

BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS FOR PARENTS OF AUTISTIC STUDENTS

While your kid continues to enjoy the summer, you cannot avoid thinking about the new and upcoming school year. This is actually pretty normal and might be beneficial for both yourself and your child in the aspects of preparation and precaution. Unlike your home or your child's playground, the school is an institution that implements rules and sanctions that must be strictly followed, which can oftentimes make it a more challenging and intimidating place for your kid. Preparing for a back to school activity requires you to look into many factors that can possibly cause problems for your autistic child. These factors depend on your kid's autistic condition, such as sensory issues, behaviour, response to changes, social withdrawal, and communication difficulties. Determining what factors should be given priority is crucial in an effective and fruitful preparation that will surely help your child deal with back to school challenges. But if this is your child's first back to school phase, it wouldn't be unusual that you will have little no idea about what to do. By reading the following back to school tips that we have provided for responsible parents like you, your child will overcome this academic hurdle with ease.

Make the necessary research.

You cannot effectively prepare for your child's future school program if you do not know what to expect. Learning the nature of your child's next academic battleground is fundamental in helping them adjust smoothly to the transition. This includes determining if the school already knows about your child's autism condition, if your child still needs extra support to effectively carry out the student responsibilities, and if it is possible to meet with your child's teachers before the start of the next school year so you can make arrangements that are beneficial for all parties involved. Not only do these matters require your involvement as a parent, these are also crucial aspects in your child's academic transitioning that when not given emphasis, will lead to a troubled school year ahead.

Observe the dress code.

Many schools impose a dress code program that must be strictly followed by its

constituents. Even if your child has autism, it might not be good to push for exemption on the dress code because it can create the wrong interpretation on others (favouritism, special treatment, etc.), and promote dissent on the school regulations. It would be better to study the dress code and make the necessary adjustments on your child's school outfit out from it. If the school introduces uniforms, you can have your kid wear a primary layer of deep-pressure inner shirt that acts as a calming tool. Wearing a weighted vest or a pressure jacket will most likely not violate the dress code as long as your child is wearing the uniform. There are also a lot of fashionable sensory jewellery that you can give to your children, such as the chewable necklace, brick bracelet, and spiky ring. The fabric of your child's clothes must be seamless and without any button or zipper, as much as possible.

Make the school sensory friendly.

No matter how accommodating and supportive the teacher and classmates are to your child, your kid's overall schooling may get hampered if there are still sensory factors present in the classroom and the campus. Sensory inputs such as bright lights, squeaking chalk, pungent food, and similar others can easily overwhelm an autistic student and trigger meltdowns if not quickly attended. To make sure that your child's classroom is sensory-friendly, you have to visit the school and check the environment yourself. If there are indeed sensory inputs, talk to your child's teacher about it and make necessary arrangements. It would be beneficial to both your child and the teacher if you provide a Break Box or Sensory Tool Kit to be used not only by your child but by all students inside the classroom.

Introduce exercise routines to your child.

The school is a very busy place that can easily drain a child's energy. To improve your kid's maximum stamina, body coordination and posture, introducing a simple exercise routine that can be done before going to school may provide very positive results. If your child is not a fan of exercises, try introducing games like trampoline hopping, a simple obstacle course, and climbing bars. These activities will jumpstart your child and make them active for the rest of the day which not

only promotes better learning but also their interaction with other students.

Plan your child's meals.

Getting ready for school days also includes developing a meal plan for your child.

Your main goal is to provide highly nutritious food that will stimulate your child's brain activities and boost their immune system. To overcome picky eating behaviour, try giving your child crunchy and chewy fruits and vegetables. This is the time to discourage eating junk food and sweets which can only increase your child's sugar levels and the risk of reactive hypoglycaemia or fatigue caused by high content of blood glucose.

Choose autism-friendly school supplies.

Many companies are now focusing on the special needs of children with disabilities and disorders in manufacturing their products to be distributed in the market. So if you are planning to buy new school supplies for your kid, do not just settle with the traditional ones, instead check if the store has an autism corner and proceed to purchase the products displayed in there. You might find special guiding papers, sensory-friendly pencils, and seamless, sipper-less backpacks.

Reduce your child's gadget time and get him familiarised with a new schedule.

It is time to cut off your child's access to iPad, cell phone, tablet, and other gadgets that they only use for games and entertainment. You might need to start implementing these new rules weeks before the start of school so that your child is given time to adjust. You must also develop a new schedule, have it printed or written in a visually helpful material and have your child familiarise it. It may also be helpful if you develop new routines designed for school days.

HOW TO CONQUER COLLEGE AS A STUDENT WITH ASD

Being a college student is not easy, and the road to success may not be that smooth as one would expect it to be. For an autistic person, that same road may even be bumpier and more crooked as they continue to face the challenges that their disorder would throw at them along the way. As autistic individuals enter a college institution, they will soon realise that it is not the same as their previous educational playground – high school. Books aren't as free and affordable as before, professors and faculty aren't too forgiving, topics and lessons aren't spoon-fed, and the number of acquaintances is greater than any close friend you might have. Recognising that college requires students to exert more effort in their studies and become more resourceful, your student life as a person with ASD will be more occupied than before. How do you deal with the challenges ahead and cope up with the new environment as soon as possible without compromising your special needs as a person with ASD? Here are a few helpful tips to lighten the load and make your educational endeavours all worth it.

Make a clear and concise class schedule. Passing in all subjects is a student's top priority, which is much true in college. Having one will make it easier for you to estimate the total number of hours you'll need for all your classes and to plan out how much of the free time you'll give for studying. Make sure to include in your schedule the duration of each class, and make allowances for contingency situations such as emergency meetings make up classes and special examinations. Doing so will make you more efficient with your book readings, research, and self-studies as you can allocate much needed time for these activities without worrying that you'll compromise your sleeping time and other non-academic aspects.

