

# Motivation For Children on the Autistic Spectrum



OAASIS

## An OAASIS information Sheet

Office for Advice Assistance Support and Information on Special needs

Helpline 0800 902 0732

oaasis@cambianguroup.com

Trying to motivate any adolescent is difficult, but one who has some form of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), may find starting and continuing tasks especially hard when out of their very structured school routine. A child with Asperger syndrome may have a strong susceptibility to inertia, especially when tired or stressed.

### During weekends and school holidays

People with ASDs view some situations differently to the majority of people and this need not be a bad thing. They should not be made to feel less adequate than people without ASDs and should be accepted for who they are. However, that is not to say that poor or rude behaviour should be accepted.

### Involvement in planning

Children with autism or Asperger syndrome like routine and structure; they like to know in advance what is going to be happening and when and where and with whom. Involve children in planning events so they feel as if they have some input into it and may feel more inclined to take part. For instance, they could be given their own shopping list of items to put in the trolley when shopping.

### Family functions and excursions

Remember that people with ASDs may not like crowds or socialising. The idea of such events can actually be quite frightening to them. A trip to the cinema, swimming pool, parties, weddings and christenings – any typical family outing – will need to be planned ahead to make these events less stressful.

- Prepare a written agenda of what is likely to happen. This may lower anxieties.
- Use visual timetables to show the events of the day – often children with ASDs cannot picture events in their head and therefore benefit from the visual input
- check with your local autism or AS support group as they often organise ASD-friendly trips and outings during the summer

### Reward positive participation

Arranging trips out they really want to do can be a good incentive to get them to join in less favourable ones. A visual reward chart can help them understand how much they have achieved and how much more they need to do to achieve their reward.

### Offer a wide assortment of activities at home

- Cooking activities can also involve doing the shopping
- TV or DVD viewing (alone - but check content)
- Reading (together - have you tried a play?)
- Games and toys to play together – some areas in the country have toy libraries
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Craft activities, such as salt dough, card-making, sewing, clay, origami, painting
- Construction toys

Have an hour doing what we would call chores, but you may like to call them something else – ‘restyle your bedroom’ instead of tidy up!

**Physical activities:** can include swimming, walking, tennis, cycling, jogging, nature walks or whatever they enjoy. You can do this as a family or with friends. This can help with socialising and keeping fit.

Some days could be totally **inactive:** TV or film-watching for the whole afternoon, having spent the morning reading, or project-working.

### Intellectual activity

Time on the computer, at the library, reading own books, and whenever possible, being with other children too – good social skill development.

### Special interests

If a child has a special interest and if there is sufficient time to organise it beforehand, a holiday project could be devised. This could be timetabled into the daily routine. For example, a child may have a strong interest in machines. Divide the project into small sections, such as decorating a scrap book cover, taking photos, visiting somewhere related to the interest, such as a museum or theme park, draw pictures for the scrap book, write and type information gathered from the library, books from home and the internet (though this would need monitoring).

### With other children

Remember that if a child with ASD is of the ‘must be in charge’ type, his play with other children may need to be carefully monitored. Using a timer can help him to understand that it is another child’s turn to be in charge.

### Raising self esteem

Ensure some activities will be easier than others so a child can excel. Some should stretch a child’s ability – but be aware of failure and possible reaction if this happens. It may take time for them to learn strategies to cope with the fact that they can’t always succeed.

### Independence

Not all activities have to include adults, but to help them progress from one section of an activity to another may need some form of prompting which could be by using a 5 minute timer. Encourage a child to self occupy by having a period of quiet built into the daily routine. This could comprise time alone playing or resting in the bedroom, allowing you to have a break as well!

### Parents and carers

Remember yourself as we all benefit from ‘me-time’: this could be exercise, relaxation, time-out (soaps, music, magazines) or out-of-home activities. If you are relaxed, you will deal far better with your family and with any issues which might arise.

