



## 10 tips for parents

- 1 Be informed about autism**, but focus on your child's need and not the label. There is a lot of information out there and it's easy to become overwhelmed. But, every child with autism is different. So, focus on what you need to do to support your child and their needs at each stage of their journey, and take it one step at a time.
- 2 Your child has their own unique personality** just like every other child. Love your child for who he or she is. And don't think that they don't love you, even though they may not say it or ask for cuddles. You are the centre of their universe.
- 3 Don't push your feelings away.** Talk about them. You may feel angry or overwhelmed. You may find yourself worrying about a future that is still years away. These thoughts are normal and it's okay to tell people that this is how you feel. No one is judging you – and people around you probably understand more than you think.
- 4 If you feel angry**, be angry with the situation or the challenges you and your child face. It doesn't help to be angry with your loved ones. If you find yourself arguing with your family over an autism-related issue, remember that the issue might be a difficult one for them too.
- 5 Remember that you have a life too.** Don't let autism consume every waking hour. Make time for yourself. Spend quality time with your other loved ones and try not to be constantly talking about autism. Everyone in your family – including you – deserves to be valued, noticed and happy, despite the challenges you may be facing.
- 6 Appreciate all your child's victories, no matter how small.** Focus on what they can do. Work with your child's strengths and accept their special interests. Try not to make comparisons with other children.
- 7 You're not alone.** Make friends with other parents who have children with autism and who understand your day-to-day challenges and the feelings you experience. Try to build a community of supportive and understanding people.
- 8 Take advantage of all the services and activities** for autistic children available to you and your child. Accessing autism-friendly services is an easy way to surround you and your child with people going through similar things, and those who are more understanding of your situation.
- 9 Consider integrating** your child early on by attending 'mainstream' services and activities. Don't be put off if your child is the only autistic child there. It is not up to your child to 'fit in'; it should be up to the activity to accommodate your child.
- 10 Get involved.** Being a champion for autism can be empowering and productive. You may feel frustrated by a lack of support or other people's attitudes. Use that energy to bring about the change you want to see.



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