Plan out all your non-academic activities ahead as much as possible. If you're living in a dormitory far away from home, that means you'll have to carry some household responsibilities with you. These duties can easily affect your study time if you do not know how to manage your free time and allocate a specific portion of these tasks. As part of taking care of yourself in college, you will have to do the laundry on your own, as well as room cleaning and groceries,

if needed. But if you have planned out most of these things in advance you won't be having any trouble accomplishing a focused and unhindered study time. Remind yourself to relax every once in a while. Other than these mundane activities, you will also be invited to many non-academic events simply for recreation or any other purpose, which means that you set aside a portion of your time for these situations as well. Your classmate or friends may invite you to the cinema, sports practice, or gatherings. While you can just refuse to go to all of them, college students are also encouraged to participate in non-academics to relieve the stress caused by school pressures, including students with ASD. As a famous adage goes, "all work and no play make a man dull", which is also applicable to college life. If you find it hard to join in social conversations, maybe you can enjoy other things like the food or drinks, the music, and the ambience. Choose the best study environment for you. As a student with ASD, distractions can be one of your weaknesses that can really hamper your study if not addressed. What you need to do first is to determine the type of stimulus or stimuli that cause you to get distracted, and then avoid studying in places where such stimuli are present. Like those of normal students, the library is one of the most suitable places to study, because there are fewer distractions to be found. But you can't always control the situation in a library, and there are times when the place is more crowded than usual hence not good for your study set up. If that's the case, you have to find a more study-friendly area like an empty classroom or a specific cubicle in the library that provides more personal space. Set your priorities according to schedules and deadlines. If the nature of your autism condition makes you less able to prioritise accordingly on a given set of objectives, it is highly encouraged that you start developing your sense of priority to become more productive with your studies. All of your efforts would be gone to waste if you fail to recognise what's more important to accomplish first. You shouldn't spend most of your time studying for a long examination to be conducted two weeks from now if you got a class report to be done the day after. While a quiz may be less important than a major research paper that's due next month, you should still study first for it if it will be given not later than next week.

Avoid hyper-focusing in any of your study time. Some autistic individuals have the tendency to focus too much on things that interest them, often neglecting their surrounding environment as well as their other needs, to the point where they even forget to eat or drink something. If you have this kind of tendency, it is very important to set up a timer to remind you that you also need to take a break from whatever it is you are studying. Not only will this help you remember to address other needs, but it will also improve your retention and somehow replenish your stamina for more studying.

Improve your ability to organise by using visual tools. Make good use of visual aids to further increase your memory recall when it comes to your schedule or timetable. A set of pictures or distinct objects can be mixed in with the schedule you created paired with a systematic colour-coding to help you with your study time management.

As helpful as it is, all of the above-mentioned tips are generated from a summary of statistical data and personal accounts of college students with autism. We recognise the fact that all individuals, even those with autism disorder, are different in a way and the same goes for our needs and preferences. If you have more concerns regarding this topic or the content of this page, we recommend that you seek professional help or see further links for more support.

IDEAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR EDUCATORS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Becoming a good teacher is not a simple feat to accomplish, knowing that you carry the responsibility of moulding the younger generations into a better version of themselves. What you teach to your students can greatly impact their lives, emphasising the importance of your educational methods and materials, especially for children who act like a sponge in absorbing anything that they can learn from their surroundings. As their mentor, you must act as a role model to your young students, and be able to facilitate their growth and development much like their second parent. This responsibility is even made more challenging for educators of children with special needs, such as those who are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Knowing that the typical classroom setting may not work as effectively for autistic students, you are now confronted with the challenge of addressing their needs while putting into consideration their autism features that might hinder their learning. That is why to become an effective mentor for autistic children, you must possess more than one or two characteristics that are expected from an ideal educator. Assessing yourself whether you have all or some of these characteristics is important to improve in your teaching career.

Creative and Flexible

Children on the spectrum may have different strengths and weaknesses in relation to the nature of their diagnosis. A great educator for these special needs children must be able to come up with creative teaching methodologies that can create avenues for all students to showcase and hone their skills and talents. When a linear type of teaching technique is proven ineffective, you must be creative and flexible enough to come up with fast and reliable alternative system for classroom teaching. Your teaching method must be able to include all of your students, even if it means having to teach the same educational material in several forms or manners.

Highly Organised

A chaotic teaching methodology and a messy classroom will eventually create an undesirable atmosphere that is not conducive for your autistic students. If you

want to be an ideal educator to autistic children, you must first develop and enhance your organising skills. You can start by creating color-coded teaching materials, easy-to-understand visual aids, schedules and graphs, labelled classroom equipment and areas, as well as an up-to-date classroom record. There are dozens of applications and software that you can use to ease your organising responsibilities and automate most of the time-consuming tasks, making you save resources and time. This sense of orderliness can help boost your students' confidence and enthusiasm in class, and they might even adopt and bring your systematic methods to each of their homes.

Perceptive and Calm

Being a second parent to your autistic students, it is also your duty to keep an eye on their behaviour and detect possible autism-related issues. When autistic kids are not able to communicate their needs and concerns, there's a possibility that they might go into a meltdown. Hence detecting the signs of these possible meltdowns before they occur will help address their needs as early as possible, avoiding a tough situation from happening. When the situation goes from bad to worse and a meltdown becomes unavoidable, you must be able to maintain your calm to be able to deal with the situation with patience and objectivity. If you also panic in the midst of your student's outburst, you may not be able to come up with a proper and effective solution. Exhibiting a calm nature will also help decrease your students' anxiety while in the classroom.

Goal-Oriented

Many educators fail to make a great impact on the lives of their students just because they are lacking vision and direction ever since day one. A good mentor not only sees to it that their teaching methodologies and materials are up-to-date but also finds the means to know how much their students have grown. To become an effective and influential educator, you must not forget to set goals prior to the start of the class which will serve as your guiding point throughout the whole academic year. You will then make periodic assessments on your students' learning progress to get an idea on who's lagging behind and needs more attention. Your role as a mentor does not stop after you've already shared

what needs to be imparted to your students inside the class, but it also includes finding out whether they've learned anything out of it.

Naturally Caring for Children

Educators of autistic children embrace the job not just because of the salary and what not, but mainly due to their love and concern for these young kids. If you think you have a big and special place in your heart for kids, then count yourself as a good candidate for an ideal educator. As someone who is more than enthusiastic to work with a group of diverse kids, you will eventually develop a good sense of humour and an aura of charm that's very effective for your young, special students. Children can easily tell whether a person likes them or not, and having a natural desire to nurture and care for kids will easily make your students reciprocate the same positive feeling. When you and your students share a great bond, this will help facilitate a more effective learning process.

Approachable and Cooperative

As a mentor of autistic kids, it is highly important that you always show an approachable personality which most parents like about their child's teachers. Connecting to your students' parents may be a tough job, but it is essential in order to discuss specific matters concerning the welfare of your students. You must be willing to understand the situation of every parent and listen to their concerns and suggestions. You must cooperate with them in coming up with better plans and programs, to prove to them that you are worthy of their trust. After all, you and the parents share a common goal and that is preparing the autistic students for a brighter future.

JOBS

DO YOU WORK FOR PURPOSE OR PAY?

We all need financial reward in order to live.

However, no matter how big your pay packet is, you'll be risking the Monday morning blues if your job satisfaction levels are on the floor.

The thing is, you don't need to sacrifice one over the other – you can have your cake and eat it.

