

MY AUTISM

This guide helps children to understand their own uniqueness and strengths. This guide can be used in professional settings or parents can use it while discussing the diagnosis with their child.





WHAT IS AUTISM?

Every one of us is different and it is actually a good thing!
Autistic features are not the same to everybody.

You may not see autism on your skin, but there are some things in which you can recognize autism.

This guide is for you who have been recently diagnosed with autism.



UNIQUE BRAINS

All brains are different. In autism, brains work differently than non-autistic brains, so you experience the world around you, and react to it the way you do.

Brain functions affect things you are interested in and how you learn, for example. It also affects your emotions, how you experience things, and how you act around other people.

SPECIAL INTERESTS

Everyone likes different things. If you are autistic, you might be super interested in one special topic.

You might want to learn everything about it and talk about it a lot.

Some autistic people are really good at remembering and learning even the tiniest details about the things they like.

OWN SPECIAL INTERESTS

Do you have a special interest?
You can write them down here



SENSES

Special senses are part of autism.

Sometimes, certain noises can be really annoying, or bright lights might make you feel bad.

If you are autistic, your senses might be too sensitive or not sensitive enough. For example, clothes with tags might bother you a lot. On the other hand, you might like firm touches more than light ones. You might also have a good nose for different smells.

Your senses can also affect what kind of food you like. Some autistic people really love sweets.

Sometimes, autism can make you not want to eat certain colored foods or foods that feel weird in your mouth. Some people think the food is ruined if different ingredients are mixed together or if there is sauce on it.

STIMMING

Stimming means doing the same moves or sounds over and over. It can be things like flapping your hands, rocking your body, or walking back and forth.

Stimming is a good thing. It helps you feel better and calm down when you are stressed or upset.



TICS

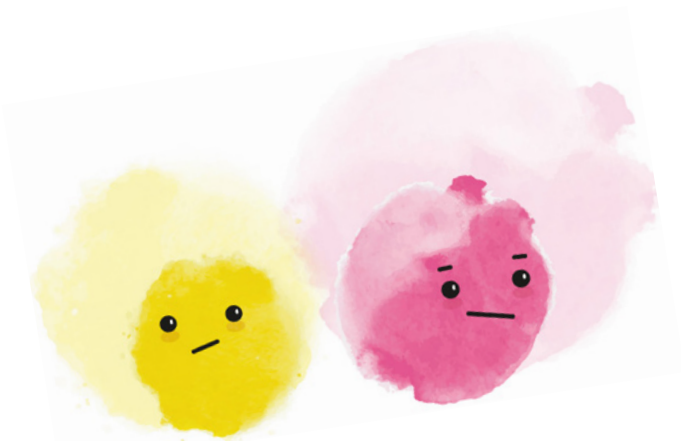
Tics are sounds or movements that you can't really control. They just happen, even if you try to stop them. Kind of like a sneeze.

Tics can be things like blinking your eyes, nodding your head, or twitching your hands. Tic sounds can be humming, sniffing, or saying words. Do you have tics? You don't have to hide them or be embarrassed.

SOCIAL SITUATIONS

In social situations you are with other people. Making friends and finding things to talk about can be hard.

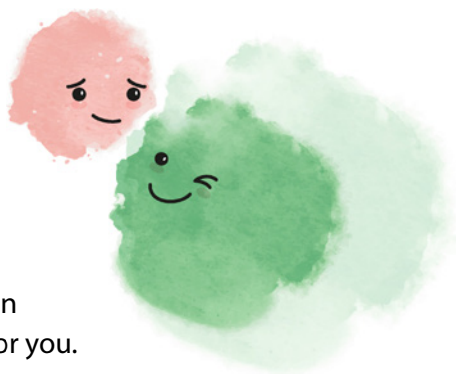
You might need time alone after being with others. It's totally okay to be alone sometimes, and it's important to know what makes you feel tired.



COMMUNICATION

Sometimes, autism makes talking hard. It might be difficult or impossible to talk to people.

You can use writing, pictures, or sign language when talking is difficult for you.



FEELINGS

Because of autism it might be difficult to know your own feelings and how the other person feels.

Sometimes your own feelings can be very strong and difficult to manage. In those situations, you might want to break something or throw things.

