



## #AutismToolboxChallenge

World Autism Awareness week provides an opportunity to focus on ways our society can be more accepting of difference and understanding of neurodiversity, in particular autism. In Scotland, one way that we are celebrating this is by focusing on the 'social environment' and what commitment you can make to change.

### What is the social environment?

The social environment includes the attitudes and actions of the people around autistic people. A positive social environment is one where the people around the child or young person have a non-judgemental and inclusive mindset and make the effort to understand the preferences of the individual.

In autism awareness week adults in schools can commit to a change by considering:

1. Environment first
2. Provide predictability
3. Make learning meaningful
4. Seek to understand distressed behaviour
5. Ensure adjustments are anticipatory
6. Difference not deficit
7. We were expecting you!

See next page for ideas.

### Learning from the autistic experience

Autistic people are experts by their own experience. We can all benefit and learn from:

- Personal accounts in books or film
- Presentations from autistic adults who have chosen to share their experiences
- Reports collated through consultation with autistic children and young people

### Disclosing diagnosis – issues

The decision to tell other people that you are autistic is not always straightforward. Sometimes an individual is comfortable with having been diagnosed and chooses to refer to themselves as 'autistic', 'on the autism spectrum' or 'a person with autism' (or whichever language they prefer). In this situation individuals may have some people with whom they wish to openly share the diagnosis. Not everyone wants to share their diagnosis with everyone and some people may not be ready to make these decisions.

### Things to consider

- You can't 'untell' people
- Children may not imagine the responses of others, particularly in the future
- Encouraging public disclosure is not recommended, e.g. in front of a class or school assembly

In World Autism Awareness Week it is the responsibility of everyone to become more autism aware rather than the responsibility of autistic children and young people to make people aware.

On the next page are a few suggestions of things you might do to mark the week. This is by no means an exhaustive list, feel free to devise your own!

Please share your own commitment on Twitter with the hashtag  
**#AutismToolboxChallenge**

## In Autism Awareness Week 2020

You could think...	You could do...
<p><b>1. Environment first</b> The physical and social environment is appropriately adapted to meet the needs of all learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about reducing the amount of language you use.</li> <li>• Watch National Autistic Society 'Too Much Information' clips: <a href="https://youtu.be/WlxXbONMqNc">https://youtu.be/WlxXbONMqNc</a> <a href="https://youtu.be/aPknwW8mPAM">https://youtu.be/aPknwW8mPAM</a></li> <li>• Complete the CIRCLE Inclusive Classroom Scale: <a href="https://www.thirdspace.scot/circle/education-resources">https://www.thirdspace.scot/circle/education-resources</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Provide predictability</b> Teachers seek to reduce anxiety and support participation by providing an environment that is predictable to learners. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routines</li> <li>• Structures</li> <li>• Interactions</li> <li>• Learning supports (e.g. chunking down, supporting with visual timetables)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce and use a whole class visual timetable.</li> <li>• Provide a developmentally relevant individual visual timetable for all children in your class with autism or related needs.</li> <li>• Maintain clear routines for key parts of the school day, e.g. assembly, lunch time, end of day.</li> <li>• Prepare for a change that is happening this week, e.g. look at photographs in advance of a trips or visit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Make learning meaningful</b> Consideration is given to each child's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developmental stage</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Sensory profile</li> <li>• Motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch Occupational Therapist Mel talk about Sensory Processing Differences: <a href="http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/sensory-differences">http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/sensory-differences</a></li> <li>• Have your class create individual sensory toolkits.</li> <li>• Think about the different ways children can access movement breaks in your class.</li> <li>• Plan a lesson around the interests of an autistic child in your class.</li> <li>• Plan a lesson about sensory preferences, e.g. like and don't like – smells, tastes, noises, textures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Seek to understand distressed behaviour</b> Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to understand 'why?'</li> <li>• Identify potential triggers</li> <li>• Avoid 'post match analysis' with the child</li> <li>• Make adaptations to avoid the same situation arising again</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read 'Uniquely Human' by Barry Prizant.</li> <li>• Watch Amy Laurent's TED Talk 'Compliance is not the goal' <a href="https://bit.ly/2IkI0yf">https://bit.ly/2IkI0yf</a></li> <li>• Use the NAIT SCERTS Risk Assessment Tool to reflect and plan: <a href="https://www.thirdspace.scot/nait/education-resources">https://www.thirdspace.scot/nait/education-resources</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Ensure adjustments are anticipatory</b> The Equality Act (2010) requires 'reasonable adjustments' and states that these should be 'anticipatory' - Let's not just see how it goes!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch the Autism Guide to the Equality Act (2010): <a href="http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/autism-lense-policy-and-legislation">http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/autism-lense-policy-and-legislation</a></li> <li>• Watch 'Delayed effect, after school meltdown' clip on YouTube: <a href="https://binged.it/2RXWcle">https://binged.it/2RXWcle</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Difference, not deficit</b> Language matters. Think about the language you use in verbal and written communication. When we see autism as a difference, not a deficit this changes the way we think about the individual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read 'Neurotribes' by Steve Silberman or watch his clips on YouTube: <a href="https://binged.it/3baNt6J">https://binged.it/3baNt6J</a></li> <li>• Watch Rosie King's TED Talk: <a href="https://binged.it/31mWtBe">https://binged.it/31mWtBe</a></li> <li>• Plan an activity mapping shared interests across the class.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. We were expecting you!</b> 25% of Scotland's school population have an Additional Support Need (ASN). Children with a range of needs and presentations should be expected and welcomed!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge people who make non-inclusive statements, and suggest alternative way of thinking or expressions.</li> <li>• Talk with colleagues in your school about the day to day big and small adjustments made in your school and the ways you promote the philosophy of 'We were expecting you!'</li> </ul>