Financial reward and meaningful employment go hand in hand at UK Autistic.

Based in London, UK Autistic is a national charity and social enterprise as well as a commercially minded organisation that values efficiency and effectiveness.

We know, that for most, the opportunity to play a part in changing somebody's life for the better is key to their job satisfaction.

The organisation supports adults and young people on the autistic spectrum with a focus on social therapy, training and vocational placements.

We have a proven system and track record and this project is on an upwards trajectory with no limits. The great thing about UK Autistic is that we work commercially in order to achieve our social goals. This means we create our own funds through enterprise with therapy to include our beneficiaries and service users. We do this in order to re-invest this money back into the organisation to support those who need it most.

This allows us to attract top quality candidates to our roles, from the public and private sector, as we can offer competitive salary packages and a great work/life balance, sector leader learning and development as well as a focus on making sure all colleagues understand our strategy and the role they play on delivering it.

We have a strong, value based culture, camaraderie and closeness to the beneficiaries, service users and the public alike that many colleagues value most. Because UK Autistic works with some of society's most vulnerable people we truly understand the need to look after our colleagues, supporting a healthy and happy workplace and workforce that in turn delivers an exceptional service across the spectrum.

MENTORING AUTISM

HOW TO TEACH EFFECTIVELY IN A CLASS WITH AUTISTIC STUDENTS

Not all teachers are fully trained to teach a class that's composed of both neurotypical and autistic students. But with the current educational setting where high-functioning autistic students are allowed to be fused together with neurotypical students in the same class, there is now an existing pressure for educators to step up their game and be able to act as a valuable teacher for both types of students. To educators, there is a continuing struggle to provide the best educational experience for students who are on the autism spectrum. Your priority is to give them a learning environment that's expected to be different from what most basic schools are offering, given the nature of their disorder. You also have to deal with their unique and challenging behaviours brought by their autism features in such a way that is not only understanding of their condition but also nurturing in a sense. Acting like their second parent is a big role to play as a teacher, which is why you don't only need the right tools and equipment to become an effective educator, you also have to learn the proper ways of communicating and interacting with your autistic students. To maximise your teaching efficiency for your autistic students' valuable education and to help them develop into more equipped and trained individuals on the spectrum, here are the most important tips that you can include in your teaching methodology.

1. Hand out tasks in a very specific and sequenced manner. Autistic individuals take words in their literal sense and find it difficult to follow orders that are not arranged. Help them execute the tasks properly by using very specific words and providing order to your instructions. Your sentence structure must not be too long otherwise you will be giving your autistic students a hard time figuring out what it means. As much as possible, break your statements and phrases into simpler ones. If you're writing the instructions on the board for homework and projects, be sure to number the tasks accordingly.

2. Train your autistic students some basic social skills that they need to observe in a classroom setting, such as taking turns in talking or answering, and the time constraints that they must consider when taking their turn. Those on the spectrum can invade other's personal space without them really knowing it, which may put their classmates at an awkward situation and discourage them to engage with your autistic students. In this regard, teach the latter how to maintain the proper social distance and how to be more considerate when engaging with their classmates.

3. Avoid giving your autistic students a handful of choices in answering a specific question. As much as possible, limit the number of choices to three because they can easily get confused and anxious when given a set of choices and find it hard to arrive at a decision easily. The use of open-ended questions is also discouraged as it will only make answering tougher for autistic students. Questions that are answerable by a "yes" or "no" are much preferred.

4. It is also possible that your autistic student will only respond with a quiet stare to your question at some point in class simply because they did not understand it, so it is not fair to end their turn or opportunity to answer because of it. Instead, you may try to ask them if they understood the question or not, and then start rephrasing it if they said they didn't.

5. Sarcasms and idioms must not be used to address an autistic student in the classroom. If the student did a violation or a mistake in class, saying the word "great" to express your frustration will only lead the student to believe that it was a good thing to do. Instead of using the phrases "sip your lips" or "this assignment is just a piece of cake", just say "keep quiet" or "this assignment is easy".

6. Have your class follow a definite routine of activities. From saying the daily prayer to falling in line and getting out of the classroom, all the things that must be done by the whole class should follow a specific pattern that is regularly performed. Of course, not all the things should be the same. The discussion and interactions during lessons can be different as long as your autistic students know that the daily routines are not disrupted. When there are factors that can cause a change of routine, make the information known to your autistic student as early as possible. This is to avoid overwhelming the student due to a sudden change in the routine they're used to.

7. Use visual aids and other presentation methods to guide the students on what you want them to achieve. Without having a specific reference, your autistic student may not be able to know whether the task has been completed or not. Show them what the completed task looks like, or tell them how near they are at completing it.

8. Do rechecks of the autistic student's understanding on instructions you've given. There are instances when they feel too embarrassed to ask the second time. To make sure that they know what they have to do, call out their names and raise their attention whenever you're about to give the class instructions. You can also have a one-on-one consultation with the student to check up on the given task.

9. Minimise sources of distraction and sensory discomfort for your autistic student. Make sure that they are not experiencing any over or under stimulation of sensory responses, and that there's nothing that can distract them during class. If there are activities where sensory issues are inevitable, you can allow the student not to participate in the said activity.

10. To further enhance their attentiveness in class, link the discussion to some topics that are of their interest. Autistic individuals are more likely to show

eagerness in social interaction and communication when the topic discussed is one that they're interested in.

PREVENTING SCHOOL BULLYING

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR CHILD FROM GETTING BULLIED AT SCHOOL

High functioning autistic students are more susceptible to bullying in school because of their speech and behaviour issues. Neurotypical students who are more articulate and socially active see their autistic classmate or schoolmate as an easy target for bullying, thinking that the latter can't stand up against them in a verbal fight, especially that they most likely have no friends to defend them. Truth be told, many autism traits such as alienation and communication challenges can provide the perfect setup for bullying to happen. As a parent to a kid on the spectrum, you cannot afford to put your child at the risk of getting bullied in school. Unlike accompanying them to a playground or the mall where you can always provide full supervision to your child, sending them to school is a different situation. The most that you can do is hang around in the designated waiting area or stay put in your car while waiting to pick your child up. In such circumstances, you cannot see everything that's happening around your child, like the things that they do together with other students or the things that other students do to your autistic child. Thankfully, there are still many things that you can do to protect your child from getting bullied in a school setting.

