

# GROWING UP TOGETHER

## Being Different

Do any of the kids in these pictures look different to you? Yes, they are different. Some are girls, some are boys, some are tall, some are short, some are African-American, some are Asian, some have blonde hair, and some have autism. But they are all the same too—they all have feelings and want to have friends.



**A BOOKLET ABOUT  
FRIENDS WITH AUTISM**

## What Does it Mean to Have Autism?

Children with autism think differently and act differently because their brains work differently. They may have difficulty talking, learning, or playing with you. But, just like you, children with autism are special in many ways, and have families that love them very much. They may also enjoy the same things you do, like swimming, videos, or horseback riding.

## Why Do Children with Autism Act This Way?

Some children with autism do not see, hear, or feel things the same way we do. For instance, the sound of the school bell or the noise of a parade may actually hurt their ears. On the other hand, things that bother most of us, like a bee sting, may not seem to hurt to them.

Read more about kids you may meet who have autism and how you can be their friend.



### Some kids with autism may:

- Have trouble talking, make strange sounds, or not talk at all
- Flap their hands, spin, or laugh a lot
- Behave or play in unusual ways
- Be very active or be very quiet and like to spend time alone
- Have trouble looking directly at you
- Do or say the same things over and over again



It is hard for some children with autism to understand what we say or what our facial and body expressions mean. But, this does not mean you should stop trying to talk to them. Sometimes, showing them a picture or an object helps them understand things better. For example, if you are talking about baseball, pointing to a baseball card may help your friend know what you mean.

### Do Kids with Autism Get Frustrated?

Like all people, kids with autism can get frustrated and angry, but they often cannot tell us why. Instead of words, they may use actions to express their feelings. When they are upset, confused, or bored, they may make noises or spin around. When they are excited or happy, they may flap their hands, jump up and down, or run in circles.

Many children with autism get upset when their surroundings or schedules change because new or different things can be very difficult or scary for them. They may cry, hold their hands over their ears, or run away. Children with autism have a hard time controlling their behavior because they have difficulty understanding or dealing with the world around them.



## What Causes Autism?

No one knows why some people have autism, and there may be many different causes. Scientists are still trying to find out just what those causes are and how to best help people with autism.

Maybe one day you can help scientists find the answers.



## Where Do Kids with Autism Go To School?

Kids with autism can be in many different types of classrooms and schools. They may be a member of your class or may be in a classroom that was set up especially for them. Some children with autism go to different schools. Today, more and more kids with autism go to regular schools and participate in after-school activities with classmates, friends, and neighbors.

You may see some special arrangements used to help a friend with autism participate in your class. He or she may have a "coach," sit at their desk or table, or use picture symbols to communicate with you and the teacher. Some kids may even have computers that "talk" for them. Friendly classmates can be the best help of all to a child with autism.



**Autism is NOT contagious. You cannot "catch" autism from a classmate or friend.**



## How Can I Be a Friend to Someone with Autism?

When you become a friend to a person with autism, you both learn a lot from each other. Here are some ideas that can help you be a friend to a kid with autism:

- Accept your friend's differences
- Protect your friend from things that bother him or her
- Talk in small sentences with simple words and use a lot of gestures
- Use pictures or write down what you want to say to help your friend understand better
- Join your friend in activities that interest him or her
- Be patient—understand that your friend doesn't mean to bother you or others
- Invite your friend to play with you and to join you in group activities
- Sit near your friend whenever you can, and help him or her do things if they want you to
- Help other kids learn about autism by telling them about your friend

**For more information, look for these and other books in your local library;**

*Andy and His Yellow Frisbee*,  
by Mary Thompson,  
1996, Woodbine House

*Captain Tommy*,  
by Abby Ward Messner,  
1996, Potential Unlimited Publishing

*Different Like Me*,  
by Jennifer Elder,  
2006, Jessica Kingsley Publishers

*I Am Utterly Unique*,  
by Elaine Marie Larson,  
2006, Autism Asperger Publishing Co.

*Kristy and the Secret of Susan*  
(*The Babysitters Club #32*),  
by Ann M. Martin,  
1990, Scholastic, Inc.

*My Best Friend Will*,  
by Jamie Lowell & Tara Tuchel,  
2005, Autism Asperger Publishing Co.

*Sundays with Matthew*,  
by Matthew Lancelle &  
Jeanette Lesada,  
2006, Autism Asperger Publishing Co.

*Taking Autism to School*,  
by Andreanna Edwards,  
2001, JayJo Books, LLC

*Talking to Angels*,  
by Esther Watson,  
1996, Harcourt Brace & Co.

*Trevor Trevor*,  
by Diane Twachtman-Cullen,  
1998, Starfish Press

*Views from Our Shoes*,  
Edited by Donald Meyer,  
1997, Woodbine House



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