it, or slam it – it provides fantastic input for the busiest of hands, though could be over stimulating for some users.

Regardless of whether you refer to them as stress balls, fidget toys, or sensory tools – Blots are a high quality hand-held sensory item suitable to almost all users. Though they come with a slightly higher price tag than typical, it is reasonable for the product you are receiving, and I would recommend any of the Blots collection (or all 3) as a solid addition to your sensory toolkit.

NEWSLETTER

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