
Understanding Autism

A Guidebook for Teens and
Tweens



SANFORD AUTISM
CONSULTING



Introduction

Are you a clinician supporting teens and tweens with Autism? Or, are you a parent of a teen or tween with Autism? If so, have you considered disclosing Autism as a diagnosis for your client/child? This does not have to be a scary experience for you or your child/client. This guidebook will assist you in having the discussion with your teen/tween and empowering them with knowledge about their strengths and challenges. By starting now, your child/client will become well equipped as their own self-advocate. By sharing about Autism, we will continue to increase awareness and acceptance for our wonderfully unique children/clients.

Let's begin...

Understanding Autism

Some people have Autism. This means that their brains are just “wired differently.”

Autism is:

- *A range of conditions described by problems in social skills, language and behavior*
- *Young children can have Autism, or they find out when they are older*

Autism has three levels:

Level 1: Also known as Asperger’s Syndrome or High-Functioning Autism: People with Level 1 Autism need some support to communicate and learn: however, they may also be really smart and know a lot of words.

Level 2: People with Level 2 Autism need moderate supports to communicate and learn; they may speak in simple sentences and have a hard time making friends.

Level 3: People with Level 3 Autism need maximum supports to communicate and learn; they may understand things, but they may speak very little or not at all.



Some famous people have Autism/High-Functioning Autism/Asperger's Syndrome:


- *JAMES DURBIN Singer from American Idol (TV show)*
- *DARYL HANNAH Actress (movies "Splash," and "Steel Magnolias"; Netflix show "Sense8")*
- *DAN AYKROYD Actor (movie "Ghostbusters" ; co-founder of The House of Blues locations)*
- *TIM BURTON Director (movies "Beetlejuice," "Charlie & the Chocolate Factory," "Alice in Wonderland")*
- *TEMPLE GRANDIN Animal Scientist, Author, Public Speaker*

People with Autism have great strengths:

- *Honest*
- *Fair/Follows the rules*
- *Great long-term memory*
- *Detail-Oriented*
- *Visual Learner*

People with Autism also have challenges:

- *Understanding humor/sarcasm*
- *Short-term memory weakness*
- *Difficulty summarizing main ideas*
- *Trouble understanding "hidden social rules"*
- *Hard to plan for long-term assignments*



Here are some of the best jobs for people with Autism:

- *Computer Programmer*
- *Animal Trainer*
- *Engineer*
- *Journalist*
- *Photographer*
- *Architect*
- *Laboratory Technician*
- *Bank Teller*
- *Statistician*
- *Librarian*

Autism is just one of the many “Invisible Disabilities” that people face; an “Invisible Disability” may have symptoms that no one can see, but can greatly impact people’s lives. Other Invisible Disabilities that some people with Autism have include: ADHD, Depression, OCD, and Anxiety.

Autism Statistics:

- *In 2014, 1 in 68 children (1 in 42 boys and 1 in 189 girls) were found to have Autism at some level.*
- *Autism is the fastest-growing serious developmental disability in the U.S.*
- *There is no exact cause known for Autism, but in some cases researchers have found that traits may be heredity (“run in the family”).*



What can help Autism:

- *There is no known cure for Autism; however, thousands of people have found help with effective treatments, such as Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Behavioral Therapy.*
- *Talk to a parent, trusted adult, or therapist about your feelings or to ask questions*
- *Join a support group so that you can meet other great people with Autism, just like you!*

All About Me-Plan

Here is a great plan to complete with our teen/tween after they have learned more about their strengths and challenges related to Autism. Then, review annually or as significant changes occur.

My name is

My birthday is

My favorite things include (color, food, sports):

My hobbies are

I am really good at

I have a hard time with

What really helps me is

All About Me-Plan

I am interested in going to college: YES NO

I am interested in the following careers

What I can do this year to prepare for my future

As an adult, I want to live: (circle one)

with my parents with roommates by myself

What I can do this year to prepare for my future living arrangements

All About Me-Plan

When I think about Autism, I feel

When I think about Autism, I think

I have these questions about Autism

The three things that I want other people to know about Autism are

I have a safe people to talk to about my feelings, including

When I'm upset or afraid, I can also try

I am a great person!

All About Me-Story

This is a great tool to help teens and tweens become more proactive in discussing Autism with others. Discuss these statements and help your child/client to complete this story.

This can be used to share with teachers, friends, classrooms, etc.

My name is.....

I have Autism.

That just means that my brain works differently.

I am really good at....

Some things that are hard for me are....

What really helps me is....

Two things that I want people to know about Autism are.....