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ASD Tips

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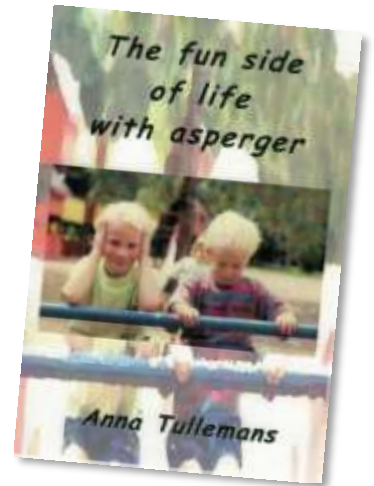
Preparing For Visitors

A major issue in the life of many ASD people is change and spontaneity. They sometimes find this interruption to their ordered world bewildering and overwhelming. Emotions are externalised and we see many inappropriate behaviours and self-stimulation behaviours may appear.

There are ways in which we can prepare the person with ASD for some of these changes, for example when expecting visitors to your house.

We begin by discussing with the child visitors and the joy that a visit can bring. We include information about the stimulation that a conversation can bring. We talk about it in terms that the person with ASD can understand. For example:

“You know how much you love talking about computers (dinosaurs/string/trains) and how good it makes you feel; well I have the same good feelings when I have conversations with our visitors.”



Then explain to them about acceptable behaviours when greeting guests and what they can do when they are finished their greeting.

An example: A visit by Aunty Rina.

The main problem is that Aunty Rina always gives big bear hugs, three kisses and a big tweak on the cheek and then tells you how much you have grown and how handsome/gorgeous you look. This unexpected physical contact can usually make greetings very tense affairs or the person may not make an appearance at all (to the consternation of visiting relatives!).



We need to prepare the person for the physical contact that is about to happen. Many people with ASD only like to be touched on their terms. By preparing him/her you are creating the touch “on their terms” and they are ready for the physical contact.

Creating a winning situation

We need to prepare the person in advance on how to greet visitors. In the case of Aunty Rina we would tell the AS person about how she always greets him and why she does that. For example: It’s just who she is! This is her way of showing you she loves you.

Preparation begins:

Explain why Aunty Rina greets the way she does:

- It’s who she is
- Being Italian, she loves to be hugged
- She loves to hug back
- This is how she shows she loves you

This is what you can expect:

- She gives you a big bear hug
- She gives you three big kisses (she’s Italian!)
- She tells you how handsome/gorgeous you are and how you’ve grown

When she is finished you can:

- Say: “It’s great to see you Aunty Rina”
- Give her a quick kiss on the cheek (optional for some children)
- Then you can go back to playing on your computer/reading your book

Aunty Rina will be happy that she has been greeted. You are happy as your child has displayed good behaviour and your child has learned an important social skill which you can help to generalise in to other situations.



Putting this into practice - Practice with family

It's a rule in our house that everyone is greeted when they arrive home even if they have been out for only a short time. This was how we managed to create an atmosphere whereby all our visitors were greeted when they arrived at the front door. We practised every time even when we were tired! The dog was also greeted (although I think she secretly loves to greet anybody anyway!)

Shaking hands as a greeting

If the person with ASD absolutely abhors being touched and hugged, you can teach him the skill of "shaking hands" as a greeting. However don't forget to teach Aunty Rina that he/she only likes to shake hands as a greeting! We need to ensure that we teach the AS person to have a firm but not too tight grip and to only shake once. Some younger people with ASD like to shake hard and lots of times!

Shaking hands as a greeting is a skill that they can use in most areas of their life where it will be appreciated by the receiver of the hand shake.

It is also an important skill for our children to learn if we are looking for them to become independent and to find work. It looks good in interviews and this presentation issue may be the difference between getting the job or not.

Good luck putting this into practice. It does work with a little patience, perseverance and lots of practice.

