

# Do you know someone with AUTISM?



By  
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## **FOREWORD**

This short booklet is intended to be used at 'story/ circle time' and is designed to promote discussion so that a sibling or mainstream child is able to discuss fears, doubts and anxieties about growing up with a child with autism, whether that is in their own home, or their local school.

Moreover, it explains the importance of their own very valuable contribution to the life and experiences of the child with autism.

Head, The Forum School

*My name is*

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*I have a very special friend.*

*My friend's name is*

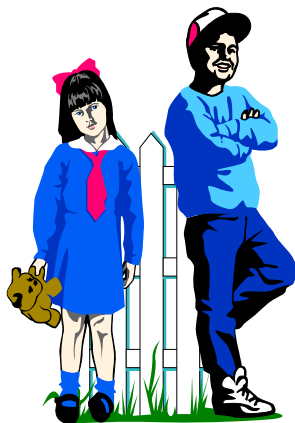
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*My friend has autism.*



Not all children are the same. You may know someone with blue eyes. Other people might have brown eyes.

Your friends could have different coloured hair from you; they might have different coloured skin.



These things do not make any difference to whether we like them or not because it is the person *inside* we are friends with.

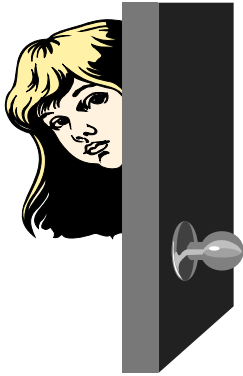
Some children have special things that make them different too.

**Autism** is a special thing that makes children different.

If a child has autism we sometimes say they are **autistic**.

It does not show.  
But it makes them feel different – inside.





Some children feel very nervous about being near other people.

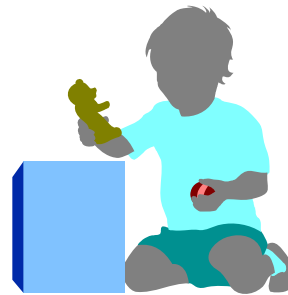
Do you feel like that sometimes ?

Maybe when you are asked to speak in front of your friends in class ?

It's like being frightened of what might happen.

### ***AUTISM COULD FEEL A BIT LIKE THAT FEELING***

Children with autism haven't learned to understand a lot of the things that you learned to understand when you were small.



They feel very nervous inside.  
They are frightened by some things that probably do not frighten you.



They do not choose to be autistic.

It is something that happens to them very early in their lives and even the cleverest doctors cannot explain it yet.

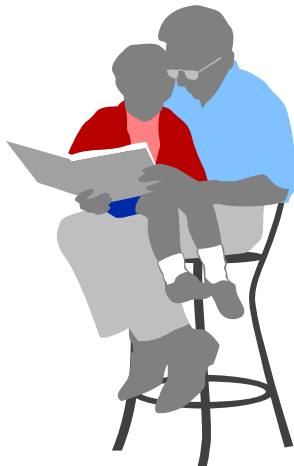
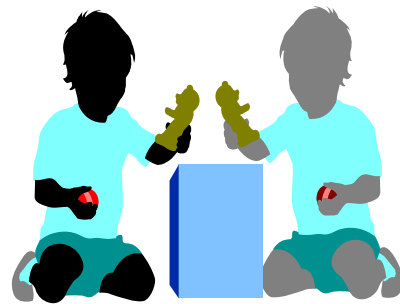
One thing we do know is that they are children who have missed a lot of the fun things that you have liked doing as you have grown up.

Children with autism find that they are happiest when they are on their own. They would often like us to leave them alone



When they do learn to join in with other children they find that this makes them happy too.

Sometimes you might think that an adult is making a child with autism do something that they do not want to do, like sit down or look at the storybook. This might look strange to you because your teacher can ask you to do those things and you understand what you need to do. We have to **SHOW** a child with autism what they have to do.



Adults who work with children with autism will encourage the children to try things out. If they do not try things they can never find out that they like them.

One of the things you might notice about children with autism is that they do not look at you when you speak to them.

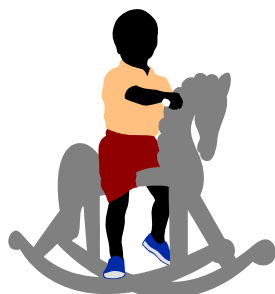
We think this is because they are frightened of not understanding what you want.



