

The Caribbean PLAY Project

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I became a PP Consultant in 2012 after receiving a Quality of Life Grant from Nova Southeastern University (NSU). The grant money was used to support my research in assessing the efficacy of parent-mediated approaches to treating families with children with ASD in South Florida. I am originally from Michigan and had been to a few PLAY Project presentations while living there, so it was my first choice in parent-mediated interventions for the treatment of autism. I became trained in the model using grant funds so that I could learn to use it effectively and with fidelity for my research. When my study was completed in 2014, I excitedly continued using the Play Project as a Consultant and as a professor at NSU exposing students to the model in both their courses and clinical work.

In 2014, I began providing The PLAY Project to a family with a child with autism living on the Island of St. Kitts after visiting there with a friend. My friend's family owns the University of Medical and Health Sciences – St. Kitts and she brought me with her to see the University as well as to enjoy the beautiful island.



However, my trip turned into something so much more than that. While on the Island, I happened to meet with the President of the University, Dr. Ross, and we discussed the possibility of me teaching part of their behavioral course which includes a section on Autism. Since that is my area of expertise, he also mentioned that he knew of a family living on the Island that was in need of assistance with their young child as they were told he may have autism by a doctor they traveled to see in Jamaica as services in St. Kitts are limited.

Dr. Ross asked if I would meet with them and of course I agreed. He introduced me to the Marshall family and we discussed the child's behavior and the possibility of autism and treatment options. The Marshall's told me that there weren't any services designed specifically to help their son in St. Kitts and that the cultural beliefs are very different regarding special needs. I told them about a variety of treatments, but since they expressed the lack of services there, I offered for them to come to Florida to participate in my research study at NSU investigating the efficacy of the PLAY Project. The child and his mother traveled to Florida 1 week later and we began an intensive program using the PLAY Project as his model of intervention.

Mathieu and his mother, Mauricer Marshall, participated in the PLAY Project for 6 weeks, where they received 21 hours of intervention a week at the University. Mathieu and mom were trained by myself and 8 graduate students who worked as research assistants in the project. When Mathieu started the program, he was essentially nonverbal and didn't display much shared attention, engagement, and 2 way communication. After 6 weeks, he returned home to St. Kitts speaking in 3 word phrases and completely connected to his mom and others in his environment!

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There is a great need, not only for intervention, but for general autism awareness and education in St. Kitts and other Caribbean Islands. I have learned this as I worked with the Marshall family in the US at NSU. Mom expressed her concerns in returning to St. Kitts as she knew there wouldn't be anything else she could do for her son. Children with special needs are treated as outcasts and their behaviors are misunderstood there. Autism is a disorder that is not well known or identified in the community, even though the prevalence has now been found to large.

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Since I trained mom to be Mathieu's best play partner and interventionist using the PLAY Project, I was confident that she could continue to help her child there even though no one else could. After she returned, others heard of her travels to the US and her experience with Mathieu and began asking her for help. She taught them what she knew, but contacted me to return to the Island to help her spread the word about autism and to devise a plan to help others in her community.

It was not until 1 year later in January, 2015 that I returned and we had a plan to approach the government with a proposal to bring resources to St. Kitts. The ministry of education agreed to my proposal and I began an autism awareness, education, and training program to teachers and professionals working in the school system, the Caribbean Autism Project.

The project has 5 phases, 3 of which have been completed to date. Phase 1 consisted of autism awareness and education to 45 professionals in the Ministry of Education; Phase 2 consisted of training to 8 selected professionals, who I named the autism cohort, to gain their autism certificates and to learn about different interventions available to treat autism. From this cohort, one professional was selected to become a certified PLAY project provider (she is currently in her certification phase); Phase 3 consisted of continued training and supervision to the autism cohort to maintain their knowledge and skills, as well as discussing plans to open an autism early intervention center with specific focus on using the PLAY Project as the model of intervention for the children newly diagnosed. Phase 4 consists of opening the early intervention center (August 2017) and Phase 5 consists of continued training and supervision of the center in 2018.

The impact has been enormous and the project has changed many lives. Cultural awareness and sensitivity towards children with special needs and autism has improved. Children are now being screened, assessed, diagnosed, and treated for ASD, something that did not exist 2 years ago.



So what does the future hold for The PLAY Project in St. Kitts and the Caribbean? There is currently one professional living in St. Kitts who is training to be a PLAY Project consultant and many who know of the model and its methods and principles. Because of this, children and families are receiving quality, evidence-based practice that will help their young children with autism. Due to the exposure of the PLAY Project through social media, other Caribbean Islands are also interested in this amazing intervention and have inquired about training as well. My hopes are that this will be the pilot for other Caribbean Islands and that other professionals living on different Caribbean Islands will use the PLAY Project to help their children with ASD.

The Caribbean PLAY Project Resources



If you would like to learn more about Dr. Rosin's work with The Caribbean PLAY Project, click on any of the wonderful resources below:

Touching Autism Documentary with *Kamiya Parris* (PLAY Project trainee) interview about the PLAY Project in St. Kitts

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/r6h5k5ab17fr3cn/TOUCHING%20AUTISM%20.mov?dl=0>

Teachers trained to help autistic children

<http://zisonline.com/teachers-trained-to-help-autistic-children/>

Rosin ZIZ News Interview

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/8u6qg2bjq5lyknj/ROSIN%20PACKAGE.mp4?dl=0>

Interview with Mrs. M. Marshall and Mr. Gittens

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/r2099ytz3nyb1sp/TWO%20PARENTS%20ON%20AUTISM.mov?dl=0>

Eight Educators within the Federation, now trained Autism Specialists

<http://www.sknvibes.com/news/newsdetails.cfm/94799>

University of Medicine and Health Sciences-St. Kitts - Blog

<https://www.umhs-sk.org/blog/dr-sheryl-rosin-conducts-autism-workshop-umhs/Caribbean-Medical-Schools>

In the Limelight Story - ASHA Leader [*The ASHA Leader*, April 2016, Vol. 21, 26-27.](#)
[doi:10.1044/leader.LML.21042016.26](https://doi.org/10.1044/leader.LML.21042016.26)

<http://leader.pubs.asha.org/article.aspx?articleid=2506039>

ASHA Leader Blog - Mauricer Marshall

<http://blog.asha.org/2016/04/05/playful-intervention-for-a-child-with-autism/>