



# Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

Designed to educate family members and friends on Autism Spectrum Disorder and how they can best support loved ones

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No two people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are the same. In simple terms, a child with autism can have difficulties with communicating and understanding what people think and feel, as well as interpreting and processing information around them. This can make it difficult for children with autism to respond and engage in the world around them.

### **Common character traits can include:**

- Difficulty with social interaction.
- Unusual interest in objects.
- Difficulty with changes in routine
- Children with ASD may have great ability in one area and great difficulty in another
- Children with ASD may have unusually strong reactions to one or more of their eight senses
- Children with ASD may do the same thing over and over again or talk constantly about specific things that interest them

### **Children with ASD may also have unusually strong reactions to one or more of their senses. For example:**

- May react to bright sunlight.
- May be sensitive to tags on their clothing
- May dislike loud noises

- May have difficulty with the colour, smell, or texture of certain foods. This may limit what they will eat to only a few foods

### **Habits and ASD**

Children with ASD may also do the same thing over and over again. For example they may:

- Repeatedly flap or clap their hands
- Rocking
- Make noises
- Jump
- Spin around
- Walk on tiptoes

These behaviours shouldn't be considered as bad or wrong, but rather the child may be doing these things to help calm themselves during stressful situations or to help occupy or entertain themselves. If these behaviours are impacting their ability to complete everyday tasks, we recommended contacting your local health professional.

## Emotional responses and ASD

Children with ASD may also have unusually intense and prolonged emotional reactions. These emotions may not match the situation they find themselves in. For example, they may:

- Get very angry when asked to stop playing and get ready for lunch
- Become upset when there is a change in routine
- Become upset by transitions

### Autie-biographical



### A Spectacular Spectrum



By: Theresa Scovil



## ASD and meltdowns

The sensory meltdown is often misunderstood for attention seeking or spoiled behaviour, or simply the child trying to get what they want out of the situation. Common reasons a child may have a sensory meltdown may include:

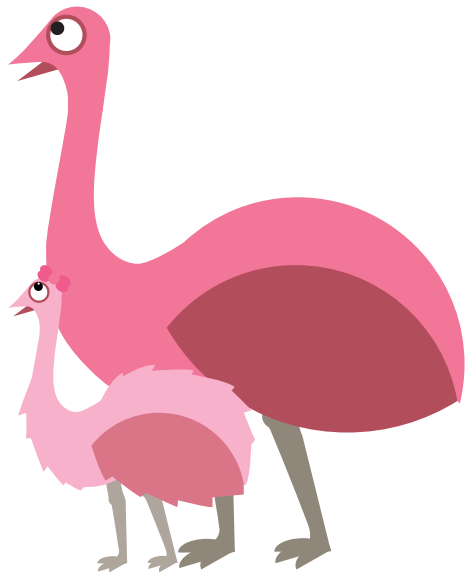
- The inability to cope with a new or challenging situation
- Inability to communicate wants and needs
- Difficulty with transitions
- Lack of sleep or overtired
- Lack of proper nutrition or too much of the wrong food
- Change in routine

## Tips that may support your child in daily life:

- Stick to a schedule. Set up a schedule for your child, with regular times for meals, therapy, school, and bedtime. Try to keep disruptions to this routine to a minimum. If there is an unavoidable schedule change, prepare your child for it in advance
- Find a communication method which works best for your child. This could include a visuals, verbal, written etc
- Keep instructions simple
- Allow for additional time for transitioning between tasks

## What to do when a child is having a meltdown:

1. Be empathetic
2. Make them feel safe and loved
3. Eliminate punishments
4. Focus on your child, not staring bystanders
5. Break out your sensory toolkit
6. Teach them coping strategies once they are calm



# The 101 Guide to Handling Autistic Meltdowns in Public

## Why do meltdowns occur?

- 1 Overstimulation in the environment.
- 2 Capacity to cope has been worn out.

Meltdowns can be in different forms like crying, screaming and even shutting down.

While it may seem like a very irrational response, it is in fact a very logical one. **The event and the response is never unrelated.**

## Friendly Advice:

When your child is having a meltdown in public, don't be embarrassed. It can be a difficult situation for you, but it is even harder on the child. Your main goal as a parent should be to identify the stressors and triggers so you can prevent them in a public setting.

<https://otsimo.com/en/>

## Best ways to handle a meltdown when you are in public:

- 1 Having a calm and nonchalant attitude.

- 2 Have some sensory toys on hand. Things like noise cancelling headphones, stress toys and slime can help calm the child down.



- 3 Step outside of the place you are in. A change of location with less stimulation helps calm the child down.

Focus on your child and not the people around. Your child needs you the most right now.

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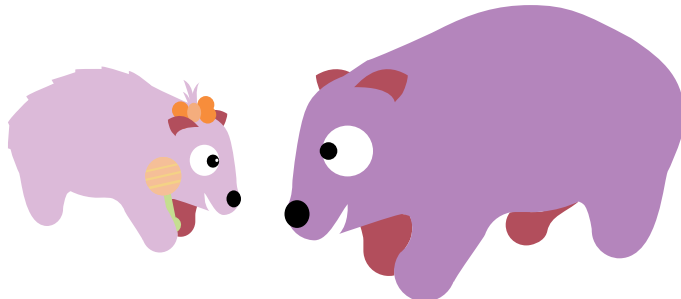
Don't resort to punishment. Remember the meltdown is not in your child's control, which is why you need to give them the freedom to vent out what they are feeling.

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## ASD strengths

- Learn through the prompts. Supports such as visual and verbal cues and physical guidance. E.g. hand over teacher
- Learn new skills when taught in a supportive environment E.g. Supports, natural contingencies or rules
- May have areas of relative strength In overall ability profile E.g. puzzles, drawing, music, facts about topic of special interest
- They find pleasure in success with a challenge/activity
- May be cuddly and provide nice feedback when hugged
- May smile, make eye contact, laugh, display a variety of emotions



# References

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