



## 10 tips for grandparents and other family members

- 1 Ask how you can help your family as they support your loved one with autism.** Every family member has something to offer and your efforts are bound to be appreciated. Showing support can come in many ways, whether it's looking after the child for an hour so that their parents can have some free time, helping to find local support services, or even helping to fundraise for your loved one's school or nursery.
- 2 Learn more about autism and how it impacts your loved one.** Around one in 100 people are autistic and it affects every one of them differently. It may be a lifelong condition but it isn't a life sentence. A young child with autism has a rich and promising life and, as they grow, you will learn their likes and dislikes, their talents and their challenges – just like any child. Share that sense of hope with your family.
- 3 Look for support for yourself.** If you find it difficult accepting and dealing with the fact that your loved one has autism, seek out your own support. Your family are dealing with their own emotions, so they may not be able to provide you with support. Find a trusted person outside of your family to talk to.
- 4 Be open and honest about autism.** It may be hard to talk about it at first but, as time goes on and as you learn more about autism and your feelings about it, it will be easier.
- 5 Put judgement aside.** Consider your family's feelings and be supportive. Respect the decisions they make for their child with autism. They are working very hard to explore all options and reach well-researched conclusions.
- 6 Try not to compare your loved one to other children.** All children develop at their own rate and each child has their own strengths and gifts.
- 7 Make special time for every child in the family.** You can enjoy special moments with family members who develop typically and those with autism. They all enjoy spending time with you.
- 8 Children with autism thrive on routines.** Find something that you can do together that is regular and structured, or is linked to something the child is particularly interested in. Even if it's just watching the trains in the station or doing a jigsaw.
- 9 Focus on your loved one's needs and not the label.** There is a lot of information out there about autism and it's easy to become overwhelmed with it all. Every child with autism is different. Focus on what you need to do to help support the autistic child in your life at each stage of their journey, and take it one step at a time.
- 10 Learn how to be an advocate for your loved one with autism.** Learn how to stand up for them, how to educate other people, and how to love them for who they are. Understand that people are often fearful of things they don't know or don't understand, and that judgement comes from ignorance. You have the opportunity to share your knowledge and to help others feel more understanding of, and more comfortable with, all people with autism.



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