

UNDERSTANDING AUTISM

A Handout for Parents

Dear Parents, best wishes on your journey of understanding autism. We hope this handout is useful in conveying information about autism and its strengths, what you can do next and where you can look for more information.

What is autism?

Autism is a type of neuro-diversity—one of the many ways in which people's brains can be unique. Autistic brains are wired differently to most people's brains, as a result of which autistic people see, hear, and feel things differently. They may sometimes socialise or communicate differently, and they also have really cool talents and strengths.

Strengths of autism

Autism can give people many strengths and abilities:

- **Unique perspective:** Autistic people often have unique ways of looking at the world. This can lead to ideas and insights that others might not think of.
- **Enthusiasms:** Many autistic people are passionate about specific topics of their interest. With the right support, their enthusiasms can enable them to make significant contributions to their communities.
- **Focus:** Autistic people can focus deeply on their enthusiasms. Once they get into something they really enjoy, they can dive in and understand it deeply.
- **Visual learning:** Autistic people often learn and understand clearly when pictures and other visual aids such as timers and calendars are used.

Autism isn't just about challenges. It's just as much about your child's talents and perspectives that make our world a better place.

What You Can Do Next

As a parent, you play an important role in supporting your child's development and well-being. But first:

- **Pause:** Feeling upset, angry, or experiencing a rollercoaster of emotions including relief to receive a diagnosis is completely normal. Allow yourself and your child the time to process the knowledge. Just because you now have a word to describe your child's uniqueness doesn't mean your child is any different today than they were yesterday.
- **Build your team:** Embrace the support and sense of belonging that other autistics and their families can offer you and your child. You're very welcome to join Sethu's Parent Support Group for Autism on Signal Messenger. Please contact us for the link.

- **Listen to autistic voices:** Resources and experiences from the wider autistic community can help you understand autism and your child better. The Reframing Autism website run by autistic people to change how society perceives autism, is particularly helpful.

Additional Resources

- **Uniquely Human by Dr Barry Prizant** is a must-read for anyone who lives with and loves an autistic person. It's one of the most empathic, wise, and insightful books you could read about autism.
- **Neurodiversity: The New Normal**, a Ted Talk by Cynthia Coupe on YouTube.

Please let us know if you'd like any more information on books, articles, videos and social media. We're here to help!

Remember

- Autism isn't a defect to be fixed or an illness to be cured. It's just a different way of experiencing the world.
- Never underestimate your child's potential for growth and success.
- Take time for yourself. Ask for help when you need it. Looking after yourself helps you to stay healthy and care for your child better.

Together, let's create a world where every child is valued and accepted for who they are.

References

- Reframing Autism. (n.d.). Introduction to autism part 2: Next steps after a childhood diagnosis. Reframing Autism. <https://reframingautism.org.au/introduction-to-autism-part-2-next-steps-after-a-childhood-diagnosis/>
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