

• AUTISTIC CHILD ESSENTIALS

ESSENTIALS FOR YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD

A slice of a parent's happiness is knowing that their child's needs have been met, with diligence and utmost care. This fundamental notion is universal in scope, which means that it's not only applicable to parents of neurotypical children but to parents of children with disability or disorder as well. As a parent of an autistic child, it is not enough to just take notes on what the experts have to say about your child. Sometimes, you have to conduct your own research in order to explore more alternative solutions and to provide supplementary courses of action to improve your child's early intervention treatment and prepare them for a brighter future. It is in this manner that such parents like yourself have to be thorough in choosing what alternatives and supplementary elements to provide for their child, especially when it comes to gadgets and other products that many people suggest as useful for children with autism.

In this day and age, being updated on many things is a must, not to satisfy personal fascinations, but more like a necessary means of survival. The discovery of a new cure, a revolutionised treatment, and other essentials for people with autism can be easily accessed through many media channels that a traditional-thinking parent may fail to know and try, which makes being adaptive to recent developments a good trait of parents with an autistic child. The following modern products below can help give you an idea as to what essentials should be provided to your autistic child.

Weighted Blankets

As the term suggests, weighted blankets are a modern take on the typical sleeping cover we use at home. For autistic kids, weighted blankets are a wonderful innovation that helps address their sensory cravings associated with pressure. This type of blanket can be used in many ways, according to the needs of the person. You can cover your whole body with it, or wrap specific areas like the shoulders, or fold it and lay it on your back or your thighs. Aside from sensory issues, weighted blankets are also beneficial for children who are sleep-deprived due to anxiety and stress which results in insomnia or sleeping disorders.

Sensory Pea Pods

Just like the weighted blankets, a sensory pea pod also applies pressure evenly to help autistic children with sensory cravings. When they are inside the pod, the child can do other things like eating, reading a book, playing with toys, or watching a TV show. The sensory pads are also inflatable which makes them a space saver if they are not needed because you can just deflate them and keep them somewhere else. The surface of a sensory pea pod is also made from comfortable materials which also helps calm your children. They are also washable which is a good thing when the surface gets dirtied and needs a thorough cleaning.

Vibrating Wristwatch

Products of this kind are designed to be discreet which makes it ideal for persons with ASD. The cue for the alarm is initiated through a vibrating effect, which helps most autistic people avoid sensory issues. Many brands are also programmable, where you can record your own voice and customise messages that will prompt when the timer activates. The vibrating wristwatch is an ideal tool to train autistic children with specific tasks that improve their executive functioning skills. Parents can help set up the schedules, from waking up and fixing the bed, to toilet training and bath time. The watch can also be used as a tool to help the child remember when to take medications, and set up reminders for behavioural training and simple exercises like taking deep breaths and stretching.

Buddy Tag

This special wristband is one of the best safety-designed devices in the market today that many parents want their children to have. There have been many documented cases of autistic children reported to be lost and cannot be found even with the help of local authorities and search and rescue teams, which convinced many parents to find ways to track their kids wherever they go to prevent the same scenario from happening. This product is the perfect response to the problem, which is integrated with a built-in Bluetooth tracking system connected to the parent's mobile device. The material used is comfortable to the touch and are fashionably made so that your child will easily wear it without any complaints.

i Pads

If you are financially able, this sleek and trendy portable device is a must-have for your autistic children. iPad is very customisable, which is ideal for autistic persons that have varying needs. There are thousands of apps available that you can install on the iPad according to your child's needs and preferences, from simple yet interactive games to more complex puzzle apps, you can introduce them to your kids through the iPad. Similarly, there are also many educational materials such as videos and eBooks that you can download to the iPad.

Trendy Noise Cancelling Headphones

A pair of headphones is the product of choice for children with auditory sensory issues. Whenever they feel like the noise or sound input is too much for them to handle, these headphones work like magic in helping them respond positively to the situation. Unlike typical headphones, noise-cancelling ones are designed to absorb and block as much as 27 decibels of noise which is the typical sound produced by a vacuum cleaner, while still enabling the child to hear conversations and important auditory cues from their surroundings. There are many fashionable headphones available in the market today, with cute animal designs or cartoon character prints.

Every autistic child is different in a way when it comes to their needs and preferences, as much as they are unique in their personality. It is every parent's duty to determine what those needs are and find ways on how they can effectively meet those needs. But it is also important to always factor in your financial capacity when providing for those needs to make sure it won't hurt other aspects of the family's essentials.

• AUTISTIC PARENTS

LIVING WITH AUTISTIC PARENTS: TIPS FOR SONS AND DAUGHTERS

When the topic of autism is brought up in conversations, many people would often have the perception that it's an issue that only involves child-related problems and the challenges entailed for better parenting. What they don't know is that it is a topic worthy of community-wide discussions, because autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects people of all ages and from all walks of life. Even parents themselves can be diagnosed with autism, whether before they had kids or after actually taking that role. As such, children of autistic parents also have a say on this topic and must be given the same opportunity to learn about the truth of their parents' disorder. Many family issues caused by parent autism can be remedied if only the children are educated and guided on the right response and courses of action to make.

If you are a son or a daughter of an autistic parent, you have made the right decision in taking the first step to understanding the nature of your parent's condition. It might be a tough road ahead but as long as you have learned the value acceptance in your heart and accommodate your parent's special needs through necessary compromises, everything will be worthwhile. Here are some of the similar situations that you might encounter in your home and the proper ways of dealing with them.

My father doesn't realise that I'm sad or frustrated in many instances.

Autistic people often have the difficulty of empathising other's emotions because they can't effectively read facial expressions and gestures which would indicate that you're sad or frustrated about something. It might be even more difficult for your father to realise that you need a pat on the back or a comforting hug just from looking at you and your behaviour.

What you can do in situations like this is to be straightforward with what you're feeling and not hesitate in voicing it out to your father. But when making verbal expressions, you must always consider using clear and unambiguous statements because autistic persons also have difficulty in understanding abstract

statements. Instead of saying “I’m not in the mood to argue right now”, or “I’m tired and I don’t want to talk”, you can instead say “I’m sad about how things are going”, or “I’m frustrated about something”. If you want a hug or a pat on the back, you just have to say it to your father as plain as it should. Your autistic father may not show that he loves you, but he actually does. He just needs some help from you to get the clue.

My mother easily gets uncomfortable and irritated whenever I put my playlist on the speaker.

Sensory problems are one of the most common features of autism. If your mother reacts in an adverse way to your music, it doesn’t directly mean that she doesn’t like your musical taste. It might be because the volume is too loud and she is very sensitive to these sensory inputs. In cases such as this, it would be safer to gradually increase the volume while asking your mother whether the volume is still tolerable for her. You may even be surprised when she starts to show interest on your playlist which means that you both have the same taste in music. This can be applied in other household situations as well, where there’s a source of strong odour or flavour, bright lights, and excessive surface contact.

If my father gets really obsessed with something, he can’t stop talking about it.

