



Cheshire and Wirral Partnership  
NHS Foundation Trust



# Understanding Autism

## Session 4: ASD and Social Skills and communication

# ASD and social skills and communication

This session will look at:

*Social skills*  
*Non verbal communication*  
*Conversations*  
*Socialising*  
*Social skill development*

***Alot of our material has been obtained from the  
national autistic society, [www. Autism .org .uk](http://www.Autism.org.uk)***

# Social skills

Social skills are used when communicating with other people. They involve knowing how to act in a certain social situation. Good social skills can improve and maintain relationships and help us to make friends.

# Social skills

You might find social situations difficult. Other people appear to know, intuitively, how to communicate and interact with each other. You may feel that other people don't understand you.



# Body language

- **Can you easily 'read' the person you are communicating with?**
- **Can you spot if someone is happy, sad, frustrated, confused, cross, irritated, embarrassed?**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4lq\\_qaJirs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4lq_qaJirs)

## Improving ability at recognising emotions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0ouAnmsO1Y>

## Secrets to decoding facial expressions

# Non verbal communication

It is easier to 'read' someone when as well as looking at their face, you also listen to the tone of their voice –

- is their voice raised?
- Is it loud?
- Are they breathing quickly and spitting words out?



- And looking at their body language – are they looking at their watch? Have they moved away from you? Have they turned away?
- Practice at home – looking at people body language in photos and on You Tube

# Eye contact

- Although eye contact can be difficult to do if you have Autism, poor eye contact with the person you are communicating with can result in misunderstandings.
- This is because you need to be watching each other in order to 'read' and understand each other more accurately.
- It allows you to check their expression. It shows you are listening to them and valuing them, even if eye contact is only made once every so often during a conversation.

***Find your comfortable level of eye contact.***

# Communication

- People with autism can find socialising and communicating challenging. Many really do want to make friends and form relationships but find it difficult to do this and sustain it.
- There may be difficulty understanding social cues and knowing when to speak or listen, and facial expressions can be hard to read resulting in social isolation.

Most people on the autism spectrum have difficulty interacting with others.

They may have difficulty with :

- responding,
- using interaction to be sociable.
- Understanding and relating to other people
- initiating interactions.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpo4pzHy338](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpo4pzHy338)

## How to start a conversation

# Developing conversation

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://www.adultaspergerschat.com/2012/02/conversation-skills-101-tips-for.html>. The page features a header with the title "Chat for Adults with HFA and Aspergers" and a group photo of five smiling adults. Below the header, a search bar is present. The main content area displays the article "Conversation Skills 101: Tips For Aspergers Adults" with an illustration of two people's heads connected by puzzle pieces. The article text discusses the challenges of social situations for individuals with Aspergers and offers basic suggestions. To the right of the article, there is a "This Week's Pageviews" counter showing 62301, a "Subscribe" section with buttons for "Posts" and "Comments", and a "Join Us On Facebook" section with a "Click the LIKE Button to Join" button and a group photo. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows various application icons and the system clock indicating 14:54 on 02/10/2012.

**Conversation Skills 101: Tips For Aspergers Adults**

Asperger's survival guide: conversation | Autism Support Network - Internet Explorer

http://www.autismsupportnetwork.com/news/aspergers-survival-guide-conversation-22

CareNotes... Coping: Bo... Quantum L... Asperge... x Social skills...

Suggested Sites

 **Autism Support Network™**  
Connect. Guide. Unite.

Get Our Newsletter: Your Email Address  GO

Select Language

Powered by Google Translate

Sign In | Sign Up

HOME SUPPORT COMMUNITY RESOURCES NEWS EVENTS CHAT PRESS MISSION ASN FOR YOU HELP

Home : News : People on the Inside

From the professionals | In the Press | Parents and Friends | People on the Inside



**Asperger's survival guide:  
conversation**  
Gisela Slater-Walker

status email alert

**Conversation**

\* It may be known to you that the art of conversation is carried out within a set of constraining rules.

