

# Ten Things Every Child With Autism Wishes You Knew



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# 1. I am first and foremost a Child

My autism is only one aspect of my total character. It does not define me as a person. *See the person first not their autism.*

They have thoughts and feelings but how they share them may be different.

Spend time with them to play, learn and strengthening your bond.

Johnny loves trains, blowing bubbles, going to grandma's and going on slides! Johnny is a boy with ASD.



## 2. My sensory perceptions are disordered



Sensory Integration may be the most difficult aspect of autism to understand but it is arguably the most critical.

Ordinary sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches of everyday that you may not even notice can be downright painful to me.

A “simple” trip to the grocery store maybe hell for me!

- Hearing may be hyper-acute
- Sense of smell may be highly sensitive
- Sense of touch may be acute or dull
- Visually I may become overstimulated by the environment
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2P4Ed6G3gw>

### 3. Please remember to distinguish between *won't* (I choose not to) and *can't* (I am not able to).

Receptive and expressive language and vocabulary can be major challenges for me.

It isn't that I don't listen to instructions. It is that I can't understand you.

When you call me from across the room this is what I hear: &\*#\$%\*&?=^ Billy. ?>+%\$\*<\*#& ...

Instead, come speak directly to me in plain words. ***“Put book down”*** or ***“Time to eat”*** This tells me what you want me to do and what is going to happen next. Now it is much easier for me to comply.

Some challenges may be tied to fine motor or sensory issue.



## 4. I am a concrete thinker.

This means I interpret language very literally.

It is very confusing to me when you tell me “hold your horses cowboy!” when you really mean to say is “please stop running”.

Don't tell me something “is a piece of cake” when there is no desert in sight and what you really mean is “this will be easy for you to do”

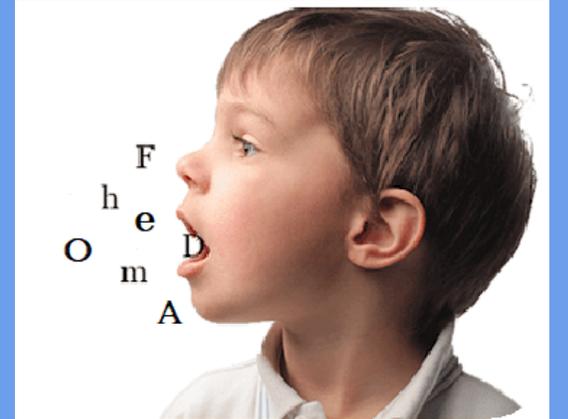
Idioms, nuances, metaphors, and sarcasms are lost on me.

Keep your language simple and say what you mean to say.

## 5. Please be patient with my limited vocabulary

It's hard for me to tell you what I need when I don't know the words to describe my feelings.

I maybe hungry, frustrated, or confused but right now those words are beyond my ability to express.



Be alert for body language, withdrawal, agitation or others signs that something is wrong.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLX\\_s-XOxxY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLX_s-XOxxY)

For students that are not yet talking or have limited language they should be using some kind of communication system to communicate and build vocabulary. Talk to your child's SLP.

Some Children with ASD may sound like a little professor, may repeat scripts beyond my developmental age. These messages I have memorized from T.V. , books or other people speech; I know I must respond when spoken to.

**6. I am very Visually oriented.** Because language and understanding the concept of time is difficult for me.



Please show me how to do something rather than just telling me (be prepared to show me many times). Lots of repetition help me to learn.

A visual schedule is extremely helpful as I move through my day. It relieves me of stress; what comes next, helps me make smooth transitions between activities and helps me manage my time and meet your expectations.

I won't lose the need of a schedule as I get older, but my level of representation may change.

# Schedule

hello song



movement



storytime



closing song



finished



## 7. Please focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can't do.



Like any other human, I can't learn in an environment where I constantly feel I'm not good enough and that I need "fixing." Trying anything new is hard when expect criticism, however "constructive" becomes something I want to avoid.

Look for my strengths and interests and you will find them. There is more than one "right" way to do most things.

## 8. Please help me with social interactions.



I may look like I don't want to play with the other kids, but sometimes it's just that I simply do not know how to start a conversation or enter a play situation.

If you can encourage other children to invite me to join them at kickball or shooting

It maybe that I'm delighted to be included.

I do best in structured play activities with clear beginning and end.

I appreciate ongoing coaching in proper social responses. For example if I laugh when Emily falls off the slide, it's not that I think is funny. It's that I don't know the proper response. Teach me to say "Are you OK?"

## 9. Try to identify what triggers my meltdowns

Meltdowns, blow-ups, tantrums or whatever you call them are even more horrid for me than they are for you.

They occur when one or more of my senses has gone into overload. If you can figure out why they occur, they can be prevented. Keep a log to see patterns.



Try to remember that all behavior is a *form of communication*. It tells you what my words cannot, how I perceive something that is happening in my environment.