It is very common for autistic people to develop a narrow but deep interest in a specific thing. They might focus too much on it to the point that they can’t notice what’s happening around them. They would even forget to do other activities, such as completing chores or eating their lunch. But in the case of your father, he might already be trained enough to control these obsessive tendencies. If he still somehow talks about his interest to an excessive degree, it would be better to discuss with your father a set of rules that will guide him on what he can talk about with you when it comes to his interest. If you don’t want to hurt his feelings, you can reason out that you have many other important things to do and talking for a long period of time may interfere with your schedule or plans.

My mother panics and feels uneasy whenever I invite my friends to our house.

If your mother is not the social type of person, it could be because her autistic condition triggers the anxious thoughts of engaging with other people. This anxiety may be a result of past experiences where her attempt to socialise did not end well due to her speech and communication challenges. The cause of panic can also be attributed to your mother's rigidity to follow her routines, which is also a feature of autism disorder. She may see the arrival of your friends as an external force that is not part of her routine, and because she wasn't prepared for it, she might respond to the sudden development in an unwelcoming way. To prevent this situation from happening, it would be best to let your mother know beforehand if you have any plans of inviting your friends to your house. That way, she may be able to make adjustments and prepare for your friends' arrival so she can welcome them properly.

My father doesn't look at people's eyes when talking and can't understand what they mean.

This might happen when you and your father are in a public place but instead of getting ashamed or disappointed, you must understand why your father is behaving that way. Many autistic people don't want to make eye contact because they are averse to social interactions. It is also difficult for them to process what other people might tell them in conversations and they might need more time to comprehend the whole thing. You can help your father talk more effectively by paraphrasing what the other person has just said, into a simpler and clearer sentence.

• AUTISTIC SON HAIRCUT

TAKING YOUR AUTISTIC SON TO A HAIRCUT

If your son has been diagnosed with autism, chances are he hates going to the barber shop as much as he hates doing other stuff and activities that would trigger his sensory meltdown. Hair trimming is indeed a huge sensory hurdle for your autistic son who can easily feel uncomfortable due to many known factors. These include the sound of the scissors clipping and the hair being cut, the feeling of the sprayed liquid and brush, and the movement of the comb and electric clipper going up and down his head. Add to that the presence of the barber and other customers who might watch the whole process, your son will certainly, feel distressed while having his hair cut to the point that he'd never want to undergo the same process again. Unlike girls, autistic boys have a higher tendency to dislike haircuts because their grooming process would take longer time than girls and involves more sensory stimuli. Many parents who are left confused as to how they would manage this kind of problem may end up compromising hair trimming for the sake of avoiding meltdowns. Fortunately, there are many ways to help your son overcome this stressful situation, without the need to worry about possible meltdown along the process. Here are some of the things that you can do.

Finding the right hair cutter/Barber

One of the most important factors that make a good haircut experience is obviously, the barber. Whether you're planning to hire a personal barber that would make scheduled visits to your house, or plan to go to a barber shop with your child, it is always a SOP to find an understanding and experienced barber. You should tell them about your child's autism diagnosis and provide them with some tips on how to deal with certain situations, like speaking in a calm and friendly tone, as well as simplifying commands or statements so that your son can easily understand. A well-mannered haircutter who's naturally friendly with children is an ideal one to hire. With this kind of barber, your son will most likely keep smiling at the end of the haircut process.

Have your son familiarise the place and process

For children, familiarity often equates to a sense of comfort and security. To make them less anxious about going to a barber shop, let them visit the place while you accompany another person, who's scheduled to have their hair cut. It could be your husband, their brother, or our nephew who'll actually be sitting in front of the mirror and not your autistic son. You can let them watch the whole process, and make them feel that there's less reason to worry about going to a barber shop. In the same way, you can also start introducing your son to the haircutter you chose for the job.

Make them look forward to it

Instead of developing a feeling of fear and anxiety about the haircut, you can help your child become more accepting and eager about the whole process. You can do this by mounting a schedule on the wall, with the day for haircut being made highly visible through a marker or picture. Helping your son develop a routine for this specific activity will greatly reduce stress, as they will begin to anticipate it in a more positive thought. Aside from making a schedule, you can also tell your son a good story that teaches the importance of haircut and set a timer in their watch on the actual date so they can feel a bit of excitement and eagerness to do the whole thing.

Reduce sensory stimuli

Even if your son has finally said yes to a haircut schedule, you cannot ignore the fact that his sensory issues will persist. You cannot just sit back and afford to let your son suffer throughout the entire duration of the haircut. Try every possible way that you can think of to minimize the sensory input that will be perceived by your child through the help of calming tools. You can let them wear headphones and listen to the musical playlist of their choice or play games on a phone or tablet to keep them distracted. If these tools are not practical in the actual scenario, you can tell some interesting stories to your son that will let them create images in their mind and stimulate them to engage in a conversation with you. You can also let your child wear a heavy-pressure vest or jacket that will help keep them calm throughout the whole process. If the hair cutter needs to

apply gel or shampoo into your child's hair, or baby powder into the neck area, you can bring your own autism-friendly brand of the product and have it applied as a substitute. This will prevent your child from inhaling strong-smelling substances or feeling the irritant material on their skin.

Introduce rewards

A reward system can go a long way in encouraging your child to undergo the whole haircut. Treating them to an ice cream parlour, or buying them their favourite sweets or toys is already heart-warming enough even for the most neurotypical child to feel rewarded. However, be sure not to spoil your son by going for expensive stuff as your reward. As much as possible, propose rewards that involve you spending time together with your son, to create more quality time and treasure-worthy moments. You must also not trick your son into believing that you'll do your part of the deal when in reality you're not. This will not only decrease your son's trust in you, but it will also cause a meltdown to trigger, especially after your son not getting what he wants.

In sensory-filled activities such as a haircut, your presence and support are highly needed by your son. If you can't go with your child due to your busy schedule, be sure to delegate someone whom your son greatly trusts and respects.

• BEHAVING WITH AUTISM

HOW TO BEHAVE WHEN YOU'RE AROUND AN AUTISTIC PERSON

Learning what Autism Spectrum Disorder is about, including its causes, symptoms, and treatment is one thing; knowing what to say and how to behave when you're around an autistic person is another. Like any other theory-application arguments, it is never enough that you have clinical knowledge about autism but you don't have any idea how you should portray yourself in real-life situations involving autistic individuals. The importance of learning both can be highlighted in situations where interacting with an autistic individual is necessary or unavoidable.

For families with an autistic member, learning how to act around their autistic loved one will come naturally through experience and the acquired knowledge from medical consultations, although it may not be instantaneous. But for individuals who are not familiar with autistic people interactions, it may be a tough task to approach these occasional situations properly. Your boss may introduce you to their autistic son or daughter, and one small mistake in your conversation can easily offend the latter, which will possibly put your job at risk. It may also be that your parent sibling will ask you to babysit their autistic child (and likewise, your niece or nephew). Not being able to effectively tend to their needs will cause a possible disagreement or fight with your sibling which can complicate to more family issues. Getting into a fight with an autistic person because you just can't understand their behaviour and act properly to it may get you labelled as arrogant or obnoxious. To avoid being portrayed in a bad light because of situations like the ones mentioned above, read on and remember these tips on observing proper behaviour when you're around autistic persons.

