

Understanding Autism

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is not something “wrong.”
It’s a **difference** in how a person’s brain works.

It affects how someone:

- learns
- communicates
- socializes
- handles changes
- and experiences the world around them

And here’s the most important thing to remember: **Different does NOT mean less.**

Your child is a whole, valuable, wonderful person first, autism is just one part of who they are.

What Might Autism Look Like?

Children with autism feel **all the same emotions** as everyone else:

- love
- happiness
- excitement
- frustration
- sadness
- loneliness

They may just **show those feelings in their own way.**

Behavior is often a form of communication.

Sometimes behavior is simply their way of saying:

- “This is too loud”
- “I’m overwhelmed”
- “I need help”
- “I’m excited!”
- “I don’t know how to say this yet”

Communication	Social Interaction	Routine & Interests	Sensory Experiences
May talk a lot, a little, or not yet	Some want friends but aren't sure how to connect yet	Likes predictable routines	Sounds, lights, clothing, or textures may feel extra intense
May use gestures, pictures, signs, or devices (AAC)	Some children love being with others	May repeat actions or phrases	Or sometimes they may not notice sensations as much as others
May show needs through behavior instead of words	Some prefer quiet or alone time	May have strong interests in certain topics (trains, letters, animals, etc.)	Movement like rocking, spinning, or hand flapping can feel calming or joyful

A Helpful Way to Think About Autism

Instead of asking:

✗ "How do we fix this?"

Try asking:

✓ "How can we understand and support my child?"

When we:

✓ provide structure ✓ build skills step-by-step ✓ teach communication

✓ follow their interests ✓ use visuals ✓ and celebrate strengths

Children grow in amazing ways.