

***Teenage Life***

**Talking about an autism diagnosis to your child**

# Talking about an autism diagnosis to your child

Many parents wish to inform their child about their diagnosis of autism, depending on their understanding. However each family needs to make their own decision, as to how and when and what is said. Some people with autism say they wish they had been told earlier about the diagnosis because they already knew they were different, and worried that there was something wrong with them or that they were to blame for their difficulties.

If you are comfortable with and accepting of the diagnosis, it will help you to be as positive as possible if you decide to talk about autism to your child.

**Five reasons why your child should be given information about their autism diagnosis:**

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1. Explaining about autism enables your child to make sense of their feelings and the difficulties they regularly face. Knowing there is a name for their difficulties can stop your child from thinking everything is their fault. It may also reduce the worry they may have about being ‘mad’ or the only one in the world with the diagnosis.
2. Explaining the diagnosis to others - families, friends, schools, partners, and carers will enable them to better understand and cope with your child’s needs and behaviour.
3. Once your child knows and accepts their diagnosis they may feel better able to speak up for him/herself and more able to ask for help if required.
4. Having a better understanding of the diagnosis may help your child locate local support and social skills groups, and get more appropriate support from employers, social and housing services, benefit agencies, colleges and other organisations.
5. Explaining the diagnosis will help your child make plans for their future living - especially if they can accept the diagnosis and gain appropriate support - putting less stress on themselves, readjusting their expectations, increase opportunities to advocate for themselves and enable them to seek contact with people who share a similar diagnosis, should they so wish.

***“Do we have to say autism spectrum disorder is her diagnosis?”***

Many people feel strongly that the terms autism spectrum *disorder* or *condition* are not very positive labels to give to a child. There are many alternatives to saying disorder or condition, you could just say:

“…the psychologist we saw said that you are an autistic thinker/ are autistic/ have an autistic personality/ have autism”. Or you might say, something like:

“You experience the world a bit differently to other people sometimes and that is called being autistic. Being an autistic thinker means you sometimes see different ways of doing things and can come up with ideas not everyone else thinks of…”

***“We don’t want to tell him while things are going well for him. It might set him back or make him depressed”***

It is for each parent to decide the ‘right’ time, but experience suggests that most parents feel it was a good idea to talk about the diagnosis, regardless of whether their child was going through a good or bad patch.

Although many children find some relief in getting a diagnosis as it helps them make sense of things, it is possible that your child may react with anger, sadness or be in denial as they struggle to understand their diagnosis. This is part of a natural process coming to terms and to be expected. Despite any upset many children say that ultimately they are glad they at least know of the diagnosis, even if they do not wish to discuss it any further. Experience shows that some children will come around to the diagnosis gradually, so it is important to discuss if they wish but if they don’t - give them space to process and be there if they want to talk. Being as positive as possible about autism helps in this process.

### *“I am worried that my child will use the term autism as an excuse for poor behavior”*

This can sometimes happen, but the benefits usually outweigh the disadvantages.

The best way to deal with the ‘excuse’ is to firstly think about what your child has said. It could be that your child is quite right and what has been requested is too difficult or needs breaking down into more straightforward requests.

If you think they really are just making an excuse then firstly agree the task in hand is difficult and secondly expect them to get on with the request. Be positive - the fact that they have autism does often make life harder, but it also means they deserve more regular praise for overcoming their difficulties.

Furthermore children will often find excuses for not doing something they don’t wish to do! If they don’t blame their difficulties on their diagnosis they will probably find something else to blame.

Don’t believe the child who told his parents the only known cure for autism is… “McDonalds and the occasional Chinese meal”!

***“We don’t want him to be labelled as disabled because then people will start treating him differently”***

This is an understandable worry, so you need to weigh up the pros and cons of explaining the diagnosis (see ‘five good reasons to tell your child’ above).