Act with the sense that you understand both the person and the disorder.

Autistic persons are also human beings, and the only thing that separates them from neurotypical people is their condition. If you are to engage an autistic person, you must see to it that you're aware of their disorder but at the same time

mindful that they also are capable of feeling. If you focus too much on the fact that they are autistic, you might regard them like a child or introduce them to someone else with the label “autistic” even though they don’t consent you on doing that. Similarly, being too accommodating will let them feel that you’re condescending. On the other hand, ignoring the fact that the person is autistic will result to miscommunication and maltreatment which doesn’t help at all. Be balanced in the manner you treat them, making sure to only talk about their disorder when they’re comfortable with it, and understand that they have special needs that must be met.

Express your feelings and thoughts in a clear and polite way.

It is never the strong point of autistic persons to share in the feelings and thoughts of other people, which makes you the more able person to meet them halfway. You must always be honest with your perceptions and feelings whenever you’re interacting with an autistic individual to avoid any form of misunderstanding. If you are happy, let your statements show it, not just your body language or facial expressions. In the same way, if you are offended or mad about something they said, what you say to them should make them realise their own mistake and learn from it.

Accept the quirkiness and oddity of the autistic person.

It is not encouraged to try to fix or change an autistic person’s behaviour just because you see them as odd or disturbing. You must understand that such restrictive movements and irregularities cannot be altered or eliminated in just one sitting and with your own capabilities alone. Instead, just learn to accept such uniqueness as part of the person’s overall makeup of self, and even welcome them with grace and complete understanding.

Become the instrument that connects the autistic person to others.

There’s nothing wrong with trying to introduce an autistic person to other people, if you know how to properly introduce them. Although they might not show it, autistic people also feel the need to connect to others; it’s just that they don’t know how to effectively do it. If you’ve gotten to know an autistic person and you want them to expand their circle of friends, be sure to tell your intention first before rushing anything.

Be watchful for any signs of possible meltdown.

As you learn more about the autistic person, the nature of their disorder and the way they behave, the ability to detect signs of autistic meltdown can naturally develop within yourself. The next time you hang around with an autistic person, you are the best chance they've got at preventing their meltdown because the autistic person may not be able to identify such signals on their own. When you think they're on the verge, the best actions to take would be to take them into a stimuli-free place, like a parking lot or an empty space where there's no noise, crowd, and other sensory input that could cause them to get agitated. But don't be too harsh or abrupt with your actions, because quickly grabbing their arm may startle them. You can also offer a hug which they might need sometimes, but if not, just try to give them time to be alone.

Be respectful of the autistic person's space and sense of freedom.

Just because a person has ASD doesn't mean you are to treat them differently from a typical human being. You must always treat them with respect and consider their own feelings before doing something that can affect them in a way. When you see other people disrespecting an autistic person through words or actions, you must confront them in a peaceful manner. You can also motivate the autistic person to fight for their rights and privileges, push their own choices and desires, and not let anybody step on their dignity.

• CHILD BEHAVIOUR

MANAGING YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

There is a big difference in the way autistic children misbehave as compared to typical ones. Parents would say that normal kids exhibit bad behaviour or tantrums normally because they cannot get what they want in most situations. Parents just don't give in to these outbursts to prevent spoiling their kids in the process. However, in the case of autistic children, the cause of these temperamental surges and unpredictable actions are specific needs or issues that they find difficult to communicate to others. These external problems should be addressed by parents in order to calm the child and avoid further complications. But how do you manage these certain situations and make your home as peaceful as possible for your autistic child? There are key elements in managing your autistic child's behaviour issues, and among them are creativity, perceptiveness, and patience.

Get to Know Your Child Better

Even after having done everything for your child, the behavioural improvement that you will see in the days to come are primarily affected by his or her innate personality makeup. Even in children, certain attitudes and segments of personality will begin to show, and it is important that parents have knowledge of these inherent traits in order to effectively choose the best approach in training their autistic children to behave like normal individuals. What better way to learn about your child's emotional and psychological foundations than to spend more time with them, to be able to observe them in a closer and deeper perspective.

Detect the Root Causes of Your Child's Behaviour

There are different types of autistic personalities that emerge with response to the specific symptoms of their disorders. Those that are always irritable may be suffering from oversensitivity to sensory inputs, such as sound, light, and smell. There are also those who are compulsive, wanting to touch, taste, feel or smell certain objects or places with high enthusiasm. Understanding this dimension of your child's disorder can help you guess what they want or not want, and

address the stimuli more appropriately. If you have reduced any source of sensory input, or conversely give your child the much needed sensory input to satisfy their craving and they still end up crying and restless, that is a sign that there is another problem you need to detect. But what are the ways of removing and providing these sensory inputs? Here is a short list to help you out.

Removing Sensory Input:

- Transfer the child to a separate location like a room where any form of sensory input is kept at a minimum.
- Give your child a set of toys specifically designed for autistic individuals to distract them from external sensory sources.
- If the situation cannot be directly altered, look for alternative solutions, such as providing ear plugs, face masks, or sunglasses.

Providing Sensory Input:

- Give your child one big and tight embrace or let him hug a huge stuffed toy.
- Roll your child on a blanket like a spring roll or have them wear thick and heavy garments.

Try to Build Your Expectations of Your Child's Behavioural Development

It is unreasonable for parents to expect their children, even normal ones, to immediately exhibit the appropriate manners and behaviours in just one or two training sessions. As much as possible, remind yourself to appreciate the smallest signs of accomplishments. An hour of behaved breakfast in the dining room may seem a bit hard to accomplish at first, so start the goal for 15 minutes, then another 15-minute interval after every couple of days. It is important that parents understand why their autistic child behave in such ways, but it is also equally essential that they know how much to expect from them to avoid frustrations and disappointments from getting in the way of your child's development.

Channel Your Child's Behavioural Issues on Fun and Meaningful Things

Think of the best possible practices or activities that can serve as the outlet for your child's behavioural problems. For instance, if your autistic child really likes

spinning, take them to a playground roundabout or install one outside of your house. If your kid would rather crawl or glide on the ground, have them play on slides, or take them to a gym that offers rock climbing exercises if your child has great tendency to climb on top of furniture or elevated spaces.

Care Less About the Eyes of the Public

Your child's repetitive behaviour problem can't just go away overnight which means that you must get accustomed to it while it persists. This commitment may be easy to do in private locations, such as in your backyard or inside the house. However, it is not easy to pretend that you are not offended by judgmental eyes while you and your child are in public places such as in the park or in the supermarket. Other kids or even parents will start glaring at your child and possibly make their own opinion out of it, but you should always try to calm down and remind yourself that these sorts of things don't really matter to you or your child because they are not the ones paying your bills and taxes.