\* When people take part in a conversation, what they say normally has to follow on from the last thing that was said. We stick to the relevant so that the conversation flows smoothly.

\* Be careful of stating the obvious. You may also wish to avoid asking questions when you can work out the answer for yourself. This way, the conversation covers more useful ground.

\* Try to avoid repeating yourself or rephrasing yourself when you have already been understood. This may be rather difficult because repetition of thought is quite fundamental to autism. However, I take the approach of always looking for new things to think about. This seems to have been quite a successful move.

\* Also, some people reply to things you say before even giving you a chance to finish your sentence. However, if they have anticipated you correctly then there is usually no need for you to finish.

**Our Support Community**

Join our free support community and connect with thousands of other families and individuals touched by ASD. Find out what's working for others, coping strategies, and life guides from others living what you're going through now. Click here to join for free!

[Join Now](#)

**Resources in Your Area**

Looking for autism resources nearby? Check our listings for professionals and services that might help.

Select a country

[Post your services](#) | [Help out in general](#)

[GO](#)

**Events**

Miracle Wonderland with Project You  
Brooklyn, NY - United States

15:02  
02/10/2017

# Conversations

People with autism have different needs and have developed different skills. The next slides show various tips when communicating.



# How can I approach someone?

- If the person you would like to talk to is already talking to someone else, it may be better to speak to them later on when they are free.
- If the person is free or is in a conversation with someone you know, approach the person. Stop when you are about an arm's length away and face them to talk to them.

# How can I start a conversation?

- Saying 'Hello' or 'Excuse me' is usually a good way to get someone's attention.
- How you greet someone depends on who you are speaking to or where you are. For example, you might say 'Hiya' to one of your friends but 'Hello' or 'Good Morning' to your boss or a customer.

- Using the person's name before or after your greeting will help them to know you are talking to them.
- Here are some general conversation starters to use at the beginning of the conversation rather than starting on a certain topic :

How are you?

It's nice to see you.

Did you enjoy the film/concert/TV programme?  
(if you know they have watched one).

Try writing down some other general questions  
and topics that you can use when you are talking  
to other people.



# What can I talk about?

Examples of other generic topics that are usually appropriate are :

- The weather.
- TV programmes.
- Films

Examples of topics that are usually more sensitive or thought of as inappropriate are :

- Critical comments about a the way a person looks, eg saying that you do not like what they are wearing.
- Money, eg asking someone how much money they earn.
- Politics
- A persons age

Avoid talking about these if you don't know the person well.

- The more times you meet the same person, the more you can develop conversations about common interests.
- Talk about things that you know the other person likes as well as the things that you like. If you both like the same things then you could talk about these.
- Take it in turns when talking to people. Let them answer your questions and give them a chance to ask you a question in return if they want to.

# Talking about feelings

People with autism may find it difficult to know how they themselves are feeling or how someone else is feeling. They may not know what to say to a person especially when the other person may not actually say how they feel or say what is worrying them. Autistic people often find it difficult to read other people's body language and facial expressions.



If you are not sure how someone is feeling, you can ask them. Here is an example of a situation where this may be a good idea.

# A friend tells you that they are emigrating to Australia due to her husband's work.

Your friend may feel sad that they have to move away from her friends and family or excited because it's a new opportunity. To make sure that you understand how they feel you could say 'How does that make you feel?'. Your friend may tell you that they are happy to be moving because they are excited about starting a new life in Australia.

However, you may feel sad because she will be moving far away from you. You could say 'I'm glad you are happy because Australia is lovely but I do feel sad though because you will be moving far away.' This means you will be talking about their feelings as well as your own.

Sometimes people don't tell the truth because they want to make the other person happy or feel better about themselves. For example, if someone asks another if they like their new outfit, they might answer 'Yes' even though they don't really like it. Some people call these 'little white lies'.



Sometimes it is difficult to understand why or what has caused a person to be upset. If you are not sure why the person is upset, you can always ask them.

