

Inclusion of children with Autism



Handbook for Teachers



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THE NATIONAL TRUST

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1. A note to the teachers

A child with 'Autism' is going to join your class.

As a teacher, you would be overwhelmed with a number of emotions. Your mind would be racing with many questions...



- *What does Autism mean?*
- *Do I have enough information to take a child with Autism in my class?*
- *How will I teach the child?*
- *Will I do justice?*
- *Wouldn't it be better for the child to study in a special school where he gets proper attention?*

Yes, you need the answers to your questions and your concerns and apprehensions need to be addressed. In this handbook, we have put together relevant information and some important learnings based on experiences that will help in getting answers to the questions listed above.

Besides giving information about the condition, the handbook also gives some strategies for the school management as well as staff to follow in order to support inclusion of children with autism.

Though the strategies have been suggested for children with autism, most of these are actually practices can be used with any child to make teaching and learning exciting.

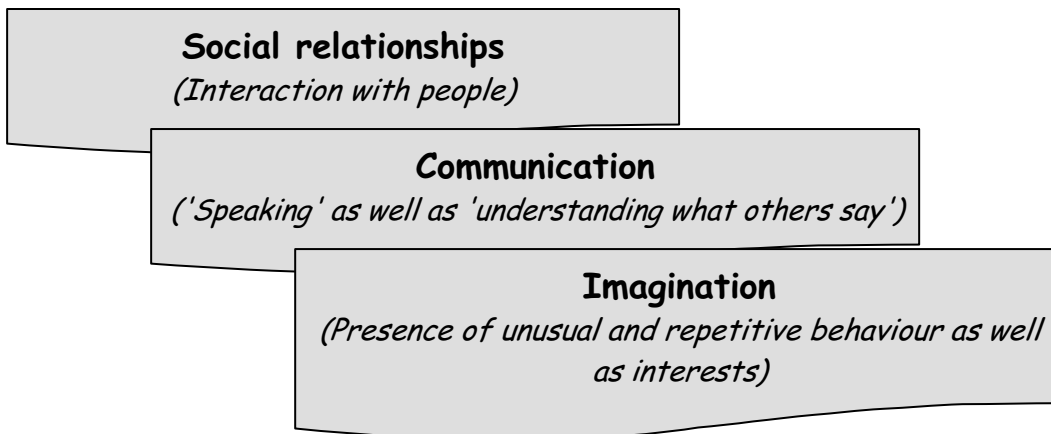


We hope this handbook will prove to be a resource for teachers who have undertaken the exciting as well as challenging task of reaching out to children (with or without disabilities) in their inclusive classroom.

2. What is Autism

Autism is a developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. It is the most common condition in a group of developmental disorders known as the Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs).

The three main areas affected in persons with autism



Autism is known as a 'spectrum disorder,' because the characteristics can be found across a wide spectrum or 'range'-from a mild learning and social disability to a severe impairment, with multiple problems and highly unusual behaviour. The thinking and learning abilities vary-from gifted to average to severely challenged. One person might be able to attend a regular school, find a job and lead a fairly independent life. At the same time, this person may have difficulty in talking and mixing with other people. Moderately and severely affected children with autism will also vary tremendously. Some might do well in a supportive environment while others might not. Some children do not develop speech at all, while others may develop speech but still have difficulty in communicate.

Besides Autism, the other conditions included in the Autism Spectrum Disorders are

- **Aspergers Syndrome**
- **Rett's Syndrome**
- **Pervasive Developmental Disorders-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)**

- ♦ Autism is caused by physical dysfunction of the brain
- ♦ Autism is not caused by bad parenting or neglect
- ♦ 80% of those affected by autism are boys.
- ♦ Autism is found throughout the world, in families of all economic, social, and racial backgrounds.
- ♦ The disorder may occur alone, or with accompanying problems such as mental retardation or seizures.
- ♦ All persons with Autism do not have special or "savant" skills. A few (10%) have unusual drawing abilities, musical talent, excellent rote memory or lightning speed at mental calculation

Having autism *does not affect a child's physical appearance*. He looks just like any other child, though he may communicate and behave in a manner that is different from most of the other children.

It is also important to remember that all children with autism are different in the way they act and interact-*no two children with autism will have the identical characteristics*.

Inappropriate laughing or crying without any appropriate reason

Not wanting to be cuddled

Little or no eye contact

Inappropriate attachment to objects

Difficulty in interacting with others - prefers to be alone

Individuals with Autism may show the following traits in varying combinations

Inappropriate or no response to sound or other speaking (as if hard of hearing)

No real fear of danger

Repetitive movements- spinning of objects or self/ hand flapping/ rocking

Apparent insensitivity to pain

Difficulty in speaking - may use gestures/ repeat what others say

3. Let's try and understand the child...

Knowing that a child has autism helps us to understand a part of the child -we know about the characteristics and traits he is likely to show. We know that because of the condition, a child with autism will communicate, interact and behave in ways that are different from other children in class.

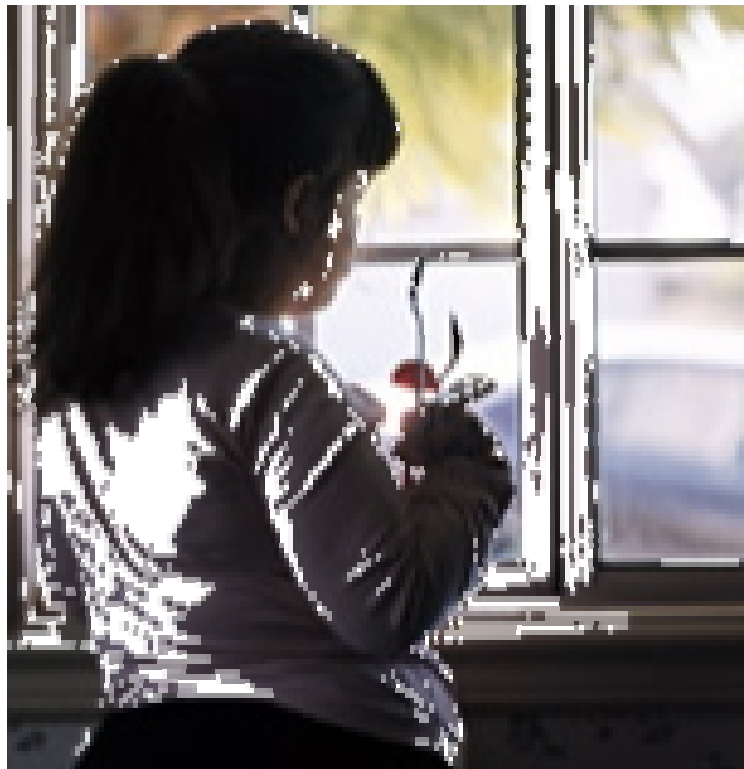
Is that information enough? Are we just scratching the surface of the condition? We need to look beneath the tag of 'autism'... Instead of focusing only on 'what' behaviour characteristics the child is showing, we need to understand 'why' it is happening. This behaviour is often misinterpreted -as if the child is behaving like this purposely and trying to get his way. It is not enough just to respond to the behaviours, what we need is an understanding of the more fundamental underlying difficulties that offer a rationale for those behaviours. Once we have information about what particular difficulties the child is facing, only then can we develop a curriculum that addresses the child's needs.



