



Advocacy and Support Tips for Parents on the Autism Spectrum

Introduction

Autistic parents, like other people with disabilities, can take good care of their children. It's important for parents on the autism spectrum to understand their strengths and weaknesses to help them become the best parents they can be. Getting help with difficult things doesn't mean that autistic people are bad parents. Support for parents on the autism spectrum will help them learn the best ways to respond to their children's needs. They will also feel better about being parents and speaking up for their children when talking to teachers, doctors, and other professionals. Here is a list of ways that parents can learn ways to advocate for themselves and find support.

Useful Hints

- **Create routines that work well for you and your family.** Many parents find that it is helpful to break tasks down into clear steps so they are easier to understand. Some ways to remember your routines include phone apps, dry-erase calendars, planners, Post-it notes, and legal pads. You don't have to create these routines by yourself if you feel it will be difficult or overwhelming.
- **Write lists of the things you need.** Sometimes making lists of the things you need will help you organize your thoughts. For example, if you would like help talking to your child's teacher about their grades, you can write down the things you find difficult about talking to your child's teacher. You can then take this list to somebody you trust, like a spouse, friend, therapist, or case manager, to help you make plans.
- **Connect to other parents on the autism spectrum.** Being around people who have gone through the same things as you can be helpful. This is because other parents can tell you what they have done to be successful. They can also tell you what kinds of help they received. Having a strong community can also help you emotionally. Mothers on the autism spectrum may be more likely to be depressed before and after they have a baby. You can connect to other parents through social media, online forums, in-person meet-ups, and formal support or therapy groups.

- **You can reach out for support from therapists, coaches, case managers, or other professionals.** Some autistic parents may have a hard time with executive functioning (planning and organizing), social interactions, and paperwork. These problems can make it hard to deal with doctors, government agencies, and your children's schools. Having a helpful guide to deal with these confusing processes can help both you and your children.
- **Everyone communicates differently.** Some people on the autism spectrum prefer to talk to people by email or online chat. Other people prefer talking in person, using video chat, or talking on the phone. Tell the people who are supporting you which kind of communication works best.