

What Should I Say?

As caregivers of children with autism, we appreciate any effort you make to connect with us and our loved ones. We realize you want to say the “right thing” but may be unsure about what is appropriate. Here are some helpful hints to help you interact with us and understand the world of autism from our perspectives. Thank you for your support!

Please Avoid

- He looks so normal. Are you sure he has autism?
- She'll grow out of it.
- I'm sorry.
- He needs better discipline. Just give him a good spanking.
- What's wrong with her?
- Don't you think you've put him through enough? Aren't you overdoing it with the therapy?
- Any cliché: “Everything happens for a reason.” “We aren't given what we can't handle” etc.
- Just get a sitter.
- That's ok. My kid does the same thing. (There's a difference when your child is a toddler vs a teenager)
- It's fine. Just let him do it. (Not helpful when we are working on appropriate social skills with our child)
- You really should make time for yourself.
- She'll eat when she's hungry.
- What's his “special talent?” Is he a genius like Rainman?
- Making suggestions without knowing anything about the child's current therapy program.
- Staring at our child and family.

Please Say

- How's your child doing?
- What is autism? Why do they call it a spectrum?
- What strategies would you like me to use when I'm with your child?
- What are his interests?
- If you need some time for yourself, I'd be happy to help.
- What are her food preferences?
- Wow! He's come so far!
- I don't know what you're going through, but I'm willing to listen if you need to talk.
- What kind of treatment program do you use for your child?
- Your child is so good at _____
- Is there anything I can do to help? Can I offer to help you with _____
- Your child has taught me so much!
- How can I best explain autism to my children?
- Before you visit, is there anything I can do beforehand to make things comfortable for your child?
- Your child is (insert any compliment)
- You can also make attempts to interact with our kids. Don't worry if he doesn't respond. Just keep trying.



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