

## Basic Template for Awareness Talk

Introduce yourself and thank the group for the opportunity to speak to them.

You might ask the audience if they have friends or loved ones diagnosed on the autism spectrum.

You might share a bit of information about your personal connection to autism by simply stating something like “I am the mother of a 6 year-old son with autism” or “I am the Special Education Director in the \_\_\_\_ school district”.

You can start by providing some basic information about autism. Suggestions:

Autism spectrum disorders are a group of developmental disabilities that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges.

Autism is a “spectrum disorder.” That means autism affect each person in different ways, and can range from very mild to severe. People with ASDs share some similar symptoms, such as problems with social interaction. But there are differences in when the symptoms start, how severe they are, and the exact nature of the symptoms.

Many people with ASDs also have unusual ways of learning, paying attention, and reacting to different sensations. The thinking and learning abilities of people with ASDs can vary—from gifted to severely challenged.

ASDs begin before the age of 3 and last throughout a person's life, although symptoms may improve over time.

You can also talk a bit about the demographics of autism:

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that an average of 1 in 110 children in the United States has an autism spectrum disorder.

Autism is reported to occur in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

Autism is 4 to 5 times more likely to occur in boys than in girls.

Studies have shown that about one third of parents of children with an ASD noticed a problem before their child’s first birthday, and 80% saw problems by 24 months.

You might talk a little bit about interventions:

There is currently no cure for autism.

Research shows that early intervention treatment services can greatly improve a child's development. Early intervention services help children from birth to 3 years old (36 months) learn important skills. Services can include therapy to help the child talk, walk, and interact with others.

There is no single best treatment for all children with autism. Well-planned, structured teaching of specific skills is very important.

There are several interventions that meet the criteria for evidence-based practices. The decision regarding the best interventions is highly individualized. The determination of what treatments will work the best is made by the family and professionals working directly with the family.

It would be wonderful if you shared information about the unique and special qualities of your child or the children with which you work.

Take ample time to promote your group! This is your time to shine. Invite the members of your audience to become involved---by attending your next meeting, by distributing your brochures or flyers, by participating in an upcoming event you are sponsoring...you get the idea.

Let me leave you with these final thoughts...

Today, many adults with ASD lead lives that are not much different than yours and mine. Adults with ASD frequently live in the community, hold jobs, and enjoy exploring personal interests. Because of great strides in education, many students with ASD have gone on to become qualified, valued employees with useful skill sets. Many individuals with ASD live independently, are successfully employed in a variety of businesses, receive wages, and pay taxes like any other employee.

Ask the audience if they have any questions.

Thank the audience members for their time!

## Awareness Talk

For ideas of where you might speak during the month of April, consult the worksheet included in this packet. Think of other organizations in your community that are not on the worksheet. Make these contacts early.... these groups try to fill their speaker calendars months in advance.

To prepare yourself for this talk, consult the Centers for Disease Control's website. Much of the information in the boxes came directly from the autism section of their website.

To familiarize yourself with evidence-based practices, consult Chapter 3 of the *Kentucky's Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders* available by visiting <https://louisville.edu/education/kyautismtraining/resources/family-guide>

There are numerous books in the KATC resource library...if you would like to consult books as you create your talk, just let me know.

The DVDs enclosed in this information packet may be of help...you might want to view them as you think about your talk.

You can easily create a Power Point for this talk, if you have access to a laptop and a projector. Use the information in the boxes as the basis for your Power Point presentation. Otherwise, consider making notes on 3X5 cards to take with you. You can refer to these during your talk.

Let me know when and where you or someone from your support group is going to speak!

As always, if you have any questions.... just call or email me.