

Here are some ideas for talk points if you do a classroom talk...

How to be a good friend to a classmate with autism

Being a friend to someone with autism is much like being a friend to anyone.

When your friends with autism need help, don't treat them like they are little kids. Here's what you can do: First, ask if you can help. Then, show them what to do and then let them try it on their own.

When you see a friend being bullied, ask the bully to stop. If it doesn't stop, tell the teacher.

Find out your friend's talents and try to use them as topics of conversation.

Tell your friends when they are doing a good job.

Try to include friend's in activities they may enjoy.

It is important to know that some kids with autism...

...may get overwhelmed easily. They may not like big crowds, loud noises, or changes in routines. Sometimes it is best to let your friend have some space.

...don't want to be ignored. They want to have friends, too.

...have times that they would rather be left alone. Don't take it personally and don't let it hurt your feelings.

...don't understand sarcasm. Also, they may not understand common phrases like "It is raining cars and dogs" or "Just get over it". Be clear in what you say.

...can learn a lot of things, but sometimes know a LOT about one or two things. Please be patient and listen.

...may have difficulty with change. They might become upset when something is moved to a different place. Be understanding!

...communicate through their behavior. A tantrum might mean that they are confused or overwhelmed. Doing something over and over again may mean that they are bored. Pushing someone might be a way to get attention. Try to figure out what they are trying to communicate by their behavior.

...may not like to be touched. Respect their personal space and keep your hands to yourself.

Learn all you can about autism. This will help you be a good friend...and you can educate other kids about autism.

This list was compiled by Debbie Lorence, LCSW. This list was adapted by Jennifer Bobo, LCSW for the Kentucky Autism Training Center. IF you have any feedback on this list, please contact jennifer.bobo@louisville.edu or (502) 852-7811. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, nor an endorsement of any product or service. February 2011.