

SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAM ASSESSMENT BY JAY MANDARINO

This is an assessment that I modify for each student depending on their background or what their challenges may be. See 2nd page for pricing and additional information.

I've learned lots over the years from training at university, as a staff member working for Toronto Parks & Recreation, counsellor at various special needs summer camps, several courses, many seminars, and mostly working with all types of children and youth all my life as I am 62 now. (I am a big kid at heart and still skateboard and Ski.) I have also learned lots as a Professional Certified Ski & Skateboarding Instructor, and now train other instructors here locally and around the globe. As well I have worked with the justice system, several psychologists and I currently sit on several boards including the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) for the past 20+ years.

What I have learned is that the world is getting more complex and difficult each year. We are all being faced with more and more challenges to deal with. We are all different and unique in the way we perceive things and deal with challenges and obstacles. As well we all learn in different ways and speeds.

A large number of children and youth might say things to others not with a bad or hurtful intention. Unfortunately it can be received in a very negative way causing harm to the other person affecting them tremendously.

The best insight I draw from is my own personal challenges being diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia and being put on a drug called Ritalin. I will never forget being in a room with two psychologists and my parents who were told high school would not be an option for me nor college or university and the most they could hope for was that I could be a gasoline attendant and only possibly with the right therapy, I might be able to be an assistant mechanic. Luckily, my parents didn't give up and didn't accept those statements made about what my future would or wouldn't be. Their love and faith in me were greater than those words. They continued their search for answers regarding the challenges I was facing in my studies and the search for the right doctor and learning environment for me.

I believe we all have the power to achieve what we want and where we put our focus on in life and that we all have a gift or specific talent. The work we have to do is to figure out the talent or gift we have, which is not always easy. I have a sixth sense and a special gift for helping children and youth as I walk the talk and thankfully have not failed yet.

Part of my assessment of the child or youth is to figure out their aptitudes and what things we can do to help foster and assist in a fun and exciting way so it's a win-win outcome for all. First, I start off with a set of 12 stretches which allows me to find out how well they listen and their hand-eye coordination and response time. Then I test to find out what is their dominant foot for stance and if it's even or split between right and left. Then we get them to do knee slides and test balance and agility. Some games are introduced that involve knee slides, balance and problem solving. At the same time I'm also testing dexterity and cognitive capabilities. Finally I get them on a skateboard or scooter and try some different tricks, etc. (Parents are encouraged to go to the second floor where they can observe the lesson from a distance.)

Throughout the assessment, I interact with the student and based on what they tell me and what I observe, I come up with suggestions or recommendations for the parent(s). When the lesson is finished I meet with one or both parents. It's up to their discretion if they want to share those recommendations with the child or not. Now my only rule is, if your child does not want me to share something with you, I have to respect that choice and not cross that line of trust. The only time I will share or cross that line is if I think they are going to do something that is either harmful to themselves or others.

My main goal is to help prevent children going through what I went through as a child and most important showing them they can be successful.

I mentor and teach during the lesson. The skatepark has been a saviour for many young children and youth as it was for me. My students confide in me and feel very comfortable sharing things with me they wouldn't necessarily share with their own parents. I have great confidence in what I do and have accomplished great success. I can get the kids to open up and share with their parents what they share with me and that they can tell their parents anything! I remind them that they are loved by their parents!!

I know from my own challenges it's really hard to talk about when you're young and you don't want to feel like an outcast or that you're not smart enough. There are many different causes that can affect you and we don't know exactly where that comes from. Kids and youth need a physical outlet to get rid of that built-up frustration or stress and skateboarding is a great outlet for that and I share that with everybody.

*“Certainly, if you open the psychiatric textbooks, you don't hear about 'skateboard therapy' in child psychiatry. This is not a standard approach. However, when you look at the principal of CJ's- Jay Mandarino - he has been a leader and supporter for learning disabilities, ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorders for years. His dedication and support of young people led me to consider sending my interested patients to see him, and benefit from CJ's. **His innovative approach is helping young people in a way that other programs haven't been able to do.***

Although the psychiatric textbooks don't discuss 'skateboard therapy', if you look for methods to improve self-esteem, you will begin to understand how CJ's benefit youth. Many people think about different therapies to improve self-esteem. Though at the core of it - the best way to improve self-esteem is to set a goal, challenge yourself, improve, achieve that goal, and have others acknowledge you for it. CJ's provides the perfect opportunity for interested youth to achieve this. As they set their skateboarding goals and achieve them, their self-esteem grows. Improving self-esteem in one area can 'overflow' into multiple areas of one's life, leading to significant positive change.”