- What are the difficulties that the child with autism is facing?
- What is making him behave or respond or communicate in this manner?
- What are his strengths?
- What do we need to do in order to support him in school?

4. Difficulties faced by children with autism

There has been intensive research on autism in the last few decades. People have come up with a number of theories, explanations and treatments. But, the most intriguing insights about the disorder have come from the persons with autism themselves! People like Temple Grandin, Donna Williams and Sean Barron have written a number of books in which they have shared their experiences and provided explanations for their behaviours.




- Difficulty in sensory processing
- Difficulty in using and understanding language
- Difficulty in social understanding (relating to people)
- Difficulty in imagining ,thinking and organizing

Let's understand each area and how it is manifests in the child's behaviour in detail.

4.1. Difficulty in sensory processing


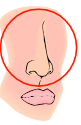
'Sensory processing' refers to our ability to take in information through our senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting and movement), organize and interpret that information, and make a meaningful response. When we hear the horn of a car blowing we know what action we need to take. For most people, this process is automatic. But most of the first hand accounts of autism have described 'distortions and misinterpretations' in one or more sensory channels. Difficulty is not in the sensory channels but the brain which does not process the information it receives from the senses properly.

Some people with autism are **over sensitive (hypersensitive)** to sensation-they feel sensations very easily. They are unable to filter out the sensations they do not want and feel as if they are constantly being bombarded with information.




- "I hear sounds all the time and it drives me crazy-shuffling chairs, clothes, sound of air moving in the room"
- "My hearing is like having a hearing aid with the volume control stuck on "super loud." It is like an open microphone that picks up everything. I have two choices: turn the mike on and get deluged with sound, or shut it off. Mother reported that sometimes I acted like I was deaf."

"When I look straight at things my eyes hurt, I like to look from the corner of my eye"





The Nose

- "The smell of French fries gives me a big headache and some smells give me a stomach ache"
- "I ate the things I liked to look at or feel or that had nice associations for me. I loved colored glass-jelly was like that-I loved jelly"



"I liked to eat things that were bland and uncomplicated as I found them soothing and comforting. I didn't want to try anything new."



- "I dislike nightgowns because the feeling of my legs touching each other is unpleasant"

"I wanted to feel the good feeling of being hugged, but when people hugged me the stimuli washed over me like a tidal wave."

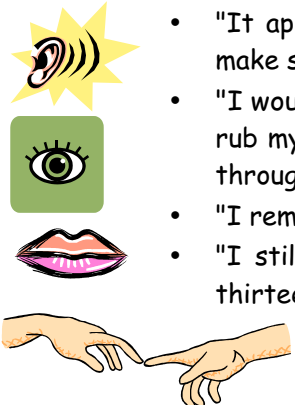
How does over stimulation (hypersensitivity) affect the behaviour of the child?

Children may try to avoid or minimize these uncomfortable sensations through 'fight or flight'. They may show aggression or might withdraw into their shell. Some unusual behaviours children might show if they are finding it difficult to cope with the overload of stimuli-

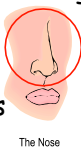
- Unable to concentrate or pay attention
- Flapping their arms or ears if the noise or other stimuli is unbearable .E.g.-even the sound of the child sitting next to him chewing food might cause distress
- Resisting/avoiding eye contact
- Very picky eaters /not able to eat certain things

- Not wanting to try or touch anything new /unknown/dirty
- Preferences to certain textures
- Reacting aggressively or withdrawing when touched/cuddled
- Rocking body back and forth repetitively
- Not wanting to put on clothes even if it is very cold/insisting on wearing the same clothes

Some people with autism are **under sensitive (hyposensitive)** to sensation-they are unable to feel sensations coming into the brain. Because of this, the children also have a constant need to stimulate themselves.



- "It appeared that I was deaf. My parents would stand behind me and make sudden loud noises without my so much as blinking in response."
- "I would face the light shining through my window next to my cot and rub my eyes furiously-there they were-the bright fluffy colours moving through the white"
- "I remember people and places by their smell"
- "I still ate dirt and flowers and grass and plastic when I was thirteen years old"
- "I didn't know where I had hurt myself until my mom asked Is it your leg or your head?"



How does under stimulation (hyposensitivity) affect the behaviour of the child?

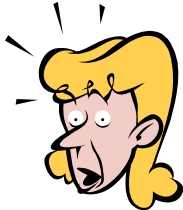
Children may constantly seek sensory experiences and stimulation. Some unusual behaviours children might show if they are finding it difficult to cope with the lack of stimuli-

- Engaging in activities that might not be safe E.g. - eating indiscriminately, climbing too high up on a tree
- Enjoying noise or sounds that are too loud
- Getting hurt and not being aware of the pain
- Holding things very close-to see, hear, taste, smell, feel
- Humming or producing his own noises
- Hyperactivity as they are constantly on the move-spinning, swinging, rocking, flapping, fidgeting E.g.-Enjoying flicking their fingers in front of their eyes
- Unaware of touch -Bumping into things / touching things and people too often and too hard
- Wanting to taste/smell/feel everything
- Wearing too many clothes and being unaware of the temperature outside

This sensory distortion in some cases is not even constant-there is fluctuation between hypersensitivity and hyposensitivity.

4.2. Communication-using & understanding language

Children with autism experience difficulty in communicating with others. Many children **'think in pictures and not words'**. Therefore, they **understand the message through pictures rather than words**. The children may really struggle to understand what people are saying to them and have difficulty expressing their feelings and thoughts. Some children may be able to ask for their own needs but not about feelings or thoughts. Some children may use gestures or show mannerisms which might look strange to others and understood only by people in the immediate environment. There are some children who are fascinated with words but do not use them for communication.

- Most children with autism have a **literal understanding of language**. This is why they are unable to understand jokes, metaphors or sarcasm. E.g.-If you give the child a colouring book and tell him, "lets paint the house", he is likely to paint his actual house and not the picture .
- A child with autism will also 'say' things literally -how things actually are-as **he is unable to infer what the others are feeling**. This may result in others feeling that this person is insensitive. E.g.-a child may go up to his friend and say-"your nose is very big" 
- In some children you will observe **echolalia where the child repeats what she hears others saying**. If you ask her 'do you want to play?' he will also say 'do you want to hear a story/'.It is sometimes an affirmation of the question, i.e., the child wants to hear a story. The presence of echolalia indicates that the child is processing language even although at a surface level.

