

Jennifer's Suggestions

- 1 Please don't try to make us "normal." We'd much rather be functional. It's hard to be functional when you have to spend all your time and energy focusing on making eye contact and not tapping your feet.

- 2 Please don't overprotect, indulge, or cosset us. We already have enough social problems without additionally learning to be spoiled and self-indulgent.

- 3 Don't teach us social skills according to how you wish the world was, or even how you think it is. Look carefully at what is really going on and teach us real world rules.

- 4 Don't talk and/or act as if your life would be perfect or sooooo much easier if you had a "normal" child. We don't thrive on knowing that we are the children you didn't want.

- 5 Don't make the mistake of thinking that teaching us typical behaviors and successful masking means we are "cured." Please remember that the more typical our behavior seems, the harder we are working. What is natural, simple behavior to you is a constant intense effort for us.

- 6 Please don't punish us with rewards or reward us with punishments. For those of us who find recess to be the most stressful part of school, any action that will keep us in from recess is one we will learn to repeat ad infinitum. Getting rewarded for good behavior with fashionable but really itchy clothing will train us to NOT behave too well!

- 7 If you assiduously train us to imitate and conform to other children's behavior, don't be shocked if we learn to curse, whine for popular toys, dress in ways you don't like, and eventually drink, smoke, and attempt to seek out sex as teenagers. Those "nice kids" you think so highly of do a lot of things you don't know about – or don't you remember high school?

8 Please do give us information about ASD/Asperger's early on at a level we can digest. We need to know what's going on — and we will figure out that something is "wrong" with us whether you tell us or not.

9 Don't avoid a diagnosis or help for us because you are scared of us being labeled. Without that diagnosis and appropriate support, our teachers, family, and fellow students will give us plenty of labels — and we might just believe them if we hear them often enough

10 Don't force us to do things we can't do. A forced social situation won't teach us social skills any more than dumping us in the middle of the Pacific Ocean will teach us to swim.

11 Don't punish us for what other kids do. The fact that other kids tease and torture us for benign "Autistic" behaviors doesn't mean we need to change, it means they do. Needing to bounce or swing for the whole recess is not morally wrong; tormenting someone for having a neurological disability is.

12 Don't attempt to use humiliation or public embarrassment to "teach us a lesson." We get way too much of that from other people, and the only lesson learned is that we can't trust you either.

13 Do punish us (or give us "consequences," heaven help us) when it is necessary to do so — but make the connection between cause and effect very, very clear. We often need visual aids to understand how our behavior can cause an unwanted result for us!

14 Don't cut us too much slack when our behavior is potentially dangerous to us. For example, adolescent pre-stalking behavior should result in serious consequences — because not treating such behavior seriously when we are young can lead to problems involving law enforcement when we're older!