



My Child Has Autism. Now What?

Sarah Clark, one of our Specialist Family Support Workers, shares her top ten tips for parents and carers to consider before, during, and after receiving an Autism diagnosis for their child or young person.

Do not google!

Instead, look at what your Local Authority can offer you in terms of advice and support. There is also a directory on the [National Autistic Society website](#).

Educate yourself, then others

There are lots of free online training courses. Knowledge is power!

Adapt the environment

Autism + Environment = outcome. An 'out of the box' approach to barriers and reasonable adjustments is sometimes needed. At other times, the simplest and easiest of adjustments can change a bad day to a good day.

Visuals

Use as many visuals as you can on a daily basis. Even if you think they are not helping, it is almost certain they will be. Visuals reduce anxiety and reinforce instructions and expectations, especially when used repetitively.



Do not catastrophise about the future

If I told you that my son, who was diagnosed at three, was non-verbal until the age of four, and attended a specialist pre-school, is now 18 years old, has a girlfriend, A-levels, and plays in a band - would you have believed me?

With the right support, our children can flourish.



Support your own mental and physical health.

Grieve, if that is right for you, and then move forward. Do not blame yourself or others. Seek therapeutic support if needed.

Embrace your new normal

I have included an extract from an Autistic individual who was non-verbal until he was 12.

"Autism isn't something a person has, or a "shell" that a person is trapped inside. There's no normal child hidden behind the Autism. Autism is a way of being. It is pervasive; it colours every experience, every sensation, perception, thought, emotion, and encounter - every aspect of existence. It is not possible to separate the Autism from the person - and if it were possible, the person you'd have left would not be the same person you started with."

Don't Mourn For Us. Jim Sinclair, 1993

Ask for help

Asking for help is one of the hardest things us as humans can do but it is one of the most important. If in doubt, ask!

Keep a good relationship with your education placement

All too often relationships with schools and parents and carers can break down. It is important that there is mutual respect and communication in order to effectively support your child or young person.

Have a hobby or interest

Autism can be all-consuming if you allow it to be. You are still a mum, a partner and an individual. You are allowed to have some 'you' time.

Remember in this journey you are not alone.