If someone is upset about something you've said or done in a conversation, it doesn't mean they don't like you. Saying sorry usually helps.

# How do you recognise when to end a conversation?

- Watch out for signals that someone wants to end a conversation with you.

These may include:

- not asking questions back
- looking around the room
- Yawning, looking at their watch
- saying they have got to go and do something.

- If you aren't sure whether to carry on with the conversation, you could say 'Would you like me to tell you more?' or 'Would you like to talk about something else?'.
- You might want to talk about a certain topic a lot, but the other person may not be interested in it or as knowledgeable about it as you are. There maybe other reasons why the person wants the conversation to end, eg they may need to get to work.

- You might be disappointed that the person has to leave, but sometimes it is better to end a conversation before you run out of things to talk about.
- If you want to end the conversation, most people will think it's polite to say things like "Well I'd better be going now. Goodbye."



# ***Making friends and socialising***

Some people with autism prefer not to socialise with other people, or others enjoy friendships, but find it very difficult to make friends.

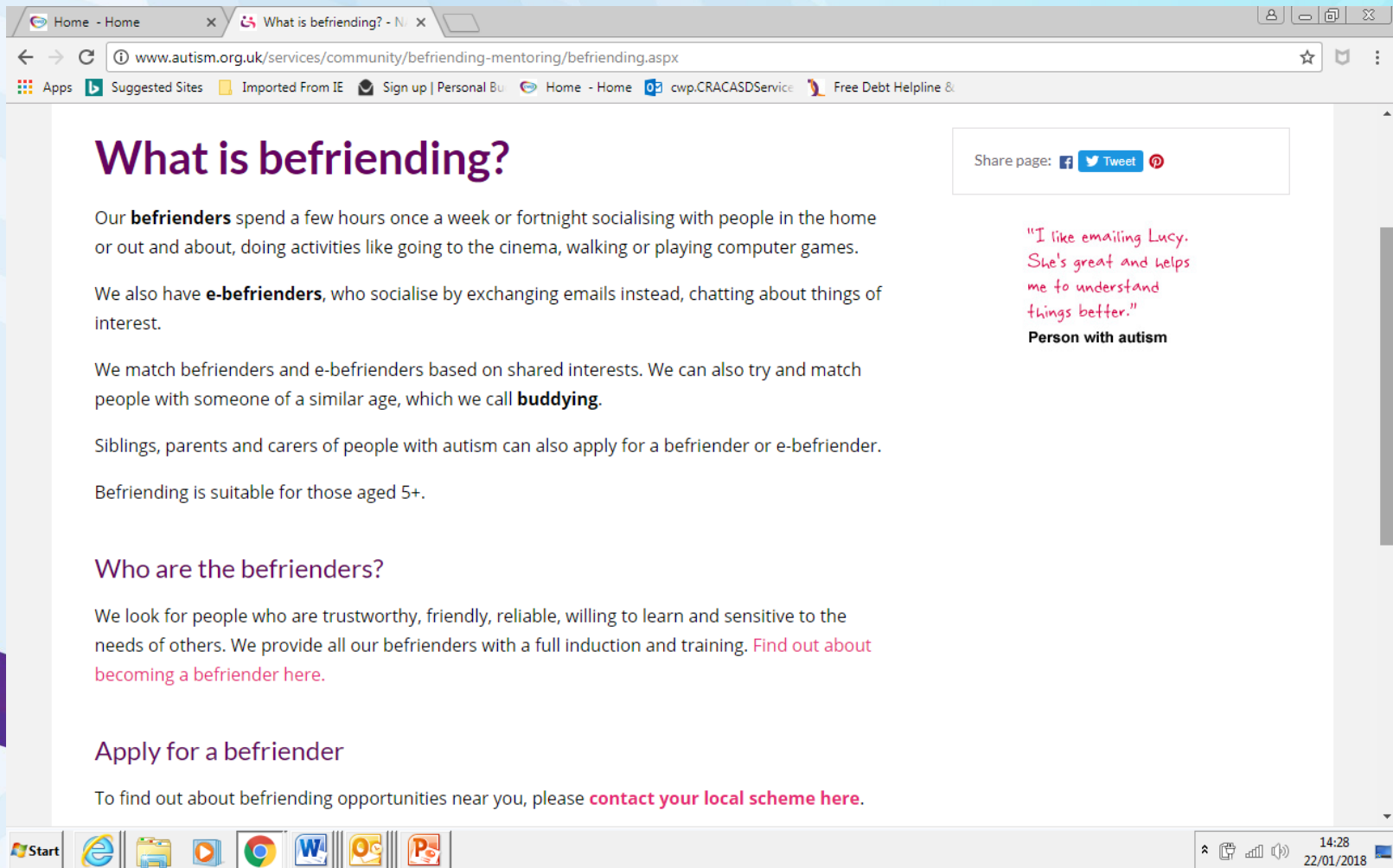
Having friends means you can go out with them and have a chat, being able to share common interests or discuss your problems with them.

