

5 Things to Remember When Talking to an Autistic Person

Autistic people are all different and have different skills, abilities and needs. But there are some issues that apply to many autistic people, and this list attempts to build on some of these. If in doubt about what would help an autistic person, please ask them!

1. **Say exactly what you mean.** Many autistic people are very literal. We tend to struggle with reading between the lines and picking up other cues, such as tone and body language. So please be clear in what you say. Blunt is usually fine and often appreciated!
2. **Make it easy for them to ask questions.** Lots of us have had bad experiences where we misunderstood someone, not least because we did not pick up on things like tone, so we may well want to clarify what you are saying even if you think you are being clear. This is not a reflection on you in any way – please be patient with us.
3. **Disregard lack of eye contact.** Autistic people often have trouble maintaining eye contact. It can feel very uncomfortable and embarrassing for us, amongst other things. But not making eye contact does not mean that we are not listening to you or are not interested in what you are saying.
4. **Understand they may be easily distracted by surroundings.** We are often hypersensitive to certain types of stimuli. For me it is noise, and particularly human voices, so if you try to talk to me in a room full of other people speaking I will struggle. Others may have problems with bright lights or other stimuli. If someone appears to be struggling, ask if a change of environment will help.
5. **If they seem uncomfortable, it's almost certainly not because of you.** Autistic people often find face to face and even phone conversations awkward. It doesn't matter who we are talking to or mean that we don't like you! We just find it difficult but we do our best.

I really hope this is of some help to you. Autistic people can play a huge role in society and want to do so. A few small adjustments can make life much easier for us – thank you for being patient!