

Top 10 Things to Remember

When Working With Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders

1. Use calendars, schedules, and checklists.

We all use checklists, calendars, and visual cues. Individuals with autism may find it difficult to organize their activities, so these techniques are even more important for them.

2. Organize the environment.

This can be very helpful and will give the individual with autism cues about what, when, and how. Reserve one area of the room for reading, one for puzzles, and another for schoolwork. Keep supplies handy and accessible to the child if possible.

3. Avoid phrases that are confusing; do not use sarcasm.

Individuals with autism have difficulty with abstract thought. They interpret verbal information very literally.

4. Avoid repeating instructions.

Individuals with autism find it difficult to interpret auditory information. Give the person time to process the information. Augment verbal communication with visual cues, gestures, or physical prompts.

5. Be observant of the environment and make changes in lighting and noise when necessary.

Individuals with autism can experience unusual responses to sensory stimuli.

6. Prepare the individual for changes or transitions.

Changes in routine are particularly difficult for individuals with autism. Using visual schedules and written reminders will help make transitions easier and smoother.

7. Emphasize social learning.

Individuals with autism must learn social skills that many of us take for granted. Social groups that are organized around favorite activities can provide a safe forum for early social learning. Socially interactive games (pat-a-cake, peek-a-boo) that require coordination between people can be very helpful in developing social skills and helping the child to “tune in” to those around him. Older children can be asked to help with daily chores that require coordination (handing mother the clothes pins, setting up an assembly line to put the groceries in the pantry, etc.). Use games that require turn taking.

8. Encourage the individual with autism to communicate their needs and wants.

For example, do not automatically provide dessert for your child with autism. Get dessert for yourself, and wait for your child to indicate their desire for dessert.

9. Seek out support from other parents of children with disabilities.

10. Have fun.

Make sure that you have some activities that are not related to autism.