Get the Fun Out of It

Being with your child and monitoring their behaviour shouldn't really be a problem for you as a parent. It may be draining and frustrating sometimes, but it is your child's welfare after all that you are trying to take good care of. Aside from that, even autistic children also need to feel that their parents are also spending quality time with them. So instead of feeling tired about it, use your creativity to make your training activities and time together worthwhile for the both of you. You can hop on and join your child in the trampoline, or you can make casual tickles to make them laugh. There are always opportunities to choose the brighter side of things.

• MANAGING ARGUMENTS

HOW TO PROPERLY ARGUE WITH AUTISTIC PERSONS

Many autistic individuals have grown up to be well-equipped for a normal life, managing to overcome the challenges that the neurological disorder is accompanied with. The most notable improvements can be seen in the area of daily needs management, repetitive behaviour control, speech, and social skills. However, such progress in an autistic person's condition does not happen overnight. While there are cases when effective parenting is enough to greatly enhance an autistic person's development, a lot of positive changes are being credited to early intervention therapies and treatments.

However, there is no such thing as an absolute cure for autism, a conclusion that is backed by dozens of medical research. There are certain symptoms and issues that autistic children may carry with them as they grow and reach adulthood. As alarming as it is, normal individuals are encouraged to be more understanding and welcoming to them because they need every bit of support and care to feel like they belong in the community they are in. There are specific instances, however, when these issues complicate the situation and become the reason for disagreement and arguments between an autistic person and the people around them.

You could say that it can't be helped if verbal disputes arise between yourself and an autistic individual. Because the most common problems that persist until adulthood are social issues and speech challenges, it is not unnatural for autistic persons to misinterpret what other people said, or express their own feelings or needs in the wrong way. When miscommunication is present, autistic people will try to reinforce their point by using their strengths, most likely logic and intellectual prowess which would even worsen the situation. Autistic people are not the type to give up easily on arguments, as long as they feel like they can win it and eventually get what they want or need. Having an argument with an autistic person can be daunting and frustrating for normal people, especially when they don't know the best approach in this type of situation. To be able to successfully

prove your point in an argument with an autistic individual and manage to calm them down, remember these following pointers the next time you get yourself in another verbal dispute.

Don't Let them Argue with their Strengths

As much as possible, never let the autistic person turn the tide of the argument to their favour by making them maximise their strength. They can easily use their logical abilities, high intellect and almost infinite willpower to their advantage. Because they can't judge very well the atmosphere of the situation and the emotions of others, they can waste the whole day pushing their point of the argument without knowing that you're already offended and whatnot. If you want to win in such argument, make sure to stay away from this aspect and let yourself dictate where the argument is going.

Target their Weakness and Build your Ground on It

Playing around the weakness of autistic people is also one way to make your point be heard in an argument. Knowing that logical reasoning wouldn't appeal that much to them, you can try poking in the grey area that would make them feel unsure and less convincing. For instance, instead of using deductive reasoning in structuring your statements, you can raise your emotional concern or physical needs. So next time you want your child to sleep early and they start arguing with you, instead of reasoning out "you have to go to school tomorrow", tell them "because I'm sleepy too", or "I'll be sad if you won't". In that manner, your child cannot simply negate your request with "I'm not sleepy" or other similar reasons, because they'll find it hard to tell whether you're really sleepy or sad or just tricking them.

Provide Tone and Depth in Your Emotional Reasoning but Never Blame

It is also important for autistic individuals to feel the emotion of others as they engage in an argument because it helps them develop their sense of empathy.

So, whenever you say you're sad, mad, frustrated, or disappointed, make sure that you accompany it with the correct tone of voice to further reinforce your point and make them realise that the argument is not going in the way they want it to

be. However, never make it a point to blame the autistic person of your current emotional crisis because it will only cause more distress in your argument. Such situation can only trigger their defence mechanisms such as crying, tantrums, and silly behaviours.

Avoid Arguing Over Obvious Miscommunications

There are cases when arguments arise because of mere miscommunication between you and an autistic person. Such situations happen when your expectations aren't met by the autistic person due to the lack of proper cues or specific details. For instance, when you ask your autistic officemate to make a photocopy of a report that you gave them, they may only photocopy the single page that you showed instead of the entire number of pages. In order to avoid getting into an argument because of similar other reasons, it is best that you'd be very specific with the instructions that you give, or straightforward with your body language and other cues. But when you're already in the middle of this type of argument, it is better not to talk back and worsen the situation. You must understand that such problems arise not because the autistic person neglected something or didn't really pay attention to what you said, but because their sense of judgment is weaker compared to others.

Use the Concept of Natural Consequence in Arguing

Although punishment is necessary for certain types of argument to help autistic persons realise the gravity of their unreasonableness and its impact on other people or situation, it is also very important that you make them learn it through natural consequences instead of giving more personal reasons to justify such punishment. So instead of saying "you can't play board games because you've been bad", tell them that you don't have the time to stay up late because you had to do the chore that you designated to them, and that made you feel more tired.

PARENT KNOWLEDGE CAN HELP CHANGE THE COURSE OF AUTISM

It is known through medical guides that the diagnosis of autism can be early as 2 years old, but that's not the real case scenario for children with the disorder.

What's really happening is that only half of children with autism are diagnosed at that early stage of childhood, and the other half are only known to be autistic when they are at least aged 6 years or older. There are many factors that could lead to late diagnosis, such as cultural set up where girls are expected to be shy and socially withdrawn thus covering the presence of autism symptoms, and lack of resources such as time and finances to actually entertain the idea of consulting an expert for a professional diagnosis.

There is also a clear lack of immediate and routine-based screening for autism in many nations and this inadequacy of government initiative also contributes to the unequal access to early diagnostic services for many populace. Although there are also families who are able to have their child tested for autism quite early and promptly, the fault may rest on the medical practitioner such as the paediatrician, who through too much objectivity, relied heavily on clinical standards and failed to check other areas that can indicate autism. These possible factors can also deprive the child of the much-needed early intervention services and treatment that could have been life-changing for such an early developmental stage where the body is most responsive. Because of these possible scenarios that are detrimental to the early diagnosis of autism in children, there is a pressing need for parents to be trained and educated about early detection of autism in children and coached about the ways to provide their toddlers with their own mechanisms to advance the progress of therapies and special programs.

The idea of equipping parents with the knowledge and practical skills in detecting and improving the condition of their autistic children is not something that is new to medical discussions. As a matter of fact, lawmakers and government agencies are cooperating with medical experts to narrow down the interval between diagnosis and access to early intervention services, while more effective methods of early detection are continuously explored. The fundamental rule is to

somewhat depart from the traditional 'diagnosis and treatment' concept and welcome a more active 'predict and pre-empt' approach. Such context has already been applied in other neurological disorders like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Through this approach, parents are taught how to detect the very first manifestation of symptoms when the course of brain development is still easy to correct.