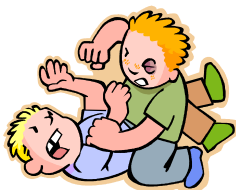
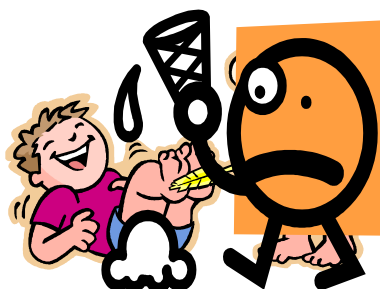


- Sometimes the child **may say something that may not seem relevant**-it may have been triggered by the context or situation. E.g.- If the child goes to the father and says 'do you want to swing?'-he might be using echolalia to communicate that he wants to swing. When the child goes to a restaurant, he might say ' everybody find a seat and start eating' because that's what the teacher says when they enter the lunch room in school.
- Some children may prefer to use names instead of pronouns. E.g.-The child will say "Rohit wants water" instead of "I want water"
- Some children have difficulty in using 'I' and 'You' appropriately. E.g.-A child wanting a sweet might say "You want sweet"

4.3. Difficulty in social understanding (relating to people)

In order to interact with people we need to understand them. To understand them, we need to infer and make sense of their emotions, thoughts, desires and intentions. Based on the observations we can predict what they are likely to do or think next. Children with autism have difficulties in all the above areas.

- They are **unable to anticipate what others might think or how others might react**. E.g.-Asking inappropriate questions-like asking an aunt why she talks in a funny way, taking off clothes in public when feeling hot
- Sometimes children might approach others, but in a manner that maybe a little **odd or inappropriate**. E.g.-going and standing too close to another person.
- Children would also have **difficulties in anticipating what the intention of the other person is**. E.g.-Not understanding the person's expression or tone of voice.
- Some children are also **not able to infer if the other person is interested or understanding what he is communicating**. They might rattle off details about his favourite topic without realizing that the other person already knows or is just not interested.
- Children would find it difficult to **recognize and make sense of emotions in others** - they are not able to make out if the other person is sad or hurt. E.g. - He starts laughing when he sees something or someone fall.
- Many children would also be **unaware of unwritten social rules**. E.g.- Going to a shop and picking up something without paying, taking a chocolate belonging to another child without asking, pushing a child off the swings as he wants to get on, going and touching someone's hair or clothes.



Due to these difficulties the child is often misunderstood as being 'rude' and 'insensitive'.

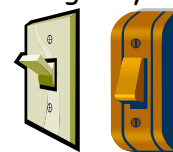
4.4. Difficulty in imagining, thinking and organizing information

The ability to play imaginatively with toys or people is limited in children with autism. As a result they have a **limited range of imaginative activities** -many of which are actually imitation of things seen on the television. Many of these activities are done repeatedly. Some of these activities seem to be quite complicated but on when observed closely, are actually quite **repetitive and stereotyped in nature**.

- Children with autism tend to **focus their attention on specific details rather than looking at the object or toy as a whole**. E.g.-concentrating only on the



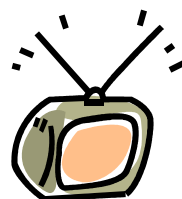
wheels of the car, or the main



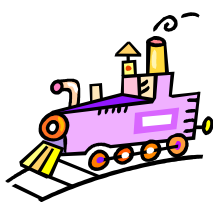
switches of appliances.

- There is a **difficulty in incidental learning**-therefore concepts need to be taught directly.
- There is a **difficulty in generalization**-so every situation seems different. This could be due to limited input from the child's imagination

- Some children have **very focused and narrow range of interests** and activities. E.g. - watching a particular programme, reading a particular type of book.



- There may also be intense attachment to particular objects, a fascination for arranging objects in lines or patterns like tying Shoe laces in a particular manner, fascination about certain topics like birds or dinosaurs or train engines and timetables, collecting objects of a certain type.



- Due to lack of imagination, **rigidity and resistance to change** are also common. E.g. - insisting on following the same route, brushing the teeth in a particular

manner, same bedtime rituals. **Any change from the routine can be very disturbing** for the children.



5. Is Autism curable?

At this point we do not know what really causes Autism and so cannot 'cure' it. While there is no known cure for autism, treatment helps the person in progressing to the maximum potential and reducing many of the challenges associated with the condition.

There are various treatment options which are being tried for persons with autism but nothing has been proven to be the best or most effective. These treatment options include

- Psycho-social /behavioural approaches
- Dietary interventions
- Drug interventions
- Speech therapy
- Occupational therapy

But, just as there is no one symptom or behaviour that identifies persons with autism, there is no single treatment that will be effective for all people with autism. A combination of approaches may be effective.

The treatment for autism would include a **structured training program which is a combination of a good school and parent training**. Children with autism have the ability to learn master new skills and move towards independence. They can make significant progress if the intervention is appropriate and consistent. It is important to find effective services, treatments and education for autistic children as soon as possible.

The earlier these children receive appropriate treatment, the better.

6. Is it possible for children with autism to go to a regular school? If so what should be the curriculum?

Yes- it is. In India, some regular schools have started taking in children with autism. A similar curriculum as for the other children could be followed, but with a **certain amount of flexibility and adaptations according to the child's needs** E.g. - learning one language instead of two, typing answers on the computer instead of using paper pencil-it depends on the individual child. Use of certain teaching strategies and methods may benefit the children. Again, it all **depends on the individual child-his strengths and his needs**. Some physical re-structuring within the classroom and school would also help the children.

Inclusion is possible when the appropriate strategies are used

7. Does the school need any preparation before taking the child-does the staff need any training?

The school management would need to ensure that the entire school staff (including support staff) the other children as well as their parents are informed as well as prepared. Some of the steps would be-

- ✓ **Sensitization**-Addressing attitudes, beliefs, apprehensions and concerns about children with disabilities in regular schools. Separate sessions could be organized for staff, children and parents. Discussions can eliminate wrong ideas and notions that people might have. *Some ideas and games for sensitization have been given in the last chapter of the handbook.*

- ✓ **Provide** information about autism. Share information about what to expect. Help people understanding the reasons that cause children with autism to respond and behave in a manner which is different as compared to other -the fact that in no way is the behaviour manipulative/done purposely.

- ✓ **Staff training-how to** a) understand the strengths and needs of individual children and b) use techniques and strategies that would support the child in class.

- ✓ **Preparing/ restructuring for a safe and supportive school environment.** This would include the physical as well as socio-emotional environment.

- ✓ **Consistency of expectations and strategies** by all staff members is crucial.

8. Can the school get support and training so that it is able to provide the child with the proper environment and teaching strategies? Who will help the school if there is a difficulty in coping?

Supporting a child with autism has to be a **team effort**. One individual or school cannot do it alone. The team generally comprises of the child, his family members and professionals working in this field as well as the school staff.



For guidance and support, the school could contact organizations that work with persons with autism. **These organizations could provide the information, organize training sessions, suggest techniques and strategies, keeping in mind the needs and the strength of the individual children.**

A list of these organizations has been given at the end of this handbook.

9. I have some information about Autism and the difficulties associated with it. What do I need to do as a class teacher?

Students with autism can learn in the general education setting provided all the concerned people are well informed, sufficient support is provided and suitable teaching strategies are implemented.

