Phoenix Children's

Autism Spectrum 101



What is Autism?

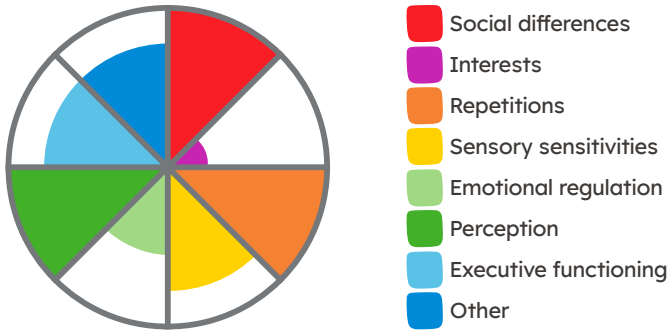
Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects social communication and behavior.



The Autism Spectrum is Not Linear



Autism may look more like:



Tips to Support Children on the Autism Spectrum

- Preview what's coming, step by step
- Explain steps in words that the child will understand
- Use social stories to help the child know what to expect
- Offer sensory choices like dimmer lights or headphones, to help them feel more comfortable
- Cut down on extra noise, light or other sensory input when you can
- Check the child's care plan

Hospitals can be Overwhelming for Children on the Autism Spectrum

- Alarms/medical equipment
- Bright lighting
- Crowded waiting rooms
- Sounds/noises
- Strong smells
- Transitions
- Uncertainty
- Unexpected touch or procedures

Reframing Language for Autism Acceptance & Awareness

Instead of asking "How do we stop this behavior?"

Ask "What is this child trying to tell us or need right now?"

Dos

- Do use neutral, descriptive language
  "Requires support with..." or *"Benefits from..."*
- Do respect family and patient preference for Identify-first or Person-first language
  "Autistic person" or *"Person with autism"*
- Do teach families that autism is different for every person.
- Do explain that support needs can change over time. A person may need more or less help depending on where they are and how they are feeling

Don'ts

- Don't refer to the child as:

Non-compliant	Manipulative
Low-functioning	Defiant
Severe	

Identity-First or Person-First

Autistic Person

- "Autistic" describes a person's identity
- Puts the focus on accepting autism as part of the person
- Many autistic people prefer this

Person with Autism

- "Autism" describes a condition someone has
- Highlights the person is separate from the diagnosis
- Some people prefer this





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