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How to Explain Autism to Children

By eHow Contributor

We sometimes have to explain autism to children. Your child with autism may have friends who have questions. Kids may not know what autism is or why a child with autism does some of the things that they do. Knowing what to say or how to say it in a way that makes sense to kids can be hard. How much do you tell them? How do you present information?

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

Instructions

- 1 When you explain autism to children, refrain from discussing a particular child with autism unless you are their parent or you have checked with that child's parent first. A parent of a child with autism has the right to know and possibly even limit how much information is being given out about their child. If you are the teacher or a parent of a friend, contact the parent of the child with autism. Perhaps they can give you good information to give out or they might want to be a part of the conversation.
- 2 Always try to answer questions without labeling first. A child is not an autistic child. They are a child with autism. Autism is secondary to who they are as a person. Therefore, if possible, answer questions about specific behaviors or things that are happening and refrain from using the label, especially with younger children. As kids get older, they are in a better position to really try to understand what autism is. If a child with autism tells other kids that they have autism and the other kids have questions, then it is appropriate to try to explain things using that word.
- 3 When you answer questions, start by highlighting how different and unique every one of us is. For example, if a child wants to know why another student never wants to play with the others at recess, let them know some kids need to always be around people and others need more time alone. Let them know that people who want to be alone more might like being around other people but they are not sure how to do that. Encourage them to be a friend and try playing with that child. That would be a much better answer than just saying that that child has autism.