



## BRIDGE ROAD FACT SHEET

### AUTISM

*NB: The information in this document has come from the websites listed below in the reference section. Bridge Road School has created a summary of useful information relevant to the families and students that attend our school.*

Autism Spectrum Australia states Autism (ASD) is a complex developmental condition that involves persistent challenges in social interaction, speech and nonverbal communication, restricted/repetitive behaviours and sensory sensitivities.

Here are some of the characteristics of Autism;

- **Social interaction and communication problems:** including difficulties in normal back-and-forth conversation, reduced sharing of interests or emotions, challenges in understanding or responding to social cues such as eye contact and facial expressions, deficits in developing/maintaining/understanding relationships, and others.
- **Difficulty relating to people, things and events:** including trouble making friends and interacting with people, difficulty reading facial expressions and not making eye contact.
- **Restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviours, interests or activities:**
  - hand-flapping and toe-walking, playing with toys in an uncommon way (such as lining up cars or flipping objects), speaking in a unique way (such as using odd patterns or pitches in speaking or “scripting” from favourite shows), having significant need for a predictable routine or structure, exhibiting intense interests in activities that are uncommon for a similarly aged child, experiencing the sensory aspects of the world in an unusual or extreme way (such as indifference to pain/temperature, excessive smelling/touching of objects, fascination with lights and movement, being overwhelmed with loud noises, etc.), and others.

Early diagnosis and treatment are important to reducing the symptoms of autism and improving the quality of life for people with autism and their families.

<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-autism/fact-sheets>

have put together a variety of fact sheets that provide an enormous amount of information on topics such as:

- Siblings
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Girls and Women on the Autism Spectrum
- Sensory Processing
- Dietary Interventions for Autism
- Autism and ADHD
- Tackling Bullying
- Social Boundaries
- Positive Behaviour Support

Autism Spectrum Australia provides information to parents and caregivers on topics such as

- Going to School
- Getting a Diagnosis
- Therapy Services
- Help with NDIS
- Autism Advisory Program

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism> site is another Australian parenting website that provides information and services for parents of children with Autism.

There are many things parents can do to help children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) overcome their challenges. The following tips will make daily home life easier for both you and your child with ASD:

**Be consistent.** Children with ASD have a hard time applying what they've learned in one setting (such as the therapist's office or school) to others, including the home. For example, your child may use sign language at school to communicate, but never think to do so at home. Creating consistency in your child's environment is the best way to reinforce learning. Find out what your child's therapists are doing and continue their techniques at home. Explore the possibility of having therapy take place in more than one place in order to encourage your child to transfer what he or she has learned from one environment to another. It's also important to be consistent in the way you interact with your child and deal with challenging behaviours.

**Stick to a schedule.** Children with ASD tend to do best when they have a highly-structured schedule or routine. Again, this goes back to the consistency they both need and crave. Set up a schedule for your child, with regular times for meals, therapy, school, and bedtime. Try to keep disruptions to this routine to a minimum. If there is an unavoidable schedule change, prepare your child for it in advance.

**Reward good behaviour.** Positive reinforcement can go a long way with children with ASD, so make an effort to "catch them doing something good." Praise them when they act appropriately or learn a new skill, being very specific about what behaviour they're being praised for. Also look for other ways to reward them for good behaviour, such as giving them a sticker or letting them play with a favourite toy.

**Create a home safety zone.** Carve out a private space in your home where your child can relax, feel secure, and be safe. This will involve organizing and setting boundaries in ways your child can understand. Visual cues can be helpful (coloured tape marking areas that are off limits, labelling items in the house with pictures). You may also need to safety proof the house, particularly if your child is prone to tantrums or other self-injurious behaviours.

**Look for nonverbal cues.** If you are observant and aware, you can learn to pick up on the nonverbal cues that children with ASD use to communicate. Pay attention to the kinds of sounds they make, their facial expressions, and the gestures they use when they're tired, hungry, or want something.

**Figure out the motivation behind the tantrum.** It's only natural to feel upset when you are misunderstood or ignored, and it's no different for children with ASD. When children with ASD act out, it's often because you're not picking up on their nonverbal cues. Throwing a tantrum is their way of communicating their frustration and getting your attention.

**Make time for fun.** A child coping with ASD is still a child. For both children with ASD and their parents, there needs to be more to life than therapy. Schedule playtime when your child is most alert and awake. Figure out ways to have fun together by thinking about the things that make your child smile, laugh, and come out of her/his shell. Your child is likely to enjoy these activities most if they don't seem therapeutic or educational. There are tremendous benefits that result from your enjoyment of your child's company and from your child's enjoyment of spending unpressured time with you. Play is an essential part of learning for all children and shouldn't feel like work.

**Pay attention to your child's sensory sensitivities.** Many children with ASD are hypersensitive to light, sound, touch, taste, and smell. Some children with autism are "under-sensitive" to sensory stimuli. Figure out what sights, sounds, smells, movements, and tactile sensations trigger your kid's "bad" or disruptive behaviours and what elicits a positive response. What does your child find Stressful? Calming? Uncomfortable? Enjoyable? If you understand what affects your child, you'll be better at troubleshooting problems, preventing situations that cause difficulties, and creating successful experiences.

### **What can you do to Help Your Child?**

Your child will require a personalised Autism treatment plan that will help them be the best they can be. Keep in mind that there is no single treatment that works for everyone. Each person on the autism spectrum is unique, with different strengths and weaknesses.

Your child's treatment should be tailored according to his or her individual needs. You know your child best, so it's up to you to make sure those needs are being met. You can do that by asking yourself the following questions:

**What are my child's strengths – and his or her weaknesses?**

**What behaviours are causing the most problems?** What important skills is my child lacking?

**How does my child learn best – through seeing, listening, or doing?**

**What does my child enjoy – and how can those activities be used in treatment and to bolster learning?**

The more you know about Autism the more you can help your child.

### **REFERENCES**

<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au>

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism>

<https://www.autismawareness.com.au>

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/for-people-with-disability/helping-children-with-autism/autism-behavioural-intervention-association-of-nsw-ltd>