

## Top tips on:

# How to support your child who has Autism

- Remember to be patient, behaviour does not change overnight, you need to be consistent over a period to achieve better outcomes for your family. Things often seem to get worse before you see the improvement.
- Try to keep a behaviour diary while you are introducing these tips, as there will be subtle changes before major improvement.
- The tips are not designed to be introduced all at once, as this confuse your child.
- Try introducing another tip when you feel you can see the first one having results.



## Effective communication

- Be concise, your child/young person will focus on the last instruction you give, as children may take longer to process the information. Instead of “Ok, we are going now, go and put your shoes on, get your coat and comb your hair”, try this:

“Put your shoes on.” When they have done this, tell them “Put your coat on” and so on: “Comb your hair.”

**Give them time to process the first instruction before you give them more. It might sound abrupt but these are clear instructions.**

- Try to avoid phrases such as “If you were in my shoes ...” Your child will take this literally and think that your shoes would not fit them.
- Avoid giving your child/young person a timeframe when they are going somewhere or will be doing an activity. Therefore, if you are running late, it will not be an issue. Try a simple visual timetable using pictures or words depending on their understanding. For example, use a “**Now & Then**” technique: **Now** talking about the present time & **Then** representing the upcoming activity.

**Now: Breakfast** (You could show a picture of breakfast cereal)

**Then: School** (You could show a picture of School to represent the next activity)

You can expand on this for the week, include what they like to do, so they can see that when they finish their schoolwork, they can do something they enjoy.

## Help them identify emotions

Your child/young person will have difficulty with abstract concepts, especially trying to give a feeling a name. They can recognise an object and give it a name but you cannot see feelings, so you have to help them recognise the feeling with the emotion. If they have an outburst, give them time to calm down, and then discuss: Did their tummy feel funny, did they want to cry, did they feel stiff etc. They need to recognise the feelings for us to try to prevent them getting to that stage again. Once they can recognise their emotions, you can help them manage them.



- Traffic light system
- **Red** = angry, **Amber** = upset, **Green** = OK or happy
- Number scale **1-5**, this needs to be visual so they can point and tell you how they feel.
- If they feel upset, let them have something that they find calming, usually sensory objects help to calm. In the summer holidays we will be making sensory items out of things you have round the house, join the virtual activities, details will be on our website soon.

## Impact of social situations

- Going to the supermarket can be traumatic if your child is sensitive to noise and lights. Try getting them to wear earphones to listen to something they like or ear defenders/protectors. They may also be sensitive to light, so you could try sunglasses.
- Difficulty coping with change, either temporary (there has been an accident so you have to take a different route to school) or permanent (transition to another school or class). Discussing changes with your child and explaining what is going to happen in a logical order could help your child have a better understanding. Try to make arrangements, for example: they could visit the new school, see their classroom, and take pictures of the new environment. Try not to use the same route to the school every day, maybe then your child will be familiar different routes.
- **Safe Space/time out** – this helps calm your child, processing the world can be hard work, they may have a special toy, enjoy the quiet of their bedroom, or some prefer an enclosed space like a tent.
- Try to build in opportunities throughout the day where they can do things they enjoy, bubble lamps often have a calming effect, essential oils if they are not sensitive to strong smells, a weighted blanket, maybe you could think about what they like.



## Praise and reward

- Many children with ASD do not understand the connection between their behaviour and punishment.
- Punishment does not help to teach them the behaviour you want or help teach children new skills.
- Using rewards and motivators helps encourage a particular behaviour or new coping strategy.
- Reward when they have completed something, for example: when they have finished their schoolwork, they could do 5 minutes of something they enjoy - it must be meaningful to them.
- It can be verbal praise, a sticker chart or 5 minutes of your time when they can speak about their interests/favourite programme.



**For more coping strategies, and to give you an understanding of Autism why not enrol for our online Cygnet Course. You can complete each session over the week and then come together for a Q and A session. For more information about Cygnet, contact the Family Information Service on 07917 791470.**