

Remember

There is a vast range of books on autism available, with new resources being released daily. These can be an investment but remember, not every book will be relevant to your child. Try to get recommendations from other parents or professionals.

Resources

Rainbow Resource Kit (Downloadable from Autism NI Website)

Amazing Things Happen – Autism (Youtube)

No Two Stars Are the Same – Books by Stellas

Pablo – Animation Series

Mr Men Books – Front covers have wonderful illustrations to show Mr Happy, Sad etc.

The New Social Story Book – Carol Gray

Autism NI Helpline – 028 9040 1729 (Option 1)

Autism NI Website – www.autismni.org



Autism hints and tips



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Autistic people and children in particular, can face specific challenges and it might feel like a steep learning curve. Many parents/carers can feel overwhelmed when trying to work out how their children think and process the world around them. The following are hints and tips from parents/carers that might make a difference to your situation. Remember every child is different, what works for one may not necessarily work for all autistic children.

Trying different ideas can help parents feel that they can do something really positive to support their child. The goal is to have a 'bank' of strategies to try out. Be consistent and most important of all, maintain a sense of humour. You do not have to be a specialist, just observe your child and work out what you might like to put in place.



Hints and tips

Communication:

- Turn down or turn off the TV/Radio or ask others talking to pause before giving your child directions. It might help to get down to the child's level to make sure that you have their attention before speaking.
- Use gestures as visual cues such as pointing when giving your child directions, and be sure to speak slowly and clearly.
- If you need to repeat directions, use the 10 second rule. Allow time for your child to process what you originally said before you repeat it. Another tip is to say their name first.
- Be careful with your wording, only use words that your child understands and keep the message short and concise.
- Picture symbols, such as photographs of food on the kitchen cupboard or options available to the child to pick from. This will help make your child's environment predictable and organised. This may help to assist your child keep calm. The use of picture symbols can help in the development of spoken words, encouraging interaction and eye contact.
- Doing something physical can help your child express their feelings. When they communicate their anger or frustration encourage them to express it in a healthy way, for example, punching pillows, hitting a punch bag, tearing paper or squeezing stress balls. It is better for your child to use this type of expression rather than hitting out at you or siblings. The aim is not to deny their feelings but to help them manage them. They will then calm down enough to express how they feel more appropriately.

Social:

- Social stories are a great way of teaching your child appropriate social skills. Incorporate them into your daily routine and keep at it. Do not give up after a few weeks, as new skills can take some time to teach.
- Use everyday examples such as pausing a movie, talk about the scene that has just happened. How did they feel? What do you think might happen next? For other ideas check out www.autismteachingstrategies.com

Behaviour:

- When your child is feeling overwhelmed a visual method can be the easiest way for them to express it. Children can point out how angry or worried they are feeling on an emotional scale and sometimes this is much easier than putting it into words. When they show you that their anger or worry is building up you can then try and do something about it. One example of an emotional scale is the incredible five-point scale.
- Try using a distractor or fidget toy to help your child to focus on something else. Help them to create a scream box using a kitchen roll tube placed into a shoebox or use a special interest object to avoid the worst of reactions. The aim is not to get in trouble for feeling angry but helping to manage reactions.
- Teaching a child to get dressed can be made easier by putting a picture of the items of clothing to be found in each drawer on the front of it. You could also make a general getting dressed chart, 1st underwear, then top etc. Alternatively, for an older child take a photo of them, fully dressed in uniform and attach to the side of a full-length mirror. They then have a visual guide that assists them daily.
- Use a picture of your child and encourage them to put stickers on body parts that are hungry, tired, sore or painful. This helps prepare your child to enable them to tell you when they are ill and may need some medical attention.
- If your child has difficulty understanding emotions, laminate a picture of faces showing various emotions, place it somewhere you spend most of the time with your child. Use them at every opportunity to help your child understand the feelings of happy, sad, cross, worried etc. It might help to use their interests for example printing Lego emotion faces may motivate your child to use them more.

Sensory:

Sensory needs are wide-ranging, and every child's is individual and therefore not always easy to identify. We recommend seeking support from an Occupational Therapist (O.T.) for advice.

- Some autistic children have significant sensory experiences with clothes and shoes. These sensory issues can have an impact on a child's willingness and capacity to dress. Clothes may feel itchy and tags can be unbearable. Ask them what the problem is and be guided by their concerns. Clothing adaptations can include seamless socks, or clothes with labels printed on rather than tags.
- Think ahead when going to meetings, what would you like to say to the health professional and what outcomes do you want to achieve.