

# Autism Facts

## What is autism?

Autism is a condition that affects the way a person's brain works.

It is not a disease and there is no "cure" for autism because it's just a different way of thinking and behaving.

They all grow, learn and change, just like you. Autistic kids grow up to be autistic adults.

## What are kids with autism like?

Kids with autism are just like you in so many ways like wanting to have friends, to be included in activities, and to be liked just the way they are.

Autistic kids are not all the same. That's why it's called the "autism spectrum." They have many different things they like to do and are good at.

All autistic kids feel the same emotions you do: happy, sad, love, joy, anger...but don't expect them to show them in the same ways you do.

Some can't look you in the eyes when you talk with them. It's not rude because it helps them focus and pay attention to what you are saying.

You may see someone with autism rub or flap their hands, rock back and forth, or make sounds. This is called "stimming" and it's something they need to do to feel safe.

A kid with autism may not be comfortable being touched. Even hugging might not feel so good.

They may be super-sensitive to noises of all kinds, bright lights, and too many activities going on at once. That's why it's okay if they need some quiet time on their own.

## How do kids with autism communicate?

Some autistic kids speak their words and some use other ways to communicate by:

- Pointing to pictures to form their sentences.
- Using sign language to communicate.
- Having their phones, iPads and computers say their words for them.

It's very important to remember that just because someone can't speak, it doesn't mean they can't communicate.



# Being a Friend

## How can I be a friend to someone on the autism spectrum?

The first step is to never ignore your peers with autism:

If you are playing a game that they don't know how to play, try inviting them to play with you.

Even if they don't say they want to play, they might really want to but just don't know how to ask.

Maybe they are afraid of being made fun of or bullied. If you ask they might feel safe to try.

You can show them what to do because we all learn by watching others.

Make them feel comfortable by giving prompts, like "It's your turn next."

Just like you do with all your friends, let them know when they've done something good. Everyone enjoys compliments!

## What does it mean to accept someone with autism?

Acceptance. That's what we all need and want as humans.

You are who you are and there's no one else quite like you. You want people to like you for who you are. That's acceptance.

Many people want to change autistic people and make them more "normal."

## What is normal, anyway?

We are all unique and special. We all have our place in this world.

Wouldn't it be boring if everyone was the same?

To accept kids on the autism spectrum means to accept them for who they are too.

Don't see their differences as bad, scary, or weird. Value their strengths, see what you can learn from them, include them, and you may make a great new friend.

