National Autistic Society | World Autism Awareness Week 30 March - 5 April

Top tips for helping autistic people

With the help of autistic people and their families, the National Autistic Society has created some handy tips on how to help autistic people.

We know that a better understanding of autism will improve the lives of the 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.

There are lots of easy ways for you to help us create a society that works for autistic people.

www.autism.org.uk

1 Anxiety about unexpected changes or events

Autistic people may... feel anxiety about changes or unexpected events.

Top tips:

1. Give people as much notice as possible about changes to plans or events they might not be expecting.
2. If someone is distressed because of changes or unexpected events, give them time to calm down.
3. Understand that what might feel like a small change or a nice surprise to you, can seem very scary to some people.

2 Sensory sensitivity

Autistic people may...

be under-or over-sensitive to sound, smells, light, taste and touch. This is called sensory sensitivity.

Top tips:

1. Provide a quiet space to retreat to when needed.
2. Understand that autistic people can be extremely sensitive to things like noise, bright lights or certain types of touch - for some even hugging can be painful.
3. If you know you are going to places with bright lights or loud noises, give people advance warning to they can plan around this or prepare themselves.

3 Time to process information

Autistic people may...

need extra time to process information, like questions or instructions.

Top tips:

1. Take the time to explain things clearly and give people time to process and respond.
2. Remember clear communication is good for everyone.
3. At work or school, make sure important points like rules or instructions are given in writing.

4 Social anxiety

Autistic people may... face high levels of anxiety in social situations.

Top tips:

1. When arranging social events give plenty of notice and as much information of what to expect as possible.
2. Provide a quiet calmer space at your event where people can retreat to.
3. Think about how to alleviate the anxiety - like sitting your autistic guest next to someone they know.

5 Communication and interaction

Autistic people may...

have difficulties communicating and interacting with others.

Top tips:

1. Do not rely on body language or facial expressions as some autistic people can struggle with this.
2. If someone is having difficulty communicating, give them time. If you still don't get a response, try re-phrasing what you said.
3. Try to avoid irony, sarcasm, abstract language and idioms as some autistic people find it difficult to understand it. Use clear language and say what you mean.

More information

There are lots of easy ways for you to help us create a society that works for autistic people.

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The National Autistic Society is a charity registered in England and Wales (269425) and in Scotland (SC039427)

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