

# KidsBooklet

## ON AUTISM

for sibling and peers  
with notes for parents and  
teachers, too!



Thank you to the following members of Autism New Jersey's Board of Trustees for their contribution towards the printing of this publication:

The Aquino Family  
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## Hi, Kids!

If you know someone with autism, please read this Autism New Jersey booklet. It has a lot of helpful information about kids and grown-ups who have autism.

We hope that this booklet answers some of your questions about what autism is. You may even have more questions after reading this booklet. If you have any questions or feelings you need to talk about when you're finished, be sure to speak with a parent, teacher, or another grown-up.

Happy reading and learning!

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## Autism New Jersey

is an organization that provides information, support and advocacy for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) in New Jersey.

# Calling All Kids!

## What is autism?

Autism is a problem in the brain that makes it hard to talk, get along with other people, and learn new things.

## How do you get autism?

You are born with autism, just as some people are born with brown hair and some people are born with freckles. Many special adults, called researchers, are trying to figure out exactly how autism happens and how to teach people with autism to learn more.

## Why can't people with autism talk like other people?

Most people with autism have a hard time using words and may even say the same word or sentence over and over again. Some people don't talk with their mouths; instead, they use their hands and pictures. There also are other people with autism who can talk just like you.



## Do children with autism go to school?

Yes. Children with autism go to school to learn just like you. A kid with autism may be in your class or a school just for kids with autism.

## Do kids with autism have tantrums?

Yes. Some kids with autism might be happy and then become sad or mad. They might even have a tantrum. It might be because they have a hard time telling people what they need and want.

## **How do kids with autism play?**

Children with autism might play in a different way than other kids. They may like to stare at something for a long time, twirl a piece of string, or spin a toy car around and around. Kids with autism may play by themselves because they don't know how to play with



other kids. They might need to learn how to play. If you know someone with autism, how does he or she play?

## **Are all people with autism the same?**

No. People with autism have many different things that they are good at and like to do. Every person in the world is unique in his or her own special way. How are you special? If you know someone with autism, how is he or she special?

## **What are people with autism like when they grow up?**

People with autism can learn to do all sorts of things when they grow up. They might have a job at a grocery store, as an artist, or working on a computer. Many people with autism learn to make friends, have a job and lead a happy life.

## **How should I act around someone with autism?**

Great question and there's an easy answer! You should always try to be a caring person. Act like you usually would. If you don't know how to hang out with kids with autism, maybe a grown-up could show you how to get their attention. Even if someone with autism acts differently than you, he or she can still have feelings and care about you. Just be yourself when you are with someone with autism. You may even make a new friend!

# Calling All Brothers & Sisters!

Here are some feelings that brothers and sisters had...

## Happy

I felt happy when my brother learned how to play with me. Now, he can take turns sharing his toy cars with me. Sometimes he still needs reminders from my mom or I have to give the red car back to him pretty quickly. I like playing with my brother.

## Frustrated

I felt frustrated when my brother wrecked my model airplane that I spent a whole weekend building. I really liked that airplane and wanted to hang it from my ceiling. But when my brother took it and threw it on the floor, it broke into so many pieces. I wish I had that airplane back.

## Embarrassed

I felt embarrassed when my brother had a tantrum in the food store. I felt like everyone was staring at us. I knew my brother wasn't going to calm down. We had to leave the store before we were done shopping. It felt weird with everyone waiting for us to leave.



## **Proud**

I felt proud when my brother was at the playground and he waved to another kid. Usually he ignores other kids, but this time, he stopped and waved hello. I was really proud of him because it took him a long time to learn that.



## **Sad**

I felt sad when my sister had to go to the doctor in another town. She and my mom had to stay overnight far away and I missed them.



## **Here are some questions that brothers and sisters ask...**

### **Why does my brother or sister need so much special time with teachers?**

Everybody needs some time with teachers to learn new things. Just think of something you learned and how you needed someone to teach it to you. Kids with autism need to see and do things many, many times to learn them well. So, they need a lot of time with teachers to learn to do the things that you do.

### **Why do my parents pay more attention to my brother even when he is bad? Do they like him more than me?**

Just like kids with autism may need more time with teachers to learn new things, kids with autism also may need more time with



their parents to learn and act the right way. Sometimes it may seem like your parents don't have time for you. You could show them this page and ask for some time alone with them. What would you like to do with them? All parents love their kids very much because all kids are special!



## What do I say to the kids at school who call my brother or sister retarded?

Here are a few choices for you:

One kid said, “He does have autism, but that doesn’t mean he is retarded. If you got to know him you would see there are a lot of things he can do really well like puzzles and pointing to things he wants.”

