

Top Tips For Communicating With Autistic People

Hey everyone! Today in this video I'm going to be sharing some tips on communicating with autistic people.

Now above all else obviously just accept us, be understanding, be kind, be non-judgemental - these are the things you should be doing when you're communicating with everyone, that is the biggest thing, but I'm going to be giving some more in-depth tips than that.

So the first thing is of course be accepting if we don't make eye contact because difficulty making eye contact is a big autism thing, so be accepting of that. Another thing is, ask questions, as we may be socially awkward in certain situations. Some autistic people don't spontaneously make conversation, it can be very difficult, so if we're just sitting there and not saying anything it does help to just ask us a question to get us talking because we might just not think of anything to say even though we really want to communicate with you.

The next thing is, keep asking us at intervals if we need something specific like a drink or something because we probably aren't going to bring it up ourselves. I think this helps because we might feel too awkward to bring it up ourselves. As well as this, if you ask just in general "Do you need something?" if it's too open-ended we probably won't really answer, but if it's something we can answer yes or no to like "Would you like a drink? Would you like something to eat?" we can

answer yes or no, it's a lot easier so that really helps as well.

The next thing is, if you want to make us really, really happy then let us talk about our special interests - autistic people often have very intense interests and these can bring us a lot of joy, they are true passions, so let us talk about those sometimes but at the same time please let us know if we are dominating the conversation, because we don't want to be too dominating, we want to let others speak as well, but if you want to really make us happy then let us share some facts on our special interests.

The next thing is that at times we may appear a little flat in the way we communicate. Of course, this isn't all the time. For example, right now I'm quite energetic, I'm speaking quite well, but sometimes we may seem quite monotone, quite flat, we may not react to things in the way that you would expect. Sometimes we may seem uninterested or unexcited when in a situation where we are expected to be, but be understanding of that - we don't mean to be rude. Sometimes we do have trouble with our tone of voice and having the emotional reactions and look of interest that other people have. But even if we don't look interested in something it doesn't necessarily mean we aren't interested, we may just be absorbed with other things.

The next thing is, be completely accepting with topics that we bring up in conversation. Of course, tell us if we're being rude, do not let us say anything mean intentionally [often we say something that seems rude but do not know it is, inform us but don't make us feel

bad for it], but I would say that sometimes we feel quite awkward spontaneously speaking, and just starting to speak randomly or saying what's on our mind - we might feel quite awkward with that. So let us feel comfortable with you to literally say anything, we may come out with some very random things to talk about, but accept that, and accept our uniqueness and our randomness in a way - it can be very helpful to literally just let us know that whatever comes to mind we can say it.

The next thing is let us stim. Now, stimming stands for self-stimulatory behaviour, it's rocking back and forth, hand flapping, jumping, stuff like that. There are a few very common stims but it can present differently in different people. With stimming, it doesn't mean we're not paying attention. For example, me rocking helps me pay attention, so when rocking or swaying when talking to you, and not making eye contact, can actually mean we are paying better attention to you than if we're looking at you and being still.

As well as this, hand flapping and jumping up and down can be like an emotional expression, as we may do these things when we're excited, so let us do those - it's our own form of body language and expression.

The next thing is, please be accepting if we tend to change the topic very quickly. It can be inexplicably dull to stay on the same topic and it can be very difficult, so let us just say whatever comes to mind. We might be a little bit chaotic, we might change the subject a bit too much, sometimes we won't even remember that we've just changed the subject, but be

accepting of whatever comes because we are just trying to communicate with you and that is a good thing.

Understand that we may not feel comfortable talking or socialising all the time. We need a lot of time to recharge as autistic people have a lower social battery than most people, so we do need a lot of time to ourselves and we do need a lot of time to rest. Be accepting of our boundaries and if we don't feel comfortable with something, and don't force us to speak on the phone if we do not feel comfortable doing so, yet at the same time do encourage us to come out of our shell a little bit if needed, but don't force us.

Know that we are probably not going to pick up on hints or social cues. We make assumptions in our mind that may be wrong, we may not understand what you're trying to hint, so please just say things directly if you want us to get something, because it can be really difficult - a big autism thing is difficulty reading social cues, so definitely bear that in mind.

Know that the amount that we speak and the way we speak can change in different situations. In one-to-one settings we may be really, really talkative; we may be really comfortable, we may be very outgoing even. But then in a group we may just sit and be quiet, not really saying anything. Some people when they talk about their interests may kind of lecture and seem very communicative, but when having a typical conversation that has to go two ways it can be very, very difficult so do understand that our

level of communication changes - it's nothing personal, it's just difficult sometimes.

Another thing is please don't ask too many questions at one time, it can be really confusing because again we might just want to answer with yes or no answers, and asking multiple questions at the same time is just really confusing because we have to process it. Some people may have slow processing speed, I know sometimes if someone says something to me it takes me a few seconds to get it and register it, but don't ask too many questions at the same time, it's just not helpful. Ask one question at a time so we can just say yes or no.

Also, please be understanding that we may sometimes smile or laugh in inappropriate situations, we can be quite awkward in that sense. We know the emotion we want to express, but it's very difficult to express it and we may just go the other way and do things that are deemed socially inappropriate, or we may not fully understand the situation and give the incorrect emotional reaction. This can seem like we're being rude but we're really not, because we don't mean it at all.

The information given in this video does not apply to every autistic person, because we are all so different, just like everybody else is different, and the spectrum of autism is so wide. However, some of these tips may be helpful for some autistic people. I hope you enjoyed these quick little tips on communicating with an autistic person.

Remember to actually ask people in the autism community if there's anything you want to learn about autism, because those are the people who've lived with it, so definitely ask what helps the individual.

Thanks for watching, bye!