



# Educate, Embrace, & Elevate Autism

Understanding, Inclusion,  
and Friendship in the  
Classroom





Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a way to explain how some people's brains work. The brains of people with autism (autistic people) work differently than the brains of people without autism.

Since your brain tells you what to do, what to think, and how to move, people with autism often:

- Communicate in a unique way
- Experience sights, sounds, touches, tastes, and smells very strongly or not enough
- Have very strong likes or dislikes
- Move their bodies around in a certain way
- Play with their friends in their own special way
- Take a bit longer to learn certain things





Everyone with autism was born with it. You cannot catch autism from anyone. If you were not born with it, you will not ever have it.

People with autism will always have autism for their whole lives. It does not go away.

But, people with autism can go to special schools, take special classes, or learn from special teachers, to help them with things that may be difficult for them, such as learning how to talk or communicate, how to play with their friends, or good ways to calm their bodies when they get very excited.





Every person with autism is different from other people with autism, just like every person without autism is different from other people without autism.

Just like a rainbow is a range of different colors, autism can be made up of a range of different behaviors, abilities, and challenges.

Each person with autism is amazing and beautiful in their own way, just as each color of the rainbow is amazing and beautiful!



Lots of people with autism speak very little or do not use words to communicate. Instead, they might:

- Point to the things they need
- Hold your hand or finger to show you what they want or need help with
- Use sign language
- Use pictures or flashcards to tell others what they are thinking
- Use an iPad or another electronic device to say their words
- Repeat words or sentences. Sometimes they might repeat what you just said to them, sometimes they might repeat things they heard on a TV show or in a movie.

They also might say only one or two words instead of a full sentence, such as "water" to say that they are thirsty. The words they say might be difficult for some people to understand too if they are just learning how to speak, so it's important to listen carefully to our friends with autism!





What are our five senses?

Sight ~ Hearing ~ Smell ~ Taste ~ Touch

Senses

Many people with autism feel their senses either too much or too little. For people who feel them too much, certain sounds might be too loud for them, or light touches may bother their skin. For people who feel them too little, they might like big hugs and squeezes, or they might like to bounce and spin to be able to excite their senses.

Because of these things, sometimes your autistic friend might need to take a break once in a while for some quiet time to relax.



# Interests

Some people with autism might really love a certain thing that interests them, and they might only want to talk about that thing. It could be a toy or game, a TV show or book, or a person or character. It could be anything in the world!

Sometimes it's difficult for them to talk about anything else, but that's ok because it makes them happy to talk about it!

If it's something you like too, you can ask them questions and talk about it with them!

What are some activities or movies that you really, really love that you are interested in?



We all show our emotions in different ways.

Some autistic people show that they are really excited or happy by jumping, spinning, or flapping their arms like a bird!

If they are frustrated or nervous or even bored, they might need to squeeze a squishee toy, fiddle with a fidget toy, or chew on a chewy toy! They also might talk a lot or really fast!

When a person with autism wants to calm themselves, they might walk around, rock back and forth, or play with their fingers or hair.

These are all things that you might do too! What are some things that you do when you're excited?

# Emotions







Play

When it's play time, it might seem like your friend with autism wants to play by themselves.

Sometimes people with autism do not look at your face when you are talking to them, or they might not answer when someone says their name.

This doesn't mean that they don't hear you, they just might not know how to answer you, or it might be uncomfortable for them to look your way, or they might just need some more time to answer.

Many times, they really do want to play, and really want to be asked to play, even if they decide to say no. Sometimes they might just want to do their own thing, but be in the same place as you while you play your game and they play theirs.



Play

The best way to play with any friend is to find out what things you have in common! When you are playing something together that you're both interested in, you will both have so much fun!

If your friend with autism isn't ready to speak yet, you can ask an adult what they like to play.

You might need to play the game a little differently to help them understand or because sometimes autistic people find comfort in doing things a certain way, but games are still fun even when they're played a different way - sometimes they're even more fun!

For example, playing tic-tac-toe using triangles and squares instead of X's and O's!





To make school easier for kids with autism, they sometimes use fun tools, or are allowed to do things that help them to learn better.

You may notice your friend wearing headphones, playing with a fidget toy, or chewing on a chewy toy. Maybe they wear a special vest, or leg braces, or glasses.

If their bodies need to release some wiggles, they may take a walk in the hallway or outside. They may need to jump a bit or flap their arms to release their energy.

In gym class they might be allowed to play certain sports in a different way to make it easier for them or in art class, they might use special scissors.

All of these things are normal tools to help people concentrate and be more focused in class!



- Being a good friend to your classmates with autism is the same as being a good friend to your classmates without autism.
- Always include everyone and remember to ask your autistic friends to join the group during playtime. When playing, be sure to show them what to do so they can imitate you.
- Remember that we're all different, but we're all the same!
- Please don't tease. Sometimes they may not understand the teasing or sometimes they may think you are being friendly when you really are not, and that's not nice.
- Stand up for your friends with autism - If you see someone teasing or bullying them, tell the person that it's not nice, and tell a teacher or adult!
- Be helpful, but always ask if they need help first.
- Cheer on all of your friends when they do good things!
- It's OK to get frustrated with your friends with autism sometimes. It's also ok to want to play alone or with somebody else. If you think he or she is being a little pushy after you've told them nicely that you want to do something else, you can always tell a teacher or another adult who can help you.



We're All Different!  
We're All The Same!

Everyone in the world is different and we all have different talents and ideas to share with others. Let's all celebrate our uniqueness and create a world where everyone can be themselves. Let's celebrate our differences and include everyone!





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Autism