Sometimes you might get stuck in your feelings and it is difficult to get over it.

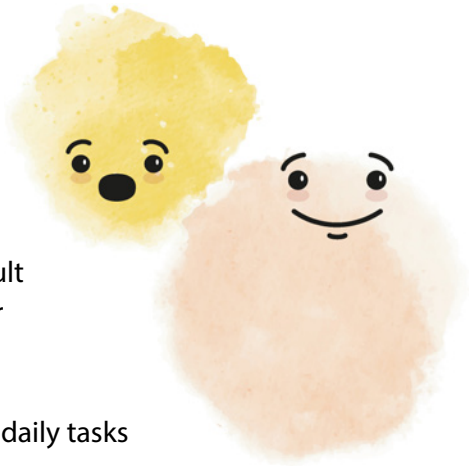


ACTIONS

Autism spectrum may affect your actions. For example, sometimes it might be difficult to get some things started or stop doing something.

Sometimes it helps if you do daily tasks in the same order every day.

Some find it easier if there are pictures showing what to do next and when to do it.



SUPPORT FROM YOUR OWN SURROUNDINGS

It is important to get to know what makes you feel good or what makes you feel bad or tired. Then it is easier to modify your surroundings at school and at home to make you feel better.

In the following pages you can pick things that match your experiences. You can also do this with your parents if it helps.

SENSES

- Certain noises make me feel bad
- Bright lights dazzle me
- Some clothes are itchy or feel wrong
- I don't like to be touched without asking
- I like firm touch
- Sometimes I feel like bumping around in purpose
- Some foods feel nasty in my mouth
- I have special foods that I like
- One should never mix foods together on a plate



STIMMING AND TICS

- I often like to walk back and forth
- I often jump around or flap my hands
- I like rocking and swinging my body
- I like to repeat words or sentences over and over again
- I like to read the same chapter from a book over and over again
- I like to touch/ wiggle / shake some specific thing/toy
- I make sounds or movements I cannot stop



SOCIAL SITUATIONS

- I sometimes notice that people get weird about what I said
- It is difficult for me to know if someone is interested in my things
- I don't always know how to approach others
- It is difficult to know how to behave in situations
- I sometimes go too close to others
- I don't like people coming too close to me
- Eye contact is difficult for me
- It feels difficult to find friends
- Being around others is tiring / exhausting
- New situations, places and people feel scary

COMMUNICATION

- Sometimes talking to people is hard or I cannot do it
- Sometimes it is easier to write or use sign language than to talk
- It is difficult for me to ask for help or make questions
- I often think about how to respond to questions
- I often respond that everything is fine, even if it's not true

FEELINGS

- It is difficult for me to know how I feel or tell it to someone
- It is difficult for me to know how others feel
- I often observe others' facial expressions
- Sometimes it is hard to control my emotions and I want to break something or throw stuff
- Sometimes I get so stuck that my brain locks down

ACTIONS

- It is hard for me to get things started
- It is difficult for me to stop doing what I love
- Transitions are difficult for me
(for example leaving to school)
- Understanding schedules is difficult for me
- I want to do things the way that I always do
- I don't like changes
- I don't like to be told
- I would like people to do things my way

Did you find something that fits you?

On the next pages there are few tips that could help you.



FEW THINGS TO TEST IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

If you find different sounds around you too loud or distracting you can try earphones or hearing protectors.

Do you get dazzled by light? Sunglasses help outside. Indoors you can dim lights for more convenience.

It would be good to find a safe and peaceful space for you to relax, destress, calm your senses or stim.

Lists, calendars, pictures or mobile phone reminders could help with schedules and to understand how much time something takes.

If speaking is too difficult, try using writing, pictures, or signs.

Remember that getting bullied is never okay. If you are being bullied, make sure to tell an adult.

You are perfect the way you are!



WHERE TO FIND MORE INFO ABOUT AUTISM?

www.autismiliitto.fi

www.mielenterveystalo.fi

The guide was created as part of the thesis “The Significance of Psychoeducation for Children with Autism Spectrum and Their Families”, LAB University of Applied Sciences, YAMK Master of healthcare, 2023.

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