

# *I have a* **Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

*Tips for Parents  
& Caregivers*



# Intro

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Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder present with a wide range of strengths and challenges. These tips provide some suggestions that may be helpful in the day to day management of your child.



# Communication

Children with ASD demonstrate a range of abilities in their communication skills. Some have little to no verbal language, while others have an advanced vocabulary but show difficulty using it in social situations. Many have difficulty understanding verbal instructions and may have difficulty using and interpreting body language. Using visuals, that may include pictures or written words, often helps children with ASD understand and remember information.

## Tips:

- › Use gestures with your spoken language
- › Use simple, clear and concise language
- › Explain to your child what expressions and metaphors mean
- › Provide time for your child to process information- wait at least 5 seconds before repeating a question
- › Use visuals to supplement verbal instructions



# Social Interaction

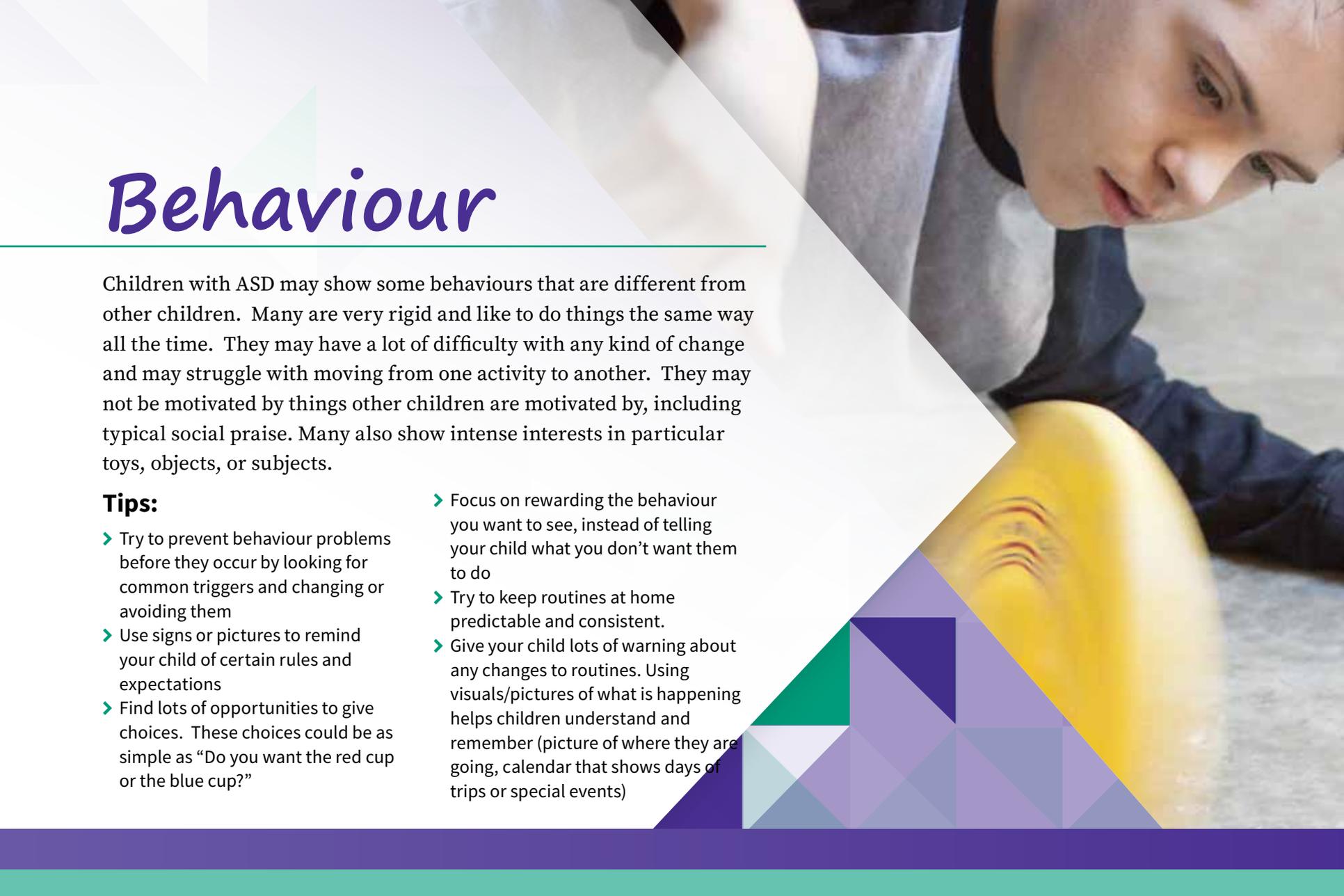
Children with ASD often have difficulties in making and keeping friends and understanding others' feelings and perspectives. Some may demonstrate limited interest in others, while others may seek out other children but lack the skills to know how to play and interact with them. Many have difficulty with managing the typical problems that arise when interacting with other children and can be at risk for being isolated from, or bullied by their peers.