1. As mentioned earlier, the first step, would be to **get information about the condition** - ensure that your queries and concerns are addressed in the sessions organized by the school management.
2. **Get to know the child**-understand not only his deficits and needs but also his strength and areas of interest. *Do this as a team*-include the child's family members and members of the organization partnering or supporting you. List out the following information-
 - a. **Strengths and interests**
 - b. **Fearful, frustrating, stressful situations**
 - c. **Challenges or areas that need to be worked on**
 - d. **Learning style preferences**
3. Once the team has an understanding of the child, the next step is to **work out the goals and outcomes**. 'Outcomes' are what you would expect the child to learn by the end of the term/academic year.
4. Once the outcomes have been clearly listed, the next step would be to **plan what the team would be doing in order to reach the outcomes**.

(Keeping in mind the child's strengths, interests, needs and learning style)

 - a. **Providing a supportive environment (physical, socio - emotional and learning environment)**
 - b. **Organizing the appropriate activities**
 - c. **Using specific strategies /teaching methods**



Remember-It will be a combination of academic and non academic goals

10. What do we do in order to provide a supportive environment?

We all know that the school environment is complex-there is constant activity, many unpredictable events happening throughout the day.



All students -with or without autism have to cope with different subjects, different teachers, changes in the timetable, extra curricular activities, peer pressure...

Many students -with or without autism face difficulties in school

- *Concentrating and attending to a task*
- *Following instructions in a large group*
- *Unable to communicate*
- *Unable to make friends*
- *Participation in class*
- *Understanding concepts*
- *Getting bullied ☐others making fun*
- *Behaviour difficulties*
- *Difficulty in coping with transition*

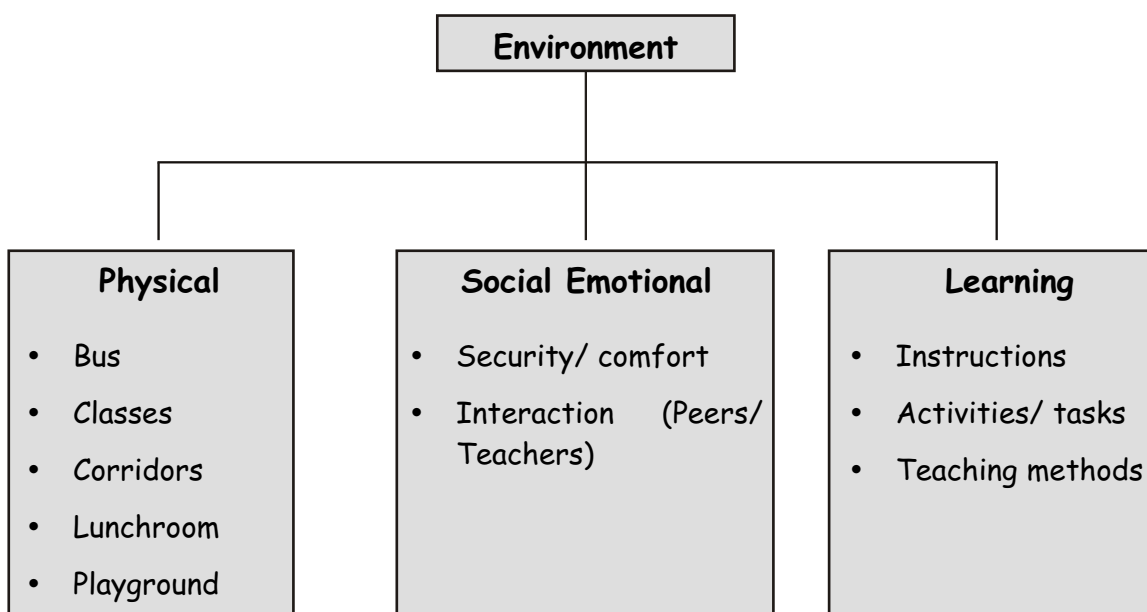
The reasons for the difficulties might be different -E.g. -one child may not be able to communicate because he is shy while the other might have a speech problem. But the difficulties are the same.

What helps is -

A structured environment

11. What is a structured environment?

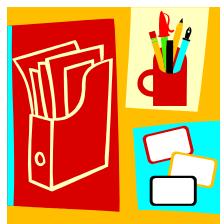
An environment that is comfortable, safe, predictable, organized keeping in mind the strengths and needs of all the students in class. In order to provide a structured environment you need to be willing to make adaptations in your class arrangement, routines, expectations to accommodate the abilities as well as needs of all the children in class.



11.1. Physical environment

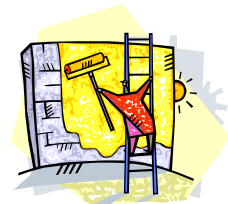
Physical environment refers to what things are placed and how things are arranged in various areas of the school. Besides being disable friendly and safe, the other things we need to ensure are-

- ✓ **The areas are clearly defined and demarcated .E.g. -**
 - By strategically placing the furniture
 - Visual boundaries like labels and floor tape
 - Colour coding a child's belongings



- ✓ **Creating a calm environment by minimizing visual and auditory distractions E.g. -**

- By painting the environment (walls, cupboards, soft boards) a soft or neutral colour
- By storing and reducing the amount of clutter which is typically present in all classrooms (charts, art material, decorations)
- By placing sheets or curtains on equipment when not in use (computer, book rack)
- Avoid using furniture that makes screeching sounds while being shifted.
- Controlling the amount of light and glare by using curtains and chiks (blinds)
- Some children might require an individual study area.



✓ **Be sensitive to the needs of children with sensory processing difficulties**

Many children have **difficulties in paying attention and concentrating**. This **does not necessarily mean that they all have sensory processing difficulties**. All of us have different learning styles, strengths and limitations. Some of us can concentrate only when there is pin drop silence while others can study only with loud music. Some of us love working with hands (painting, clay, pottery) while others cannot bear to get their hands dirty. For a child with sensory processing difficulties this would manifest in different areas. **If you suspect a difficulty**, consult the parents and the entire school team.

- **Learn/observe what excites or calms or frightens the child.**
- **Organize adaptations in the environment keeping these things in mind.**

Some examples-

- If a child is very sensitive to sound, then a head phone can be provided during noisy times like transition from one class to the other.



- If a child needs auditory stimulation, we can provide him a walkman.



- If a child is extra sensitive to touch, then we would ensure that adequate space is maintained between him and the next student in line. We would ensure that he is not put under stressful situations like-clay class, touching things in the science lab.



11.2. Social Emotional Environment

We need to provide a comfortable and encouraging environment to the child so that he is able to overcome his difficulties and learn new skills.

✓ Preparing / sensitizing the other children in class

- Provide information about the condition. Help the children understand the reasons why children with autism might respond and behave in a manner which is different as compared to others - the fact that in no way is the behaviour manipulative/done purposely.

If you think carefully, you will realize that many students in class have some need or the other. Instead of talking only about 'autism' we could have a general discussion on various needs of children - due to medical conditions, disabilities, financial emotional or financial difficulties

✓ Appreciating the efforts and giving the children opportunities to succeed.

