Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew

1. **I am first and foremost a child.** I *have* an autism spectrum disorder. I am not "autistic." ASD is only one part of me. No one knows what I am truly capable of. If I get a sense that you don't think I can do something, I may stop trying.
2. **My sensory perceptions are disordered.** The environment I live in may feel hostile to me. My brain may not be able to filter through all the sensory input we all receive constantly.
3. **Please remember to distinguish between won't (I choose not to) and can't (I am not able to).** It may not be that I'm not listening, but that I can't understand what you are saying. If I am struggling, approach me and speak in plain, simple words.
4. **I am a concrete thinker.** This means I interpret language very literally. Idioms, puns, nuances, double entendres, inferences, metaphors, and sarcasm are often lost on me.
5. **Please be patient with my limited vocabulary.** It's hard for me to tell you what I need when I don't know the words to describe my feelings. I may flip over to movie talk when I know I'm expected to respond but can't come up with my own words.
6. **Because language is so difficult for me, I am very visually oriented.** Show me what to do rather than just tell me. Be prepared to show me many times. A visual schedule is extremely important to me. I won't lose the need for a visual schedule as I get older, but the kind of schedule I need will probably change (pictures vs. words)
7. **Please focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can't do.** I can't learn in an environment where I'm constantly feeling like I need to be "fixed". There is more than one right way to do most things.

8. **Help me with social interactions.** I may look like I don't want to play, but sometimes it's just that I don't know how to get started. Encourage other kids to invite and encourage me. I do best in structured activities where I know what's expected and that have a beginning and an end. Coach me in how to respond socially.
9. **Try to identify what triggers my meltdowns.** They're more horrid for me than they are for you. They occur because I'm on overload. Try to remember that all behavior is a form of communication.
10. **If you are a family member, please love me unconditionally.** I did not choose to have autism. Remember that it is happening to me, not you. My potential is bigger than you might think. I promise you – I'm worth it.

And finally, three words:
Patience. Patience. Patience.

Work to view my autism as a different ability rather than a disability.
See the gifts that autism has given me.
I might be the next Einstein. Or Mozart. Or Van Gogh.
They had autism too.
Be my advocate, be my friend, and we'll see how far I can go.

Info taken from Ten Things Every Child With Autism Wishes You Knew
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