

## Supporting People with Autism



### Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental condition or disability that affects the way a person's brain works. It can affect the chemistry of the brain and, sometimes, the way certain parts of the brain are formed. These differences can affect the way a person thinks, communicates, behaves, and/or how they interact with others.

### Some people have Autism

People with autism have difficulties with communication, social relationships and understanding their environment. People with autism may also behave differently and or have stronger reactions to things in their environment.

### Some people have Asperger's Syndrome

People with Aspergers usually have excellent verbal skills and can do very well academically. Some have a great deal of knowledge about their favourite interests. This may lead to them talking about these topics at length, not realizing that others might not be interested. Certain social situations may cause anxiety for these students.



### Autism and Aspergers are on a Spectrum

One of the most important things to know about ASD is that, just as with people who do not have ASD, every individual is different – across a spectrum.

Some people with ASD are able to speak well and do well in school, but they may have difficulties understanding how to play games or how to get along with others. Others may be very severely affected and be unable to communicate or participate in regular schoolwork and have difficulty in understanding their environment. Their responses to situations may at times upset others around them.

Each person with ASD can have a wide range of abilities and disabilities, each of which can change over time.

### The causes of ASD are unknown

While the causes are not known, most researchers believe that people with ASD are born with genetic links to this condition. ASD is not a disease that you can catch. Researchers around the world are studying the potential causes of the disorder while trying to understand why characteristics among those with ASD can vary so widely.

### 1 in 150 people have an ASD

Recent studies show that as many as 1 in 150 people have ASD, with males being four times more likely to be affected than females. Autism can be found in people from all races and all cultures.



### How you can help your classmate who has ASD:

- Take the time to say "Hi" even if your classmate can't easily reply.
- If you see a student being teased or bullied, get help.
- When in class or playing, it sometimes helps if you show your classmate what to do rather than explain what to do with words. He or she can learn more effectively when they are able to watch you show them how to do something.
- Feel free to help your classmate when they need help. Just don't try to be too helpful.
- Be aware that some people with ASD might be sensitive to certain textures, sounds or lights.
- Sometimes, your classmate may behave very differently, as this can be their way of telling you that something is wrong. Try to figure out what the problem might be. If you don't understand, ask your teacher to explain.
- Try to include your classmate or friend when you and your other friends play. This might be as simple as walking together around the playground.
- You can learn a lot by taking the time to see the world through your classmate's eyes. Your friend with autism will enjoy your companionship knowing you are supportive.
- Remember that your classmate may have wonderful skills and abilities that they can share with you or your class.



### Autism spectrum disorders are life-long conditions

Children with ASD grow up to be adults with ASD. It is important to remember that, as children with ASD grow, they will gain many skills and abilities that can help them lead lives with various levels of independence.

### You can help!

Teachers and parents know lots of ways to help students with Autism and Aspergers learn. By being supportive you and your classmates can make all the difference in how your classmate with ASD will experience school. One of the most important ways is to make the effort to becoming a friend.

### Together for Autism works to raise awareness and support research

Together for Autism, a program of Autism Ontario, is a province-wide campaign that encourages a better understanding about people with autism while raising funds for research. Anyone; a school, a business, a daycare centre, can participate in a Together for Autism activity. It's fun and easy.

Visit

[www.togetherforautism.ca](http://www.togetherforautism.ca)

to learn how you can get involved!



Together for Autism is a program of Autism Ontario  
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