

BRIEF TIPS ON MANAGING AUTISTIC SPECTRUM PROBLEMS

Above all be aware. Autistic tendencies are best managed with awareness of the unique needs and demands of autistic spectrum individuals.

Behaviour is driven by the individuals' conceptual understanding of their environment. Rarely is it willful, intentional misbehavior

Develop a profile of each particular individual. Individuals are very different.

1. Within the autistic spectrum characteristics, find which characteristics affect this individual.
2. Allow time to adjust to new situations. Change is threatening. Try to keep consistent environments.
3. Always prepare for change. Don't expect easy or ready adjustment to new situations.
4. However, don't allow resistance to all change. Work toward gradual normalisation.
5. Bring in change slowly, a step at a time. Allow time to adjust to the new level before more change is introduced. Be aware regression in behaviour may be a sign of improved learning.
6. Be aware of 'defensive' behaviour or sensitivity issues, e.g. noise defensiveness at the airport.
7. Increased atypical behaviour is often a sign of stress or feelings of loss of a controlled environment.
8. Allow child to go to a 'sanctuary' (place/person) for time away from the out of control environment.
9. Allow child to exert control over the stressful environment to reduce atypical behaviour.
10. Don't punish atypical behaviour. Try to replace it with a more appropriate behaviour.
11. Don't yell or criticise atypical behaviour; directly and gently encourage more appropriate behaviour.
12. Use clear visual cues to support understanding, wherever possible.

13. Break difficult tasks into small steps, which can be visually demonstrated, maybe with prompts.
14. Don't rely on verbal instruction. Present learning by several sensory means, e.g. visually, practically.
15. Use areas of personal interest (even circumscribed interests) to help explain concepts.
16. Information is learnt in a rote rather than conceptual manner. Don't expect learnt information to be generalised to similar environments. Show what is the meaning of behaviour or of information.
17. Help link together old learning with new concepts. They do not realise this logical step.
18. Skills are learnt as a series of sequential behaviours, rather than grasping the whole concept or meaning of the behaviour. A child may mimic behaviour but not understand it.
19. Help grasp the whole picture, as they tend to focus on detail. Give time to absorb it, don't rush.
20. Help them avoid perseverating on a point. Encourage broader viewing of concepts and information.
21. Help to isolate the important factors, as they have difficulty screening irrelevant information.
22. Avoid colloquialisms and idioms, that they may take literally.
23. Avoid 'cool' language, such as "How's my big buddy", or "that's so good it's wicked, that's sick".
24. Be very careful with jokes, riddles, etc.
25. Eliminate sarcasm or "cute" teasing.
26. Try to use brief, concise statements, which are directly to the point. Avoid vague, imprecise language.
27. Use an 'expand and compress' method for more complex verbal directions.
28. Try to avoid abstract terms. Avoid terms that have double meanings.
29. Encourage listening and attentive skills. Don't call from a distance.

30. Be aware they may know the dictionary meaning of words but not grasp meaning in a sentence.
31. Using vocabulary terms does not mean they understand fully what they are saying.
32. Questioning to ensure grasping of topics and understanding is needed.
33. Instructions need to be given very briefly and clearly, with very definite separation between instructions. Preferably only give one brief instruction at a time. When understood and completed these further instructions may be given. Going through first... next....last will help.
34. Action not reasoning! Avoid long discussions or reasoning, use immediate, simple consequences.
35. Don't over verbalise or raise your voice. It is a conceptual problem not a hearing problem.
36. Don't accept echolalic questioning. Revert the question back or limit discussion on that topic. Alternatively change to a written discussion. Be aware echolalia may be a sign of stress.
37. Don't rely on them to carry verbal messages. Set up a system that relies on the parent, e.g. a written note in a 'daily chatterbook', with a phone call to check the message arrived.
38. Use behaviour modification to change behaviour, with some care and awareness of uniqueness.
39. Only use behaviour modification rewards that are meaningful to the child.
40. Rely on creative, relevant rewards rather than traditional parent or teacher rewards.
41. Deliver rewards fairly immediately and directly, don't delay rewards or reward vaguely.
42. Don't take non-compliance or misbehaviour as a personal attack. They are likely not aware of your feelings, thus they are less likely to be manipulative. They are mostly driven by egocentric thoughts.
43. Non compliance may be due to inability to read non verbal language. Be very clear exactly what behaviour you expect to be performed.
44. Increase social competence through using relevant social skill training.