

## Tips For Talking To Kids About Autism and Inclusion

Teaching kids about autism and inclusion, as well as about valuing differences, is important for promoting empathy and understanding, fostering inclusion, building social skills, and preparing for the future. Kids can learn to recognize and challenge exclusionary behavior, helping to create a more inclusive environment for all. By teaching children these topics at a young age, we can help create, and prepare them for, a more inclusive and accepting society.

If your child has questions about autism, you can:

1. **Emphasize similarities:** Help kids see that people with autism or other disabilities have many similarities to themselves. They have emotions, needs, and desires, just like everyone else.
2. **Promote and celebrate differences:** Help kids see that differences are something to be celebrated. People with autism have different strengths and abilities that make them unique and valuable.
3. **Encourage questions and conversation:** Kids are naturally curious, so encourage them to ask questions and have conversations about autism and inclusion. Create a safe and supportive environment where children feel comfortable asking questions and sharing their thoughts and feelings.

You can also remind your child about the following points (Adapted From Sesame Workshop):

- **Include Your Friend With Autism.** He or she may want to play but may not know how to ask. Tell them exactly what they can do to join the fun, and give them what they need (like, "You can stack these blocks with us. Here is a block.") Try to find something you both like (like horses or a certain television show).
- **Keep Trying.** It may take time, and a few different tries on different days, to get to know your new friend. That's okay. If he or she says no or needs space, you can stop trying that day.
- **People Have Ways Besides Talking to Tell Us What They Know and Want.** Autistic children might put your hand on an object for help, repeat what you say, or use sounds or pictures to let you know what they want.
- When you see your friend hand flapping, rocking, or repeating noises, he or she might be trying to calm down.
- **Be Patient.** Just because your friend is quiet or looking away doesn't mean he or she is not listening or understanding what you say. They may need more time to respond. It's okay to repeat yourself or wait a bit.
- **Tell a Grown-Up** if you see someone being unkind to your friend.

### Other Resources:

Sesame Street's Sesame Workshop offers many resources to learn more about autism:  
<http://sesameworkshop.org/topics/autism/>