Increase Supervision

There are many ways to heighten the level of supervision that you can give to your child, even without you being physically there in the school premises. You can talk to your child's classroom adviser, the school principal, and other school educators and staff, informing them about your child's autism diagnosis and appealing them to look after your child not only during class hours but in other indoor and outdoor school settings as well. This may include their time spent on the school bus, the playground, school canteen, comfort rooms, hallways, and several other school areas where the child may be away from the direct supervision of their classroom adviser. Aside from the educators and school staff, you can also communicate with one or more of your child's schoolmates who show their concern or the student council and classroom officers who you think

are responsible and trustworthy enough to report any cause of worry about your child's well-being while at school.

Intervention and Counselling

When the bullying person or group is caught and reprimanded, the process must not simply end with said students promising not to do the deed again. Bullying has become a serious and nationwide community problem because it is shown to destroy many lives if not prevented or intervened at early detection. The said students must be educated about the cause and effect relationship of bullying to other community issues and must be given immediate and continued counselling so that they can overcome this stage of their lives and be provided with the help they need in facing existing problems at home and at school. Oftentimes, these bullies are misunderstood individuals who are living troubled lives, and they resort to committing such acts to channel their own frustration and anger to others. A sense of parental duty and cooperation from the school can go a long way in helping bullies become responsible and productive individuals in the society.

Talk to your child about it

Sometimes, autistic kids won't even know that they are already being bullied because of their inability to read social situations and respond properly to context and cues. Even when they are being made as the subject of joke or ridicule, your autistic child might still think that it's nothing personal and they are still somewhat friends with the bullies. At crucial times like this, it is best that you inform your child about the nature of bullying and how they can detect such situations. While getting physically hurt may be a clear indication of bullying, emotional and psychological aspects may not be easily detected by your child. Tell your child to be open to you whenever they are confused about how another student treats them, or how they feel uncomfortable whenever they're around a specific individual or group of students. You can also advise your child to report these incidents to their teacher or principal.

Inform your child's classmates

Friends are some of the best protectors one can have, and for your autistic child,

a good place to start earning new ones is their classroom. During the scheduled parent-teacher conference or similar meetings, you can talk to the parents of your child's classmates about your kid's autism condition and get their support in properly informing their child about it. When their own parents are the ones who are explaining this to them, there is a great possibility that your child's classmates can learn to understand and accommodate your child's autism features. It will only be a matter of time until your child will find their new circle of friends who will be there to protect them against bullies.

Train your child for counteractions

It isn't all the time and circumstances that your child's report about the bullying incident will reach the school administration and educators. When you think there's a chance that they'd be facing this battle alone, equip your child with the right verbal counteractions and gestures that will somewhat discourage the bullies from chasing your child. Phrases such as "whatever", "bullying is for losers", and "don't you have more important things to do?" are some of the powerful statements that can catch the bullies off guard after hearing it come from their target's mouth. You can also tell your child to shake their head in disbelief, act unaffected and uninterested, or simply walk fast and away from the bully.

Being an autistic student is already a big hurdle for your child to overcome, which makes being the target of bullying a burden that you just can't let your child carry as well. There are many ways to protect your child from incidents of bullying, and it is up to your own initiative and resourcefulness to find the right solution to this kind of school problem.

SCHOOL INITIATIVES

COST-EFFECTIVE SCHOOL INITIATIVES FOR AUTISTIC STUDENTS

With the increasing number of high-functioning autistic students being enrolled in basic educational institutions, it has become a challenge for schools to provide a holistic and conducive learning environment for students on the spectrum. A typical school setting is undeniably a field full of hurdles for autistic students, and the daily struggles may include a range of problems. The overcrowded corridor is an overwhelming scenario for students with this disorder, and the class discussions can be very challenging for them due to communication challenges. The food cafeteria may be an unwelcoming place for autistic students who have social aversive behaviour, and the school bell, gym lights, and presence of various odours can be easily distracting and irritating for those on the spectrum. While it is the top priority of schools to educate, it is also an integral part of their core responsibilities to see to it that the students are safe from any kind of harm, and are having fun while learning. If you are an educator yourself, you have the great opportunity to raise the concerns about the welfare of autistic students in your school to the administration and its constituents. You can push these initiatives that not only promote the improvement of the quality of education for autistic students but also empower them to become more able students with equal footing as those of their neurotypical classmates and schoolmates.

Hold non-competitive sports events

Autistic individuals have a weak spot in sports-related activities mainly because they have low muscle tone coupled with poor fine and gross motor skills. Part of the school's initiative must be to let these students realise that they are a part of their community in which they strive to belong, by organising team-sports that are not competitive in nature. There should be an emphasis put on the non-competitive nature of the sports activities because autistic individuals deal with defeat and competition in a rather negative way. Team sports such as basketball and volleyball may also bring about social and communication issues that can add pressure to the autistic students thereby rendering them less capable than

their neurotypical peers. Considering all these factors, the school can hold an autism-friendly version of these sports events, where certain adjustments are made to cater to the participating autistic students. For instance, the volleyball net may be positioned at a lower level than the standard point, and shorter basketball nets are used for basketball games instead of the basic one. At the end of the event, all participating students from all teams should be able to receive a trophy or medal to indicate that they all emerged victors.

Have hands-on exercises more often

For those who are not really into sports activities, the school should be able to provide other alternative activities. Autistic students, especially of younger age, are less interested in oral lectures and class discussions. They are more inclined in doing engaging activities that enable them to investigate and observe things on their own. As such, it would be beneficial for them if the school supports the development of hands-on school programs that allow autistic students to touch, feel, smell and stare at their objects of study, and learn along the process. Art classes that employ mixing of paint and other colouring media can provide a new learning experience for autistic students. The same concept can be applied in cooking practicum where they can prepare ingredients and come up with a finished product that they can taste and enjoy. For a more innovative approach, the school can also sponsor Lego building classes and science experiments.

Provide autism aides if necessary

There are instances when the parents of the autistic student would request the assistance of a professional therapist skilled in Applied Behavioural Analysis or ABA to supervise their child in a classroom setting and help the autistic student gain more skills while becoming less dependent on the aide's assistance. The school should facilitate the structuring of an ideal setting for the provision of autism aide to be feasible, aside from simply answering to that request. The best way to address this matter is to include the said system in the drafting of the Individualised Education Program or IEP.

Create an oversight board composed of parents and school admin

To improve the assessment and response to school-related problems that are

encountered by autistic students such as bullying, it is encouraged that the school should form a committee composed of both parents and school staff that will be tasked to review these matters and come up with the best solution. With the parents being able to directly communicate with the school, families of autistic students will be given a greater opportunity to raise their concerns and even initiate programs that will promote the welfare of autistic students in the campus.