An adult working with a child with autism will ask the child to look at them maybe by calling their name. This is one of the ways of helping them to understand that they need to listen.

When you call to your mum, dad or friend and they are facing the other way, you do not know if they are listening.

But once they look at you, you know that they are ready to listen to you.



Children with autism like to explore just as much as you do.

One of the ways they explore things that are new to them is by touching them.

They might touch your hair or face to find out what you are like.

They might even want to sniff you to see what you smell like.

They don't really think that you smell, it's just a special way that they explore things.

It's OK to let them if you don't mind but if you don't like something that a child with autism does to you, then you should tell them "No". Just as you would tell one of your friends.

Some people with autism speak very well. Some speak, but mainly copy things they have heard and do not make things up in their own words.

This is a bit like some very small children who can sing their favourite TV programme's tune – putting all the right words in the right places – but will give only one word answers when you ask them a question.

Others do not speak at all. It's not that they will never speak, but that they have not understood how to do it yet.

They are not deaf, they can hear very well. Sometimes using sign language can help them understand what we are saying.

Sometimes a child with autism learns to use sign language really well and this can be helpful all through life.



Learning sign language might help children with autism understand things. When they can understand more they are no longer frightened to speak.



Imagine how you would feel if you couldn't understand that there could be two different roads that both lead to the same place, maybe your house.

If you had always gone home from school along one road, then one day, you were taken home along a different road, you would feel confused and frightened. You wouldn't be sure that the different road would lead to your house until you saw the front door. If someone had explained it to you before you started, it would have helped you to feel happier all the way along the road.

Children with autism are confused like this about nearly everything, so adults working with them would take time to explain.

Your teacher might say to you to "Go to the gym". This is enough for you to understand that your teacher wants you to go in line and sit when you get there.

But adults would try to help children with autism by making it clearer, so that they can understand.

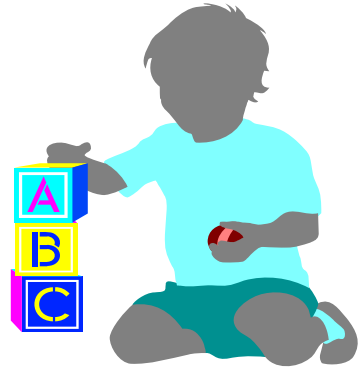
They would only say one instruction at a time, like this:

- "Line up"
- "Walk to the gate"
- "Line up at the gate"
- "Walk to the gym"
- "Line up at the gym"
- "Go in"
- "Sit down"



Some children with autism are very good at doing the things that they practice a lot.

You might meet a child who can spin things really well, or stack things or line things up.



If they like doing these things they might push you away if you ask them to do something else. Pushing you away does not mean they don't like you.

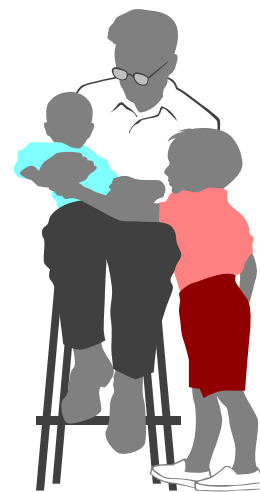
Children with autism could hurt you – then give you a cuddle. This is because they do not understand what this means to **you**.

It can seem as if children with autism are getting away with being naughty. They try lots of different ways to make you leave them alone.

Everybody can help them to understand how to behave properly.

They often need reminding.

They are children who need lots of help from adults, brothers and sisters and friends.



Because they need a lot of adult help, children with autism sometimes live at school. They still see their parents and brothers and sisters on visits and some go home at weekends and school holidays.

I hope that you agree that these special children need us to be their friends.

They need **us** to help them learn how to enjoy things and have fun.



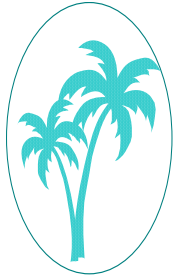
We can help them to understand things more, and feel less confused, by showing them how to behave.

Although we are all different, we all need to have friends.

Making friends with someone who has a very special way of being different makes them a very special friend.

And remember that you have all got things that make you different from your friends and this means that **you** are a special person too.





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