



Autism Tip Sheet

From the Elida School District Autism Team

Communicating with an Autistic Child: Can We Talk?

Speech development in people with autism takes different paths than the majority of neuro-typical children. The effects of autism on communication are extremely varied. Autism is increasingly referred to as being part of the autism spectrum due to the variability and degree of its effects. Most children will not have any trouble with pronunciation. The problems lie in using language effectively.

Some children may exhibit only slight delays in language, or even seem to have precocious language and unusually large vocabularies, but have great difficulty in sustaining typical conversations. The “give and take” of non-autistic conversation is hard for them, although they often carry on a monologue on a favorite subject, giving no one else an opportunity to comment.

There is no 'one size fits all' in Autism Spectrum Disorders, and this is especially so with communication. In some cases, individuals on the autism spectrum avoid virtually all forms of social interaction, and may ignore someone talking to them, have an emotional outburst or escape.

We are usually unaware of the complexity of the language we use. Concrete language refers to making the meaning of a sentence very plain - the words simply mean what they say. Much of our language involves sub

meanings such as sarcasm, irony or 'reading between the lines' and children with autism or Asperger's consistently have trouble with anything other than a literal meaning of the words spoken. Examples of difficult phrases to understand would be:

- Great work, I'm sure that girl really enjoyed you pushing her into the mud!"
- "I wonder if people might think it's unusual if you wear just your underpants in public".

Remember this when having a conversation with an autistic individual:

Keep language

- **Specific**
- **Simple**
- **Concrete**

Sources and additional information:

- 1) [Autism-Help.org: Communication Issues](http://Autism-Help.org:Communication_Issues)
- 2) [Autism-Help.org: Basic Strategies of Communication](http://Autism-Help.org:Basic_Strategies_of_Communication)