



Successful Interactions Amongst Peers: 5 Tips

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1. Students with an ASD can have a hard time with these 3 things:

Starting a conversation or keeping it going

When you ask a question and the student does not respond, provide choices.

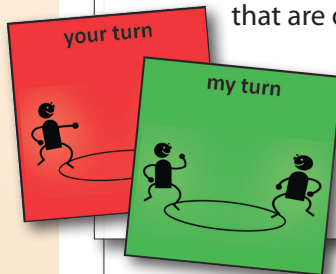
For example: "What's your favorite kind of cookie? Chocolate chip, oatmeal, or peanut butter?"

Often times, a student with an ASD will want to talk about their interests and will have a hard time talking about anything else. It is important to provide them with an opportunity to share these interests but also to allow you to share your interests.

For example: "First you tell me about your new Pokémon cards, and then I will tell you about my soccer game last night!" It may be helpful to use the "my turn, your turn" cards or a timer to assist with taking turns.

Playing together

Students with ASD often have a hard time initiating play or joining peers. Because of this, try to include them by asking them to come and play. You can also increase their interest by showing them items or involving them in activities that are of interest to them.



The individual with ASD may only be interested in playing with whatever it is they like and may not want to play the game or activity that someone else enjoys. To help with this, take turns. Offer to play their activity if they will then play your activity.

Repetitive use of body parts (flapping hands, flicking fingers, rocking) or objects (lining toys up, carrying one toy around wherever they go)

Understand that students often use these behaviors to stay calm in a setting that might be difficult for them. If the behavior is not dangerous or inappropriate or does not distract or prevent the student from getting involved in the activity, then it may not be necessary to stop it. If the behavior does interfere or is inappropriate or potentially harmful, the teacher may need to prevent the behavior during that activity and/or, if appropriate, use a First-Then board (www.HANDSInAutism.org/pdf/HowTo-FirstThen.pdf) or a visual timer to help the student know that the behavior is not acceptable and that it is time to focus on something else.

First



Then



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Interdisciplinary Training
& Resource Center is
affiliated with Department
of Psychiatry, IU School
of Medicine and Riley
Hospital for Children, IU
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a variety of live and online
training opportunities to
educational and medical
professionals, service
providers, and parents.



& Learning Connection

2. Students with an ASD often process information slower.

Give them a few extra seconds to respond before you repeat what you said or provide any help. If you repeat what you said and they still don't understand, they may need added help by way of showing them what you are asking by modeling or showing a picture or other cue.



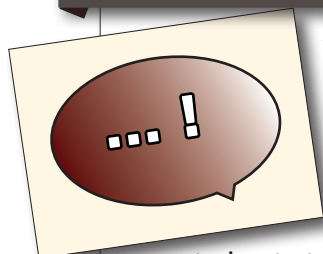
3. Understanding other peoples' feelings is often very difficult to someone with an ASD.

Remember, this isn't done on purpose. Students with an ASD genuinely don't know what hurts other people's feelings. Let them know what it is that they did to hurt your feelings, or ask an adult for help.

4. Students with an ASD often have to work a lot harder to concentrate on activities...

...Because of this, they may not respond when someone starts talking to them while they are in the middle of doing something else.

Say the student's name before you say what you need to say. You may also have to get closer to or in front of the student, tap on an object or otherwise get their focus to let them know you are trying to talk to them.



5. Moving from one activity to another or changing the order of events on the schedule...

... may create confusion and possibly upset the student with ASD.

Doing things the same way and with the same items is more comfortable to individuals with an ASD. Even one small change can be upsetting. Try to help the student by preparing them with your words or with a combination of pictures and words that a change may be coming soon (e.g., you can point out the picture or entry on their schedule) and by letting the student know when it is almost time to move on to a different activity. You can use a timer, a countdown or stoplight (www.HANDSInAutism.org/pdf/HowTo-StoplightCountdown.pdf) or a schedule to help support this change. If a student does get upset, be understanding and get an adult to help.