Explaining autism to your child should go hand in hand with discussion (preferably with your child, depending on age etc) about who to inform of the diagnosis. It is likely people will treat your child differently if you tell then about the diagnosis, but the most important factor is your child’s personality. This means that if your child is very challenging then at least some people will be able to see that autism is at least contributing to the behaviour and not your ‘naughty’ child. And if your child has fewer behaviour challenges then if you tell people your child is autistic they will probably think ‘ok… but I cannot see why’. This is annoying but probably manageable.

It is fair to say some people will blame the parents whatever you do!

Some parents say they tell other people on a need to know basis. Others talk about measuring the costs and benefits for telling each person. Your child may not wish to tell a friend who lives locally, but may wish to tell his classmates. Or they may wish to tell their college tutor or employer, but not their exercise class.

It may be worth considering that people do treat those with autism differently whether they are diagnosed or not. People will pick up on the social difficulties and come to their own (often unkind) conclusions about why your child is behaving differently to everyone else.

###### “**What is the right age to talk about my daughter’s autism?”**

###### One suggestion is that the need to tell your child will arise when your child starts to notice they are different. This is a good rule of thumb, and will depend on your child’s personality, intellect, self-awareness and age at diagnosis.

Also be aware that your child may notice they are different but not talk about it.

Experience shows that many children from age 3 or 4 talk about feeling frustrated quite early on:

‘my head feels like popcorn’ (3 year old)

‘I’ve got a silly brain. It doesn’t work properly’ (5 year old)

Many parents report their child was around 7 or 8 years old before they discussed the diagnosis of autism. In practical terms this is not always possible since many people are not diagnosed until later in life. The key is to not make a big deal out of it. Talk about autism when you think they can make some sense of the information.

###### **“What do I actually say to him?”**

There are many different ways to discuss autism.

One parent, following a presentation on autism, decided it was the time to tell her son. She told him, ‘you know how you say some things you do differently to other children, well there is a name for that, it is called autism. It is OK to do things differently because I do things differently too and I am OK’ (son was about 9 years old).

One dad gave his teenage daughter the book ‘Martian in the Playground’ (Clare Sainsbury). She recognised herself in this which then made it easier for them to discuss the diagnosis. There are lots of good story books with autistic characters in them, which make for a good introduction. See www.jkp.com for books on autism.

Having some written information ready for your child may be a good idea. There are many good books available, but it is important that you read through a selection and then decide which is best for your child. You might talk about the diagnosis a little and then say ‘here is a book that explains a bit more about autism you might like to read’.

Other children might respond better to reading about autism on their computer or be directed to do some research on the web. However there is a lot of information about autism on the Internet and not all of it is very accurate so do get advice if you are not sure.

Some parents like to write out an explanation. Here is an example of how one parent explained autism to her son (6 year old):

*I am NAME*

*I am kind and friendly*

***I am good at quite a few things like:***

*Reading*

*Writing*

*Drawing*

*Using computers*

*Remembering things*

***There are also some things I find more tricky/difficult***

*Changes to my timetable*

*Looking at people’s faces*

###### Knowing how I feel

*Mum, and dad will always try to help me with the things that I find difficult. Quite a lot of people (some famous) have a brain that thinks like mine. I am an autistic thinker and there are many thousands of people who are also autistic thinkers in this country. People cannot see autism because it is inside my brain. I am loved by lots of people and I am able to make many people happy with my kindness.*

Remember it is important to stress your child’s strengths not just their weaknesses. Try to avoid saying what is ‘wrong’ with them. One parent said he thinks it is important to be honest and told his child he would have difficulties but what matters most is making the best effort in life (not achieving the highest results).

Explain that the world needs people with autism, because autistic thinkers see the world in a different way, and come up with new ideas. Perhaps talk about famous people who may have had autism.

###### **“Who should explain autism to my child?”**

Many parents say they were the first to discuss autism with their child, and often report he/she is glad they did explain it. However there may be times when another approach may be more appropriate. For example, if the relationship with your child is fraught, or he/she is likely to disbelieve or reject your explanations the diagnosis of autism might be more acceptable from a professional.

