

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD AND OTHERS ABOUT ASD:
*WHO NEEDS TO KNOW
 WHAT & WHEN?*

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TODAY'S EXPECTATIONS


We will be respectful of the ideas and opinions of others

We will be inclusive of all ability levels

We will be a source of uplifting ideas

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TO TELL, OR NOT TO TELL?
 THAT IS THE QUESTION.



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WHY WOULD WE NOT WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?

- Fear of hurting's child's self-esteem
- Fear of creating learned helplessness
- Fear of _____



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WHY WOULD WE WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?




- Increased self-awareness
- Increased empowerment
- Increased self-advocacy
- Understanding of strengths and weaknesses

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THE LITERATURE IS OVERWHELMINGLY CLEAR:

Talking openly about differences and disabilities is the right choice.

- Literature on physical disabilities
- Literature on adoption
- Literature (recently) on ASD



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TALKING OPENLY




Most professionals agree that telling children empowers them and helps them learn to become their own advocate.

- "That makes so much sense."
- "When I learned I had autism, I felt normal for the first time. I knew I wasn't the only one."

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YOUR CHILDREN *WILL* FIND OUT.




Would you like to tell them intentionally or unintentionally?

Parenthood video clip (Season 2, Episode 17; 40:55 to 41:15)

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Your children *will* find out.



Would you like to tell them, or let their peers?

(It may not be friendly...)


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OKAY, OKAY... WE'RE READY TO TALK! BUT...

- When do we tell them?
- What do we say?
- What if he/she doesn't 'get' it?

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HERE'S WHAT NOT TO DO:



What did you notice that could have gone better?

PARENTHOOD VIDEO CLIP (SEASON 2, EPISODE 18: 0:33 TO 2:35)

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WHEN DO WE START TALKING?

- No age is too young or too old
 - use child-friendly language
- Speak openly about autism from the time you are able to do so *with composure*
- Your child will not 'get it' the first time and that is okay!

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WHAT DO WE SAY?


DO WE USE THE "A" WORD?

- Hiding or avoiding using 'autism' sends the message that it is embarrassing, bad, or fatal

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WHAT DO WE SAY?

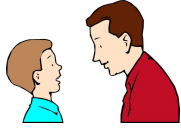
Discuss autism matter-of-factly along with other differences such as divorce, depression, wearing glasses, adoption, diabetes, etc.



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WHAT DO WE SAY?


- Your willingness to talk about autism casually and often reduces the likelihood of anxiety or shame and increases the likelihood of comprehension
- If you can, try not to create a situation where you have to 'break the news'



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WHAT DO WE SAY?


TIPS FROM A TV DOCTOR TO MAX'S PARENTS:



Parenthood video clip (Season 2, Episode 18; 7:29 to 10:08)

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ONE EXAMPLE OF TALKING WITH A CHILD:




Parenthood video clip (Season 2, Episode 18; 35:40 to 38:40)

MAX'S PARENTS GET IT RIGHT!

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WHAT DO WE SAY?



- Avoid using words that give positive or negative value to characteristics
- Don't say: good/bad, well/poor, better/worse;
- Do say: efficient/inefficient, easier/harder
- Leave out the word "disorder" until understanding is very good
- Talk about successful people with autism or other people that your child knows with autism

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ONE IDEA:

Brain 'lights' script:

- You know how you find ___ really easy? Well, that's because when you ___, this part of your brain over here lights up. It's a really efficient part of the brain for _____. Well, when I ___, this part of my brain lights up over here. It is not the most efficient for _____. It doesn't mean I can't ___, but I may have to practice and work a little harder at it than you do.



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Brain 'lights' script, continued:

- For ___, we're the opposite. I find ___ to pretty easy. When I ___, this part of my brain that is efficient for ___ lights up. You use this part over here for _____. It is less efficient, so that's why you find ___ more challenging. It doesn't mean you can't ___ just that you may have to work a hard and practice at it. That's why you practice ___ with/at _____.

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ANOTHER IDEA:



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HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM!



What do I say when my child says...

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Wishing and Wondering

"I wish I didn't have autism."

"Why can't autism go away?"

"Why me?"


- I wish ___ was easier for you too. I'm so proud of you for ___.*
- Autism is just one thing about you. All the things about you make you special.*
- You are so good at ___. Maybe without autism, that wouldn't be true.*

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Feeling Alone or Not Understood

"You don't understand because you don't have autism."

- You're right, but my experience is ___.
- I don't understand, but I'd sure like to try. Can you help me with that?



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HOW DO I TALK TO FAMILY MEMBERS ABOUT AUTISM?

- Extended family
- Siblings




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TIPS FOR TALKING TO ADULT FAMILY MEMBERS:

- Try to avoid statements that blame autism for behavior
- Use words like "anxiety" that people generally understand
- Use and stick to a schedule... just like with children, you can blame the schedule for your exit or plan!
- Talk in terms of the child rather than "we"

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TIPS FOR TALKING TO OTHER CHILDREN:



- Explain stimming, atypical, or unexpected behavior
- Explain that autism is not contagious to others
- Use "cant's" and "won'ts"
- Invite them to ask questions

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TIPS FOR TALKING TO STRANGERS:



- You have a decision- to ignore or to educate?
- Not sure what to do (are they being rude or trying to connect)? Ask why they care or stare: "Why do you ask?"
- Consider business cards
- Realize that no matter what you do, they may not 'get' it, and it is not your job to make them!

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Provide resources to children, family, and strangers as needed.



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QUESTIONS?



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