Efforts Leading to Early Autism Detections

Scientists and medical researchers are looking for potential ways to detect autism in the earliest stages of a child's development, which includes distinctive changes in speech, movement, and attention. Technologies such as Electroencephalography (EEG), Brain Imaging, and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), have made these complex studies in the nervous system practicable. Others are also focusing on blood samples and any other sources of genetic material to analyse significant differences in gene signatures. Many of these studies are conducted in younger siblings who have autistic older brother or sister because younger siblings' risk of getting diagnosed with autism is higher compared to firstborns, specifically one out in every five.

While there are efforts made to detect autism at the earliest possible stage, other groups are also looking for the best applicable techniques in treating autistic infants. In this manner, several studies are conducted for the purpose of determining the methods that can be implemented in infants aged one month to two years and findings suggest the great role of parents in boosting the positive effects of treatment, to the point where autism-related symptoms can be masked, leading to a relatively normal and unimpaired development of the child.

Parent Coaching Approach

Sally Rogers, a professor of psychiatry and behavioural sciences at the University of California, together with her team, provided coaching services to parents of infants who are already showing symptoms indicative of autism. The seven babies are aged between 7-15 months and manifest many warning signs such as repetitive behaviours, narrowed interests or fixations, limited babbling and lack of social response. The parents were taught of specific strategies that

will stimulate their child's social response, such as reacting to the infant's attempt at communicating which include gestures and movements. The results of the interactive nurturing coaching sessions were then measured when the infants reached the age range of 18-36 months. The infants that have coached parents showed fewer autism-related symptoms compared to their counterparts whose parents were not included in the sessions. Similarly, those whose parents are trained, have developed better communication skills while those whose parents didn't have delayed speech development.

There's another study conducted by Jonathan Green and his team in 2015 that somehow showed related results. Green is a child/adolescent psychiatry professor from the University of Manchester who initiated a controlled trial of some 54 random babies who had autistic older siblings. A designated therapist visited the homes of the babies who are then aged 9-14 months in six different instances and recorded the interaction they had with their parents. The general result showed a lower average of autism-related symptoms in the 54 infants, especially on their responsiveness to certain stimuli. They also exhibited relatively normal behaviours that can be seen in their neurotypical counterparts which are a good sign of an improved social behaviour.

Face Memory Study

The findings of another study conducted by a team of researchers from the University of Washington also solidified the same assumption. Entitled 'Promoting First Relationships', the research involved some 33 random infants whose parents were either monitored throughout the duration of the test or guided by parent coaches in 10 weekly home visits. The visits lasted from 60 to 80 minutes, where the trained coaches recorded the infant-parent interaction and then provided the parents with meaningful input as to what they can do to stimulate social responses. The aim of the study was to determine if infants showing autistic behaviours can improve their skills in remembering faces, which provided positive results. The treated babies have shown even faster face memory than their 150 selected neurotypical counterparts.

• PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

FOSTERING AUTISTIC PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

One of the main roles of every parent is to know the problems that keep troubling their child, provide the necessary advice, and help them come up with a good solution. Parents should see to it that they are teaching their sons and daughters the ways to deal with these problems and not just spoon feed them with immediate remedies, in order for them to become responsible adults. But what if the child's problems spring from their own parents' behaviour, health condition, or mental capacity?

There are many cases of families where the parents are challenged by a certain disorder or health issue, one of them being autism. Parents on the autism spectrum may find their kids or teens getting distressed and ashamed of their autistic features, which might be a consequence of the feedback of the community or the judgment of their friends and acquaintances. The autism-related issues might also be severe that it's obviously causing problems in the household. If not seriously addressed, this growing problem may ultimately create a rift between parents and children at home. If you are a parent yourself who is diagnosed with autism, the following discussions might give you the motivation and clear guidance to fix your relationship issues with your son or daughter.

Make Compromises for Sensory Issues

A simple misunderstanding about how loud or how low the volume of the television is can lead to more serious arguments between you and your kid or teen when they don't understand your condition. The kitchen is not a good place to debate about how much of the spice or seasoning is needed for the dish, especially when it's one of the few places where the whole family is gathered and expected to talk about how each other's day went. It is also frustrating to always argue on whether the lights should be turned on or off during the night. Similarly, always asking for cuddles or giving away hugs may become tedious for your child.

If you have sensory sensitivity issues, it is better to discuss this with your son or daughter so that they can understand deeply about your autism condition and get the idea of what you may feel when you're exposed to these certain stimuli or crave for more. Through a meaningful talk, you can both make certain compromises for the benefit of the whole family. For instance, if your kid wants to turn up the volume of the TV or other devices, you can wear noise-cancelling headphones to avoid arguing and maintain peace in the house. If the situation is reversed, your child can then wear the headset instead. You can also agree on setting up schedules for sensory activities, such as doing your own fun-filled massage therapy.

Clear Out Any of Your Child's Misconception About Your Autism Condition

Your child's attitude and perception about your autism diagnosis can easily be affected by what they hear from their friends and the people around them. While it is not appropriate to prevent your child from talking with their friends and peers, it is sometimes crucial to guide them towards the right kind of people they will spend their time with. It is possible that your child will hear demeaning and harsh commentaries about your autism condition, and they might even be ridiculed for it. When this happens, proper and serious communication is necessary to clear out any wrong information that's been passed on to your child. If your child still cannot understand technical terms regarding your diagnosis, simply stating the facts about your condition will give them the knowledge and confidence to defend your side and inform others about it. You can give statements such as "I am mentally competent", "you don't automatically inherit my disorder", "I am capable of accomplishing things that other normal people can do", and "I can talk with other people but with specific limitations".

Emphasise the Advantages of Your Autism Condition on Your Role as a Parent

Sometimes, telling the positives will somehow make up for the negatives that your son or daughter feels or thinks about your disorder. Truth be told, being an autistic parent also comes with benefits, and these are left for you to discover. Pointing out these advantages can make your child realise that you are indeed a

responsible parent, regardless of your autism diagnosis. They will be reminded to be always grateful for your sacrifices, especially when you make these exemplifications:

- Your insomnia or lack of desire to sleep has allowed you to stay up late at night and check on your child, as well as to keep a watchful eye on anything that happens inside the house in these nocturnal periods. It is undeniable that your being autistic increased the level of security in your home at night.
- Your tendency to hyper focus has given you a strong commitment and willpower to accomplish your parental roles. This includes providing full support to your child's school-related activities, preparing the necessary allowance for your child's wants and needs, and not taking your eyes off them when you're caught in a crowd of people on a concert, beach party, and other similar big events.
- Your constant need to follow routines has trained your child to be more systematic and organised, a lifestyle that most successful students adopt. By making strict schedules for your child's daily school routines, he or she has never missed an assignment or project and has never come to class late and unprepared.

Being an autistic parent indeed presents more kinds of challenges that you must overcome to foster your relationship with your children. Having a positive outlook on your everyday life is one thing, but possessing the courage and strength to communicate with your child about delicate matters and problems is one of the best traits that you can develop as a parent on the spectrum. Start fixing your relationship problems today so that you and your child can live inside a more harmonious and happier home.

