



# OAASIS INFORMATION SHEET

## Autistic Spectrum Disorder and motivation

Office for  
Advice  
Assistance  
Support  
and  
Information  
on  
Special needs

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**OAASIS**  
A part of  
Cambian Education  
Services



### MOTIVATION

Trying to motivate any adolescent is difficult, but one who has some form of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), when out of his very structured school routine, may find starting and continuing tasks especially hard. A child with Asperger Syndrome may have a strong susceptibility to inertia, especially when tired or stressed.

### During holiday times at home:

Accept your child's genetic make-up (ie. his way of responding to the world because of his ASD).

Don't expect him always to want to be included in family activities, but encourage it (reward it?) nonetheless.

Remember that children with autism or Asperger Syndrome like routine and structure; they like to know in advance what is going to be happening and when and where and with whom.

- Try keeping to a timetable of events: include things which your son or daughter enjoys doing, as well as more routine chores, such as shopping.
- Write up a daily timetable and let your child have the next day's timetable the day before. Do not write up a timetable *too* far in advance, just in case you cannot keep to it!

### Offer a wide assortment of 'activities'

- Home-based project work (with your prompting and encouragement)
- TV / video viewing (alone - but check content)
- Reading (together. Have you tried a play?)
- Games and toys to play together

**Formative Fun** – home educational toys and products covering all areas of the National Curriculum are particularly useful for children with dyspraxia, dyslexia, autism, Down's syndrome, visual or hearing impairments.

Tel: 0845 890 0609

Web: [www.formativefun.com](http://www.formativefun.com)

Email: [info@formativefun.com](mailto:info@formativefun.com)

**TFH** - produces toys and equipment for all abilities and needs, including turn-taking games, interactive, sensory etc.

Tel: 01299 827820

Web: [www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)

- Trips out to the cinema, shops, swimming pool, museum, activity park etc – check with your local autism or AS support group if you and your child want company as they often organise ASD-friendly trips and outings during the summer.

**DaysOut.co.uk** - great days out for all the family. They promote attractions that have good facilities and access for visitors with disabilities and special needs.

Tel: 01708 222394

Web: [www.daysout.co.uk](http://www.daysout.co.uk)

Email: [david@daysout.co.uk](mailto:david@daysout.co.uk)

Don't forget the fundamental importance of self-esteem to everyone: ensure some activities will be easier than others so he can excel; some should stretch - but be aware of possible failure. Try to 'stroke' at least once a day - encourage, praise, reward.

Not all activities have to be physical, nor do they all have to include you, but to help him progress from one section of an activity to another may need some form of prompting. But be careful: if you tell him that you will let him know when 'the half hour' is almost up, he may keep asking you the equivalent of 'Are we nearly there yet?!' It may be an idea to mark out on a piece of paper a line of squares, each one of which represents 10 minutes. If you tell him after each ten minute interval he can mark off each square, and be able to see how many ten minute divisions remain. Gradually extend the length of the intervals.

Remember *yourself*: treat your own stress with positive action: exercise, relaxation, time-out (soaps, music, magazines), out-of-home activities. If you are fit, you will deal far better with your family and with any stress which might arise.

Remember too that if your Asperger child is of the 'must be in charge' type, his play with other children may need to be carefully monitored.

Days could include:

1. an outdoor (or physical) activity - swimming, walking, tennis, cycling, jogging - whatever they enjoy and you can do as a family or with friends. Helps with socialising and keeping fit.
2. a period of quiet (schedule the time allowed to be spent in bed, reading, or on the sofa in front of the TV).
3. time doing what we would call chores, but inventive skill on your part may call them something else - 'restyle your bedroom' instead of 'tidy up!'
4. some form of intellectual activity - time on the computer, at the library, reading own books, and whenever possible, being with other children too - good social skill development
5. and don't forget treats - a trip to the cinema/leisure centre once a week (could be 'earned' for good behaviour / doing one or two tasks during the week - but be realistic, don't expect too much!). These may need to be tabled in a visual way too, so that your child can see what he has achieved, and how much more he has to do in order to earn the treat.
6. Some days could be totally inactive days: TV or film watching for the whole afternoon, having spent the morning reading, or project-working.
7. If your child has a particular interest, is of the right age (and if *you* have sufficient time and energy to organise it beforehand) a Holiday Project could be devised. This again should be timetabled into the days. Eg, your son may have a strong interest in machines. Divide the Project into small sections: "Draw me a picture of ....." "Describe what it does ...." "Name other machines which do the same work....". Each section would form one part of your child's daily timetable of events.

**Reading: see also OAASIS information sheet 'Books – where to find them'**

*Playing, Laughing and Learning with Children on the Autistic Spectrum: A practical resource of play ideas for parents and carers*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Julia Moor. Not just a collection of play ideas, this book also shows how to break down activities into manageable stages and looks at ways to gain a child's attention and motivation and to build on small achievements.

ISBN: 9781843100607 price £12.95, available from Jessica Kingsley Publishers, website: [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com) Tel: 0207 833 2307.

**Websites:** *Five Survival Strategies to Help Children with Asperger Syndrome Overcome Inertia* [www.childspirit.com/5aspergers.pdf](http://www.childspirit.com/5aspergers.pdf). This paper by George T Lynn purports to help overcome the Asperger (neurological based) inertia, rather than one coming from depression or fear of the unknown.

The National Autistic Society's website has an information sheet on 'Play and Autism' at [www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=306&a=3353](http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=306&a=3353).

**Cambian Education Services** run seven residential special schools and colleges for young people with autistic spectrum disorders, Asperger Syndrome/HFA, severe learning difficulties. OAASIS can give you advice on the schools and send you their prospectuses or visit the website [www.cambianeducation.com](http://www.cambianeducation.com).

OAASIS produces a wide range of **free Information Sheets**, **8 publications** entitled 'First Guide to...' and **wallet sized cards** explaining 9 learning disabilities. Please contact OAASIS (see front of sheet for contact details) for the full list, or view and download them on the website at [www.oaasis.co.uk](http://www.oaasis.co.uk). All sheets are checked annually; please ensure you have the current version.

Note: The OAASIS Information Sheets use 'he' 'his' 'him' rather than the cumbersome 'he / she' 'his / her' 'him / her'. No sexism is intended. The sheets are checked annually, please ensure you have the current version.