##### ***“My child is not interested in talking about autism, or he denies he has any problems”***

One parent said ‘I haven’t told my son because he has no idea that he is different from anyone else. He just isn’t aware’.

Telling your child is probably only useful if he/she can make sense of what you say, or has some interest in it. However, if in doubt it is probably best to discuss with them, if only so they can tell others they have autism if asked.

Some children will deny that they have any difficulties and disregard the diagnosis of autism. There is no point arguing. To accept the diagnosis is to accept that he/she is different - something the person may have been fighting hard to resist. They will need to ‘come to terms’ (if at all) in their own time.

Sometimes people are doubtful of ‘another’ diagnosis especially if they have had previous experience of misdiagnosis in the past. This seems to be more often true for teenagers or adults receiving a late diagnosis. This may be an occasion when your child will need to talk to a real expert in autism who can properly explain the diagnosis in a way that makes sense to them.

Some children will not wish to use the term autism but may accept ‘communication difficulties’ or ‘language difficulties’ as a term to describe their difficulties. It is up to each individual but it is worth pointing out that it is harder to get other people to take seriously such ‘vague’ phrases.

If your child will not tolerate the word autism, you may need to talk about the difficulties he/she does accept having - like handwriting, coping with loud noises or making friends and work with those.

#### “Who else should we tell about the diagnosis?”

## If you explain the diagnosis to your child, you will then need to consider who else to inform.

## Brothers, sisters, teachers, grandparents, friends may all benefit from greater understanding.

## Some people will learn better from online sources, others from books.

## Your child should not be worried that you are going to tell everyone about the diagnosis! They

## should feel in control of who knows what about them, as far as possible. Think about who to tell

## at school and how, especially as legislation states that if one teacher is told all the rest of the

## school staff should be made aware. There is a good argument for ensuring teachers and other

## staff have received recent training in autism before informing the pupils. If teachers and other

## staff are not aware of and do not understand autism, this will give the wrong message to the

## pupils.

## Once staff have been informed and trained, it may be a good idea for your child’s class to be told

## about the diagnosis and this will require careful preparation. Talk to your child’s teacher/SENCO

## about how they may approach this.

**Talking about an autism diagnosis to your child - things you can try**

Every child is different. Some want a detailed explanation; others do not appear very interested at all. Some are very anxious or angry about having autism, others seem quite relieved. How you talk about the diagnosis will depend on their understanding and communication skills. The following are a mixture of ideas and approaches you may wish to use. Take what is useful from it and adapt for your own situation. You could copy n paste sections you like and make your own short book with your child, to suit your preferred way of explaining the diagnosis.

Find out how the body works

As part of helping your child that we are all different, it is good to see how our bodies work.

Draw and outline of the body and find out where in the body the different body parts (or organs) are.

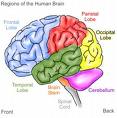
Try to draw the liver, kidney, heart, lungs, stomach, bladder and where they are inside the body.

When you have drawn the body parts next find out what different parts of the body do and write this next to the organs

To get information about the different organs of the body get some good textbooks eg Collins or Usborne books. Or use online materials like [www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody](http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody)



Find out how the brain works

[](http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://quantumlearningblog.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/brain1.jpg&imgrefurl=http://quantumlearningblog.wordpress.com/2009/02/&usg=__OzdycXNqHMahL0-14QfpyfmkGhc=&h=326&w=324&sz=21&hl=en&start=6&itbs=1&tbnid=1IdkHJo8JnkN3M:&tbnh=118&tbnw=117&prev=/images?q%3Dbrain%26hl%3Den%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1)Draw an outline of your head

Draw in the brain or get images from internet

eg [www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody](http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody)

Find out what different areas of the brain do in as much detail as necessary.

Write the different parts of the brain on the diagram.

For some children you may just want to name body parts and state that they all work together to make us healthy. Others will want much more detail.

Here are some simple facts that you can adapt for your own child and situation:

What is the brain?

