

Ideas to help you understand how I communicate with people

-Jordan Ackerson

1. If possible, please let me finish what I'm trying to say rather than jumping in, interrupting, and trying to finish my sentence for me.
2. If you ask me a question, please *give me enough time to process* what you asked me so I'm able to give you a clear answer. If you repeat the question too soon, or ask me another question, then I forget your original question and I don't know what to say.
3. Slow your pace down when you're talking to me or otherwise my brain can't process auditorily what you said. I don't have trouble hearing, it just takes my brain a little longer to interpret what is being said to me.
4. Before changing the topic, it's fine to ask me if I was tracking what you were saying. I will also try to let you know if I am not following you, or if I forget what you were saying.
5. Very general questions are harder for me to answer. It would be very helpful when you ask me a question if you could give me choices from which to answer.
6. Sometimes people who have autism tend to go on talking about one subject a little bit longer than they really need to. If that happens, you have my permission to let me know, in a very courteous way, when you're having trouble listening to me. You can let me know when you're feeling like you are ready to change the topic.
7. Even though it takes me longer to process what's being said, that *doesn't* mean that I don't understand what's going on in the world.
8. Please understand that it takes a lot of my energy to focus on what's being said to me. If I don't follow what you're saying, that doesn't mean that I'm not trying to listen.
9. To let you know, my brain thinks very fast and I can't get words quite as quickly as my thoughts. This sometimes causes me to pant, or to repeat the same words to make sure that people are still listening to me while I'm working getting my words out.
10. Whenever I'm feeling an emotion, I make a distinction between feeling that emotion and being that emotion. For example, if a sad event happens, I like to say that sad is not what I am, but how I feel at the time.

A note about Jordan: Jordan Ackerson is an 18 year old senior in high school who experiences autism. He and his mother plan to write a book about his journey through high school as a student with social and learning challenges. Jordan feels strongly about promoting acceptance of diversity and has begun to do public presentations on related issues. Contact him at jordana515@comcast.net. ©2003 All Rights Reserved