

Are you aware of the issues our students with Autism encounter in school?



**AUTISM**  
is **NOT**  
a **disease.**  
Dont try to cure us.  
Try to  
understand us.

## What is an Autistic Spectrum Disorder? (ASD)

An Autistic Spectrum Disorder is a lifelong development condition which affects the way a child/adult communicates and relates to those around them.

This developmental disorder is described as a spectrum because the main areas of difficulty can vary from being mild to severe. The main diagnoses given are Autism and Asperger's syndrome.

There are no medical tests for ASD although there are diagnostic tools such as the Autism Diagnostic observational Schedule (ADOS), and specific questionnaires that can examine the significance of your child's social and communication difficulties on the daily functioning. Recent figures suggest that Autism is more common in boys than girls.

Students with an ASD seem to find it very difficult to become 'tuned into' language, both verbal and non-verbal. In turn this makes it difficult to try and make sense of the world around them.

They may have a limited range of words/phrases; or a range of vocabulary that appears older than their age. When they speak they may lack in intonation (the normal 'ups and downs' in our voice when we speak).

I'm not misbehaving



I have Autism

Please be understanding

## What difficulties may they encounter at school?

They may find it difficult to understand what is said by others.

Take literally what is said. For example, 'can you close the door please?' 'yes'

They may avoid eye contact or stare at you or other students.

They may not understand gestures or facial expressions. They may be in your personal space because they do not understand distance.

They struggle listening to others or taking it in turns during discussions and conversations.

They may find it difficult expressing how they feel and when asked how they feel may appear blank or over exaggerate feelings relative to the situation.

While they may feel their own emotions very strongly, they may have difficulties putting a "label" on their feelings and also identifying how others may be feeling.

They may find it difficult recognising another person's needs, desires, and feelings which can make them seem insensitive.

They can have a lack of empathy, lack of embarrassment, little desire to make others happy.

They may prefer their own company

They may be too friendly and not understand who to talk to or have physical contact with (stranger-danger vulnerability)

They may struggle to manage typical fall outs and disagreement and working things out if they are being teased / bullied.

## How can we help students with ASD in our school?

ASD students cannot cope with change, so try to keep routines the same, e.g. furniture layout.

Time is an abstract concept and can be hard to understand 'soon', 'next', so be specific how long a student has to complete a task or when you want to see them. They may also find it difficult to anticipate future events so a clear structure as to what is happening and when can be very helpful.

Some ASD children may take longer to put ideas on paper and prefer more factual subjects such as Maths and science, so please be patient.

Some ASD students may be over sensitive or under sensitive in one or more of their senses. All of these can affect mood, anxiety levels, behaviour and communication. So warn the students if they are going to see a bright light or hear a loud noise or touch something. Or think about where a student with ASD will sit the place with the less stimulation, e.g. noise and light.

Some people don't like the feel of clothes against their body. They may not want to wear a tight fitting apron or put on a PE kit.

Some ASD students find it difficult to feel comfortable about using the toilet. Some of our ASD students have an exit pass. Please don't question them about why they are out of class and just ask to see their pass.

Some students may have high levels of anxiety and worries. And may become aggressive, destructive, run away, self-injure and display socially unacceptable behaviour. Please again be patient and understand they are not being 'naughty'. Try to work out what is

leading the student to behave in a certain way. For example they may become distressed if you suddenly stop a task they are doing. So let them know how long they have left before they need to pack up.

ASD children may be able to focus on a task for a long period of time. They may prefer learning visually and excel in subjects such as art and music.

They may become very engrossed in particular activities that they have a strong preference for. They may then find it difficult to cope when that activity is not available or is terminated abruptly.

They can be good at learning how to do something when they see someone else doing it.

Please don't be sarcastic with an autistic student, they don't understand, try to be clear what you want and give them time to process what has been said to them.

Give them a visual aid for them to use if they are stuck. They won't ask for help verbally.

Be clear in your instructions. Give one at a time instead of several at once.

Some students may display dangerous behaviour (jumping off furniture) or repetitive movements. This is a way of de-stressing for them. Try to encourage exercise to burn off some energy.



# Autism Awareness

When people on the autism spectrum are stressed, upset and overloaded, asking them what's the matter simply adds to their overload. They are unable to think about their emotions because of the overload



Magsy

## the autism paradox

1. It's easy to recite an entire book but difficult to make up a story.
2. It's easy to line up toys but difficult to stay in line.
3. It makes perfect sense to climb on the sofa but little sense to sit on it.
4. Memorizing the Presidents in order - 10 minutes. Packing a school bag - 10 hours.
5. Family pictures on the wall are boring but that speck of dust next to it, now that's fascinating!
6. Talking about weather patterns - a piece of cake. Talking about my day - impossible.
7. Ability to focus on spinning objects - timeless. Ability to focus on homework - 3 seconds.
8. Being called by name - can't hear it. Some owl hooting in the distance - clear as a bell.
9. How to operate the remote control - zero instruction. How to button up pants - intensive instruction.
10. Navigating social rules - poorly skilled. Navigating from the back seat of the car - highly skilled.

-author unknown

created by fb/autismwithaglassofwine

## Emotions In Autism



- People with autism often report that their emotions are very scary for them.
- They often do not understand them, or feel that they can control them.
- The world is often very chaotic and confusing for them, causing ongoing stress and anxiety.
- Poor cortical control makes it difficult for them to inhibit their emotional impulses.
- Emotions are often very intense, causing "fight or flight" response.

# How to support people with autism

- Explain at every stage what you are about to do, what will happen next and why.
- Give the person enough time to understand the information you are sharing and wait a few seconds for a response if it is not given immediately.
- Questions should be clear and direct using language that is easy to understand and pictures where necessary – do not rely on the person to pick up on the meaning of your questions or body language.
- People with autism might take what you say literally so avoid words with a double meaning and humour that could be misunderstood.
- Maintain a routine – familiarity is often important to some people with autism.
- Social difficulties may include lack of eye contact and unusual body language, talking at inappropriate moments or about inappropriate topics.
- Repetitive behaviours might be a coping mechanism and therefore should be respected.
- The environment is important – some people with autism are particularly sensitive to light, movement, sounds, smell and touch. Try to keep the immediate environment as calm as possible to help alleviate any anxiety.
- Always consider the person's behaviour in terms of his or her autism, even if it becomes challenging.
- Ask the person and/or parent, carer or advocate what support they might need.

This leaflet has been produced using information from the website [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk) and Dr Wendy Kellaway, Senior Clinical Psychologist at Ashton Health Centre.

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