Your brain is in your head

Your brain is the size of two fists held together

Everybody’s brain looks nearly the same inside their head

Your brain is amazing

It has thousands of things to do!

Different parts of the brain have different jobs to do

What are the jobs your brain does?

Your brain is amazing

It can do thousands of jobs at the same time

There is a part of your brain that tells your body when it is hungry

There is a part of your brain that tells your body when to sleep

There is a part of your brain that tells your body when to go to the toilet

There are different parts of your brain that help you to balance and stand up

There are different parts of your brain that help you to walk and run

There are different parts of your brain that help you to draw pictures

There are different parts of your brain that help you to write words

There are different parts of your brain that help you to listen to what someone else is saying

There are different parts of your brain that help you speak words out loud

There are different parts of your brain that help you to remember things like what you did last night or where you live

There are different parts of your brain that help you to stay in control when you feel angry

There are different parts of your brain that help you know how someone is feeling from looking at their face

Your brain makes you think and feel

One of the biggest jobs your brain has to do is think and feel

Your brain is the part of your body that makes you think

Your brain is the part of your body that makes you feel different things like happy, excited, sad or angry

Everybody’s brain makes them think a little bit differently

Your brain thinks a bit differently to other people’s brains

There are different kinds of thinking

Everybody’s brain makes them think a little bit differently

Because everybody’s brain thinks a little bit differently

We all have some things our brain makes us really good at

We also have some things our brain makes us not so good at

Some people’s brain makes them have a good memory

Some people’s brain makes them able to talk easily and explain things

Some people’s brain makes them good at being kind and friendly

Some people’s brain makes them able to understand how machines work

Some people’s brain makes them good at numbers and maths

Some people’s brain makes them able to make things with their hands

Some people’s brain makes them good at art, music or acting

Some people’s brain makes them able to get along with other people and make friends.

People are good at different things

Every child in the world is different

Everyone in the world is good at different things

Some people are good at sports

Some people are good at talking

Some people are good at being happy and smiling

Some people are good at maths

Some people are good at playing games

Some people are good at helping other people

Some people are good at remembering facts

Some people are good at gaming

Some people are good at running

Some people are good at art

Some people are good at music

Some people are good at other things

The most important things to be good at are:

* being friendly to other people
* being happy
* being kind to yourself

Everyone in my family is good at different things

Mum is good at

* making me laugh
* watching Formula One
* listening to me when I am sad
* playing chess

Dad is good at

* helping me with homework
* making tasty dinners
* spending all day mending cars

You are good at

* Making mum and dad happy
* Being kind to the dog
* Mending things
* Looking after your belongings in your bedroom
* Letting your sister borrow games

The most important things to be good at are:

* being friendly to other people
* being happy
* being kind to yourself

Everyone in your family finds some things difficult

Mum finds it difficult to:

* sit still
* to sleep sometimes
* not lose her temper, sometimes

Dad finds it difficult to

* remember things like where his keys or wallet is
* not fall asleep when he is watching a film
* do DIY jobs

You find it difficult to

* have a shower every day
* turn off the TV at bedtime

Different things people find hard to do

Some people find it hard to do sums in maths

This is because their brain is not so good at working out numbers

Some people find it hard to how to spell words

This is because their brain is not so good at telling the person’s hands which letter to write next

Some people find it hard to play the guitar, piano or drums or sing in tune

This is because their brain is not very musical

Some people get lost when they walk around schools, big shops or when they are driving in their car

This is because their brain is not so good at reading maps or knowing which way to go

Some people don’t have a very good memory and forget things they have been told or seen

This is because their brain is not so good at remembering things

Some people find it hard to make friends easily

This is because their brain is not so good at working out what other people are thinking or feeling

Everyone has things they find difficult to do

Everyone in the world has some things they find hard or difficult to do

Nobody can be good at everything

It is OK to be good at some things and not so good at others

The most important things to be good at are:

* being friendly to other people
* being happy
* being kind to yourself

Make an All About Me book with your child

An All About Me book is a way to introduce about autism to your child. Ideally your child will help write the book, if they are interested.