*It is important to avoid social isolation if you want contact with others.*

# Clubs and groups

- One option is to join a club relating to a activity or hobby that you are interested in. The other members will have a common interest, often making conversation easier.
- Another option is to join a social group for people that have autism. Some groups take part in leisure activities, others focus specifically on developing social skills.

# NAS befriending service



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [www.autism.org.uk/services/community/befriending-mentoring/befriending.aspx](http://www.autism.org.uk/services/community/befriending-mentoring/befriending.aspx). The page title is "What is befriending?". The content includes a definition of befriending, a quote from a person with autism, and information about who can be a befriender and how to apply.

## What is befriending?

Our **befrienders** spend a few hours once a week or fortnight socialising with people in the home or out and about, doing activities like going to the cinema, walking or playing computer games.

We also have **e-befrienders**, who socialise by exchanging emails instead, chatting about things of interest.

We match befrienders and e-befrienders based on shared interests. We can also try and match people with someone of a similar age, which we call **buddying**.

Siblings, parents and carers of people with autism can also apply for a befriender or e-befriender.

Befriending is suitable for those aged 5+.

**Who are the befrienders?**

We look for people who are trustworthy, friendly, reliable, willing to learn and sensitive to the needs of others. We provide all our befrienders with a full induction and training. [Find out about becoming a befriender here.](#)

**Apply for a befriender**

To find out about befriending opportunities near you, please [contact your local scheme here.](#)

*"I like emailing Lucy. She's great and helps me to understand things better."*  
**Person with autism**

Share page: [f](#) [Twitter](#) [p](#)

