



Your Awareness Will Reward Us All

World Autism Awareness Day— 2 April

Autism is a lifelong developmental condition that affects what an individual sees, hears and senses. This can result in problems of communication, social interaction and behaviour. Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurological condition that occurs on a continuum. This means that symptoms can occur in many varieties and with varying degrees of intensity.

People with autism tend to have communication deficits, such as responding inappropriately in conversations, misreading nonverbal interaction, or having difficulty building friendships appropriate to their age. In addition, people with autism may be overly dependent on routines, highly sensitive to changes in their environment, or intensely focused on inappropriate items. Again, the symptoms of people with autism will fall on a continuum, with some individuals showing less symptoms and other having much more severe symptoms.

This condition is lifelong and can have a significant impact on the life of a family. Parents often face enormous challenges understanding, supporting, and raising a child with autism. This job is often made all the more complex by a lack of community understanding and awareness of the condition, with parents regularly enduring critical comments or unfair assumptions about their child's behaviour or their parenting.

It is not known what causes an individual to have autism. Much research is being done to try to find out more. At this point it is believed to result from changes to brain development which may be caused by a combination of reasons, including genetic and environmental factors or a combination of both. The current estimated prevalence of autism is more than one person in 100 has autism. It is no longer considered a low incidence condition. On these estimates, every 20 minutes in Australia a person is diagnosed with autism.

There are students in your school community who are living with autism and this information is provided to increase your understanding of the condition with the view to enabling you to help and support those children and families living with this sometimes complex condition.

For more information call 1300 288 476 or visit autismtas.org.au





Your Awareness Will Reward Us All World Autism Awareness Day— 2 April

Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder have a wide range of difficulties and abilities. Usually by the age of three, children who have autism display these characteristics:

Social interaction and relationship difficulties:

They might not respond when people speak or gesture towards them, even when their names are called out. They may make little eye contact with others and usually won't copy other people's actions, like clapping. They *may not be interested in other children chatting or playing and have trouble with giving and sharing.*

Communication and language difficulties: Children with autism usually take longer than the average to learn language and communication. Children with autism may find it hard to comprehend language, so understanding simple instructions and social communication can be difficult. When children with autism do have language skills, they may talk about their own special interests, and occasionally use language skills to communicate with others. They might echo what they hear, repeating patterns of words without attaching any meaning to them.

Repetitive behaviour, routines and sensory difficulties: Even from a young age, children with autism will often prefer the same routines – feeding, sleeping or leaving the house needs to be done the same way every time. They might be upset by even minute changes. Many children with autism also like to repeat behaviour, like lining their toys up in a particular way over and over again. Children with autism may have a range of narrow and intense interests that capture their attention to the exclusion of other activities and interests. They may have difficulty interpreting sensory information, and can be overwhelmed by many of these sensory experiences such as hyper/hypo sensitivity to light, noise and smell.

Although each individual diagnosed on the autism spectrum has these core characteristics that define their condition, it does not define them as a person. Every person with autism is a unique individual with their own set of likes, dislikes, personality and capabilities. Get to know someone in your school community who has autism or talk to their parents and remember to be **Autism Aware.**

For more information call 1300 288 476 or visit autismtas.org.au





Your Awareness Will Reward Us All

World Autism Awareness Day— 2 April

How you can support a person or family living with an Autism Spectrum Condition.

Having a child with autism affects the whole family. Everyday things that most of us take for granted have to be carefully planned and executed. Parents often face enormous challenges understanding, supporting, and raising a child with autism. This job is often made all the more complex by a lack of community understanding and awareness of the condition, with parents regularly enduring critical comments or unfair assumptions about their child's behaviour or their parenting. There are students in your school community who are on the autism spectrum and this information is provided to increase your understanding of the condition with the view to enabling you to help and support those children and families living with this sometimes complex condition.

One of the most significant support structures for families living with autism is the child's school. School staff, other children, and parents can all help to improve the quality of life for the child and their family. This can be done by:

- acknowledging the child with autism as a child first, not by his or her condition or diagnosis
- take the time to include and talk with the child's parents about the usual things parents talk about as these parents want to share the trials and joys of parenting too
- recognise that some families nurturing a person with autism may be doing it tough and have even more need for a friendly smile, a coffee and a chat or just to know that they are not being judged by their child's complex behaviour or how they manage it
- encourage others to be more understanding and supportive of a parent or a child in your school community who has autism

For more information call 1300 288 476 or visit autismtas.org.au





Your Awareness Will Reward Us All

World Autism Awareness Day— 2 April

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a complex neurological condition, and while there are common characteristics each individual is unique. This condition is lifelong and can have a significant impact on the life of a family. Parents often face enormous challenges understanding, supporting, and raising a person with autism. Autism Awareness in the community can be of significant assistance to a family, and may be as simple as taking the time for a chat.

Individuals with autism develop differently from typically developing individuals. For more information on autism or support for children and families, please contact Autism Tasmania. Autism Tasmania offers a number of services across the state, including:

Support Autism Tasmania facilitates support groups and provides information and practical help to people on the autism spectrum, parents, other family members and care providers through our state-wide Information Team.

Helping Children With Autism (HCWA) From offices in Hobart and Launceston the association specifically helps parents and carers of young children on the autism spectrum throughout Tasmania, as part of the Commonwealth Government's funding initiative.

Resource Library, Quarterly Magazine, Fee-for-service training and workshops

For more information call 1300 288 476 or visit autismtas.org.au