This is me. I am (NAME).

Things you might want to include:

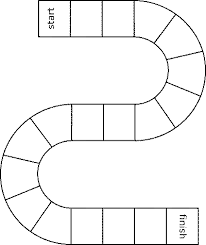
* Age and birthday
* Hair colour
* Eyes colour
* Complexion
* Face shape
* Height

Your child might want to include photos

When writing about what they look like make sure you tell them their features you love about them - like their friendly smile or long soft hair

Life story

Your life story is all the big things that have happened to you since you were born

[](http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/images/learns/snakepath.gif&imgrefurl=http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/learns/games-snakepath&usg=__dGidLjOJQaIXfdAhZ4zYQpYaXuA=&h=475&w=400&sz=4&hl=en&start=11&itbs=1&tbnid=-4e_s01FWXlRCM:&tbnh=129&tbnw=109&prev=/images?q%3Dsnake%2Bpath%26hl%3Den%26gbv%3D2%26tbs%3Disch:1)

Make a life story path is a good idea.

Ask a parent for help making your life story path.

Draw a long bendy path

Then divide it into about 20 sections.

You can use each section to write in something important that has happened to you

You can always add more sections – make it a longer snake - or leave some blank for adding in ‘things that have not happened yet’…

The first section should say your date when you were born and how much you weighed when you were born.

You can add a photo or draw a picture of you as a baby

Which hospital were you born in? Have you got a picture of it – if so you could add that to the first section

Write into the different sections important things that have happened to you. For example May 2019 – learnt to ride a bike! Or September 2020 started Secondary school.

You also might want to write down the date when you were found out you had autism.

My talents

Draw a picture of yourself and write next to it your strengths, characteristics, skills, talents, things people like about you.

For example:

* friendly smile
* loads of energy
* never bored with your own company
* great memory
* tell jokes
* good at writing
* always try even when things are difficult
* listen to cool music

Favourite things

List your favourite:

* TV programme
* Food
* Hobbies
* Book
* Thing to do after school
* Music
* Sport
* Way to relax
* Place to go on holiday
* Place at school
* Place at home
* People

What else do you love doing?

For example:

* Reading about stars and planets
* Writing stories
* Computers
* Watching TV
* Riding a bike
* Riding a skateboard
* Remembering facts
* Playing an instrument
* Playing with other children
* Playing with animals
* Drawing
* Cooking
* Painting
* Supporting a football team

Ask your parents to draw a picture of you too

It might be a drawing of what you look like

It might be a drawing of all the things that make you a great person.

Family

Then write a few pages about family

Who is in the family, where do they live, where do your relatives live?

Think about putting in a map of the UK and red dots to show where they all live.

You might write out a family tree diagram to help your child see how he relates to the wider family

Your differences have a name

All people in the world are different.

Sometimes differences people have are given a name.

Your differences have a name.

The name of your differences is autism.

You are an autistic thinker

Autism makes your brain work differently to most people

Having an autistic brain means you have a different way of thinking

About 1 in 100 people have autism

Most people do not have autism

You can learn ways to make friends

Many people have a brain that makes it easier to make friends   
You can make friends too. If you find it difficult to make friends, ask your parents or teachers for their help

You can learn how to make friends

Having autism means it can take practice to make friends

Having autism does not stop you achieving things in life, like making friends.

What is more difficult if you have autism?

Children who have autism may find it hard to make friends easily

This is because if you have autism your brain finds it hard to work out other people

Tick if you agree with any of these

* I find making friends difficult
* I like things being different
* I like pizza
* I like plans being changed
* I like talking to other children at school
* I like playing games with other children
* I like people to explain things properly
* I like playing computer games
* I like flapping my hands sometimes
* I like pacing up and down
* I like surprises
* I like chocolate
* I like looking people in the eye when I talk to them
* I like birthday parties
* I like to have time alone
* I like taking things apart and seeing how they work
* I like my brother if I have one
* I like my sister if I have one
* I like loud noises
* I like being on my own a lot of the time
* I like being in my room
* I like eating with other people
* I like all the children in my class
* I like most of the children in my class
* I like my teacher

Children with autism can have friends it just takes practice. (Practice means learning about how to make friends.)