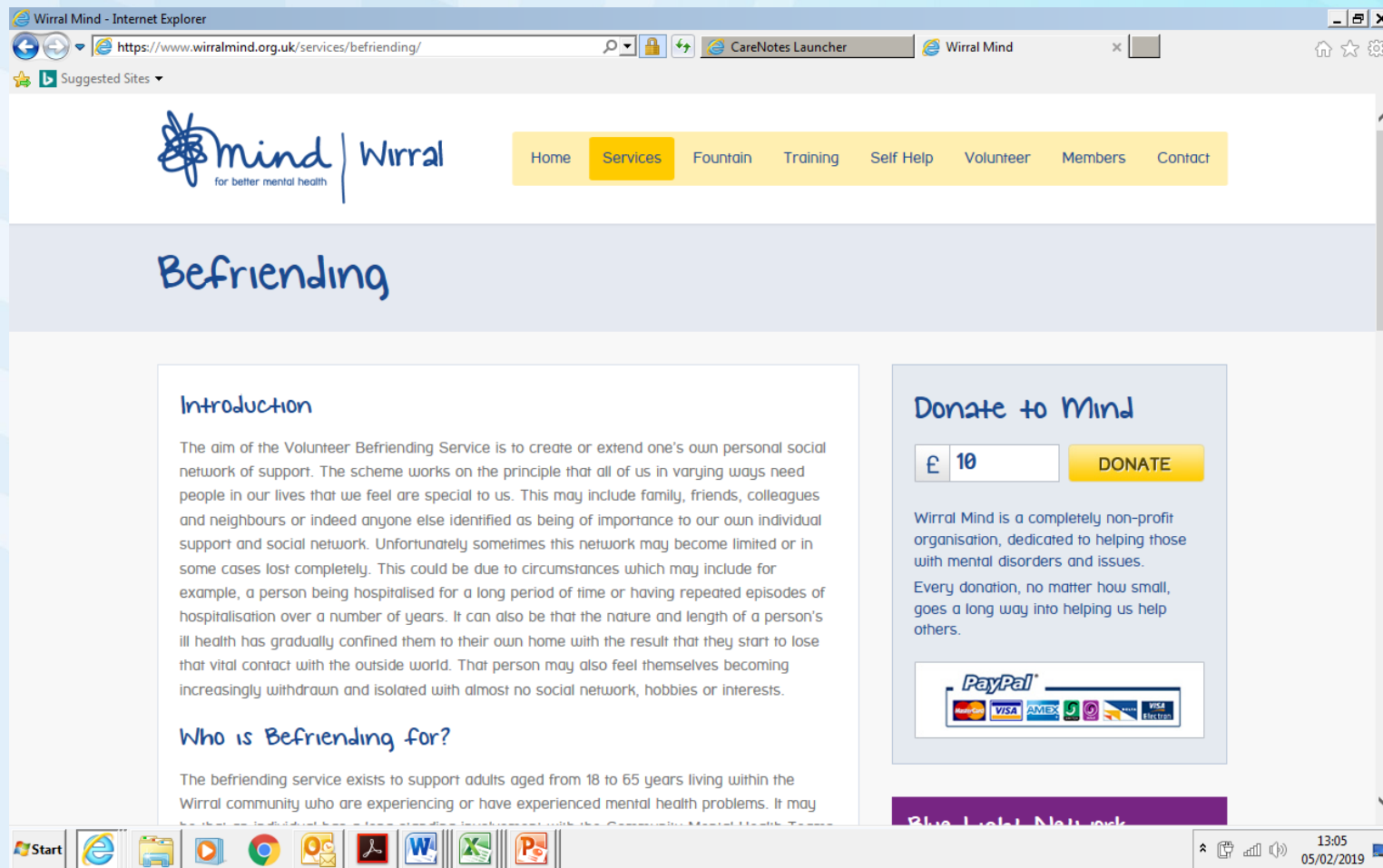
Windows taskbar: Start, Internet Explorer, File Explorer, Media Player, Google Chrome, Word, OneNote, PowerPoint, System tray (14:28, 22/01/2018).

The National Autistic Society has a befriending and an e-befriending scheme To match people in the local area with similar interests.

Another way of meeting people with similar interests is through [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com)

Or at a local group for people with ASD.





Our post diagnostic leaflet, which contains lots of information about local groups and activities.

<http://www.cwp.nhs.uk/resources/leaflets/autism-spectrum-disorder-adult-service-post-diagnosis-information/>

# Courses

Learning a new skill whether for pleasure or related to your employment can often lead to making new friends. Your local college might run daytime and evening courses in things like art, IT and cooking.

# Online

- You may prefer communicating with others online. Here are some ideas :
- The NAS online Community Courses.
- There are various social media groups and Facebook sites for people with ASD.
- Outsiders is a web community which aims to help people with any disability find and form friendships
- Open University offers courses which are studies at home.
- Asperger United is a magazine written by and for autistic people.



# Friendships - Who is a real friend?

- It can be hard to tell if someone is a real friend or not. It maybe difficult for you to notice body language and tones of voice and these can be signs if someone is just pretending to be your friend.
- So called 'friends' may go on to abuse a person with autism. This can be financial, physical or sexual abuse. This is called mate crime. Mate crimes are Disability Hate Crimes and should be reported to the police.