PARENTAL APPROACH IN DEALING WITH TEEN AUTISM

For families with teenagers recently diagnosed with autism, early intervention services are most likely crashed out from the list of alternative treatment procedures and programs available for the teen. This could mean that most free community and government-sponsored options cannot be availed anymore for the diagnosed family member. Insurance coverage and sponsored services may also set age-specific limitations that would restrict the family from opting it for their autistic teen. At our current setting, it can be noted that most of these intervention services and training programs are highly focused on dealing with autism diagnosis of toddlers and kids. As the age of autism diagnosis rises, the number of available medical support options decreases, mainly due to the very nature of the disorder where younger individuals have more adaptive capabilities that produce better results. The remaining options presented to the family may prove financially inconvenient and unconventional. Not to mention that the teenager also has school responsibilities to worry about, it is not uncommon for families to settle with a home-based approach in dealing with their teen's autism. If you have a teenager who is also diagnosed with autism and you think this option also fits your family set up, these following pointers may provide you with additional insights in properly addressing your teen's autism condition through full-time parental care.

Teach the value of friendship and encourage your teen to make new friends. Socialising is rather one of the weakest areas for people in the spectrum. Aside from dealing with speech issues that only reduce your teen's self-confidence to start a conversation with others, the difficulty of understanding communication cues such as body language and facial expression only make the matter worse for your teen. But instead of letting them lose hope and succumb to isolation, you have the power as the parent and motivator to encourage your teen to become braver in approaching this situation. First, you have to instil in them the importance of having friends and teach them the basic rules in making new friends and keeping this bond of friendship. Second, you have to emphasise the

crucial point about finding other people who share the same interest with them, which is one of the easiest ways to fuel friendly conversations.

Enhance the usefulness of visual aids

Visual materials are really helpful for autistic teens as they begin to embrace a more independent life setting. The use of timetables, picture reminders, and colourful marked memos will greatly assist them in adapting to their daily schedule of activities and functions both at home and at school. Gadgets and watches can also help them keep track of their time and become more responsible with how they use it. Visual materials can also be used to present to your teen a set of future events or situations that are inevitable in nature. You can show a book or a movie that depicts these scenarios and then provide your child with the proper insights to properly respond to these scenarios.

Assist them with school-related stuff

The pressure from academic endeavours might overwhelm your teen if you don't extend the much-needed help and guidance. As they find it difficult to multitask, your supervision can help them find the right direction and keep them on track with their schoolwork. Make a proper schedule for their school assignments and work with them if you can. Do not forget to ask about any school project and activities which your teen might need help with. Through constant training and reinforcement, your teen will eventually develop a systematic approach to dealing with school-related stuff. However, you must not be too strict and persistent about the accomplishment of these tasks to prevent your teen's rebellious tendencies from surfacing.

Educate your teen about adolescence and express reassurance

Most autistic teens easily get overwhelmed by the various changes happening to their body especially when they don't have a clue about what's causing these changes and how it may affect their life. As the parent, it is your duty to teach your teen about the kind of phase they are currently undergoing in their life.

Introduce to them the biological factors that spur these changes, and the concept of reproductive health and personal hygiene. As complex as it is, you have to prepare your teen about the possibility of social interactions that involve courtship

and dating, and train them how to properly groom themselves and look presentable to others. While you are opening up these topics to your teen, assure them that you are always there ready to answer any questions regarding these areas and provide support.

Simulate social scenarios at home

Application of theoretical knowledge requires practice, which is why it is best to create a simulation of a real-life social scenario at home where your teen can train their skills. Prepare a set of scripts that you and your teen would act out according to the simulated place of engagement. You can agree to turn your living room into a classroom and act out conversations between classmates or between a teacher and a student. These home simulations will equip your teen with readily accessible social skills that they can use when they are in a specific social scenario.

Be more tolerant and understanding

Giving your teen more freedom with their life's choices also equates to handing them more responsibilities to shoulder on their own. When they make mistakes, do not confront them just to point out that it's their fault all the time. Because they are still learning, what they need the most is parental advice or guidance to do the right thing the next time around. Scolding and punishing your teen for every fault may only cause a rift in your relationship, turning them into their rebellious nature. If you want their transition to go as smooth as possible, you have to provide them with the ideal learning environment where you play the part of the adviser or teacher.

• PARENTING STYLES

PARENTING STYLES UNFIT FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Having known from a recent consultation and diagnosis that your child is suffering from Autism Spectrum Disorder, your parenting decisions will probably be never the same again. Chances are, you will be given a proper guide on what to do and shouldn't do while raising your autistic child with love and care. A couple of expert advice are essential tools that will help you become a well-suited parent or guardian for your child as they face the challenges ahead with you on their side. However, even in an ideal scenario, well-prepared parents may still have second thoughts when it comes to the right method of parenting to apply. If you don't think you are prepared enough to become the best parent for your autistic child, there might be inevitable shortcomings that you will have to face and accept. Your approach might not work, but this doesn't mean that you can just give up on your responsibility and role. Rather, think of several other parenting styles that you can adopt for your own betterment until you can eventually provide your child with the right nurturing environment dedicated to their special needs. If you are not familiar with the right parenting styles for autistic children, knowing the unfit ones is another way of making you a better caregiver.

Hands-Off Parenting

Many parents believe that giving their child a sense of independence will result in a more holistic growth and development. Not interfering with what the child is doing and supporting his or her interest can help hone leadership skills, initiative, and discovery of potential talents. However, on the case of an autistic child, this type of parenting may not provide positive results. Knowing that most autistic children are not self-directed or are socially inclined, it would be unwise to leave them on their own. Parents are encouraged to always engage with their child, as guidance is what autistic children need the most. Learning social cues, making small talks, and understanding how society works and behaves, are just some of the essential things that should be taught to autistic children and parents share

this primary responsibility above anybody else. Failure to do so would lead to even more withdrawn and solitary tendencies which would cause more serious problems as the child reaches further stages in life.

Helicopter Parenting

While guidance is a must for autistic children, overly concerned parents have the tendency to check on their children in almost every action they make. They think that children with this disorder need to be provided with special treatment at all times and when a new challenge presents itself, they'd topple it down before their child can even look through it. While it is true that autistic children need a special kind of attention and care, it doesn't mean that they require it in every moment of their life. Hovering above their children's actions, parents practicing helicopter parenting would most likely impede their children's learning and development because they deny them of the direct involvement and experience that goes along with it, contradicting the very concept of learning through observation and example.

Competitive Parenting

The learning process and development of autistic children greatly differ from those without any disorder. As a spectrum disorder, autism displays a list of symptoms that are easily observable in early infancy before reaching the age of 3. Speech difficulty, sensory offensiveness, and social unresponsiveness are just some of the early indicators of autism hence it is common for autistic children to not be able to learn a single word or phrase, understand a cue and respond to it at this specific range of age. Competitive parents are not helping at all in dealing with these issues because expecting your autistic child to learn things and develop certain skills that are projected from normal children is never the right thing to do. Comparing your child's growth and progress to others would only make you feel inferior as a parent and lead you to question your child's potential even at such a young age. The worst-case scenario would be you getting jealous of other parents and making your child feel unloved or neglected in return.