Dr. Kenneth Handelman, MD FRCP(C)

Child, Adolescent and Adult Psychiatrist

Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Neuroscience, McMaster University



FORMAL ASSESSMENT and COST

At the formal assessment, we will discuss YOUR goals and how our staff can best work with you as a team to achieve them. The cost of this initial assessment is \$100.00 and includes a half hour lesson and rental of all safety equipment including skateboard and/or scooter, helmet, knee, elbow and wrist guards — this will ensure we can mutually agree on a program that is right for you. If our program is a great fit, we will work together to establish goals for the student.

OUR COMMITMENT and MISSION

To engage and empower all people in the community including those with special needs. (kids living with ADHD, Asperger's, Autism, Blindness or Impaired Vision, Cancer, Deafness, Down syndrome, LDs, OCD, or any other challenge one might have). We achieve this by guaranteeing a safe and fun learning environment through recreation, development and mentoring in the sports of skateboarding, scooter riding, and other park activities.

OUR SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMS

We emphasize FUN, SAFETY, STRUCTURE, CONSISTENCY and the ACHIEVEMENT OF INDIVIDUALIZED GOALS and MILESTONES for each of our students.

OUR CORE VALUES

We ensure all of our students and members have the right to be in a COMMUNITY where they can achieve PERSONAL GROWTH goals in a SAFE and RESPECTFUL environment, where no one gets teased or picked on. We promote SELF-ESTEEM and INCLUSION so our students, instructors and volunteers can focus on fun, learning and meeting OUR goals.

TOTAL ACCESS

When you visit our facility you will notice one thing immediately: total access and viewing for all parents and caregivers. Our park cameras, reception area and second-floor mezzanine are where you can watch all of our students, instructors and volunteers in action in EVERY area and corner of our facility.

INITIAL CONSULTATION

No obligation phone consultation for initial assessment. Download and complete our Special Needs program assessment form at www.CJsSKATEPARK.com/snprogram.

The form will be submitted CONFIDENTIALLY to the Special Needs Board Committee Chair or Jay Mandarino, CJ's SKATEPARK President and Founder. If we feel our program will truly benefit the applicant, we will arrange an appointment for the applicant and their family or primary caregivers to visit the park for a formal assessment.

AFFILIATIONS

We have run events and developed programs with OPACC (Ontario Parents Advocating for Children with Cancer), Gilda's Club, Childhood Cancer Canada, CINB, SickKids Hospital, Big Brothers & Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, LDAO (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario), the Bob Rumball School for the Deaf, Children's Aid, City of Toronto, and many other organizations.

PARENT TESTIMONIALS

"I remember Jay telling me very early in my son's program – people think this program is about the skateboarding, but it's about confidence, mentoring and respect – skateboarding is just a great vehicle to develop those things. Jay was right. My autistic son has learned to drop in, rock the coping and pump in the vert ramp. More important, he gets to come to a place where he is welcomed into a community that respects him and focuses on making him a better, more confident person – physically, emotionally and socially. Thanks Jay, Greg, and the entire team at CJ's. You were right, 'it's not just about the skateboarding'...it's about a program and place where a person with special needs can be themselves, never be picked on or judged, so they can become their best."

"We cannot thank CJ's SKATEPARK and all of their amazing staff enough for building our son's confidence and engaging his mind. Although extremely bright, he was diagnosed with ADHD, being quite inattentive. Most sports did not hold his interest for long and because he was not really the athletic type, he never found an activity he felt he was good at. Then we were introduced to CJ's SKATEPARK, a place that does not judge by ability or disability. By the end of his first lesson, he was beaming from his accomplishments and we already noticed that he seemed more confident. Now several lessons later, he loves coming to the skatepark. Learning in CJ's environment with the skatepark team totally engages his mind and at the same time continues to build his confidence. We are overwhelmed by what this program has done and what it continues to do."

"CJ's SKATEPARK does an amazing job of working with children with special needs. Their program is designed to help these kids learn something new and fun! Our daughter absolutely loves skateboarding, she has a permanent smile while she is out there. Who would have thought that she would also benefit from a little physical therapy every Saturday morning. She had to continuously engage her core and keep her balance, things that she struggles with on a daily basis. The staff are fantastic and are extremely helpful and understanding in the needs that these kids have. I would highly recommend this program for any child that has special needs."

CJ's SKATEPARK

560 Hensall Circle, Mississauga, ON, Canada L5A 1Y1

905.272.6888 | CJsSKATEPARK.com

A division of the Canadian Skateboard Park & School Association

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CJ's SKATEPARK FOUNDATION is a Registered Charity #846549632RC0001

Special Needs Assessment Form

Name:

Age:

Date:

CJ Instructor Staff:

Energy:

Attention:

Stance:

Stretches:

Hyperactive:

Problem Solving:

Balance:

Confidence:

Attitude:

Patience:

Following Instructions:

Observations & Recommendations:

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