## Tips:

- Teach social skills that are most important in managing at school and in the community (e.g., tolerating others, turn taking, boundaries, lining up, etc.)
- Show your child what you would like them to do and have them practice with a sibling or friend's child.
- Use clear consistent language to remind your child of appropriate social behaviour (e.g., "hands down", "my turn", "quiet mouth")
- Make sure you let your child know when he/she shows positive social behaviours ("I like the way you waited your turn in that game!")
- Point out examples of positive social behaviour in books and on television. Explain what the person is doing – "That little girl just helped the boy who was crying by giving him a tissue".



# Behaviour

A young child with light hair is looking down at a yellow ball. The child is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt. The background is a light-colored floor. The image is partially obscured by a white geometric shape on the left and a purple geometric shape on the bottom right.

Children with ASD may show some behaviours that are different from other children. Many are very rigid and like to do things the same way all the time. They may have a lot of difficulty with any kind of change and may struggle with moving from one activity to another. They may not be motivated by things other children are motivated by, including typical social praise. Many also show intense interests in particular toys, objects, or subjects.

## Tips:

- Try to prevent behaviour problems before they occur by looking for common triggers and changing or avoiding them
- Use signs or pictures to remind your child of certain rules and expectations
- Find lots of opportunities to give choices. These choices could be as simple as “Do you want the red cup or the blue cup?”
- Focus on rewarding the behaviour you want to see, instead of telling your child what you don’t want them to do
- Try to keep routines at home predictable and consistent.
- Give your child lots of warning about any changes to routines. Using visuals/pictures of what is happening helps children understand and remember (picture of where they are going, calendar that shows days of trips or special events)

# Emotional & Sensory Issues:

Many children with ASD struggle with managing strong emotions and may be more likely to become anxious or to have strong reactions to everyday challenges. Some may have temper tantrums and meltdowns, while some may withdraw and become quiet. Children with ASD are also more likely to be over or under sensitive to sensory input including sounds, lights, smells, textures and movement.

## Tips:

- Identify early signs of your child's anxiety (e.g., hand flapping, increased movement, faster talking) and act early.
- Provide a choice, direct him or her to another activity or provide a distraction.
- Keep calm yourself – talk quietly and slowly and give your child more space.
- Reduce environmental stimulation (noise, people, bright lights) when you see your child getting overwhelmed.
- Provide sensory activities (e.g., playing with soapy water in the sink, squeezing playdough, jumping on a mini trampoline) throughout the day if your child and is calmed by that sensory input.
- Make sure your child gets regular movement breaks throughout the day.
- Teach your child to calm down using deep breathing or something else that works. You may need to remind him/her when to use that strategy.



# Useful Websites for Parents:

- [www.challengingbehavior.org](http://www.challengingbehavior.org)  
*behaviour strategies, tools & tips for young children*
- [www.autismsocietycanada.ca](http://www.autismsocietycanada.ca)  
*general information, services & resources related to ASD*
- [www.autismontario.com](http://www.autismontario.com)  
*general information, services & resources related to ASD*
- [www.speakingofspeech.com](http://www.speakingofspeech.com)  
*many free, printable visuals and other resources*
- [www.autism.net](http://www.autism.net)  
*general information, services & resources related to ASD*
- [www.do2learn.com](http://www.do2learn.com)  
*many free, printable visuals and other resources*
- [www.connectability.ca](http://www.connectability.ca)  
*family friendly resources related to developmental disabilities*
- [www.redandgreenchoices.com](http://www.redandgreenchoices.com)  
*great ideas for visually teaching good behaviour choices*
- [www.nlconcepts.com](http://www.nlconcepts.com)  
*behaviour tools, free resources and other products related to ASD*