Another kid said, “My sister has autism and it takes her a long time to learn things. I think calling my sister retarded is mean. I like my sister so please don’t be mean to her.”



Lastly, another girl didn’t say anything at all to the kids who called her brother retarded. She thought they weren’t being nice and decided to talk to her friends instead.

**Write the questions here that you want to ask your mom, dad or another grown-up:**

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# Calling All Classmates & Friends!

## **One of the kids in my neighborhood has autism. Is it okay to laugh if he does something that looks funny to me?**

Since you asked that question you already may know that it's not nice to laugh at someone. It's okay to laugh if he is telling you a joke or doing something funny to make you laugh. But it is not okay to laugh if he is just being himself and doing things you don't understand.



Maybe he is excited about something that you don't know about. Instead of laughing, you could ask him to play with you on the swings, with stickers, blowing bubbles and lots of other toys. It may be easy or hard to play with him. Remember, you can always ask a grown-up for help. Be a good neighbor and a good friend and you'll both be happier!

## **A new kid with autism joined our class. The teacher said that she needs more help from teachers and from us. Why are the teachers and other kids more interested in her?**



It can be a little scary when things in your class change. It's good to know that your classroom will stay almost the same. The teacher will teach you things, your friends will be there, you will play at recess time, and you'll still have homework. So, as you can see, most of the things will stay the same.

All students need help learning new things. Sometimes you need a lot of help and sometimes you need a little bit of help. Kids with autism usually need more help than you do to learn something. That's why they need more attention from the teachers – to learn the lesson. Teachers know how to make all of their students learn and feel good about themselves. All students are special!



### **How can I help a boy or girl with autism in my class?**

Make sure to always be nice and try to make children with autism feel comfortable. Always try to include them in the activities that you and

your friends are doing. Use toys that they like and talk to them about things that they want to talk about. You and your friends can teach them how to play games on the playground. If they are being made fun of by another classmate, help them by inviting them to walk away and play with you instead. You always can ask your teacher for more ideas on how to help! Remember, being a friend to someone with special needs makes you feel special, too!

**Write the questions here that you want to ask your mom, dad or another grown-up:**

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# Looking for something to do?

## Read a Book

Read a book about autism written by other kids, such as *Views from Our Shoes*. For more books, see Autism New Jersey's Autism Reading List for Children and Adolescents on page 14.



## Ask your school librarian if you can make a library display with books about autism

You could ask to make a display during any month, but April is a great time because it is National Autism Awareness Month! Look in this booklet for a list of books that you can add to your display. If your library doesn't have any, this is a good time to ask your librarian to order some.

## Make a presentation

Teach your class about autism! You can use this book for easy ways to explain autism.

You also can read your favorite book about autism to your class, or choose one from Autism New Jersey's Autism Reading List for Children and Adolescents.

If your class has questions you don't know the answer to, don't be embarrassed. There are some questions that even adults don't know

the answers to! You always can ask your teacher or parents for help with answering questions.

## **Join the Sibling Pen Pal Program**

Be one of more than 250 kids looking to meet other kids who have sisters or brothers with autism, just like you! You can send them mail, e-mail, talk on the telephone and maybe even meet one day! You can talk about other things, too, like movies, music, sports, hobbies and friends! See the sign-up sheet on page 17 and make a new friend today!



## **Start a Sibling Group**

Start a sibling support group and talk about what it's like to have a brother or sister with autism. You will need some help from your parents to organize this. Ask your mom or dad to look on the parents' page in this booklet. The third book in the reading list has easy ways to run a great support group for siblings. Call Autism New Jersey for a list of sibling support groups.

## **Become an Autism Ambassador**

Autism New Jersey's Autism Awareness Junior Ambassador Program helps siblings educate and enlighten their friends and neighbors during April, National Autism Awareness Month. Junior Ambassadors speak to their schools and communities about autism and their personal experiences. Autism New Jersey provides resources for kids, suggested activities and reading lists. To sign-up as a Junior Ambassador, see the sign-up sheet on page 19, e-mail [aamonth@autismnj.org](mailto:aamonth@autismnj.org), or call 800.4.AUTISM.

# Information for Parents

As parents, we love our children and want what is best for them. When one child has autism, it is common to worry that your other children may be deprived in some way. While you may want to spend more time thinking about your other children's needs, the needs of your child with autism can be urgent and intense.



