

## Section 5: Relationships

### Information for adults following diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

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

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This leaflet may be made available in a larger print, Braille or your community language.

Resource Pack created by NHS Lothian Adult ADHD and ASD Resource Team

## Relationships

Many autistic people have partners and children. Some manage marriage, relationships and family life very well, while others may have great difficulties developing and sustaining social relationships.

You might have difficulty with...	You could try this...
<b>Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Following a conversation in noisy or crowded situations</li><li>• Interpreting a partner's body language, facial expression and tone of voice</li><li>• Understanding abstract language</li><li>• Using social language e.g. to tell a partner or a child you love them</li><li>• Listening to or talking with a friend or partner about things that interest them</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain to other people in advance if you prefer quiet surroundings or small groups</li><li>• Be clear with other people about what you can manage in a social setting</li><li>• Ask your partner if you are unsure what their facial expression means</li></ul>
<b>Social understanding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding your partner's emotions and feelings</li><li>• Knowing when to offer comfort or sympathy</li><li>• Thinking about the impact of what you have said or done on another person</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remember to balance talking with asking questions about your partner and their interests and views</li></ul>
<b>Social relationships</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognising that someone is not genuine or honest</li><li>• Knowing whether an internet relationship is safe</li><li>• Discussing your role and your partner's role in a relationship</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write things down to help you understand social rules and expectations</li><li>• Draw up a schedule for regular shared activities to help you and your partner know what is going to happen and when.</li><li>• Talk to a safe person about new relationships or if you have concerns about a relationship and your role in it.</li></ul>

## Parenting

Raising children can be demanding for anyone. As an autistic adult, the social, emotional and sensory demands of raising a child can be overwhelming. Teaching children social skills that you find difficult yourself can feel challenging, especially organising play dates and actively seeking social opportunities for your children.

Parents with sensory sensitivities may need time-out from the demands and environment of babies and toddlers; and it may be helpful to seek support from partners and family when possible. The autistic community can also be supportive for autistic parents.

### Things I may need support with...

- Coping with my baby or small child's needs as well as my own
- Understanding and managing my child's behaviour
- Encouraging my child's development, including play and social skills
- Managing demands from school and afterschool clubs
- Social demands from other parents

## Recommended websites and further reading- relationships

- **National Autistic Society Social Group**

This is a social group for people over the age of 16 who have Asperger's Syndrome. The group meets monthly in different places and participates in a variety of activities such as cinema visits or eating out.

**Phone:** 0115 847 3540

**Email:** [socialprogrammes@nas.org.uk](mailto:socialprogrammes@nas.org.uk)

- **National Autistic Society Help and Support**

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

[www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/help-and-support](http://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/help-and-support)

- **Advice and information on relationships**

[www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/family-life-and-relationships/family-life/partners](http://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/family-life-and-relationships/family-life/partners)

- **National Autistic Society Online Community**

[www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/community](http://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/community)

- **ELAS**

A social group run by autistic people for themselves

<http://aspergersnet.wixsite.com/elas>

- **Amaze**

A fact sheet about romantic relationships and ASD

[www.amaze.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Amaze-Information-Sheet-Romantic-relationships-and-autism.pdf](http://www.amaze.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Amaze-Information-Sheet-Romantic-relationships-and-autism.pdf)

## Carers

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

Parents, carers, partners, siblings and children may all act as a carer of an autistic person. This section is intended for people who care for an autistic person. If you are a carer for someone with autism, your main concern will be 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. Some autistic people need help limiting their options for certain aspects of daily living, or 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.

### 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.

## Physical abilities

For some autistic people, poor physical or organisational 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.

## Asking for help

Asking for help is a positive step that could make your situation less stressful if you are a 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 Personal Independence 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

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/autism-and-everyday-life/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/autism-and-everyday-life/)

- **Carers Direct helpline**

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

**Phone:** 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

**Email:** [info@pasda.org.uk](mailto:info@pasda.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.pasda.org.uk](http://www.pasda.org.uk)

- **Parent to Parent**

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

**Phone:** 0808 800 4106

- **Talk about Autism**

An online support forum for people caring for someone with autism

<https://forum.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/talk-about-autism>

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

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

**Phone:** 0131 622 7621 / 0131 466 8082

**Email:** [centre@vocal.org.uk](mailto:centre@vocal.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.vocal.org.uk/](http://www.vocal.org.uk/)

- **Carers of East Lothian**

**Phone:** 0131 665 0135

**Website:** <https://coel.org.uk/>