

# Tips for Helping Students On the Spectrum

*In the classroom it's important to remember that kids with ASD aren't trying to be difficult, but they may require some adaptations to achieve their full potential. It can help for you to meet with your child's teachers and support staff to work together - use similar words and phrases, practice*

## **Communicate clearly, saying exactly what you mean.**

Implied follow-through may not happen. For example, asking, "Can you place your scrap paper in the recycling bin?" You may get a "Yes,, but the child doesn't follow through, with your implied request.

They answered honestly, but didn't see the connection to the next step of removing the trash. This is the type of implied expectation that is often difficult for those with ASD to understand. A better way would be to state your request with clear direction as, "Please take your recycling to the bin."

## **Use direct language and avoid the use of double meanings, sarcasm, teasing, or subtle jokes.**

Often Aspies will take your comments literally and get confused or offended. Make sure that you have his/her attention before communicating. Use his name, but don't necessarily expect to gain full eye contact – this can be difficult for pupils with an ASD.

## **Think about slowing down your communication.**

Imagine a complicated pathway from beginning to end, like a maze. Now compare that to a direct line from point A to point B. The brain of a person with ASD is like a maze, with all sorts of sensory information being received at the same time, and traveling down a complicated road to the final destination.

Not only would this take longer time for understanding, it also can be quite exhausting to process information this way.

## **Check that students understand what is expected of them for both classroom work and homework.**

Often students with ASD are incredibly bright, but they still may require assistance with processing verbal information. You may find visual aids helpful.

Be clear about expectations in the classroom; when breaks from class can be taken, where he/she is to go for lunch and recess. Routine and repeated instruction can help ease the anxiety that can arise from new environments and change in setting.

## *Tips for Helping Students On the Spectrum (continued)*

### **Be patient and remember they are not trying to be rude or disruptive.**

Students with ASD struggle with the basic social understanding to realize how they appear to others. They may say or do things that seem obviously offensive to others, but it's due to biological differences that affect the parts of the brain that control social behaviour and understanding.

### **Use a calm voice and minimize noise disruption.**

Often, Aspies are extremely sensitive to noise, some find loud noise physically painful. Speaking in a loud angry tone, can cause more upset, as it does for most children. Do not shout or expect him/her to comprehend facial expressions and gestures. Be clear in your communication and instruction, and confirm understanding.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

How to Help Classmates Support Friends with Aspergers:

<http://www.autism.org.uk/working-with/education/educational-professionals-in-schools/lessons-and-breaktimes/asperger-syndrome-in-your-classroom-information-for-classmates.aspx>

For Educators:

<http://www.autism.org.uk/working-with/education/educational-professionals-in-schools/pupils-with-autism-in-your-school/asperger-syndrome-a-schools-guide.aspx>

Dr. Tony Attwood, Asperger Syndrome Specialist: <http://www.tonyattwood.com.au/>

Asperger's from the Inside Out, Michael John Carley:

<http://www.michaeljohncarley.com/index.php/books.html>

### **About the Author**



Jodi Carmichael is the award-winning author of *Spaghetti is NOT a Finger Food and Other Life Lessons*. She is also a speaker, an advocate for **Asperger Manitoba**, and a full time daydreamer.

Jodi loves discussing the writing process with students and establishing Young Author Clubs in Canadian schools.

When Jodi is not busy with these activities, she is completing the first draft of her middle grade mystery; *Ford and Ellie's Mostly Solved Mysteries: Family of Spies*.

Follow Jodi on her blog at [www.jodicarmichael.com](http://www.jodicarmichael.com).

Copyright. Jodi Carmichael. All rights reserved.

Published May 2014 by Mom's Choice Awards® for the [Mom's Choice Matters](#) blog.