

# AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

## A Guide for Students

Autism Spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder that limits social interactions and communication. As peers to an autistic individual, one must be sensitive enough to understand how to interact with them socially while also being mindful of not excluding them because of their condition. Here are some tips to help you understand how you can have fruitful interactions with an individual with ASD.

### Be Inclusive

Excluding the 'odd' child out from social activities is a common thing in schools. Even if Autistic students act differently than you do, it is never an excuse to ignore them. They may seem unresponsive to your offer of friendship at first, but if you make an attempt to understand them at a level they are comfortable with, you'll find that they also have the desire to connect with people. Be informed and offer to help if there is a need for it. Make accommodations whenever possible.

### Respect Physical Boundaries

In friendship, it is common to want to be close to others through physical touch in order to solidify your relationship. However, some people find it difficult to deal with that sort of contact. It is important to recognise that not everyone has the same affinity for touch that you do, and accommodate those needs. It is never okay to hug or hold someone without their consent.



### Avoid Name-Calling

When faced with the unknown or the odd, it is typical for students to separate themselves from it. Due to lack of understanding, engage in discrimination, whether verbal or physical. Instead of hurting an autistic student's feelings, because of their behaviour, it is important to be sensitive. They do not experience the world in the same way you do, and that is never an excuse to make life harder for them.



### Be Sensitive to their Routines

A symptom of autism is the desire for order and routines. This helps them direct focus and alleviates the stress of unpredictability. It may be eating the same meal everyday, taking the same path to school or keeping their space orderly. You should never interrupt those routines, as it helps them process the world better.