Here's some good news. Most siblings of children with autism are as well-adjusted as other children, and continue to do well into adulthood. Many siblings become compassionate and respectful adults. Some go on to have a career in a helping profession.

Siblings and the entire family benefit when:

- They have a safe place to express all of their feelings on a regular basis with someone they trust.
- They receive accurate information about autism in a way that is meaningful to them and easy to understand.
- They discuss problems and try out solutions.
- They have good friends.
- They watch adults who are optimistic and realistic.
- They watch adults who solve problems in a way that is respectful to all involved.

You can find more great information from families and siblings themselves in the books listed under the For Parents section of Autism New Jersey's Reading List on page 15 of this booklet. You also could use a support group meeting or an online chat to discuss sibling issues.

Remember, Autism New Jersey is ready to provide you with assistance to help your entire family. Call 800.4.AUTISM, or visit [www.autismnj.org](http://www.autismnj.org).

# Information for Teachers

As teachers, we care about our students and want what is best for them. When students with autism are educated with their peers, there are opportunities to enjoy and challenges to face. No two students with autism are alike. So, it is important to individualize not only the educational programs, but also the strategies you use to ensure that all of your students are positively and successfully getting along.

It is important to give children accurate information about autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). Consider how a student with an ASD may wish to be involved in this process. Reading this booklet in class is one way to provide accurate information in a kid-friendly way. You can incorporate themes, such as the universality of strengths and weaknesses. For example, you could say, “I am really good at computers, but I don’t know how to cook very well.” All people have something they are good at and something they struggle with. This idea may help your students become more compassionate about the student’s deficits and more aware of what they can do well.



Another theme to incorporate is the importance of making progress, or in more kid-friendly words, getting better at something. This way, the focus is on what each student needs to make progress. Running your classroom with this in mind is one way to teach students that fair does not necessarily mean equal. Fair means that each student is provided with the materials and attention that he/she needs to learn and maintain skills.

Please refer to the reading list on the next page for more information on autism. Remember, Autism New Jersey is ready to provide you with additional information and assistance if needed. Call 800.4.AUTISM, or visit [www.autismnj.org](http://www.autismnj.org).

# Autism Reading List

## For Children and Adolescents

Adsum Incorporated. (Ed.). (1997). *In our own words: Stories by brothers and sisters of children with autism and P.D.D.* Fall River, MA: Author. ISBN: 0965795403. 22 pages. Ages: 12 +.

Amenta, C. A. (1992). *Russell is extra special: A book about autism for children.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. ISBN: 0945354444. 32 pages. Ages: 4 - 8.

Edwards, B., & Armitage, D. (1999). *My brother Sammy.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press. ISBN: 0761304398. 32 pages. Ages: 4 - 8.

Gagnon, E., & Smith Myles, B. (1999). *This is Asperger Syndrome.* Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company. ISBN: 0967251419. 20 pages. Ages: 9 -12.

Katz, I., & Ritvo, E. (1993). *Joey and Sam.* Bel Air, CA: Real Life Storybooks. ISBN: 1882388003. 40 pages. Ages: 5 - 11.

Lears, L. (1998). *Ian's walk: A story about autism.* Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company. ISBN: 0807534803. 32 pages. Ages: 6 - 8.

Meyer, D. (2005). *The sibling slam book: What it's really like to have a brother or sister with special needs.* Baltimore, MD: Woodbine House. ISBN: 1890627526. 152 pages.

Meyer, D. (1997). *Views from our shoes: Growing up with a brother or sister with special needs.* Baltimore, MD: Woodbine House. ISBN: 0933149980. 114 pages. Ages: 9 - 12.

Rosenberg, M. S. (2000). *Everything you need to know when a brother or sister is autistic.* New York: Library Binding Rosen Publishing Group. Part of the series Need to Know Library. ISBN: 0823931234. 64 pages. Ages: 4 - 8.

Thompson, M. (1992). *My brother Matthew.* Baltimore, MD: Woodbine House. ISBN: 0933149476. 26 pages. Ages: 5 - 10.



Thompson, M. (1996). *Andy and his yellow frisbee*. Baltimore, MD: Woodbine House. ISBN: 0933149832. 21 pages. Ages: 6 - 8.  
Twatchman-Cullen, D. (1999). *Trevor Trevor*. Higganum, CT: Starfish Specialty Press. ISBN: 0966652908. 44 pages. Ages: 5 - 10.

\*Vermeulen, P. (2000). *I am special: Introducing children and young people to their autism spectrum disorder*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN: 1853029165. 78 pages. Ages: 5+.