Organise autistic-exclusive parties and events

Knowing that many autistic students are often deprived of social interaction, it is common for them to get left out in social gatherings and skip important events like school dances and fairs, even though they really want to join in the fun and enjoy the events too. As such, it would be a good initiative of the school to sponsor similar events that are exclusive to autistic students. This may be in a form of a movie night, video game fest, card and board game day, and similar other activities where they can share their interests, try to understand each other's behaviour and attempt to socialise in their own ways.

Support autistic students in joining student clubs and organisations

With the current legal rulings that aim to provide autistic students equal rights to join or participate in school clubs and organisations as much as their neurotypical counterparts, autism communities are seeing a bigger ray of hope in their advocacy. However, it still goes down to how effective the school is in implementing these rulings in their whole studently. Discrimination against autistic students should be discouraged and sanctions should be imposed to violators of these policies.

SCHOOL LUNCHBOX

LUNCHBOX TIPS FOR PARENTS OF AUTISTIC STUDENTS

The school is not your child's typical playground where they can have as much fun as they like without having a single thing to worry about. When your child becomes a student, they have to carry that academic responsibility of following their school rules and regulations and making the necessary effort to at least garner passing grades in all of their school subjects. Classroom activities will not only be limited to books and board instructions but can also include physical activities that require a great deal of energy. Overall, your child's school endeavours will eventually raise the need to provide them with the right kind of food which will enhance both their intellectual and physical performance in school. This responsibility of the parent is given higher importance when it comes to their autistic child's lunch meals because this is the kind of food serving that most students cannot enjoy inside their homes but only in their school's canteen or dining area. If your child's school does not offer a canteen program for its students, or you simply don't want to trust your child's nutrition to their school canteen, here are some of the lunchbox tips that you need to remember if you're hands on in making your child's mid-day meal.

The Lunchbox

Choosing your child's lunchbox can be as equally important as deciding about the kind of meal you'd have to prepare for them. Your child's lunchbox should not only be functional but must also look and feel very interesting so that your child will eagerly look forward to opening it during lunchtime. Consider going for a lunchbox that's imprinted with your child's favourite cartoon character, or with a unique design that they'll surely love. When it comes to durability and convenience, you have to check the material used in manufacturing the lunchbox. As much as possible, avoid those that are made from PVC plastic because these are known to contain toxic components. Choose only the easy-open lunchboxes for your child to prevent them from getting frustrated over

opening their food, but not those overly loose types that can easily spill over or leak out the contents.

The Contents

Aside from the nutritional content of your child's lunchbox, you must also consider the presentation factor that also influences how much your child enjoys the whole meal. Many parents forget how picky their child can be when it comes to food, and appearance can easily dictate whether or not the contents of the lunchbox are consumed. Considering as well that your child follows a GF/CF diet, there must be special food portions that are not appetising to look at when they're not fashioned in a special way. To add a bit of excitement and fun in your autistic child's overall lunch time, try going for a bento-themed lunchbox. Bento is a kind of Japanese lunchbox that's popular due to the level of creativity one can put into its contents. A bento box is typically comprised of a single portion of meat or fish, a good amount of rice, and a side of vegetables. The container can be a single section or divided into several compartments. What makes bento-themed lunchboxes extra special is the part where the food itself can be shaped and formed in a cool and fun way. The rice or any plain-coloured carbohydrates can be shaped into platforms or cartoon faces, and the more colourful meat and veggies can be used to add details to and decorative parts.

Although it is always preferred to go for fresher ingredients over processed ones, weekdays can be very busy for parents like you. Going for hot dogs and sausages, canned ingredients, and sweetened or pickled fruits and vegetables might be not as nutritional as the fresher options for your child's lunchbox meal. However, there are instances when you have to go for it to save time and resources. It is still a satisfactory choice, but when it comes to processed foods, you have to consider many things such as expiration dates, brand or label, and the presence of certain additives that can cause adverse effects to your child's condition.

About Food Sharing

While sharing food between classmates and schoolmates is a good value that

any parent can teach to their child, autistic students must not be left unchecked in this context. If your child is still not able to learn the nature of their diet, there is a great chance that they'd be willing enough to share their food with others and partake what others give to them as well. To prevent your child from eating gluten and casein containing food, you have to at least educate them about why they have to stick to their GF/CF diet and be more cautious about sharing and swapping food with others. Simple command statements such as "don't eat this or that" will not work when arguing with your autistic child. Instead, provide them with the simple reasoning behind why they have to follow your advice. You can say "because it might worsen your sensory issues" or "it will upset your stomach", and while you're at it, also provide a list of food that they have to avoid and those that they are allowed to eat.

Preparing the Lunchbox

To help your child better understand the importance of eating the meal you prepare for them during school days, it might be a good practice to let them join you in the preparation stage every once in a while. This is a good habit for parents that are not really creative when it comes to making lunchboxes and such, so the extra surprise factor is actually out of the picture. You can teach them about the nutritional value of each food component while you let them arrange the whole lunchbox, as well as the process involved in making them. You might even be surprised how creative your child will be in preparing their own lunchbox. This will not only give you and your child an additional bonding time but it will also be a very educational moment for them.

SEARCHING FOR JOBS

JOBSEARCH 101 FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

One of the inevitable challenges of adulthood is finding a job that you will be able to keep for as long as you could. Once you reach that certain age in your life where you start making decisions for your future, that's when you begin transforming into a more mature individual. Whether you successfully obtained a college degree or not, feeling the pressure of landing a job will be unavoidable especially when your family's finances are already stretched at the maximum. You will realise that as a grown up, it just doesn't seem right to stay in the house and contribute nothing when you can do so much more, like helping your family manage your finances through your own job's salary. Suffering from Autism Spectrum Disorder isn't enough of an excuse to not start taking more adult roles in the family, especially if your disorder lies above the spectrum and you don't have very serious challenges that hinder you to manage your everyday needs and respond to social interactions appropriately. However, as a person with Autism Spectrum Disorder, it is normal to have a lot of questions regarding the what and the how of finding a specific job that will accept applicants with a disorder like you. The following tips may prove to be a life-changer if you take these pointers to heart to successfully land a job much suitable for you.

1. The very first and most obvious thing to do when looking for a job opportunity is to discover within yourself what it really is that you are most passionate about. Out from this, you can easily make a list of jobs that are best suited for your interest or passion. A good-paying job is ideal, but what's more important is that you always enjoy what you're doing to the point where you rarely get tired of performing it on a daily basis. Once you set your eyes on these specific job positions, you must be able to learn the employment process being set for each of these jobs, and of course, prepare for necessary documents and specific requirements for these recruitment opportunities. Like any other job candidate, you also need to prepare yourself for random job interviews and try to anticipate certain questions that potential employers might give to you.