Frenetic Parenting

The expression “too much of everything is bad” can easily be exemplified in the case of overly supportive parents of autistic children. While it is never wrong to give everything your child needs, it is also not good to give more than what your child can handle. Autistic children have special needs, such as therapies and programs, that can help treat the disorder and make the symptoms appear less hindering to their development. Enrolling your child in a therapeutic class, physical training or speech therapy means that you as a parent understands the needs of your autistic child. However, it isn’t quite right to make a very loaded schedule for your child, since it will not provide them the right amount of time to absorb what they learned and apply it. Enrolling at a dozen therapies and programs would tire your child out, especially if they’re not as interesting as he or she would expect, making it impossible for your child to give their hundred percent focus and retention to all of them.

Permissive Parenting

If normal children can grow up to be rebellious and hard-headed with the lack of proper discipline and confrontation from parents, how much more for those suffering from autism spectrum disorder? Your child suffering from this disorder doesn’t mean that you have to exercise maximum level of tolerance to them because doing so would reflect a certain degree of misinformation about autism. Some parents believe that autistic children aren’t capable of achieving much, and would easily give up on expecting something from them may it be simple social skills, accomplishing chores and behaviour control. The truth is that they are capable of all these mentioned things if only the parent establishes some sort of house rules or a clear set of instructions and be stiff in implementing it.

• PARENTS RELATIONSHIP

HOW THE CHILD'S AUTISM AFFECTS MARRIAGE OF PARENTS

While the topic of a kid's autism and a couple's marriage divorce may seem two separate issues on their own, there are certain household setups or conditions wherein parents end up putting a dent in their marriage vows because of the way they deal with their child's autism disorder. It is true that autism is a disorder that needs a special approach in treatment and coping up, and parents of autistic children are the most affected individuals who will be constantly challenged by behavioural issues, temper management, and similar stressful situations.

However, it is also true that in all cases of autism, the child should never be the one to be blamed regardless of the gravity of the condition or the nature of the disorder. It is also not conclusive enough to generalise that all cases of child autism tend to make the parent couple bend and break their marriage. As a matter of fact, there are instances when such disorder in the offspring becomes the very inspiration of the parents to give their all, play their role and strengthen their bond even more so than before. Having said this, it is more logical to focus more on the parents' reactions, decision-making, and level of fortitude to know the root causes of marriage mishaps in the case of families with an autistic child rather than to focus on the child's condition itself. If you are worried about how things would go with your better half at this point in time and in the future ahead as you both raise your autistic child, know these common reasons why some marriages go down the drain and learn what you can out of it.

Contrasting Opinions on Other's Observations

Depending on the type of environment the child is exposed to, there are instances when other people are the first to notice symptoms of autism in the child. It could be the teacher, the grandparents, neighbours, relatives, and other outsiders who will raise such concern to one or both parents. However, when they try to discuss this matter, one will tend to believe the observation and would suggest consulting a doctor as soon as possible. The other partner, on the

other hand, might choose to disregard the concern and would even provide justification on why it is not believable at all. For instance, the mother would relay to her husband what the teacher said about their daughter being less responsive to others in school. The father would argue that their child would choose not to speak to others because of a pulled tooth she doesn't want them to see, or similar other reasons. He will then tell the mother to stop talking about this issue and instead focus on more relevant things. There will be a huge possibility that the mother would be offended by her husband not trusting her instincts and a crack in their relationship would soon be formed.

Even if the mother would choose to proceed with the consultation and gets a positive diagnosis, the husband would still react differently to the situation, feeling like he's been pushed to a corner. Financial decisions on the treatment and key responsibilities will not be made quite easily if such disagreements continue. To address this problem, it is highly encouraged that one partner should explain to the other the importance of getting an expert's diagnosis in the early treatment of autism, as a disorder that can greatly affect their child's life. It is much better that both of them know why the issue is of great importance in the first place.

The Complexity of Autism Leads to Conflicting Solutions

Even after having the specialist explain the nature of Autism and the diagnosis of the child, there is still a great possibility that parents would remain confused as to the nature of the disorder. Add to that the wide range of treatment and programs developed for autism as well as the different types of drug and dosage that can be administered, it is not unusual for parents to experience a feeling of great uncertainty as to picking the right solution for their child. One might be open to new but risky treatment methods and programs, while the other partner would decide to stick to the traditional and relatively safe approach. These decisions would most likely reflect a certain history on both parent's lives, such as bullying in school, that would explain why suggesting an intensive, private setting, is much preferred by one of the parents over the other group-based

therapy. Even the type of school and future plans set for the child are emotion-driven decisions that shouldn't be easily disrespected by the other partner or else this would be reason enough to cause a blur in their relationship.

The key element to help avoid this complication from happening is for parents to learn to make a compromise, that is, reaching a common solution that can provide a reasonable answer to each of their questions. Perhaps opting for the early interventions services provided by the school and health agencies for free is a good start since it has both quality and affordability concerns addressed at the same time.

Sticking to the Predetermined Parental Roles

Mothers are primarily seen as the main caregiver of the child, even for those with autism. This is the role established by the society in which families tend to conform. Fathers are still expected to provide the much-needed attention, quality time, love and care to their autistic child but most of the time, mothers spend the longer number of hours being hands on, raising their kid. As such it is oftentimes the case where the mother become more knowledgeable about autism than the father. This could prove quite difficult for the latter if situations, like taking a walk in the park and talking to a bumped friend, would warrant some explanation of the child's condition. In the same manner, the father would also feel ignorant of what the mother and the child are doing while he's busy attending to household chores. Conversely, the mother would think that it's unfair how the father can still go to social gatherings and activities while she's busy taking care of their child, arousing indignation and even suspicion.

Both partners should work together in raising their child, without the need to see who's the better parent. The mother shouldn't feel overly entitled on the child's upbringing to the point where she's depriving the father of quality time. The father should also be more considerate when making decisions such as going to parties and outdoor events, especially if his wife would also want to go, but couldn't.

• RAISING CHILDREN

KEEPING THE BALANCE: RAISING BOTH AUTISTIC AND NON-AUTISTIC

CHILDREN IN ONE HOME

It isn't an unusual situation to have both an autistic and a typical child in your family growing together in the same type of environment. As a matter of fact, these scenarios can happen to any family who has two or more offspring, given that autism is not a disorder that has a great linkage to hereditary factors.

Although some causes are known to be genetic in nature, mutations of these genes may happen after childbirth, and not directly inherited from the parents. As such, it would be very inappropriate to conclude that if an autistic child has siblings, all of the brothers and sisters are autistic as well.

Because cases like these happen in real life, the lifestyle of affected families become even more complicated as parents face the challenge of addressing the different needs of both autistic and normal siblings. What the typical siblings would feel and how they would react to this underlying household setting can also greatly affect the overall status of family living. Normal children may perceive the autistic condition of their brother or sister as either a challenge or an opportunity, and your guidance as parents will matter the most in maintaining a balanced and nurturing environment for all of your children.