\*Some behaviors may have underlying medical cause. Food allergies, sensitivities, sleep disorders, etc. can have profound effects on behavior.

## 10. Love me unconditionally



**Work to view my autism as a different ability rather than a disability. Look at what you may see as limitations and see the gifts my autism as given me.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwtHIAfyWA0&t=6s>

# 10. Love me unconditionally

Banish thoughts like “If he would just...” and “why can’t she...?”

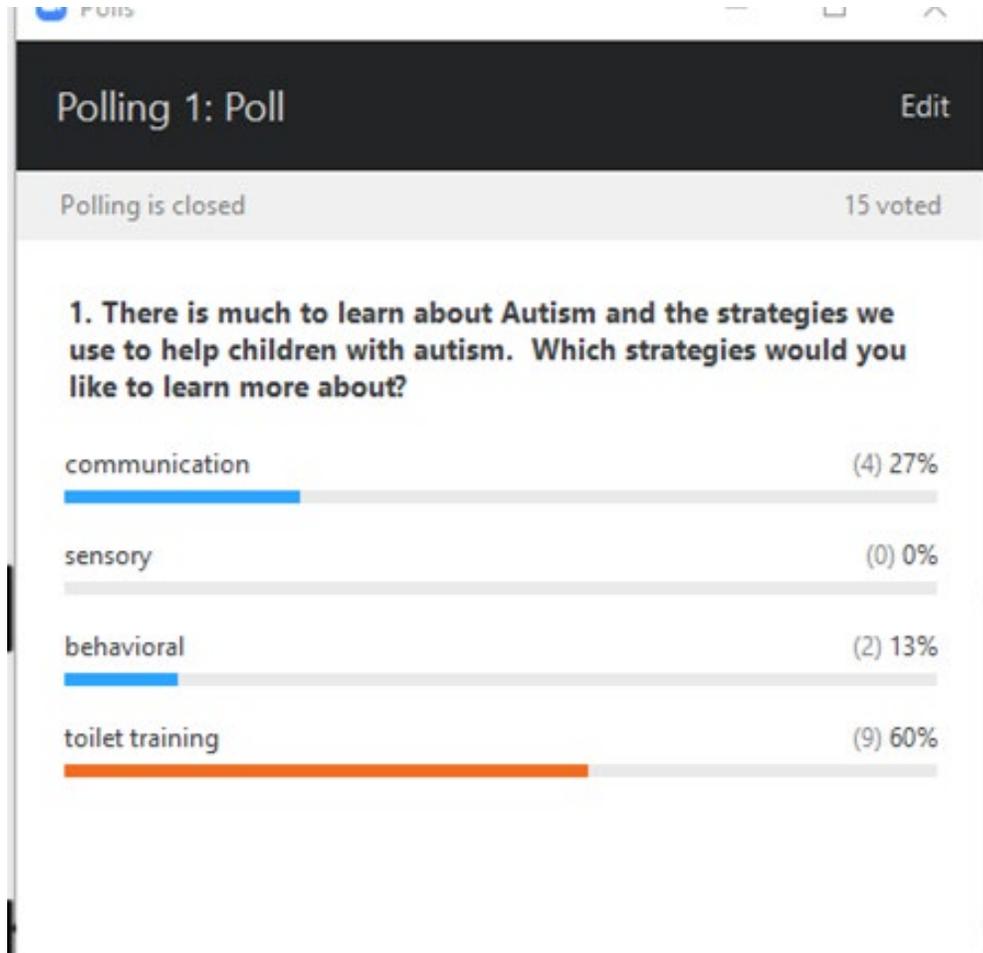
You did not fulfill every last expectation your parents had for you and you wouldn’t like being constantly reminded of it.

I did not choose to have autism. But remember that it is happening to me, not you.

Without your support of successful, self-reliant adulthood are slim. With your support and guidance the possibilities are broader than you might think. I promise you. I am worth it!

Finally, three words: patience, patience, patience. Work to view my autism as a different ability rather than a disability. Look past what you may see as limitations and see the gifts autism has given me.

# Time for a Poll



We will schedule a parent training on Toilet Training in May!

# Ellen Notbohm



## Parent and Author

Author, columnist and mother of sons with autism and ADHD, Ellen Notbohm's writings on autism, parenting, history, baseball and general interest subjects have been published on every continent (except Antarctica — yet). Her books *Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew*, *Ten Things Your Student with Autism Wishes You Knew* and *The Autism Trail Guide: Postcards from the Road Less Traveled* are all ForeWord Book of the Year finalists as well as recipients of many other awards and nominations including the Eric Hoffer Book Award, iParenting Media Award, and Learning Magazine Teacher's Choice Award. *1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism or Asperger's*, 2nd edition, co-authored with Veronica Zysk, won a silver medal in the 2010 Independent Book Publishers Awards. Ellen is a columnist for Autism Asperger's Digest magazine (2004-2009, 2011- ) and Children's Voice (2006- )

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