I am me!

I am a very important and precious person to my parents.

I am clever, and good at doing lots of things

Mum, dad and my teachers will always try to help me with the things that I find difficult.

The name for how I think is ‘autism’.

Quite a lot of people (some famous) have an autistic brain

People cannot see autism because it is inside my brain.

I am loved by lots of people

I am able to make many people happy by being a friendly person.

A and B thinkers

Some people are A thinkers

some people are B thinkers

A thinkers are clever at some things

They think in logical ways

But can get stuck sometimes

B thinkers are clever too

They are less logical and sometimes make decisions based on their emotions

The world needs both A and B thinkers

A thinkers are often the ones who make things

B thinkers are good at talking

A thinkers often notice details

B thinkers get the bigger picture but sometimes miss the details

A thinkers find it easier to relate in quite places, and talk to one person at a time

B thinkers are happy in a larger group and don’t mind lots of different conversations at the same time

There are some things I do well

* Reading
* Writing
* Drawing
* Using computers
* Remembering things
* Looking after the dog

There are some things I find difficult

* Changes
* Looking at people’s faces
* Knowing how I feel
* Losing my temper easily

You can do great things

Just because you have some things you find difficult does not stop you being a great person.

People who find things difficult can still do great things

People who are disabled can still do great things

People who cannot see very well can still do great things

People who cannot hear very well can still do great things

People who cannot walk very well can still do great things

People who cannot make friends very easily can still do great things

Everyone has things they find difficult

Everyone can do great things

What is a disability?

A disability is what you call it when someone finds something very difficult or is unable to do.

Some people are deaf.

Being deaf is a disability

If you are deaf you cannot hear very well or not at all

Some people are blind.

Being blind is a disability

If you are blind you cannot see very well or not at all

Being physically disabled is a disability

Some people with a physical disability need to use a wheelchair to get around because they cannot walk very well or at all

Many people think autism is a disability.

This is because if you have autism it is often difficult making friends and understanding other people.

There are lots of people who have a disability in the world.

People with disabilities find some things difficult and some things easy, like everyone else.

People with disabilities can achieve most things they want to, the same as anyone else

What is autism?

Autism is what doctors call it when you find making friends difficult.

If you have autism you find making friends and understanding other people difficult.

Having autism means you don’t always understand what you are supposed to do or how to act with other people.

Having autism makes life quite difficult for me because I really do want to get along with everyone and be friendly with everyone

Autism is not catching. It is not a disease or illness; it is not going to get worse or harm you.

Having autism does not make you worse or better than anyone else

All people with or without autism should be treated with kindness and care

Having autism does not make you better than anyone else

Having autism does not make you worse than anyone else

People with autism do lots of things the same as everyone else

You do most things the same as everyone else

You have things you like the same as everyone else

You have things you don’t like the same as everyone else

You have things that make you happy the same as everyone else

You have things that make you angry or sad the same as everyone else

You walk and run the same as everyone else

You need to eat, drink, use the toilet and sleep the same as everyone else

You just think a bit differently which can make you feel different to most other people

People with autism are amazing

There are many people who have autism

Having autism can make you amazing at doing some things

There are some people with autism who are amazing at being kind and friendly

There are some people with autism who are amazing at understanding things in a way no one else had thought of before

There are some people with autism who are amazing artists

There are some people with autism who are amazing actors

There are some people with autism who are amazing inventors

There are some people with autism who are amazing designers

All people with autism are amazing

All people without autism are amazing too!

Why have you got autism?

No one knows exactly why people have autism

It is no one’s fault that you have autism

Having autism does not mean there is something wrong with you

You were born with autism

Autism is not a disease or illness

Autism does not harm you

Autism is to do with how your brain works

Autism is just a different way of thinking

Other people in your family might have some autism or they might not

You cannot give autism to other people

It is not an illness or medical problem

People who have autism are amazing

People who have autism can do lots of great things

How many people are there with autism?

