



# Autism Tip Sheet

From the Elida School District Autism Team

## The Basics of Autism

What follows is information geared towards helping teachers work with the types of higher functioning autistic students who they are increasingly seeing in their general education classrooms

1. **Autism is a "spectrum" disorder.** This means that each individual with autism exhibits a unique mix of relative strengths and weaknesses.
2. **Stims.** Short for "stimulations". For example: rocking, tapping foot, touching nose, making repetitive noises. These stims are coping/calming mannerisms.
3. **Sensory sensitivity.** Students with autism may have an unusual reaction to physical stimuli. For instance, they may be oversensitive to noise, light, pressure or texture. Simultaneously, they may lack sensitivity to pain. These sensory sensitivities may trigger "meltdowns".
4. **Obsessive interests.** Students with autism often have one or more areas of obsessive interest. These areas of interest range from fairly functional to fairly eccentric.
5. **Literal comprehension.** Students with autism tend to have very poor practical and social understanding of language. As a practical result, they may have extreme difficulty comprehending non-literal information.
6. **Eye Contact/Body Language.** Students with autism often have difficulty recognizing and decoding "body language." As a result, they may (without realizing they are being inappropriate) stand too close, speak in monotone, use inappropriate volume, miss non-verbal signals.
7. **Troubles with generalization.** Students with autism may have difficulty generalizing information learned in one context to other contexts. Connections between old information and new information often need to be explicitly pointed out to them.
8. **Troubles with "theory of mind."** Students with autism often have difficulty grasping that other people think and perceive the world differently than themselves. They genuinely believe that everyone has the same background knowledge, interests, and perception of right/wrong.
9. **Anxiety.** Because of their deficits in generalizing, comprehension, and critical thinking, students with autism constantly find themselves in situations that are unfamiliar. This, in turn, triggers anxiety. The best way to treat anxiety in students with autism is to establish "safe" areas and familiar patterns.
10. **Meltdowns.** Students with autism may succumb to a unique type of tantrum known as a "meltdown." Understand that this is *not* the same thing as a temper tantrum, and *must not* be handled in the same way. Meltdowns occur when the child's coping mechanisms fail and they lapse into a state of panic. Students in meltdown are not capable of processing logical information, no matter how calmly delivered.

**Additional Information may be found by following the link below.**

Source: [Listphoria Blog Spot](#)

**February 2013**