



## Tips for Families Living with Autism

Kathryn Smerling, Family Therapist, compiled this advice from families who have learned to gracefully deal with the challenges of autism.

### ***Tips for Parents:***

- Be informed so you can be the best advocate for your child.
- Don't deny your feelings. It's OK to feel conflicting emotions. Direct your anger towards the disorder and not towards your spouse who is hurting also.
- Be careful not to let autism consume every waking hour of your life. Spend quality time with your spouse, your typically developing children, and talk about other topics besides autism.
- Take pride in each small accomplishment your child achieves.
- Get involved with the autism community. The support from other parents will empower you and benefit your child.

### ***Tips for brothers and sisters:***

- Remember that every family has challenges; you are not alone!
- Be proud of your brother or sister with autism. Learn to talk openly about autism. As you become comfortable with the topic, others will too.
- Talk to a professional counselor to help you understand your feelings, especially if you are upset or angry for extended periods of time.
- Spend time alone with your parents. This would be important even if you didn't have a brother or sister with autism.
- Find an activity you can do with your brother or sister that you both enjoy.

### ***Tips for grandparents:***

- Ask your children how you can be helpful. Your efforts, from babysitting to advocating, will be appreciated.
- Seek out your own support so you can be stronger for your children when they face challenges.
- Be non-judgmental with family decisions concerning the treatment of autism. Try not to compare children--with or without autism.
- Learn more about autism. Education gives hope for future possibilities.
- Find a special activity you can do with each grandchild. Typically developing children need to feel important too. Children with autism thrive on routines, so find one thing you both enjoy that can be done repeatedly.

**Source:** *First 100 Days Kit*, Autism Speaks

[http://www.autismspeaks.org/docs/family\\_services\\_docs/100\\_day\\_kit.pdf](http://www.autismspeaks.org/docs/family_services_docs/100_day_kit.pdf)

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