

8 tips for communicating with autistic people

I'll wait...



1 Allow for additional processing time

Autistic people need more time to process verbal information. We have a lot of information in our brains to sort through to give a response. Multi-part questions and instructions can be too much information and we need repetition and visual support to be successful.



2 Explain non-literal language

Sarcasm, jokes and sayings are difficult to understand when we don't know the person well. Be aware of when you're using non-literal language and explain its meaning to us.

I CAN'T HEAR YOU



3 Be aware of the communication environment

Many autistic people struggle to communicate if the environment is busy, noisy or has bright lights. Too much of our attention is taken up with coping with sensory aspects. Check with us the environment is okay before engaging in conversation.



4 Converse whilst doing other tasks

Colouring whilst talking takes the stress from non-verbal aspects of communication, like eye contact and helps us to process what's being said. Having our hands busy makes interaction more comfortable.

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5 Be specific

Autistic people like to know exactly what to expect to reduce anxiety. Vague time concepts, such as "soon" are unhelpful. We want to know exactly what is expected of us because it's exhausting when we have to guess from the confusing social context.



6 Information share, reduce questions

When autistic people interact together our natural style of conversation is usually trading information rather than asking each other questions. Some believe this says we aren't interested in the conversation partner but we often are!



7 Use multiple communication methods

Autistic people can be very aware of non-verbal cues, often it helps us to process and make sense of social language. Gesture and visual information makes your message clearer for us. Modelling is a great way to teach us new skills. It's also important that you accept alternative communication methods and are patient with us when we use them.



8 Quit the small talk

There is nothing worse for autistic people than small talk! It makes us very uncomfortable. Instead we prefer you to dive in to a conversation topic. Saying "hello" and "goodbye" is usually very awkward for us, we prefer abrupt conversation starts and endings.