

A Parent's Guide to Supporting a Child with Autism



If you've learned that your child has or might have autism spectrum disorder (ASD), you're probably wondering and worrying about how you can support them. No parent is ever prepared to hear that a child is anything other than happy and healthy, and an ASD diagnosis can be a worrying thing. Here are a few tips to help you deal with the initial diagnosis.

Learn as much as you can about autism.

The more you know, the better prepared you'll be to make informed decisions for your child. Find out about what the diagnosis means and how you can support them both at school and at home. Talk to your GP; your child's pediatrician; their teacher; or the SENCo at their school. You know your child better than anyone and need to work in partnership with everyone involved.

Become an expert on your child.

Learn what triggers your challenging or disruptive behaviour. What can you and others do to make things better? What does your child find stressful or frightening? What do they enjoy doing? If you understand what affects your child, you'll be better at helping them to overcome problems and making sure as best you can that any trigger points are avoided.

Accept your child for who they are.

Being autistic does not define who they are: love and acceptance is the key to living a happy and successful life and your child will thrive if they know that you understand them.

Don't give up.

Life with an autistic child can bring challenges but with patience and encouragement an autistic child will thrive and, just like everyone else, they will grow up and develop their abilities.

Look after yourself.

Make sure that you develop a good network of people around you who understand the challenges of bringing up an autistic child. Make time for yourself, take time to relax and be with friends; do something that you enjoy. When you have a child with ASD, taking care of yourself is not an indulgence - it's essential. If you are emotionally strong, you can be the best parent possible to your child.

Don't try to do everything on your own.

You don't have to! There are many places you can go or contact for advice, a helping hand, advocacy, and support. Go online to see what is available in your area and give them a ring. Talking to other parents with an autistic child can help you to share concerns, get tips and just offer moral support!