- **Catch the children 'doing it right'** - praise them when you see them making an effort.



- If you reward the child in ways that are meaningful to them, they are more likely to increase their efforts.

- **Encourage** the children by giving them a sense of achievement. You can do this by **providing them with opportunities to use their strengths in various areas like maths, music, art**



✓ **Provide a comfortable and predictable environment**

- Children with autism can become very anxious if there is any change in the routine. Help the child cope with change - **provide warning of any impending change. Making it visual** (through a picture or chart) would be more effective than a verbal warning. E.g. - change in time table, teacher, classroom.



✓ **Enhance emotional development**

- As a teacher you need to **recognize that any significant change in the manner or behaviour may be a signal of anxiety**. Understand the reason and function of the behaviour, not respond to the behaviour in isolation.
- **Observe what agitates the child** - if you know that a particular thing or situation is likely to trigger a tantrum and then avoid the situation.
- The child needs to be taught **anger management** - i.e., what to do if he gets angry. (This would include-where to go and what to do.) The school needs to identify a quiet place where the child could go and sit whenever he they are agitated. The child needs to be taught to go there whenever disturbed. You can demarcate space in quiet areas like the library, computer room, and prayer room. He also needs to be clear as to what he would be doing there-if reading-then which book, if painting then what would he paint, if computer, then what exactly on the computer.



- **Do not raise your voice** if a student is angry or agitated. Also, do not assume that he will understand you by looking at your expression. Speak to him in with a neutral expression and calm voice. You can use a visual support (like a picture of a quiet person or quiet room) to help him calm down.

- **Threats or bribes do not work.** Instead of saying things like-" If you do not finish your work, you will not go to the swings" or, "If you finish the work I will give you a chocolate" Just say," Finish the worksheet and have the chocolate.
- Children also need to be **taught to recognize and label their feelings and emotions.**

E.g. - "Seema hit you-it made you **angry**"



"You shared the sweets with me -I'm **happy**"

- Many children with Autism find it **difficult to wait**. Apart from being a social concept, waiting also has to do with time which is an abstract concept Therefore; children with autism find it difficult to understand the purpose of waiting. In order to introduce this concept, begin by specifying the waiting period by marking it with a clear end/finish. What you mean by the end/finish should be concrete and preferably visually clear. For example, you are talking to another child and the child with autism wants your attention. You could tell him, "I will speak to you when I finish talking to Mahesh "or "I will speak to you in one minute". Keep the waiting period very short at first and extend it gradually. An important thing to remember is that make sure you keep your word. If you have told him you will speak to him in one minute, then you have to keep your word, even if it means leaving the conversation midway
- Be a good **role model**-the other children as well as staff will be looking and learning from you as you work with the child.

✓ **Enhance social development-Circle of friends**

- Carefully select a **small group of sensitive students who would help in supporting the student in different situations**. E.g.-,accompanying them from one class to the other, sitting together in the bus joining for lunch, playing during break time, teaching rules while playing games, sensitizing others if they attempt to bully or make fun of the child.

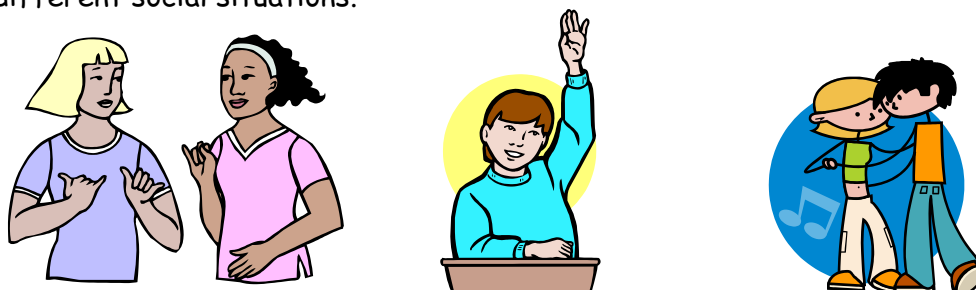


Remember-this group will need awareness and training on how to communicate and make children with autism feel more included. The group also needs to meet with the team (teacher and therapists) to review the progress and how to cope with challenges.

• **Tips for the circle of friends**

- Address the child by his name instead of calling him the "autistic child"
- Whenever in doubt, ask a teacher or another peer who knows the child better.
- Be specific while making plans with the child-Instead of saying- 'See you outside later' say- 'I'll meet you outside the computer room at 2:15 pm.'
- Don't be late and try not to change your plans too often-the child may have a tough time understanding the concept of 'waiting' or 'not knowing what is going to happen'
- Since children with autism will take you literally-so avoid using jokes, phrases with double meanings, metaphors
- Others might make fun of the child simply because they don't know why the child is behaving in that manner-sensitize them by explaining the condition to them.

- Children might need to be taught **basic social skills** like-greeting, waiting for their turn, keeping physical distance from others, starting a conversation, shifting topics. You can do this training in a small group which includes other children who would benefit from the session. E.g. - shy children. You could use drama and role play to model appropriate behaviour in different social situations.



- If the child says things that are socially inappropriate or odd, then you can help the child by providing him a **list of appropriate topics**. Also give him a list of phrases and opening lines he can use to initiate a conversation.

Inappropriate topics	Appropriate topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking people how old they are • Asking people how much they earn • Commenting on their physical appearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking about their hobbies • Asking people about their favourite subject • Commenting on the weather

- Some children who can read can also be taught how to be taught to **cope with situations using 'social stories'**. In this, stories are written for the child in simple language -explaining step by step what will happen in specific situations. This helps them to cope with these situations.

<i>If I Feel Angry</i>	<i>Saying Hello</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All people feel angry at one time or another. • Sometimes I feel angry in school • When I get angry I will find my teacher • When I find her I will try to use words to tell them that I am angry. • I can say "I'm angry!" • It is okay to use words when I feel angry. • She will ask me what happened • This will help me to feel better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People like it when I say "hello" to them. • There are many times during the day when I can say "hello" to people. • I can say "hello" to my mother when I get up in the morning. • I can say "hello" to my father when I get up in the morning. • I can say "hello" to my bus driver. • I can say "hello" to my friends and teachers when I get to school. • I can even say "hello" to people I see in the corridor. • I make people happy when you say "hello" to them.