2. Be sure to make up your mind on the matter of disclosing your autistic disorder in your job applications. While the decision to do so remains a personal choice, there are certain advantages and disadvantages of making such disclosure to your prospect employers. If you choose to disclose, you might need to prepare appropriate explanation that would still highlight your strengths as an individual and a future employee. You must also anticipate harsh questions and then plan on appropriate responses when you get caught in awkward and mostly offensive situations. In order to get better insights, consulting another autistic individual who has good experience with job interviews is a good idea.

3. Think of the ways to put yourself in a more advantageous position than the rest of your candidates. Job interviews are often harsh, especially to those who aren't prepared for the competition that develops among interviewees. As much as possible, sell yourself with your educational background (if you come from a prominent school or university) and any skill-based training that you've completed. Do not leave out any positives and be sure to make yourself appear as a strong person if your interviewer happens to know of your condition, by

briefly explaining how you manage to live with it and emerge as a better person from your disorder. You may even get a better shot at your job search if you have certain capabilities that are characteristic of your autism disorder, such as good attention to detail and strong focus on routinely tasks.

4. If you have already worked before but stopped for a much-needed break, chances are your skill set will become outdated or less valued in the present status quo of the industry you are in. In order to make a successful comeback, it may be necessary to improve your competitive edge by taking any related job that is offered to you, even when they are low-paying or voluntary in nature. These jobs will provide you with more training and skill set to add to your arsenal, which will eventually pay off for the next job opportunity you choose to apply.

5. Build as much confidence in yourself as you can. Self-affirmations on certain strengths, talents, and abilities will help a lot in giving yourself a boost of self-esteem. Work on your weaknesses like engaging in conversations and accepting

criticisms, and turn them into more strengths that you can use in your prospect job interviews in the future. While a good support system from family and friends is a great factor in acing a job interview, your own level of confidence can play a huge part in the result of your job employment.

6. Make sure to exhaust all the job listings that are made available from all sources. May it be on newspapers or the internet, never settle for a couple of job offerings and just give up when you fail to pass in any of them. You should know that most job listings on the front pages are offered to everybody hence the competition is very strong. What you can do is to narrow down your research to more specific criteria, like jobs being offered for people with disorder like autism. When you become more thorough with your job search, you may surprise yourself with the number of opportunities that will be presented to you.

As helpful as it is, all of the abovementioned pointers are generated from a summary of statistical data and personal accounts concerning job search experiences of individuals with autism. We recognise the fact that all individuals, even those with autism disorder, are different in a way and the same goes for our needs and preferences. If you have more concerns regarding this topic or the content of this page, we recommend that you seek professional help or see further links for more support.

VIDEOGAME BENEFITS

BENEFITS OF VIDEOGAMES ON AUTISTIC KIDS

We have come to the point where discussions about the effects of technological advancements to the condition of autistic individuals have become inevitable. As more and more game applications are being made every day to respond to the growing market for gaming hardware and electronic device, parents can't help but feel constantly worried about their autistic child's response to video games. Aware of what gaming addiction can do to a child's lifestyle and future, many sceptic parents try their best to keep any kind of video game unknown to their child. There are also research findings that somehow back this notion about video games, claiming that children on the autism spectrum become overly focused on playing video games that they can spend the whole day doing nothing aside from this. When it turns into an obsession, autistic children might not want to participate in other developmental activities or therapy sessions which are essential for early intervention.

There are also parents who believe that playing video games provides positive results. In the context of play, autistic children fall behind their neurotypical counterparts in the aspects of role playing, toy recognition, and interaction. With the help of video games, these parents believe that their autistic child can learn how to play in a more conventional and proper way. This ongoing debate about the pros and cons of video games in honing autistic kids has led to the discovery of more potential benefits despite the disadvantages.

Video Games Provide The Ideal Venue to Train Social and Communication Skills

Believe it or not, the video games of today have more social elements embedded to them compared to their older generations. With the advancement in programming and device capabilities, modern video games offer interactive platforms where players can join up in a party or group, especially in cooperative games, to complete quests, win fights, and earn rewards. There are also trading

systems, where in-game items can be traded between players while they exchange offers through chat channels, and guild systems where a player can join a specific guild of their choice and find ways to improve their banner and promote it to others. There is also the player versus player (PVP) type of video games where contenders can talk to each other and offer suggestions to improve.

These features provide autistic kids the avenue to improve their social skills and communication. The idea of meeting and talking to people will become less daunting to them when they continuously interact with other players in video games. However, there are still important aspects that autistic kids can't efficiently learn from video games, which include facial expression, gestures, intonation and other social cues. But when the child has developed a strong interest in a specific video game, the family can use this interest to start conversations and small talks that can somehow simulate social interaction and communication with other people. For autistic kids with social and communication challenges, playing video games is a good way to improve themselves in this area.

Video Games Make Autistic Kids More Flexible and Teaches Them to Properly Deal With Failures

Many video games today are designed to be complex, which means that a player can encounter different kinds of situations while they are in the game. This includes solving a puzzle, getting stuck in a specific stage, and not knowing what to do. A lot of video games have difficulty levels that are relatively hard to overcome in a single try. Problem-solving must be done in a more flexible approach rather than a linear one. Hence, it is normal for players to fail many times before they can finally proceed, and they are encouraged to think intuitively and outside the box in order to look for better solutions. In this manner, video games are very helpful in teaching autistic kids how to properly deal with failures and frustrations, while learning from them. It also gives them the courage to try new things that are outside of their comfort zone, making them less rigid to follow

routines and become more adaptive to changes.

Video Games Help Improve Motor Skills

Different types of video games can help improve different motor skills in autistic children. Mobile, console, and PC games are good for those who are having difficulty with fine motor skills or movements that require the coordination of the eyes and small body parts such as the hands and fingers. A lot of these games introduce character combos or combination of techniques, which need the eyes and hands to be synchronised in order for a specific set of in-game movements to be successfully performed.

With the introduction of motion-sensing games from famous companies like Kinect by Microsoft, Wii by Nintendo, and Move by Sony's PlayStation, autistic kids can develop their gross motor skills or movements that involve the coordination between the large body parts such as the arms and legs. They can even enjoy playing this game together with the whole family or group of friends, which further increases interaction.

Video Games Increase the Effectiveness of Traditional Teaching and

Training Methods

Many autism experts today are now utilising the charm of video games in introducing their modern twist of the traditional training and teaching methods for autistic children. They initiate the programming of video game applications that are designed to improve many developmental aspects of autistic kids who are able to play them. There are many key factors that make video games better than the conventional techniques of early intervention programs. First, autistic kids are drawn to video games because they provide high visual input. Second, video games limit the presence of social factors that somehow affect the child's participation. Third, these games are highly interactive and interesting for many children, especially those who have sensory issues who like to push buttons or touch screens. Fourth, autistic kids prefer video games because they are the ones who control the pace, which helps reduce anxiety and pressure in most cases.

