

Autism: Support for the Whole Family

Autism spectrum disorder, or ASD, affects how a child talks, plays, learns, and connects with others. Each child with autism is different, and each family faces their own challenges as they support a child with ASD.

Family members may feel:

- Confused or unsure about what autism means for the child's future
- Tired or stressed from extra caregiving needs
- Worried about how to help the child do well
- Sad or lonely at times

Families do best when they have support, care, and time to rest.



With the right support, families can find more joy and less stress.

Brothers and Sisters

It is not always easy to be a sibling of a child with ASD. Brothers and sisters may feel:

- Left out because their sibling needs more attention
- Confused about why their sibling acts differently
- Embarrassed, worried, or even jealous at times

Ways to support siblings:

- Make special one-on-one time for them.
- Let them ask questions. Give honest, age-appropriate answers.
- Help them understand autism using books or stories.
- Notice and comment on their patience and kindness.
- Let them join fun family activities, even if their sibling cannot.

Support for Parents

Parents may feel a wide range of emotions:

- **Stress:** From managing therapy, school, or behaviors
- **Worry:** About the future or daily needs
- **Guilt:** Even though autism is not caused by anything parents did
- **Loneliness:** Especially if friends or family do not understand or are unhelpful

Parents will do best when they take breaks and ask for help when needed. If possible, find a trusted friend or family member to be with your child so you can get out now and again.

Other advice for parents includes:

- Join a support group to share feelings and learn from others.
- Talk to a counselor if you feel overwhelmed.
- Create predictable routines at home. They help children with ASD get through the day with fewer meltdowns.
- Celebrate small wins. Each step forward matters.

When to Get Help

It is OK to need support. Reach out to your care team if:

- You or your partner often feel very sad, worried, or angry.
- A sibling is acting out, withdrawing, or seems overly stressed.



- You feel burned out or unable to manage daily care.
- You want help finding family counseling or support groups.

Therapists, social workers, and counselors can help family members talk about feelings, solve problems, and feel less alone.

Trusted Resources

Your care team is always here to answer any questions you may have. You can also find support through trusted websites and organizations that are made to help families just like your own.

- **CDC Autism Resources:** The Centers for Disease Control has many resources and answers to common questions.
- **National Institute of Mental Health:** NIMH has a wealth of resources, including the latest research into ASD and clinical trials.
- **Autism Speaks:** This group has chapters throughout the U.S. They can help you find local resources and supports for your child into adulthood.
- **Autism Society of America:** This group also has chapters nationwide. It connects families to support and resources in their community.

Questions for Your Care Team

If you do not already have the answers, here are good questions to ask your care team:

- Which services are right for my child and family?
- Where can I find local family support groups or sibling programs?
- How do I talk to others about my child's needs?
- What can help our family cope better at home or school?

Thank You for Choosing Us

Thank you for trusting us with your care. We are here to support you and want you to feel your best. Contact us with any questions.



IF YOU HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, CALL 911 OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM.

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.

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