



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
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Imagine that you're in your classroom in school and you have no idea what to say or do. Next, imagine you're in the cafeteria at school and you're eating alone – again – because you just don't know how to have a conversation with your peers. Those peers are making fun of you but you don't know what you've done to cause them to do that. Finally, you are having a panic attack because there's an assembly today that will change your schedule and you weren't given prior notice to prepare yourself and figure out what to do. These are just a few of the many challenges faced every day by individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. For these individuals the thousands of interactions that we all participate in so easily every day can be a mystery and an impossible hurdle to jump. For many it's easier to stay by themselves than to try to figure out and follow the many social cues that we all know how to follow.

We all know that the number of people being diagnosed with Autism seems to be greater every day so what can parents and teachers do to help them? Perhaps the most helpful thing we can do for children on the Autism spectrum is to get them into early intervention, as quickly as possible. The younger children are when they start therapy, the better their chances of learning to function smoothly in our social environments.

In addition to starting therapy for the child, the entire family will need to understand what they need to do to help the child on the spectrum best succeed. This may involve parents observing the therapies used and doing the same things at home to ensure that the child is able to perform the same tasks across many environments.

If your child is in school make sure that your school system is well equipped to teach students on the spectrum. He/she will need to have a teacher who understands your child's needs and how to change troublesome behaviors into acceptable behaviors as well as how to help your child learn how function in a variety of social environments. Find out how much time the Autistic Support teacher spends with your child and what methods he/she will use to help your child succeed. Also, be a contributor to your child's educational program, after all, you know your child the best and what your child responds to.

Next, remember that all children with Autism are different and they all respond to different methods of teaching. What works for one child may not work at all for another child and a good teacher will recognize this and work with the strengths of the child to help him/her learn and succeed.

Last, aim high! Children with Autism may have a disability but they also have a wonderful wealth of abilities and strengths as well. Tap into those strengths and expect that each child may be able to meet and exceed those expectations!

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