

Give them choices

Choices can be particularly useful for children who are strong-willed. Letting them choose something for themselves makes the world more predictable and safe and can help avoid a battle of wills.

Be aware of bullying

Children with ASD can be particularly vulnerable to bullies as they will often not understand sarcasm or the punchlines of jokes. Their communication problems may make it hard to report an incident of bullying. Encourage friendships as much as possible as friends are invaluable in giving our children support and helping them to avoid bullying.

Help others understand

Consider making a friendly, positive booklet about your child to help introduce them to others. These are sometimes known as 'personal portfolios' or 'communication passports'. It is useful to have when your child is going for respite, having hospital visits, starting a new school or meeting people for the first time. The charity Cerebra (www.cerebra.org.uk) provides a free service to help parents and carers create a personal portfolio for their child.



Helping you to be an even better mum or dad



For more information and tips on family life, visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk. You might like to:

- Attend a local *Time Out for Parents - Children with Special Needs: ASD* course www.careforthefamily.org.uk/courses
- Read the *Top Tips for Raising children with Special Needs* leaflet www.careforthefamily.org.uk/shop
- Visit the *Additional Needs* section of our website and sign up for the *Additional Needs Support* newsletter www.careforthefamily.org.uk/additional-needs

 **positiveparenting**

Care for the Family is a registered charity and has been working to strengthen family life since 1988. Our aim is to promote strong family relationships and to help those who face family difficulties.

For information on the wider work of Care for the Family visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk

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Top Tips

For Parents

Raising Children with ASD



Autism, Asperger syndrome and high-functioning autism are all part of what is termed Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ASD affects the way a person communicates and relates to people around them.

Being the parent of a child with ASD can be both challenging and rewarding on a daily basis! Here are some tips to help you as you care for your child.

Stay positive

Having an autism spectrum disorder doesn't mean having a lower IQ; it means that the brain is working differently. Many people with ASD have very fulfilled and happy lives, though some aspects of life will always be a challenge for them.

What causes ASD?

No one knows the exact cause of ASD. Research suggests that a combination of genetic and environmental factors may account for the changes in brain development. The theory that parental practices or social circumstances are responsible has long been disproved. It is also not the child's fault. As the parent of a child with ASD, you will need to make allowances and accept their condition. Show them that they are a valued member of your family.



Help them communicate

Communicate with your child visually as much as possible, using objects and pictures. This will help to reduce your child's anxiety and help them to communicate and express their feelings. You can use picture boards to show your child what's going to happen that day and the order in which it will happen. Try not to raise your voice or talk very quickly as your child will find it harder to communicate when they are stressed. Count to six in your head before expecting an answer. Keep your instructions short and simple to make sure your child understands them.

Help your child relate to others

Watch how your child plays with other children and make a note of any skills they may need, such as how to take turns. Practise playing games at home, modelling to your child how to do the activity and how to behave.

Imagination

People with ASD tend to have a lack of imagination, for example, they are unable to pretend and cannot imagine what someone is thinking or what a new situation might be like. To help your child, try drama activities such as role playing, for example, opening a present in a bored manner or miming an action. Play hiding games such as hide and seek or read a story and discuss how the characters might feel.

Encourage their special interest

Many people with ASD tend to develop a special interest that dominates their time and conversation. Use your child's special interest to improve their learning, to reward them and to build their self-esteem.

Look for the reason behind the behaviour

All behaviour happens for a reason and it's important to remember that children can 'act out' their needs and feelings. It can be very difficult at times to decide whether a child's difficult behaviour is due their autism (such as frustration or anxiety) or whether it is typical of all children (such as testing boundaries or wanting their own way). Try to work out the reasons for your child's difficult behaviour before attempting to deal with it.

Help them manage behaviour and anxiety

Aim to give clear instructions and have routines and consistent rules. Giving plenty of warning for any schedule changes can help manage repetitive behaviours and using a clock to time-limit an activity can help deal with obsessive interests. Reward good behaviour and identify triggers for misbehaviour and sensory difficulties.



Anxiety is often the reason behind 'difficult behaviour' in children with ASD. Every child is different, but some signs of anxiety include rocking, pacing, tenseness, feeling ill, and increased twitching. You may find that calming music, removing your child to a quiet room, distracting them or giving them dark glasses to wear can help.