# Someone pretending to be a friend

- might make unfair requests of you or put you in awkward situations
- might treat you less well than their other friends
- might play on your guilt if it helps them get their own way.

# A true friend

- will always be kind and make you feel welcome and talk to you if they have the time
- will treat you as well as they treat all of their friends.

# *Telling people that you are autistic.*

- If you tell people that you have autism this often helps people to understand you and communicate better with you. It is your choice whether to tell people or not but often it is considered be a positive decision.
- You could tell them things you'd like them to know (eg that you can concentrate more on a conversation by not making eye contact) and things you'd like them to do eg be more direct with you and tell you how it is as you may miss subtle cues. You could tell them where they can find out more information about autism.



# *More information*

- Friend or fake easy read booklet, Arc
  - <http://arcuk.org.uk/safetynet/friend-or-fake-easyread-booklet/>
- Quick cues, is a social script app that helps autistic teens and young adults to handle new situations.

# Resources

# Safety Net



← Learning Disability Week 2012

Mate Crime on ITV evening news →

## Friend or Fake Easy Read Booklet



The Safety Net project has been raising awareness around Hate Crime and Mate Crime.

**Our aim is to prevent the exploitation of people with learning disabilities, by those claiming to be their friends.** We want to help people with a learning disability, and their families and supporters, to ask and to identify who really is a Friend and who is a Fake.

- Download the [Friend or Fake? Easy Read Booklet](#)
- We also do a [Friend or Fake? CD Training Resource](#)

Bookmark the [normalink](#)



Search

### Latest News

★ Launch of the ARC Real Change Challenge on Mate Crime

As part of an on-going series of Real Change Challenges ARC has launched its two-part Real Change Challenge on Mate Crime. The Real Change Challenges form part of a wider drive by ARC to promote better quality services for people ... [read more...](#)

★ Updates in the news on mate and hate crime: January – March 2013

Links to news articles of interest on mate and hate crime from January to March 2013 [read more...](#)



Available on the App Store

"With our user group, there is a need for direct instruction and we want to teach them everything we can so they don't have to learn from their mistakes over and over again."

-- Jody Hofer Van Ness, Psychoeducational Consultant, The Fraser Institute

### QuickCues

The Fraser Institute has used social scripts for years to teach teens and young adults on the autism spectrum how to handle new situations and learn new skills. The advent of iPads and iPhones brought the team at Fraser a practical

new tool for sharing these scripts in a way that is mobile, discreet and easily accessible to users who are bright but lack social understanding and executive function skills.

Jody Hofer Van Ness, a psychoeducational consultant at The Fraser Institute, says, "I am a firm believer in consistency across environments. Mobile apps make that possible. In the past, people with autism have been dependent to a point on the expertise of people at hand in different environments. QuickCues can support users across all environments: home, clinical and school. In the clinical arena, we've been talking about providing consistent support for years but we've never had the mechanism. It is so rewarding to help create a tool that does provide consistent support."

Jody, alongside a team of Fraser skill trainers, penned these scripts based on Jody's experiences with her son, who has autism, and the many young adults that come to Fraser for social skills training.

### Why Did You Create QuickCues?

*Jody Hofer Van Ness:* QuickCues is a teaching and prompting tool. People with autism often need reminders on how to handle social or stressful situations. They also need repetition to commit the "rules" to long-term memory and to generalize to different situations to use the learned skills fluidly. We wanted to create a discreet tool to make social scripts available to users when they need them.

Users can access the scripts on QuickCues in anticipation of a situation that causes them some

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Look inside ↑

## 60 Social Situations and Discussion Starters to Help Teens on the Autism Spectrum Deal with Friendships, Feelings, Conflict and More

Seeing the Big Picture

Lisa A. Timms

Written with both parent and teen in mind, every story in this book outlines a real-life situation that young people on the autism spectrum are likely to encounter. Each story is followed by questions and practical tips for parents on how to initiate constructive discussions. Teens will then be able to transfer these skills into everyday life.

