

What The Autistic Child Would Tell Us if They Could

1. Quiet Please!

Talking and Listening are not the primary modes of communication. Many are HYPER SENSITIVE to sounds, among other stimuli. “Keep it Simple”, more and louder does not help, avoid repeating verbal directions. Think concrete, ask objective questions. They don’t get “why”, “what happens next”, time concepts, “how do you feel”. Their behavior is their communication.

2. I am trying to tell you something!

Behavior is driven by the need to escape (flight, fright, fight), a sensory need, attention and desire for something. Positive reinforcement when the kid is NOT doing the inappropriate behavior. Trying to teach them a socially acceptable way of coping.

3. Teach me How!

Social communication skills are crucially important in attaining a functional level. Need to be taught cause intuition, initiation and organization aren’t there. Help them understand other people’s points of view, how to read cues, behavior adjustments, humor, initiating conversation.

4. Mine is an overwhelming world.

Sensory input can be overwhelming and perceived as painful, disorienting. They have a hard time distinguishing what input is relevant. Safe space needs to be created. Ask the parent what is calming. Blanket, sports bottle or other oral chewy thing, push ups, pushing a wheelchair, bubbles, kazoo, doodling, shoulder massage, jump rope, animal walks, crawling. Avoid light pressure. Wind and loud noise is tough.

5. Show, don’t tell.

If a token system is used, make sure the goal is clear. Demonstrate with few words. Pictures could help.

6. I don’t have time to waste and neither do you!

Our league needs to be developmentally appropriate for the child and we have to realize it just won’t be for some kids. The environment may be too much to cope with.

7. I need a way to tell you!

Communication is an exchange of information: speak, sign, gesture, label and point, and the ability to respond to the sender.

8. Why am I doing this?

Will the skills learned in ML enhance participation in family and community? Will anything learned cross over to a different setting?

9. I have to do it myself!

Autistic kids are good at learning to be dependent and constant striving to function independently must be built into all activities. Assistants should be used as little as possible, and not be the same person all the time. However, since we only see the kids 1 hr/week, a good match will probably help the kid enjoy and succeed in the league.

10. I need lots of people to help me.

It is always ok to ask the parents what is working and what is NOT working with the child. They might appreciate your perspective in the observations you make in that one hour. NO JUDGEMENTS should ever be given, we are all in this to provide special conditions for a special child to function as normally and independently as will be possible