

**nickelodeon™**

# **AUTISM ACCEPTANCE**



**Autism Society**





Together with the Autism Society of America, Nickelodeon is celebrating Autism acceptance. Picture a world where every kid in the Autism community is valued for exactly who they are. This is the Autism Society of America's dream of acceptance. In this article, you will find kid-friendly activities and resources that advocate for, connect, and empower members of the Autism community.

## WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental condition that typically appears during early childhood. It can impact a person's social skills, communication, relationships, and how they manage behaviors and emotions.

Autism is often referred to as a "spectrum condition" that affects people differently and to varying degrees. Some may require continuous support and care, while others live fully independent lives. It is important to remember that no individual's experience is the same as another and there are many different ways members of the Autism community interact with the world around them.

*Autism impacts families from every ethnic and socioeconomic group. Over 7 million people in the U.S. are on the Autism spectrum.*

# AUTISM SIGNS & CHARACTERISTICS

It is generally thought that Autism is caused by differences in brain structure or genetic factors. Autism cannot be diagnosed using medical tests like blood tests or brain scans. Instead, a doctor may work with a team of experts to carefully observe communication skills, social interactions, activities, and interests.

Kids and adults on the Autism spectrum may have challenges with:

- Understanding and expressing their feelings, along with difficulty understanding other people's emotions.
- Making eye contact, responding when their name is called, and/or following other social cues.
- Learning to talk. They may have atypical ways of speaking, or be nonspeaking or nonverbal.
- Adapting to changes in routines and navigating new environments.
- Sensitivity to loud noises, bright lights, crowds, and other sensory aversions.
- Restricted and Repetitive Behaviors (RRB) including repetitive movements like hand flapping, ritualistic behaviors like rocking or spinning, and/or a fixation on a particular interest.

*Children should be screened for Autism by a pediatrician three times by the age of 3. Kids who receive an early Autism diagnosis are more likely to receive support services.*



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Autism Society of America creates connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully. They support the Autism community through information and referrals, education, community, advocacy, and support services. Use their resources to explore [Autism Acceptance Month](#), find information about [Autism screening](#) and support for a [new diagnosis](#), and connect to services in your community through the Autism Society's National [Helpline](#).

## CELEBRATE AUTISM ACCEPTANCE

Celebrate Autism acceptance by learning about, connecting with, and empowering kids in the Autism community — not just today, but every day! Here are a number of small, but meaningful actions you can take as a family. The connection is you!

- **Learn** about people's experiences with Autism. Books are a great place to start. [Check out this children's booklist](#) with stories about Autistic characters and books by authors on the Autism spectrum. You can also ask your local librarian for recommendations.



- **Respect** people’s identities and experiences. Encourage your kids to listen to others’ thoughts and perspectives, ask about their backgrounds and interests, and celebrate what makes them unique. As a family, [explore this Nick Helps resource](#) to better understand how a person’s identity, like their race, gender, and ability, shape who they are and how they experience the world.
- **Promote** inclusive collaborations. Kids and teens with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities can work together to make change in their schools and communities. Learn more from U.S. Special Olympics Youth Ambassadors, Sophie and Joey, about their program that develops young, inclusive leaders, in this special edition of [Unified Talks](#).



- **Model** being an Upstander. Speak up if you hear or see someone being mean or rude to others. From your actions, your kids will learn to act in support of those who are being treated unfairly. Together, check out some of the ways you can be an Upstander and [stop bullying](#) in its tracks.

- **Practice** calming strategies. Sometimes a person can feel overwhelmed, worried, or anxious if they are in an unfamiliar setting where there is a lot of noise, action, and people around. This is especially true for people with Autism. Using different calming strategies can help you, your kids, or others who need it, feel better. As a family, practice [deep \(sea\) breathing with Patrick Star](#), then make a simple DIY [Sensory Bag](#) or [Calming Bottle](#) and use it when you need to refocus!



- **Explore** [local and national organizations](#) that support Autism Acceptance through advocacy. Brainstorm with your family ways to get involved. Attend an event where you can meet people in the Autism community or volunteer your time.
- **Share** your own stories and connect with others in the community by using the hashtag **#CelebrateDifferences**

# WANT TO LEARN MORE? NICK IS HERE TO HELP.

[NickHelps.com](https://www.nickhelps.com)

for kids of all ages

[NickParents.com](https://www.nickparents.com)

for parents and caregivers

[NickCommunity.com](https://www.nickcommunity.com)

for youth organizations and educators

**SPECIAL THANKS**

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