

10 Things Your Child with Autism wishes you knew

1. I am first and foremost a child. I have autism. I am not primarily “autistic.”
 - My autism does not define me. I am also a person with thoughts, feelings, and many talents, not an individual of just one trait – autism.
2. My sensory perceptions are disordered.
 - Ordinary sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches can be out-and out painful for me.
3. Please remember to distinguish between won't (I choose not to) and can't (I am not able to).
 - Please approach me and speak directly to me in plain words. I can't understand you from across the room.
4. I am a concrete thinker. This means I interpret language very literally.
 - Idioms, puns, nuances, double entendres, inference, metaphors, allusions, and sarcasm are usually lost on me.
5. Please be patient with my limited vocabulary.
 - Be alert for body language, withdrawal, agitation, or other signs; it's hard for me to tell you what I need when I don't know the words.
6. Because language is so difficult for me, I am very visually oriented.
 - Lots of consistent repetition helps me learn. Show me how rather than just tell me.
7. Please focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can't do.
 - Look for my strengths and encourage me. Negative instruction makes me want to give up.
8. Help me with social interactions.
 - I may not know how to start a conversation or enter a play situation with others. Please, encourage other children to invite me. I do best with structured play activities that have a clear beginning and end.
9. Try to identify what triggers my meltdowns.
 - Meltdowns, blow-ups, or tantrums usually occur because one or more of my senses has gone into overload. Keep notes on time, settings, people, and activities; see if a pattern surfaces.
10. If you are a family member, please love me unconditionally.
 - With your support and guidance. The possibilities are broader. Without your support, my chances of successful, self-reliant adulthood are slim.