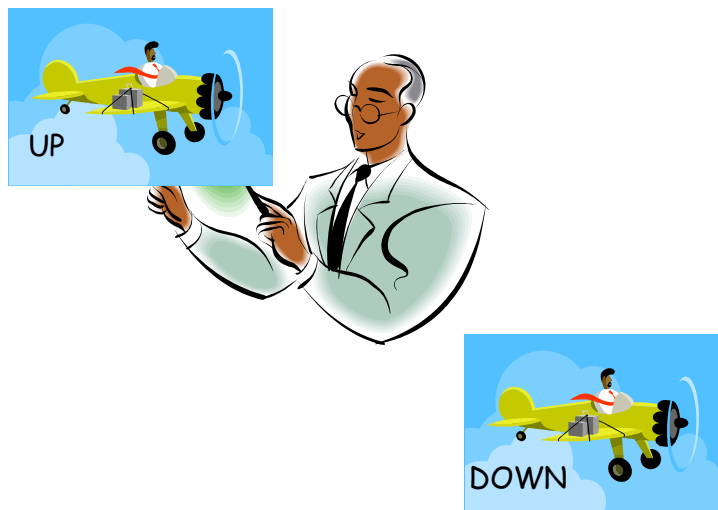
11.3. Learning environment

🔊 Organizing the environment

- ⌘ Provide a very **clear structure and a set daily routine**. Ensure that the student knows the days programme at the start of the day. Provide a visual schedule so that the child can keep referring to the schedule as the day progresses. This schedule will tell the child what activities are going to happen and in what sequence. The schedule could be in the form of pictures, photographs, written instructions or timetables. This will help in reducing the child's difficulties with sequential memory and organization of time. It will also help children with limited comprehension of spoken language to understand what is expected of them
- ⌘ The child can also be taught to remove the activity picture card and keep it in the finished box as each activity gets over. This way he also knows what he has to do next. This will help the child to move independently from one activity to another as it tells them where they are supposed to go next. Some samples-(can be modified as per the child's needs.

Organizing time	
Morning routine	School time table
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Brush your teeth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Reach school, go to class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Have a bath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Complete worksheet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Get dressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Lunch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Eat breakfast. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Get your bag. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Art class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Go to school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Home

- Besides being told what activities to do, the children also need clarity about doing the activities. If it is maths, then what exactly to do in maths-what sequence is to be followed? Writing it down would help instead of giving only verbal instructions.
- Children with autism are usually visual thinkers-they think in pictures and not words. While teaching concepts - use **concrete visual methods** as far as possible. E.g.-while teaching up and down, you can take a model of an aero plane with a label UP stuck on it and place it above you then use a label saying down on the aero plane and put it down.



- If you are teaching concept of half, then take an apple with the label full; take another apple cut into half with the label half.
- If you are using concrete objects, do not use objects as representation of some other object as the children have a **difficulty in imagining**. E.g.-avoid taking a pen or a block and telling the children-"let's imagine this is a car" and roll it on the table.
- **Teach a concept in a variety of settings** in order to help the child **generalize** what he has learnt to other situations. E.g.- if you are teaching a child not to push others in class, you also need to remind him in other situations and settings like the playground and bus.
- Some children might need assistance while doing the activities. Provide the extra help through **peer partners** or **volunteers**.



✓ **Communicating with the child-giving instructions**

- Some children are able to understand instructions better if **one mode** is used-**either visual or verbal**. They might get confused if both the modes are used simultaneously.

- **Do not insist on eye contact**-Some children find it difficult to process visual and auditory stimuli simultaneously. They can either look at you or understand what you are saying. Address the child by name and ask him to pay attention. If the child is not looking at you, it does not necessarily mean he is not paying attention.



- While giving verbal instructions-Give clear instructions using simple and short sentences. **SAY EXACTLY WHAT YOU MEAN**. E.g.-If you want the child to take out his science notebook, then say-take out your science notebook rather than take out your notebooks. For



visual instructions-show them what you want them to do E.g.-hold the text book you want the child to take out. Write the page number on the blackboard.



- **Do not give too any instructions at a given time** -break them down into smaller steps-let the child complete one step before giving him the next instruction.
- In case a child finds it difficult to realize that when you address the class, it includes him-then **address him individually** also. E.g. -"Ishaan, listen to me."
- Give the child a '**wait time**' to receive a message and respond to it. The average processing time is 30-60 seconds. Repeating the instructions within that period will not help in comprehending it. The best way is to give the child time by waiting for 30-60 seconds, depending on the child's needs.
- **Avoid asking questions with choices if they actually have no choice** and unless you are prepared to hear a 'no'. If you ask-'Are you ready for the English class' you might get a 'no' in response. It would be better to say,' open chapter 3 in the English reader.'
- Tell the child **WHAT TO DO** rather than **WHAT NOT TO DO**. E.g.- Instead of saying 'don't keep fidgeting', say-'stand straight'. Instead of saying, 'Don't look here and there', say,' look at the book'.
- **Be consistent in the words that you use**-don't substitute them with different words. E.g.-Say either copy or notebook-not copy at one instance and notebook in another. Similarly say either cafeteria or lunch hall, not both of them.
- Use **first/then** or **finish /then** statements. E.g. - "Finish your worksheet then play on the computer. "

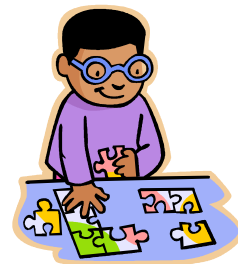


✓ **Assistance during unstructured time in school**

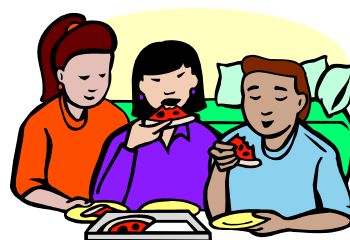
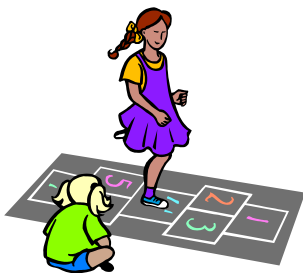
- Do not forget that the time the children spend in the classroom is mostly structured-they may need your assistance during unstructured time, especially outside class-E.g.-lunch break, playground, toilet, bus, going from one class to another. These unstructured times could be very daunting for children with autism. E.g. - Children running in the classroom and corridors, children laughing and talking on the top of their voices. This is why many children with autism actually prefer lessons to free time. If the unstructured time is not worked out, it could result in isolation, anger, aggression and bullying by other children.

Some strategies that could be used during such times would include-

- Bringing in structure-preparing the child to do activities that they enjoy doing. E.g.-Bring a book to read in class or another already identified quiet place, sitting and doing a puzzle, listening to music, painting, music.



- As mentioned earlier, the child's circle of friends can accompany him in order to provide support during these unstructured times



12. Books written by persons with autism

Temple Grandin

- *Unwritten Rules of Social Relationships,*
- *Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports from My Life with Autism*
- *Emergence: Labelled Autistic*

Donna Williams

- *Nobody Nowhere: The Extraordinary Autobiography of an Autistic*
- *Somebody Somewhere: Breaking Free from the World of Autism*
- *Like Color to the Blind: Soul Searching and Soul Finding*
- *Autism and Sensing: The Unlost*
- *Exposure Anxiety - The Invisible Cage: An Exploration of Self-Protection Response in the Autism Spectrum and Beyond*
- *Everyday Heaven: Journeys beyond the Stereotypes of Autism*

Sean Barron

- *There's A Boy In Here: Emerging from the Bonds of Autism - with Judy Barron*
- *Unwritten Rules of Social Relationships- with Temple Grandin*

Erika Hammerschmidt

- *Born on the Wrong Planet*
- *Congratulations! It's Asperger syndrome*

13. Games for introducing autism to a class

a. Memorise a sequence game

This is a game that some people with autism that have a fascination with order and sequences would find very enjoyable and would be very good at.