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## USEFUL RESOURCES

### Cerebra

Parent Support Tel: 0800 328 1159

Have a Postal Lending Library; (books are available relating to neurological conditions), and sensory items and toys designed for tactile, audio and visual stimulation are all available to hire (1 sensory item for 1 month) with no postage costs – toy deliveries and collections are made by courier and arranged by Cerebra.

Website: [www.cerebra.org.uk/parent\\_support/Library/Library.htm](http://www.cerebra.org.uk/parent_support/Library/Library.htm)

### SenseToys

Website: [www.sensetoys.com](http://www.sensetoys.com)

Tel: 0845 257 0849

Specialise in providing a carefully selected range of toys, activities and Montessori materials to help parents and professionals, particularly those caring for children with special educational needs and learning disabilities, including poor or delayed language development and skills, dyspraxia, and developmental delays, autism and other spectrum disorders.

Email: [info@sensetoys.com](mailto:info@sensetoys.com)

### TFH (Special Needs Toys)

Website: [www.specialneedstoys.com](http://www.specialneedstoys.com)

Tel: 01299 827820

Produce toys and equipment for all abilities and needs, including multi sensory, swings, trampolines, sensory integration kits, switches, rewards, and small sensory toys, etc. See also Adult section.

### The Novelty Warehouse

Website: [www.thenoveltywarehouse.com](http://www.thenoveltywarehouse.com)

Email: [info@thenoveltywarehouse.com](mailto:info@thenoveltywarehouse.com)

Tactile, interactive and stimulating multi-sensory resources, toys and novelties. Ideal for play, therapy, and Sensory rooms.

### True to Life Ltd

Has a wide range of sensory resources, including a new range of (made to order so allow 6-8 week delivery time) sturdy wooden multifunction resources. Also a new range of equipment to create/enhance sensory room or area.

Website: [www.truetolifesensory.co.uk](http://www.truetolifesensory.co.uk)

Tel: 0208 368 7694

Email: [trueetolife@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:trueetolife@hotmail.co.uk)

**Wise Owl Toys** – sell home educational toys and products covering all areas of the National Curriculum and are particularly useful for children with dyspraxia, dyslexia, autism, Down's Syndrome, visual or hearing impairments.

Tel: 01305 266311 or 01905 22353

Email: [info@wiseowltoys.co.uk](mailto:info@wiseowltoys.co.uk)

Web: [www.wiseowltoys.co.uk](http://www.wiseowltoys.co.uk)

## READING

See also OAASIS information sheet 'Books – where to find them'

**Playing, Laughing and Learning with Children on the Autistic Spectrum: A practical resource of play ideas for parents and carers**, 2nd edition by Julia Moor. Not just a collection of play ideas, this book

also shows how to break down activities into manageable stages and looks at ways to gain a child's attention and motivation and to build on small achievements.

ISBN: 978-1-84310-608-1 price £13.99, available from

**Jessica Kingsley Publishers,**

website: [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com)

Tel: 0207 833 2307

## USEFUL INTERNET SITES

### Five Survival Strategies to Help Children with

**Asperger syndrome Overcome Inertia** is a paper by George T Lynn which purports to help overcome the Asperger (neurological based) inertia, rather than one coming from depression or fear of the unknown. It can be found at: [www.childspirit.com/5aspergers.pdf](http://www.childspirit.com/5aspergers.pdf).

**The National Autistic Society's** website has an information sheet on 'Play and Autism' which can be found at <http://www.autism.org.uk/working-with/education/educational-professionals-in-schools/play-and-autism.aspx>.

**Cambian Group** who support OAASIS, run Outstanding residential special schools, colleges and homes for children, young people and adults with autistic spectrum disorders, Asperger Syndrome/HFA, severe learning difficulties. OAASIS can give you advice and send you their prospectuses and information. Please contact OAASIS.

OAASIS produces a wide range of free Information Sheets, 8 publications entitled 'First Guide to...' and wallet sized cards explaining 9 learning disabilities. Please contact OAASIS (see front of sheet for contact details) for the full list, or view and download them on the website at [www.oaasis.co.uk](http://www.oaasis.co.uk).

All sheets are checked and amended annually. Please ensure you have the current version.