AUTISM-FRIENDLY PLAYGROUND

CHOOSING AN AUTISM-FRIENDLY PLAYGROUND FOR YOUR CHILD

Parents are always on the watch when it comes to their autistic kids. However, with the increasing number of missing autism children cases across the globe, many parents can't help but wonder if their focused supervision would be enough to keep their kids from harm at all times. According to the recent autism research funded by Autism Speaks, about half of the population of autism children manage to leave their designated safe zones such as the playground and wander off somewhere. From this number, more than half of these wandering children will be reported missing, and those who are found are often tracked in perilous locations. Autistic children are said to wander off because they are overwhelmed by an existing situation and just want to escape somewhere, or that they have a strong desire to go to a specific spot that holds a special place in their heart. Some parents would eventually find out that their autistic kids just simply want to explore places, and being confined in a specific area such as the playground limits their opportunity to do so. When these autistic children go missing, their families are the most stressed out by their disappearance, which would not only affect the parent's work situations but their relationship to other people as well. To ensure that your autistic child doesn't go anywhere else but inside their playground, here are some of the most helpful tips for achieving that.

Choose a completely fenced playground

One of the main factors why autistic children are able to wander off within a matter of seconds or minutes away from their watcher's supervision is because there is not enough physical safeguard in their playground to keep the child from going outside the safe zone. The next time you plan on bringing your child to a public playground, be sure to choose one that has a fence system which is installed in the entire perimeter. There should only be at least two ways of entry in the playground, and the entrance/exit must be carefully watched over or kept closed when there's nobody using it as much as possible. There should also be a

bench or sitting area near the entrance/exit so that the parents can better know if their child is nearing that area. If you have your own playground inside of your house and you think there's no need to install a new fence system because you already have one for the whole territory, make sure that your house perimeter is well-fenced as well and your gates are always closed if nobody else is using it. Know whether the playground has equipment and toys that your child likes to play with

Another mistake that most parents often make when bringing their child to a playground is the thought that their child will always come to like the stuff that they see in there. Not all autistic child is the same, which means that their sensory needs may differ and their preferences to play as well. There are those that might like playing with the big equipment, while others might prefer playing with hand-held toys and tools. You should always consider whether your child finds something interesting in that playground or not because if your child thinks that the whole area is uninteresting, they might find another way to amuse themselves and that includes wandering off to discover other things. Simply ask your child if they have seen something that they want to play with, or if they want to stay in the playground. If the answer to both these questions is "no" or "not sure", it's better to find another playground.

Choose a playground that maximises your vision

A playground with big equipment that can cover up your child's entire body is a big no-no. As a parent, it is your utmost priority to ensure the safety of your child, and the only means that you can maintain that setup in a playground is through careful observation. As much as possible, choose a playground that maximises your line of sight on your child, such as those that only install see-through and flat-modelled equipment. Some examples are climbing bars, swing, roundabout, and seesaw that can still give you guaranteed vision on your child while they are playing. One small window of time where the child is out of your sight can spell accident, which you can't afford risking your child for the sake of enjoyment.

Make sure that the playground has a wide outer area where your child can chill out or rest.

There are playgrounds that are too narrow and compact due to area limitations. Knowing that your child is not the only one who'll play inside a playground, it is easy to imagine them bumping with another child while they go to the playground because of the lack of space to freely move about. To keep your child safe from any injury while inside a playground, choose one that allocates space between equipment and the overall playground area. This will not only give your child the proper location to safely study the whole playground at a distance, it will also give them a good venue to rest while they are far from other children.

Identify the playground that best addresses your child's several autism features and issues

There are playgrounds that promote interaction between children due to the very design of the equipment and toys. There are also playgrounds that provide sensory tools which are ideal if your child is having sensory issues. Aside from these aspects, your child can sometimes feel the need to play alone and away from other children, which necessitates the feature of a playground that has enough space for a child can play quite privately. If there are many playgrounds to choose from in your locality, choose one that hits the most birds with a single stone.

Playgrounds are a great place for your autistic child to spend their time and energy, but not all playgrounds are safe. It is your duty as a parent to keep your child safe and busy while inside the playground and not wander off someplace else.

AUTISTIC EMPLOYEES

WORKING WITH AUTISTIC EMPLOYEES

Being the head of an organisation requires leadership and managerial skills that will propel the whole team forward and meet its desired goals and objectives. This includes the ability to effectively and efficiently communicate with your subordinates, and interact with them in a way that builds trust and confidence for the betterment of your organisation. As the manager or the boss of a firm or institution, it is your responsibility to know the strengths and weaknesses of your employees by socialising with them in a fair and proper manner, through organisation-wide parties, team-building exercises, meetings, and other events. This means that if you have a mixture of neurotypical and autistic employees in your workforce, you will see to it that the sentiments of both groups are heard and their shortcomings pointed out with no sign of bias or favoured treatment. Today, many autistic individuals manage to overcome the adversities of their condition and are finally able to pass through job screenings. There are even specific job descriptions that would prioritise autistic employees because of their certain traits which give them an edge in the workplace. As the composition of the modern workforce evolves, so are the capabilities and opportunities that are opened for autistic individuals. However, it is also common for these employees to stumble upon social and communication challenges in their line of work that can greatly impact their overall performance. To extend a hand, here are proven helpful tips to improve the synergy between you and your autistic employees.

Make your expectations clear and known

Most of the time, the job description does not expound everything that the employee should do and observe to maintain the position. Having knowledge about other things that are involved in their work is very important for autistic employees. Aside from knowing the nature of the job, you must also communicate to them the existing schemes and undisclosed rules that they must

follow to adapt to the current flow of the workplace operations. You must point out that these established work protocols and future changes that will be made in the current setup are geared towards improving the overall performance of the organisation and not just for the sake of filling in their flaws and shortcomings.

Train the autistic employee and monitor performance with the right approach

There is no better way for your autistic employee or staff to learn the job than by having someone else teach them or show them how it's done in a step-by-step process. Like other neurotypical employees, an autistic staff is ready to carry out their task in the way that they are acquainted with it. Letting the autistic employee learn on their own may not help them progress faster especially if they misunderstood or misinterpreted a part of their job description. The training can be done by yourself, another designated employee with expertise and experience, or through a formal training that is attended by many other newly hired personnel. Monitoring must be done regularly, where the observed positives are praised, while identified negatives are pointed out to the employee in a one-on-one discussion where suggestions are much appreciated.

