

# Halloween costumes for special needs kids

FAMILY & PARENTING | OCTOBER 17, 2008 | BY: ANGELE SIONNA | [+ Subscribe](#)

Some special needs children can benefit from extra special costumes this Halloween.

Enter Fun and Function, a Philadelphia-based company specializing in toys and other items for young children with special needs. Among their special products - Magical Apparel costumes for Halloween or any day.

They're specially designed for children three to eight with interior pockets into which hidden weights can be inserted to give an added therapeutic benefit for children with sensory processing disorder, autism and other physical and behavioral challenges.

Aviva Weiss is a pediatric occupational therapist and founder of Fun and Function. I talked to her about the idea behind these special costumes.

**Examiner: Why did you invent these costumes?**

*Aviva:* I began designing weighted vests several years ago when I learned that my daughter was experiencing sensory processing difficulties, a condition marked by hypersensitivity to certain sensory stimuli and by motor coordination challenges.

Weighted vests have been shown to help children with SPDs autism and other special needs by providing a secure, soothing hug. When I was unable to find one at any price that neither intimidated my daughter nor projected the stigma of special needs, I decided to try my hand at designing some myself. The first vests were stylish but more basic in appearance. Our Magical Apparel™ line is more of an attempt at combining the therapeutic function of a weighted vest with the equally important benefits of motor skill development, dressing skills and imaginative play, while keeping the message to children simple: Use these costumes to play together and have fun.

**Examiner: How do they work exactly?**

*Aviva:* The vests include three rescue work-

er (fireman, policeman, EMT) designs and one fantasy (fairy princess) design, with two separate options (ballerina, ball gown) for skirts that can be attached to the princess vest. Each versatile outfit is constructed of a heavy-duty cotton/poly blend with elastic panels for one-size-fits-all convenience. Incorporated laces, snaps, buttons, zippers and hook-and-loop closures help children develop their fine motor skills. For children who need extra sensory input, the vests feature special pockets into which optional weights can be safely inserted to provide a soothing "hug."

**Examiner: How do they help?**

*Aviva:* The weights in vests provide deep pressure which allows the child to self-calm, relax and regulate so that other sensory stimuli can be processed and responded to appropriately.

**Examiner: Why are they important?**

*Aviva:* We refer to the Magical Apparel line as a 3-in-1 benefit for children. They provide a fun, creative opportunity to practice dressing. They inspire children to engage in pretend play and exercise their social skills and creativity. And they provide a soothing touch of weighted apparel for children with sensory difficulties and other physical or behavioral challenges.

**Examiner: How many kids across the US could benefit from these extra special costumes?**

*Aviva:* All children age 3 to 8 can benefit from these costumes, because without the weights they're like many other costumes that help them develop important skills like dressing, fastening and imagining.

In removing the stigma of special needs they help both the special needs child and his/her classmates or playmates avoid the distraction of the typical sight, sound and feel of therapeutic products, allowing them to focus on having fun together and promoting an environment of acceptance and confidence.

As for the specific benefit to special needs children, Safe Kids USA estimates that nine million, or 13%, of U.S. children under 18 years have a special health care need. In addition, research by the SPD Foundation indicates that 1 in every 20 children experiences symptoms of Sensory Processing Disorder that are significant enough to affect their ability to participate fully in everyday life.

Additionally, 1 in every 150 children are diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and the vast majority of autistic children experience sensory processing disorder. Wearing a weighted vest such as those in our Magical Apparel line can provide a therapeutic solution for many of these children, especially those facing developmental challenges such as sensory processing disorder, autism and other behavioral and physical issues.

For more info: Find out more about Magic Apparel and other items by Fun and Function at their website [FunAndFunction.com](http://FunAndFunction.com).