When do normal siblings see their autistic brother or sister as a challenge? Here are some of the most common reasons why typically developing children find it hard to live with their autistic siblings and what you can do as parents to straighten out every problem or misunderstanding along the way.

Normal siblings can easily get embarrassed by society's perception of their autistic sibling's condition. Especially when they are still kids, normally developing children easily get offended by what other people would say about their friends and family. The worst part is, they can easily believe the things that they hear. So when someone tells them that their brother or sister is a weirdo, it is hard for them to just turn the other cheek. This growing sense of dilemma will most likely to persist, even until teenage or adulthood. There are certain life

stages when normal siblings will have to revisit this issue and may try to change their mindset for the better, especially on teenage years when finding dates and throwing parties are the highlight events. The typical sibling may also think critical on this issue when finally deciding to find a lifetime partner and settle down. In this regard, parents should always try to inculcate on their normal children the proper response for these situations, convincing them to accept their autistic sibling's condition and take pride of it if they can.

The autistic sibling's handicap may push the normal sibling to take in more responsibilities in the family and step up their game as meeting built up expectations are required of them. A set of household chores that should've been divided among the siblings may end up being done by the normal child alone. This would make the latter feel that the autism condition of the other sibling is a heavy burden that he or she will have to carry. Even on more personal and emotional needs, the normal child would be told to manage them on their own or ask for help only when the parents are not occupied with taking care of the autistic sibling. This attitude towards his autistic sibling might even worsen if the parents fail to explain the many great needs of persons with autism while at the same time appreciating everything that the typical sibling has done for the family. Communication is a key factor in helping the normal child understand the nature of his sibling's disorder and to encourage him or her to become a better brother or sister.

There are instances when the typical sibling cannot help but feel that their parents have an obvious favourite. When the autistic sibling's condition begins to cause financial constraints in the family, one of those who will be affected the most is the normally developing sibling. That is because parents will have to prioritise the autistic child's needs over other matters that are not of the life-and-death level of importance. When it comes to wants and interests, the normal sibling will most likely get little to no approval at all and they will be forced to compromise for the sake of the autistic sibling. Medications and therapies will be preferred over toys, and autism-friendly food will be served at the table instead of the normal sibling's favourites. Unless the autistic sibling is not interested in

watching, the television is not free to be enjoyed by other members of the family, including the normal child. On a bigger perspective, such as housing and school preference, the normal child will have no choice but to wait for the family's final decision after having factored the autistic sibling's needs in the arrangement. As a parent, there is no easy way to tell your normal child that you are not choosing favourites, but you will still have to try. It may help if you emphasise that you love all of them equally, it's just that the other one is less capable of overcoming life's challenges alone, and in the end, you will always be there for all of them whenever they need you.

It isn't easy to raise many children in the family, let alone have at least one of them with autism. It is your duty as parents to see to it that all of your children feel that they are loved, especially the typically developing ones who are more emotionally vulnerable. Just as much as you want to spend time with your autistic child, make some quality time with your typical child as well and treat him or her as equally special. Do not prevent your normal child from asking you questions related to autism, as long as it educates them about the disorder and helps them understand fully the condition of their sibling.

TELLING YOUR CHILD ABOUT THEIR AUTISM DIAGNOSIS

Receiving an autism diagnosis from an expert medical practitioner authorised to test your child may come as a life-changing news for you as a parent. From then on you will have to layout most of your decisions with your child's autism disorder at the centre of it. Your parenting methods and approaches may turn out quite different compared to those parents of neurotypical kids and you will be confronted with many challenges unique to parents of special needs children. Regardless, you will still find a way to create the friendliest and most nurturing environment for your child as they grow and create their own future. Beating all the odds is most likely impossible, however, without the help of other people that are close to you and your family. After you and your partner have known about it, you will have to tell your child's grandparents, your close relatives, trusted friends, and other people in the community who you think will show their utmost understanding and support for your child's condition. However, it is also important that you let your child know about their own diagnosis as it not only helps them understand themselves better, but it also prevents trust issues and misunderstandings from happening as your child begins to become more aware of things around them. But this part can be very challenging for parents who do not know how to tell their children about it in the most considerate manner. If you are in this kind of situation, the following pointers will help you break the news to your child in the best parental way possible.

Instil in your child the idea of diversity

Over the course of your child's life, it is inevitable that your child will feel that they are different than other people, whether by other's observations or through their own. This will leave them in a confused state which can complicate into other psychological and emotional issues if not addressed. One of the most important aspects that can lead your child to understand their condition is by making them appreciate the concept of diversity as early as possible. Explaining the idea of differences in the human's point of view may be hard for them, which is why you

have to start with other living things such as plants and animals. For instance, you can introduce to them why there are different kinds of flowers in the world, and how each variety of flower is used for specific occasions and purposes. You can also have them differentiate a dog and a cat, or a group of superheroes based on their superpowers. Emphasise to your child how each of us can be different from one another, and how this diversity makes us stronger. Once your child understands this concept, you can then put into perspective the differences in humans, from our talents, personalities, and roles in the society.

From diversity, talk about similarity

Making your child see the beauty and power in diversity is one thing, but dwelling on this truth alone may lead your child to believe that they cannot do what other children can. As such, it is equally important that your child also knows how similar we can be. You can say that all flowers are appreciated for their beauty whatever the colour or fragrance and that both dogs and cats are adored by people because they are both cute and friendly human companions. This way, they can begin to understand the same principle in people, where we can be all similar in many things despite our differences. Tell them that every people have the same set of emotions, the right to dream and the privileges of friendship and a good life. It is also important that your child relates this fact to their responsibilities or duties at home and school.

Help your child understand the way their mind works

Just because there are medical terminologies in the diagnosis that your child cannot understand doesn't mean that you have to keep the truth from them. What you can do to tell your child about your diagnosis is to explain some things about the diagnosis on your own words. For instance, if your child somehow develops a special preoccupation to a specific object or topic, you can explain to them that they're thinking as such because their autism condition is telling this to their brain and at some point in time this preoccupation may change to other things and that it is alright if this happens. You can also explain why they may not like a certain food or people in that matter. There are many things about the autism diagnosis that your child can possibly understand if only you give them

the right information. And when your child fully becomes aware of these things, it would be much easier to make them think of autism not as a disorder but as a kind of unique trait that makes people extraordinary.

Consider the right time to tell your child

Not all autistic children are the same, especially in their developmental process.

There might be some who are made aware of their disorder at an early age, but

there are also others who might not have any idea about their condition even

after learning the ABCs. Rushing the explanation part to your child may not be a

good idea if you are not sure about their level of maturity and capacity to

understand most of the stuff that you're planning to tell them. It is much better to

monitor their perception from time to time and watch out for signs of curiosity

related to their condition. If your child starts to ask questions that are linked to

autism issues, it may be the right time to tell your child about the diagnosis.

Parents should always be cautious about what they tell to their child because it is

their words that their child will take for it. It is important that you make your child

aware of their autism diagnosis, but it should not be done in an abrupt manner

and in a single discussion.