Ask the class to form a circle and choose one person to start the game by saying. Today I went to the shop and brought myself a..., thinking of an item and adding it to the end of a sentence. The next person in the circle then has to say the sentence with the item the last person said along with their own choice of item. This continues around the circle until someone makes a mistake. That person is then asked to sit down, and the game continues around and around the circle until the last person is left. You can adapt the sentence to suit the class interest.

- You can introduce an off-putting noise such as a drum, vacuum cleaner or a radio. This will make it harder for people to concentrate, giving a clearer understanding of why people with autism find distractions hard to cope with.
- Ask the students how this game made them feel. Did any of them feel frustrated when the loud noise started?

b. Sensory Game

This game is good to help the students to understand why unexpected occurrences can be uncomfortable, which many people with autism have to cope with every day.

- Select a range of edible and textured objects and place them in a box. These things can range from instant coffee granules to jelly. Ask for one volunteer to sit up at the front of the class and blindfold them. With each of your selected sensory objects, allow the student to either taste or feel them. The more unexpected the sensory object, the more surprised the student will feel. Things like coffee granules will be very unpleasant and give a better understanding of how unexpected events can sometimes be distressing. With the different students you selected, ask them to explain how they felt when experience a taste or feel of an object they did not like.
- You could also offer the class something to eat or drink that looks like something they are used to but in fact is something else like a chocolate spread sandwich, with a dollop of mustard hidden inside or a glass of lemonade or water with some colourless flavouring in it such as aniseed. The unexpected can be more shocking than we expect. Ask them how important trust and respect is when building relationships with people with autism.

c. Speaking game

- Address the class in a severe tone of voice, but saying friendly, positive words. Then speak to them in a friendly voice, but using negative words e.g. "You are a very naughty group and I am angry with you all."
- This highlights the importance of tone and volume in communication.
- People with autism can miss these clues.

d. Listening / understanding game

- Address the class in gibberish or a foreign language, at the same time focusing on one pupil. Through gesture, indicate you wish them to stand. When they do so ask them why they are standing. Tell them you weren't indicating for them to stand but were actually indicating to them to do something else (dependent upon what your gesture looked like!)
- This highlights the importance of non verbal clues in language and how instinctively we react to them.
- Explain that someone with autism would not be able to follow non-verbal clues. They might misinterpret them or not notice them at all.

e. Making friends game

One young person with Asperger syndrome, Mark Segar, put together a list of his Rules for Life advice and tips for others with Asperger syndrome and autism on how to interact and communicate with people. Share the following examples with the class:

- If you wish to chat up someone else, the best thing to do when you first meet them is just to talk to them and NOT get too close.
- Suitable boundaries may vary from one person to another (see body language).
- It is important not to appear too eager.
- If you are a man, don't wear too much after shave.
- Don't chat up just anyone, make sure it's someone you like.

Ask the class, what do you do when you go out? Do you go with someone? How do you get a girlfriend? What do the class think it would be like doing these things for someone who doesn't understand the ways that people communicate and interact?

f. Understanding emotions game

- Make two pupils face each other at a space of about 5 metres apart. Ask one to walk towards the other, then stop when it's comfortable. Ask them why they feel it's comfortable.
- Then tell them to take one more step, then another, until they are practically touching. Then join them.
- Ask the class where this level of closeness is acceptable e.g. on the bus, in a football crowd, on the tube etc.
- Ask them where it is not acceptable e.g. At the beach.
- Ask where this understanding is written.

Highlight that we do things instinctually, but people with autism have to learn these social rules, which are changing all the time dependent upon who is involved, where and when.

(Source-nas.org.uk)

14. References

- Teaching a child with autism to mind read-A practical guide by Patricia Howlin, Simon Baron- Cohen and Julie Hadwin
- Inclusion strategies for participation-Vidyasagar, Chennai
- Articles by Action for autism ,New Delhi
- www.autism-india.org
- www.autism-pdd.net
- www.autismchatboard.com
- www.mugsy.org
- www.autistics.org
- www.templegrandin.org
- www.nas.org.uk

15. Registered Autism Specific Organizations in India

Action For Autism
Sector 5 Jasola Institutional Area
Behind Sai Nikatan
New Delhi - 110 025
Tel: (91-11) - 55347422, 30964730
Email: autism@vsnl.com
<http://www.autism-india.org>

Action for Ability Development &
Inclusion (AADI),
The Spastics Society of
Northern India
2, Balbir Saxena Marg, Hauz Khas
New Delhi - 110 016

Inspiration
12th Block, JJ & slum Deptt.
M.C.D., Community Centre, Tilak Nagar,
New Delhi

TAMANA Association - School of Hope
C.P.W.D. Colony, Vasant Vihar
(Near Chinmaya School)
New Delhi - 110 057

Manovikas Comprehensive
Rehabilitation & Research Centre
A - 267, Suraj Mal Vihar
Delhi - 110 092

Movement for Autism
House No 216 Ramachandrapuram
Jalahalli Post
Bangalore - 560 013, Karnataka
Tel: (91-80) - 28391050
Email: swapnatn@vsnl.com

India Autism Forum
S-123, Kirloskar Colony
III Stage IV Block, Basveswarnagar
Bangalore - 560 079, Karnataka
Tel: (91-80) - 3225279, 3230357
Email: info@ashaforautism.com
<http://www.ashaforautism.com>

Forum For Autism
2nd floor, Block A, Jeshtaram Baug
Dr.Ambedkar Rd, Dadar,
Mumbai - 400 014, Maharashtra
Email: forumforautism@hotmail.com

SOPAN
A-4 Silver Arch, Ramnagar
Borivali (W)
Mumbai - 400 092, Maharashtra
Tel: (91-22) - 28064443, 28864183

Ummeed Child Development Center
Ground Floor, Mantri Pride
1-B, 1/62, N.M. Joshi Marg
Subhash Nagar
Near Chinchpokli Station
Lower Parel
Mumbai - 400 011, Maharashtra
Tel: (91-22) - 65528310, 65564054,
23002006, 23001144
Email: ummeed@vsnl.net

Sambhav
B-4/24, Chitrakoot
Ajmer Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan
Tel: (91) - 9214350987

We Can Trust
Resource Centre:
4/ 370, South First Main Road,
Kapaleeswarar Nagar, Neelangarai,
Chennai - 600 041, Tamil Nadu
Tel: (91-44) - 55461010

We Can Trust
No 4/2 Parsn Riviera
4th Main Road Extn, Kotturpuram,
Chennai - 600 085, Tamil Nadu
Tel: (91-44) - 24464655, 24473136,
4464077
Email: wecantrust@rediffmail.com

Pradip Centre for Autism Management
203/B, Block - B, Post-Lake Town,
Kolkata - 700 089, West Bengal