You must remember, however, the possibility that the employee is socially withdrawn, making interpersonal interactions awkward to them. What you can do is reassure the employee that the training is designed to help them feel more at home and the personnel assigned to teach them knows very well the nature of their condition.

Give clear and concise instructions

Autistic people perform at their best when the instructions given to them are precise and logical. Using ambiguous phrases may put them in a confused state where they are susceptible to making wrong choices and decisions. You have to know that autistic individuals understand other people's words as is, and they carry this trait with them in their own workplace. Hence, you must see to it that your work directives are straightforward and easily comprehensible for your autistic employees.

Introduce a well-structured workplace

People on the autism spectrum are very inclined to follow well-organised and structured workflows. They don't like going about randomly on their tasks without knowing well what's first and what's next in their list of to-dos. To help them grasp the cohesiveness of their work processes, do not forget to provide them with the necessary schedules or timetables. Making a flowchart of their work will also help greatly in understanding the sequence of their tasks, and breaking down complicated tasks into simpler processes will enable them to set priorities from the most important aspects down to the least important ones.

Consider their sensitiveness in making feedbacks

Your autistic employee can make certain lapses that are often caused by their fear, feeling of inferiority, and similar other emotional and psychological factors. Similarly, when you make criticisms and feedbacks about their performance, these emotional and psychological factors can easily get the better of them if you are not considerate enough. This being said, it is encouraged that you make constructive criticisms that are somehow more encouraging than dispiriting for your autistic employee but not to the point where you have to bury the mistake and deviate the issue by discussing the effect of the problem rather than the cause. Be direct with your assessment, but deliver it in a more sympathetic way.

Make considerations and exceptions when they deserve it

There are instances when the company rules are hard to follow for your autistic employee because their condition is compromised. For instance, wearing headphones may be prohibited during work hours but the autistic employee needs to wear it to address sensory issues. Other concerns such as window covers, lighting, and temperature control may also cause the employee to experience sensory problems. As such, you must make the necessary considerations to promote their well-being at work, not only for their own good but for the organisation as a whole. Let them wear jackets, shades, and bring other sensory calming tools if they really need it to become productive.

AUTISTIC FRIENDLY CLASSROOM

MAKING AN AUTISM-FRIENDLY CLASSROOM

The value of a traditional classroom setting is already being challenged by the increasing number of autistic kids that are mostly enrolled in public schools today. Educators from different academic institutions find themselves needing to change their pedagogy and adopt new teaching concepts because their classroom composition is getting more diverse and complex not only in a cultural sense but in the aspects of communication and learning pattern as well. If you are an educator yourself, you must have known by now that many autistic students have the learning capacity comparable to those of their neurotypical counterparts hence they qualify to be taught in a regular educational program, inside the same classroom and immersed in the same kind of teaching strategies and materials as that of their normal classmates. But you also know for a fact that autistic individuals have special needs and varying autistic-related issues that must be addressed.

If you want your classroom to become autism-friendly, there are many ways that you can try to achieve it. Most of these methods require the installation of additional educational materials, and some others suggest an overhaul in the teaching method which you may have applied in the past.

Clear cut Rules and Instructions

Most often, autistic persons are being misunderstood by the people around them as stubborn or unmanageable. The truth is that they cannot easily comprehend social cues which make them unable to sense the thoughts and feelings of others. They also have the tendency to disregard other people's opinion and instead talk extensively about their own thoughts. In a classroom setting, this may pose certain issues related to communication. To address this issue, you have to make sure that specific rules related to classroom discussions are strictly implemented, such as time limit for answering or raising questions, and respecting other people's answers and opinions. If there are group activities or experiments, make sure that you deliver your instructions as clear and as

systematic as possible so that the autistic student can perform the tasks with no problem.

Schedules and Calendars

Autistic persons commonly lack executive functions and self-regulation skills that are needed for multitasking and planning. Because of this, an easy-to-understand schedule or calendar can be of great help for autistic students who also need to be informed about set school activities. The schedule can be posted inside the classroom with clear markers so the students can take note, or handed out to each of them through printed copies. You can also make an electronic copy of it to be sent to the student's phone or other devices for convenience.

Camera

A simple phone camera can spell a big difference in the learning process of students, especially those with autism. You can teach the students how to use their cameras to take pictures of the discussions written on the board if they are having difficulty taking down notes, which can sometimes dampen the students' knowledge absorption. They can also take a picture of many other learning materials, like the schedules and reminders being posted inside the classroom. However, there must still be rules imposed in the use of camera inside the classroom, and you have to make sure that your autistic students know the reason why they have to observe it.

Notices and Announcements

Autistic students don't really like the idea of changing anything that has already become a part of their daily routine. This includes the sequence of daily classroom programs or activities which they have already gotten used to. However, when the need to respond to such changes arises, autistic students will always try their best to adjust to these transitions. Educators can help autistic students better respond to such changes by giving early announcements and prompt notices so they can prepare ahead of time. It wouldn't be good for autistic students to know about the changes when they're already being imposed or put into place since it can easily overwhelm them and trigger meltdowns.

Visual Aids

Autistic students can benefit so much from visual tools as this helps guide them on what they need to do if there's nobody to ask from or knowledgeable enough to explain the concept to them. The aforementioned schedules and calendars are just two of dozens of visual aids that you can set up inside the classroom.

Anything that has colours, pictures and pronounced objects on them can be a great visual material when the students are able to understand what it tries to portray in a relatively fast and easy manner. Examples of visual aids that are fundamental for an autistic student's learning include different kinds of charts, interactive whiteboards, handouts, PowerPoint presentations, and videos shown through a projector.

Calming Corner

Students with autism are highly vulnerable to sensory issues. When they are exposed to overwhelming sensory inputs produced by their classmates, or the classroom itself, autism meltdown may get triggered and start to show. The same fit can also occur when their sensory cravings are not met. To provide a solution to this problem, you can allocate a certain area of your classroom where autistic students can go and calm themselves when they are on the verge of an autism meltdown. If there's not enough space, you can design your own teacher's desk or cubicle as a calming corner where sensory management tools like headphones, stress balls, jackets, masks, and sunglasses are provided. When your autistic student starts to exhibit signs of possible meltdown, you can quickly send them to the calming corner to release the tension.

Autism-Friendly Activities

You can consult autism experts and therapists about specific activities designed to improve autism conditions that you think you can introduce to your class where not only your autistic students can benefit. The goal of these activities is to promote learning to all of your students while making sure that autism-specific needs are also addressed. You can take your model from popular art or music therapies and improvise by putting your own twists on these activities.