Werlin, N. (1996). *Are you alone on purpose?* New York: Ballantine Books, Inc. ISBN: 0449704459. 184 pages. Ages 12+.

## For Parents

Ariel, C. N., & Naseef, R. A. (Eds.). (2006). *Voices from the spectrum: Parents, grandparents, siblings, people with autism, and professionals share their wisdom*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Harris, S. L., & Glasberg, B. A. (2003). *Siblings of children with autism: A guide for families (2nd ed.)*. Baltimore, MD: Woodbine House.

Meyer, D. J., & Vadasy, P. F. (1994). *Sibshops: Workshops for siblings of children with special needs*. Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes Publishing Company.

Stern Feiges, L., & Weiss, M. J. (2004). *Sibling stories: Reflections on life with a brother or sister on the autism spectrum*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

\* This book is intended to be read by, or to, children with an autism spectrum disorder to provide information on their diagnosis. It also is a source of information for typical children.

# Autism New Jersey Sibling Essay Contest

The Sibling Essay Contest is an annual competition open to anyone with a brother or sister with autism spectrum disorder, and in grades 4 through 12. Winners will be selected in the following categories:

4th through 6th Grade  
7th through 9th Grade  
10th through 12th Grade

Autism New Jersey will award one finalist from each age group a savings bond. A judging panel of Autism New Jersey staff and Board members will select winners.



Once winners are announced, they will be invited to an Autism New Jersey event to read their essay. Winning essays will be published in Autism New Jersey's newsletter and posted on Autism New Jersey's website. All essays also will be published in a booklet.

For more information on how to enter an essay, call 800.4.AUTISM or e-mail [essaycontest@autismnj.org](mailto:essaycontest@autismnj.org).

The terms and conditions for this contest can change without notice. Call Autism New Jersey or more details.





# Sibling Pen Pal Program

The Sibling Pen Pal Program is a great and easy way to connect siblings so that they can share stories, successes and challenges of living with a brother or sister with autism. To join the program, complete this sign-up form. Include the children's ages, hobbies and any other information you think would be helpful in making a good pen pal match. Feel free to photocopy this sheet or use extra paper. You will hear from an Autism New Jersey staff member soon.

Send all correspondence to:  
Autism New Jersey  
Attn: Gale Rainier  
1450 Parkside Avenue, Suite 22  
Ewing, NJ 08638  
Fax: 609.883.5509

Register online at  
[www.autismnj.org](http://www.autismnj.org)

Sibling Name \_\_\_\_\_ Male/Female \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies (Please list 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of child with autism \_\_\_\_\_ Male/Female \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Sibling E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Tell us What You Think About the Autism New Jersey Kids Booklet

Circle the number that corresponds to the category below:



**1**  
**Strongly Disagree**

**2**  
**Disagree**

**3**  
**Not Sure**

**4**  
**Agree**

**5**  
**Strongly Agree**

- |    |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I found this booklet helpful for siblings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | I found this booklet helpful for peers.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | I found this booklet helpful for parents.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | I found this booklet helpful for teacher   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

What I liked most about this booklet is:

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What I would change about this booklet is:

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Please mail or fax to:  
Autism New Jersey  
1450 Parkside Avenue, Suite 22, Ewing, NJ 08638  
609.883.5509 (fax)

# Jr. Autism Awareness Ambassador Sign-up

Help spread awareness in your community during April, National Autism Awareness Month. Sign up to become a Junior Ambassador and Autism New Jersey will send you a kit of information especially designed for kids.



## Child 1

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NAME

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DATE OF BIRTH

MALE/FEMALE

## Child 2

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NAME

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DATE OF BIRTH

MALE/FEMALE

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ADDRESS

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CITY

STATE

ZIP

---

TELEPHONE

E-MAIL

---

PARENTS NAME

---

PARENTS SIGNATURE

Please mail or fax to:  
Autism New Jersey  
1450 Parkside Avenue, Suite 22, Ewing, NJ 08638  
609.883.5509 (fax)



# Tell us What You Think About the Autism New Jersey Kids Booklet

Circle the number that corresponds to the category below:



**1**  
**Strongly Disagree**

**2**  
**Disagree**

**3**  
**Not Sure**

**4**  
**Agree**

**5**  
**Strongly Agree**

1. I found this booklet helpful for siblings.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
2. I found this booklet helpful for peers.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
3. I found this booklet helpful for parents.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
4. I found this booklet helpful for teacher  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

What I liked most about this booklet is:

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What I would change about this booklet is:

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## Attention Parents and Teachers:

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800.4.AUTISM

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