Autism Society West Bengal
22 Anjuman Ara Begum Row
Kolkata - 700 033, West Bengal
Tel: (91-33) - 24730706, 24170860
Email: autismsocietywb@hotmail.com

Schools for Autism Spectrum Disorder (in alphabetical order)

Open Door
Sector 5 Jasola Vihar
Behind Sai Niketan
New Delhi - 110 025
Tel: (91-11) - 65347422, 40540991/2
Fax: (91-11) - 40540993
E-mail: autism@vsnl.com
http://www.autism-india.org/afa_opendoor.htm

School of Hope
CPWD Complex
Near Chinmay School
Vasant Vihar
New Delhi - 110 057
Tel: (91-11) - 26143853, 26151572
Email: tamana@mantramail.com

Diuli Daycare Centre cum Preschool
841/1, Alto Porvorim,
Goa - 403 521
Tel: (91-832) - 2414916

Jyot Special School
Kutarkar Residency,
Near Multipurpose School,
Borda, Margao, Goa
Tel: (91-832) - 2765097

Disha Charitable Trust
319-320, Race Course Towers
Gotri Road,
Vadodara - 390 007, Gujarat
Tel: (91-265) - 2325250
Fax: (91-265) - 2300059
Email: dishatrust@iqara.net
<http://www.disha.org/>

Autism Centre
c/o Prasanna Hospital
Deccan Gymkhana,
Pune - 411 004, Maharashtra
Tel: (91-20) - 25652246
Email: info@prasannaautism.org
<http://www.prasannaautism.org>

DEC
C/o Spastics Society of Karnataka
31, 5th Cross, Off 5th Main
Indira Nagar - 1st Stage
Bangalore - 560 038, Karnataka

Priyanj Special School
239/1905 Motilal Nagar no 1,
Achyut Behre Marg,
Near Ganesh Mandir, Road no 4,
Goregaon (west),
Mumbai - 400 104, Maharashtra
Tel: (91-22) - 28753880
(91) - 9821098325
Email: priyanj_school@yahoo.co.in

SAIRAM Autism
C/o Jai Vakeel School
Sewri Hills, Sewri Road
Mumbai - 400 033, Maharashtra
Tel: (91-22) - 24701129, 24702285

Samarpan
M.G. Road Municipal School
Opp. Parle Vidya Tilak Mandir
3rd floor, Above Marathi Medium School
Near Kesrekar Garden
Vile Parle (East)
Mumbai - 400 057, Maharashtra
Tel: (91-22) - 26336537, 56043998

Sankalp Learning Centre
Q-9, New No. 41, 6th. Avenue.
Chennai - 600040
Tamil Nadu
Tel: (91-44) - 42113947
Email:
sulata.sankalp@airtelbroadband.in

Sunshine Centre For Autism
280, 6th Cross
Domlur Layout
Bangalore - 71, Karnataka
Tel: (91-80) - 65360892
Emailsunshineautism@vsnl.net

We Can Trust
No 4/2 Parsn Riviera
4th Main Road Extn
Kotturpuram, Chennai - 600 085
Tamil Nadu
Tel: (91-44) - 24464655, 24473136
Email: wecantrust@rediffmail.com

Vidyasagar
No-1
Ranjit Road
Kotturpuram, Chennai - 600 085
Tamil Nadu

Other Relevant Links in India

Disability India Network
Society For Child Development
Cottage 15, Oberoi Apts
2 Sham Nath Marg
Delhi - 110 054
Email: webmaster@disabilityindia.org
<http://www.disabilityindia.org/>

National Institute of Mental Handicap
(NIMH)
Manovikas Nagar
Secunderabad - 500 009, Andhra Pradesh
Tel: (91-40) - 2775 1741-45
Fax: (91-40) - 2775 0198
Email: hd1_nimhldhk@sancharnet.in
<http://www.nimhindia.org/>

National Institute of Mental Health and
Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS)
<http://www.nimhans.kar.nic.in/>

Chennai Holistic Health Centre for
Autism
Plot no:218, Palkalai Nagar, Palavakkam
Chennai - 600 041, Tamil Nadu.
Tel: (91-44) - 24511670
Email: ism_chhc@hotmail.com
<http://www.autismchennai.in>

(Source-www.autism-india.org)

Disability Etiquette

Always remember that an individual with a disability is a person first. Use language that preserves the person's dignity and does not portray the individual as a "victim" or someone to be "pitied." Language such as "person with epilepsy" (not "epileptic") is appropriate because it places the focus on the person, and not upon his or her disability. A person who uses a wheelchair is not bound to the chair ("wheelchair-bound" is inappropriate) but rather a "wheelchair user."

- When greeting a person with a disability, don't be afraid to offer a handshake. If the person is unable to shake hands, he or she will say so.

- Shaking hands with the left hand is acceptable.

- For those who cannot shake hands, touch the person on the shoulder or arm to welcome and acknowledge their presence.

- Never patronize people using wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.

- Always look at and speak directly to a person with a disability, not through an interpreter, helper, or companion that might be present. If you have trouble understanding what a person is saying, do not pretend that you understand. Rather, ask the person to repeat what has been said. If you still have difficulty understanding the person, move to a quieter location or ask simple yes-no questions.

- When addressing a person who uses a wheelchair, never lean on it. The chair is part of the person's private space.

- When talking with a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, use a chair, whenever possible, in order to place you at the person's eye level to facilitate conversation.

- When greeting a person who is blind or who has low vision, always identify yourself and others who may be with you when entering or leaving the room.

- Offer assistance in a dignified manner with sensitivity and respect. Be prepared to have the offer declined. Do not proceed to assist if your offer to assist is declined. If the offer is accepted, listen to or accept instructions.

- Allow a person with a visual impairment to take your arm (at or about the elbow.) This will enable you to guide rather than propel or lead the person.

- Signal with a tap or a wave to get the attention of a person who is deaf. Not all persons who are deaf can read lips or know sign language, but you can use pencil and paper to ask if there is a preference. Face the person you are speaking with and speak clearly but naturally, don't exaggerate.



- Staring at a person with a disability is inappropriate. If a child asks about a person with a disability, do not reprimand or "shush" the child. Rather, answer the question in a simple and factual manner that helps the child to understand that disability is a normal part of life that isn't necessarily negative. "Radha uses a wheelchair to help her move around because she has trouble using her legs. She can run races using her chair like you do with your legs."

- If someone behaves in a way that is outside your personal experience or that does not make immediate sense to you, consider that the individual may have a hidden disability. For instance, a noisy or dark environment, or many people talking at the same time, might make it difficult for people with hidden disabilities to participate fully in a conversation. Hidden disabilities can include low vision, seizure disorders, hearing loss, learning disabilities, head injuries, mental illness, or health conditions such as arthritis.

- Speak to a person with a disability as you would anyone else. It is perfectly fine to say "See you later" to a person who is blind or "Gotta run" to a person who uses crutches or a wheelchair.

Text Courtesy: Disability Etiquette Handbook, City of San Antonio Disability Access Office, US Illustrations-Kanwal Singh, Action for Ability Development & Inclusion (AADI)