In the United Kingdom there are about 700,000 people or more, with autism

For every 100 people there is at least one person with autism.

That means there is probably someone with autism living in nearly every street in the United Kingdom or other country.

How do you like to talk to other people?

Some people with autism like to talk a lot

Some people with autism do not talk at all

Tick how you like people to talk with you:

* I like people to show me pictures of what they are talking about
* I like people to not talk to me very much at all
* I like people to speak quickly when they are talking to me
* I like people to speak a bit more slowly when they are talking to me
* I like people to write down information for me to read
* I like using email
* I like using instant messaging
* I like using texting
* I like it when people write things down as well as speak

You might have some questions about autism

Write down any questions you want answered about having autism

Give the questions to your mum or dad to answer

Or look online at [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

Having autism can make life harder sometimes

You will have things you try to do that you find difficult.

You will learn different ways to be happy and to get along with other people

If you want to talk to someone about having autism tell your parents.

Sometimes you might wish you did not have autism and feel angry, frustrated or upset. Tell your parents if you feel like this. They may be able to help.

It is a good idea to tell other children at school about having autism

If other people know you have autism they can help you more

If other people know you have autism, they may be more friendly

Although not everything will be perfect it is usually better to tell other children about having autism

A few children may make fun of autism because they are not very mature or grown up, but most children will probably help you more and be more friendly

What to write to tell other children you have autism

You could use what is written here to help you make an information sheet on how having autism affects you.

My name is xxxxxxxxxxx

I want to tell you about autism

You may have noticed that I have a few ways of doing things that are different to most other people

For example:

* I often don’t join in games in the playground
* I seem to be in a world of my own sometimes
* I like to sit near the exit in assembly
* I am not very good at talking about some things
* I love talking about xxxxxxxx and don’t know when to stop sometimes
* I sometimes get really annoyed about something and have to leave the classroom
* I don’t always get jokes
* I look at your face but I cannot work out how you are feeling
* I sometimes say something that is rude without realising why I was not supposed to say it
* I don’t say a lot
* I call out in class when I should put my hand up
* I flap my hands
* I forget to say hello or smile back if you say hello or smile at me
* I sometimes repeat what you have just said
* I talk under my breath
* I sometimes seem to ignore you because I am thinking about other stuff

The reason I do all these things is because I have something called autism.

**Conclusion**

The overall message should be that we all have differences; it is just that your child’s differences have a name. Your child should know that they will face difficulties in life, but that they will gradually work out many of the social rules as they get older, especially with the right support.

Being diagnosed with autism is often still treated like a secret that people are unwilling to discuss. It is important that your child does not grow up feeling that their way of experiencing the world is something that cannot be spoken about.

Your child will experience times when they do not wish to have autism and become upset about their condition. They have a right to know about themselves and to have a trusted someone nearby to talk to if they feel sad. It isn’t all plain sailing but being open and positive is always the best approach.

**Further reading on explaining the diagnosis**Elder, J. (2006). Different like me. My book of autism heroes. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.  
  
Welton, J. (2003). Can I tell you about Asperger syndrome? A guide for family and friends. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Adams, S. *A Book About What Autism Can Be Like*

Gerland, G. (2000). Finding out about Asperger syndrome, high-functioning autism and PDD. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Jackson, L. (2002). Freaks, geeks and Asperger syndrome. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

[](http://www.jkp.com/uk/)Jessica Kingsley Publishers [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com) have hundreds of autism books – you can get hold of their catalogue [www.jkp.com/mailing](http://www.jkp.com/mailing)

YouTube for clips of people talking about what it is like to have autism. Some are good, they do vary in quality, so watch them first, before offering them to your child

A good starting place is a 15 minute film [www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/15655232](http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/15655232)

Also look at [www.interactingwithautism.com](http://www.interactingwithautism.com)