



Guidance for Parent/Carers when creating audio recordings of their children

Thank you for your interest in contributing to this unique animated series. Below you will find a list of the topics we would like to include in the series along with a brief description of each one to give you an idea of what we're after. On the right-hand side, you'll find ideas of what you can ask your children when you're interviewing them, however nobody knows your child better than you do, so feel free to improvise with the questions to direct them towards a specific experience, strength or difficult you know they have.

We are looking for an even balance between positive, negative and humorous situations. You don't have to ask all the questions,

they are just a guide. One per topic may be enough. It would be helpful if you could encourage your child to start their answer by re-phrasing the question you have just asked. For example, if you ask them 'Who do you like to play with?' they would reply 'I like to play with...'

It's ok to leave your voice in the recording, we don't expect you to do any editing. Don't press for long answers but if you do get long answers don't worry! As long as the final file is uploadable we're happy to edit.

There are no wrong answers.

THEMES

Diversity

Autistic people are like snowflakes: although they share similar characteristics, each one is unique. You can't tell that somebody is autistic just by looking at them because you can't see inside their brain! And because autism affects people differently depending on other factors such as temperament, intelligence and life experiences, it's important not to have any preconceived ideas but instead get to know the individual. For example, some autistic people may be very shy and selectively mute while others are loud and verbose. Some love having lots of friends while others prefer one special friend. Some like to be in control all the time, while others are happy to follow. Some run away or hide when they feel overwhelmed while others may become aggressive. Most autistic people have a special interest that they really enjoy doing. A few have an amazing talent such as Math or reading or remembering facts. Some autistic people have a learning disability and will need extra support throughout their lives.

Everybody is different and that is true of autistic people too. Each person has their own individual strengths and challenges. Try getting to know someone with autism and you might discover **amazing things!**

Communication

Social communication involves using body language, tone of voice and words to get your message across to somebody else. Social interaction involves the 'unwritten rules' around communicating in groups, e.g. the give and take of conversation, when to interrupt, how to react if you win or lose in games, how to share. Autistic people find these things difficult to understand and therefore struggle to 'get it right' when they socialise. They may come across as too quiet when they are simply afraid of saying the wrong thing. Or they may be so honest that they offend. Or they may talk constantly because it feels safer and easier than a two-way conversation. Because socialising takes so much cognitive effort, they often need time alone to recover afterwards. Misunderstandings due to communication difficulties make autistic people more vulnerable to isolation, rejection, humiliation and bullying. This is a shame because they usually make very interesting, creative and loyal friends.

Autistic people want to have friends and be included, but they are just not sure how to fit in.

Try being kind to somebody who seems a little different and you might discover an **amazing friend!**

QUESTIONS

How do you think autism affects you?

What do you like about being autistic? What do you dislike?

Do you know anybody else who is autistic? How would you describe them?

If your teacher said that you could do anything you wanted for a whole day at school, what would you choose?

If you met a boy or girl who is new to your school, how do you imagine the conversation might go?

What would you like your classmates/teachers to know about autism?

Who do you like to talk to? What are your conversations about?

Who do you like to play with? Why? What do you do together?

What makes a good friend? Are you a good friend?

What's the best way to make new friends? Is that what you do?

Have you ever been teased or bullied? What happened? How did it make you feel?

Do you always understand your classmates/teachers? If not, why not? What happens?

How could your classmates/teachers help you understand them a bit better?



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Perception

Because their brains are wired differently, autistic people often experience the world around them in a very different way. Some of their senses may be heightened, for example they may have an amazing sense of smell or be able to hear even the quietest sounds – a bit like having a superpower! Other senses may be less responsive, so they may not realise they are too hot or that their shoe is rubbing or that they need the toilet. Sometimes senses get mixed up so that a person may be able to ‘smell’ colours or ‘feel’ words. These sensory differences may vary from day-to-day or even from hour-to-hour depending on how someone is feeling. When there is too much sensory stimulation e.g. in a busy school playground, an autistic person can feel very upset and overloaded. They are unable to think logically and may lash out or try to run away or simply freeze. These meltdowns can be very frightening for the autistic person and those around them.

Autistic people process sensory information differently. Try seeing the world from their point of view and you might experience what it would be like to have **amazing senses!**

Behaviour

Because autism affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people and how they experience the world around them, life can sometimes be confusing and overwhelming. This is why many autistic people feel anxious a lot of the time. High levels of anxiety can lead to unusual behaviours which may seem weird or scary to others but are perfectly logical when you try to see things from an autistic point of view. For example, an autistic person may be very controlling and want to do the same thing over and over again in order to create certainty in an uncertain world. They may engage in a special interest to block anxious thoughts and provide a ‘safe’ topic of conversation. They may stand too close to you because they don’t understand the concept of ‘personal space’. They may have unusual body movements e.g. hand-twisting, rocking or jumping, because it helps to integrate their complex sensory system. When they become overwhelmed by excessive social contact or sensory overload they may experience a rush of adrenaline causing a fight/flight or freeze response and need to escape to a ‘safe place’ to recover. Sometimes, in the heat of the moment, they hurt people they care about and feel very guilty afterwards.

Autistic people sometimes behave in unusual ways – especially when they are anxious or stressed.

Try understanding what life is like for an autistic person and you might develop **amazing empathy!**

QUESTIONS

Which is your favourite sense? Why?

Do any of your senses work better or worse than other people? Which ones and how are they different?

Can you sense what other people are feeling? How?

What happens when you feel overwhelmed with too much sensory information? What do you do? How can the people around you help?

Do you have a special interest? What does it involve? How does it make you feel when you are talking about/doing your special interest?

Do you think you have any unusual habits/behaviours? How do other people react when they notice these?

What do you do at home/school when you are feeling worried/confused/overloaded? What happens afterwards?

How do you calm down when you are feeling worried/confused/overloaded?

Is there anyone at home/school who is good at helping you feel calm? How do they help?



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Strengths

Evolution ensures 'survival of the fittest' so autism must provide some special advantages to the human race or it would not be maintained in the gene pool. In every field of human endeavour (including music, art, literature, fashion, drama, sport, science and technology) autistic people, or those suspected of being autistic, have excelled. There are probably a number of reasons for this. For example, the enjoyment of a special interest enables them to focus on a single topic to the exclusion of everything else. Also, because they perceive the world differently, they tend to have an original approach to problem-solving and a strong preference for visual learning which can lead to the generation of novel ideas. Lastly, because they have to cope with so many everyday challenges, this can make them incredibly brave and resilient.

Autistic people have huge value to society and require appropriate support to help them achieve their potential. Try helping someone who thinks differently and you might benefit from their **amazing strengths!**

QUESTIONS

Encourage your child to dream out loud and speak freely . . .

What do you think are your best qualities? Why?

What are you really good at? Why do you think you have this strength?

Who is your role model/hero/favourite character? What do you admire about them?

What are your goals in life? What would help you achieve these goals?

What would you like to be when you grow up? Why?

How would you like to be treated by other people?

Who is your favourite teacher ever? Why do you like him/her?

If you could change anything in the world to make your life happier what would it be and why?