



# How to be autism-friendly

## Quick tips for inclusive interactions

There are some simple ways you can help people on the autism spectrum to feel more comfortable, supported, respected and included – here are a few we've developed with the input of the Autistic community.

### Celebrate neurodiversity

Highlight the value of diverse perspectives and abilities in enriching our communities. Encouraging an attitude of celebration rather than tolerance or deficit can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for everyone.

### Focus on the person

The Autistic person you're talking to will have unique abilities, interests and perspectives. Take the time to listen – you never know what you'll learn. Get to know them and give them the opportunity to show you that they can be a really great friend. Try seeing beyond autism to recognise the individual's strengths and talents which will foster a deeper connection and build mutual respect.

**Our purpose  
a different brilliant®**

Understanding, engaging  
& celebrating the strengths,  
interests & aspirations of people  
on the autism spectrum.

### Facilitate peer awareness and support

Encourage environments where peers are educated about autism to promote understanding and inclusion. This can be achieved through explicit inclusion statements, workshops, informational sessions, or inclusive activities that highlight collaboration and mutual respect.

### Use visual supports when possible

Since many people on the autism spectrum find visual aids helpful, incorporate visual aids like step-by-step guides to support understanding and independence. Visual schedules can help in transitioning between activities by providing a clear sequence of events.

# Quick tips for inclusive interactions



## Promote structured environments and interactions

People on the autism spectrum often thrive in environments where routines and expectations are clear. Clearly outline schedules and routines, using visual timetables or calendars when possible. This helps reduce anxiety related to the unknown and provides a sense of security and predictability.

## Encourage inclusivity in group settings

When organising group activities, directly invite Autistic individuals and explain the activity's purpose and structure. Consider assigning roles that align with their strengths, such as research for a project if they have a deep interest in the topic. Don't force social interactions.

## Adjust to different communication styles

People on the autism spectrum often interact and communicate differently. Instead of judging these differences negatively, or seeing them as an inconvenience, adapt your approach and focus patiently on the purpose of the communication. Listen to the words they are using rather than focusing on their tone or body language.

## Keep things clear and simple

Sometimes people on the autism spectrum take words and phrases literally or have trouble reading 'between the lines'. Don't be offended or annoyed if they repeat your words back to you, or need to clarify certain points (even if this means going back to previous comments). They're just making sure they've understood you correctly. To help, keep your language direct, clear and easy-to-follow.

## Respect personal space

Understand that individuals on the autism spectrum may have different preferences for physical space and touch. Always ask for consent before initiating physical contact and be mindful of personal boundaries.

## Take the pressure off

People on the autism spectrum can find it tricky to read social cues and body language. Remember this, and be patient and understanding in conversations. Allow for pauses in conversation which will give the Autistic person time to formulate their thoughts and responses.

## Don't mistake honesty for rudeness

People on the autism spectrum can come across as brutally frank, honest and matter of fact. Remember not to take this personally; anything that seems rude or inappropriate is likely to be completely unintentional!

## Emotions matter

People on the autism spectrum have the same feelings and empathy as everyone else, so make sure you treat them with dignity and respect. Give them the space to express feelings and thoughts in different ways. Understanding and respecting different ways of processing and expressing emotions can lead to more meaningful interactions.

## Watch out for 'overwhelm'

Sometimes people on the autism spectrum get overwhelmed by sights, sounds or smells, especially when they're in busy places. Give people the space and time they need to process their surroundings, and understand if they need to leave a situation quickly. Ask about what adjustments may be necessary. Create a safe space for them to be their authentic selves. Simple adjustments can be made that have a huge impact such as dimming lights, reducing background noise, or offering a quiet space to retreat to if needed.

We specialise in delivering a customised autism-friendly and hidden disability staff training.

To learn more and enquire about this service, [click here](#).

Aspect offers a comprehensive approach, based on the idea of a **different brilliant**<sup>®</sup>, that:

- Respects difference and diversity
- Builds a person's skills based on their strengths, interests, aspirations and support needs
- Develops autism-friendly environments
- Supports others to understand and embrace autism and to develop respectful supportive interactions.