

Section 5: Relationships

Self Help Resource Pack for autistic people

This pack has been put together from information available from specialist autism services, autistic people, and professionals working with autistic people.



Self Help Resource Pack created by NHS Lothian Adult ADHD and Autism Resource Team.

Relationships

Many autistic people have partners and children and wider relationships. However some difficulties can arise with developing and sustaining relationships.

If might have difficulty with...	You could try this...
<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating and maintaining conversations • Interpreting another person's meaning when they use nonliteral language such as sarcasm or metaphors • Engaging in chit-chat • Having a back-and-forth conversation • Processing communication more slowly than others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It might be helpful to let some people know that you have a different communication style because you are neurodivergent • You could ask the other person to explain what they mean in more literal language • If you are processing information more slowly you could ask the person to speak more slowly or repeat themselves • Let the other person know if you prefer written information, emails or texts • When you are communicating with people you know well, you might want to have a conversation about your different styles. See website below
<p>Non-verbal communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting another person's body language, facial expression and tone of voice • Understanding another person's emotions and feelings • Understanding your emotions and describing these to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In close relationship it might be helpful to ask a person to tell you in words how they feel and let them know that you find it difficult to gauge through their non-verbal communication • Where it is important, such as with a doctor, you may need to let them know that you find it hard to describe different emotions. It might be helpful to agree a simple system to describe your level of distress
<p>Keeping yourself safe in social relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising that someone is not genuine or honest • Knowing whether an internet relationship is safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to a safe person about new relationships or if you have concerns about a relationship and your role in it • Talk to a trusted person about your activity. If you plan to meet someone you have met on the internet, make sure someone knows where you are and that you have returned safely • Don't give out information to people you meet online.

Recommended websites and further reading- relationships

- **Autism Initiatives Number 6 One Stop Shop for Autistic Adults**

1:1 appointments available with staff to discuss a range of issues including relationship. Drop in and planned social opportunities also provided by Number 6.

Website: [Number 6 One Stop Shop Autism Support | Autism Initiatives](#)

- **National Autistic Society Help and Support**

National Autistic Society has a range of online and telephone support services available through their website:

Website: [Help and support](#)

- **Advice and information on relationships**

Website: [Family relationships - a guide for partners of autistic people](#)

- **Advice and information on autism and communication**

Website: [Autism and communication](#)

- **National Autistic Society Online Community**

Website: [Online Community](#)

- **Edinburgh and Lothian Aspergers Society**

A social group run by autistic people for themselves

Website: [ELAS](#)

- **AMASE (Autistic Mutual Aid Society Edinburgh)**

An autistic people's organisation based in Edinburgh that provides community events and peer support, advocacy and education.

Website: [AMASE – Autistic Mutual Aid Society Edinburgh](#)

Advice for family members and carers

Autism is a lifelong developmental condition that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others.

This section is intended for people who are in a relationship with and/or are caring for an autistic person. You may be concerned about how best to support them, both now and in the future.

Understanding the needs of an autistic person

Need for routine

Autistic people may find it difficult to predict or plan what is going to happen. A routine can help the person have a sense of predictability or control over events.

Processing information

Many autistic people absorb a lot of details that other people might miss or not consider important. They can have difficulty deciding what is important and what is not.

Absorbing many details about a situation can be a positive trait but can make it much harder for the autistic person to make decisions or choices. To help them make a choice, present just one or two options. Some autistic people need help developing clear schedules to support them with personal organisation and planning.

Organisation

Many autistic people find it hard to plan their time, estimate how long a task will take and carry it out or organise the items they need to complete a task.

Some autistic people need help developing clear schedules to support them with personal organisation and planning.

Learning

Autistic people tend to learn more effectively and retain new information when it is presented visually, rather than orally. They can find it difficult to generalise a skill or task even if it's one they already know, to a new or different setting.

They may need additional help to develop a new skill or a new way of performing a familiar task. You may need to provide them with repeated opportunities to practice a task or skill and guide them through it to help them learn and become confident.

Autism can co-occur with other neurodevelopmental conditions including ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia. Each individual will have their own unique set of traits, strengths and difficulties. For some autistic people, poor physical skills may be an additional difficulty. They may have difficulty with games and activities such as team sports that involve coordination, balance and social skills. Some autistic people may also have difficulty with fine motor skills. This can include handwriting, managing fiddly tasks such as tying shoe laces, or typing on a keyboard or operating a mobile phone.

Autistic people may find communicating their needs to others difficult. You could help them to identify what adjustments would be helpful for them and practise how to ask others for these.

Asking for help for yourself

Asking for help is a positive step that could make your situation less stressful if you are a family member or carer of an autistic adult.

Make sure you get the benefits you're entitled to. As a carer, you may be entitled to Carer's Allowance, and the person you care for may be entitled to Adult Disability Payment. Contact your local social work department for a carer's support plan to determine what help you might receive from social services, including respite care.

Talk to your GP about any issues affecting your own health. They can refer you to a relevant support service or tell you who you can contact.

Recommended websites and further reading- carers

- **NHS Choices**

Information about caring for someone with autism

Website: [Autism and everyday life - NHS](#)

- **Carers Direct helpline**

Confidential advice on any aspect of caring Mon-Fri 9am to 8pm and Sat-Sun 11am to 4pm

Tel: 0300 123 1053

- **Pasda**

Offers support to parents, partners, siblings and carers of autistic adults (over 16 years) who live in Edinburgh and the Lothians

Website: [Pasda – Supporting families of autistic adults](#)

- **Parent to Parent**

Free confidential UK wide telephone service for parents and carers of children or adults with autism

Website: [Parent to Parent Emotional Support Helpline](#)

- **Salvesen Mindroom Centre**

Offers support to parents and carers of autistic children

Website: [Home - Mindroom](#)

- **Talk about Autism**

An online support forum for people caring for someone with autism

Website: [Home | Talk about Autism](#)

- **VOCAL (Voices for Carers across Lothian)**

Provides advice, information, training advocacy and counselling for carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian

Tel: 622 7621 / 0131 466 8082

Email: centre@vocal.org.uk

Website: [VOCAL - VOCAL](#)

- **Carers of East Lothian**

Tel: 0131 665 0135

Website: [Home - Carers of East Lothian](#)