Details	Price	Qty
Paperback / softback 2011, 9.21in x 6.14in / 234mm x 156mm, 160pp ISBN: 978-1-84905-862-9	£15.99	<input type="text" value="1"/> <a href="#">Add to cart</a>

# Social skills development

- **Social skills development programmes:**
- **CHAPS:** [www.cheshireautism.org.uk](http://www.cheshireautism.org.uk) Run a 6 week course
- **Autism together,** 0151 334 7510 [www.autismtogether.co.uk](http://www.autismtogether.co.uk)  
Occasionally run courses
- **National autistic society:** [www.autism.org.uk/socialskills](http://www.autism.org.uk/socialskills)
- **Befriending services:** [www.autism.org.uk/befriending](http://www.autism.org.uk/befriending)
- Or <https://www.wirralmind.org.uk/services/befriending/>
- **NAS social eyes:**  
[www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/socialeyes.aspx](http://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/socialeyes.aspx)
- Carers trust 4 all adult social skills groups:  
[www.carerstrust4all.org.uk](http://www.carerstrust4all.org.uk)

# Social isolation

**Autistic people can experience social isolation. Here we will look at the possible reasons for this, and ways in which family, friends and carers can improve matters**

# Possible reasons for social isolation

- Autistic people may prefer to be on their own and enjoy their own company
- they may want to engage with others but lack the skills to do so
- they may find it difficult to maintain contacts due to a lack of social skills
- a bad experience in a social situation in the past
- need for support
- the person or their family, friends and/or carers may not know about suitable activities in their local area.



# Encouraging social interaction

- Some people may need time to themselves if they find it difficult to be around others for long periods of time. It is important to respect this. But it is also worth talking about the benefits of having a network of contacts, for when they want company or need support.
- If you feel that you are engaging in an activity for an unusually long time (eg playing computer games), you might draw up a timetable which includes other activities.

# Social groups and special interest groups

There are lots of different types of social groups around the country and people benefit in having a common interest, which makes it easier to start and maintain a conversation. It's a great way at improving your conversation skills!

[www.Meetup.com](http://www.Meetup.com)

Or other local interest groups.

# Overcoming restrictive routines

For many autistic people routines can provide reassurance and comfort, but can limit social interaction with other people.

In order to overcome restrictive routines, try to gradually introduce change by identifying one new place to go to every week, for example a local shop. Try to focus on places where it is possible to meet new people. Over time you may get to know the people you see there and not feel so anxious. If you need to take someone with you.

Recognise your achievements and build on these.

# Managing anxiety

If you have difficulties with social skills and anxiety, you may use some anxiety management techniques. These will be discussed in another session.



# Preparing to take part in a group or activity

- Find an activity that is of interest to you,
- Contact with the group leader, - find out the format and ask for information.
- You may need to become a member of some social groups to attend meetings, which might mean paying a fee.
- It's up to you whether you tell people about your condition. Giving them this information can help them support you, should you need it.

- Put the activity or group meeting on your calendar so you don't forget.
- Plan how you are going to get there.
- To make sure the activity is right for you, you may try going along as an observer at first.
- If you feel you may need additional support ask if a family member, friend or carer can come along or if the group could provide some extra support.

- At first don't feel pressured to attend for the whole of the session. As you feel more confident you can increase the length of time you stay, eventually aiming to attend the whole session without additional support.
- If you have any issues at the group, discuss these with the group leader so that they can be resolved as quickly as possible.

# Local support groups and activities:

- **Merseyside autistic adults: (Wirral – sessions occur out of wirral Mind)** email:merseysideautisticadults@gmail.com  
Their activities and events are on their facebook page.
- **CHAPS:** [www.cheshireautism.org.uk](http://www.cheshireautism.org.uk) run a variety of activities for adults and young people across Cheshire.
- **ASPIRE:** [aspirechester@gmail.com](mailto:aspirechester@gmail.com), based at the storyhouse, Chester
- **Autism together**, 0151 334 7510 [www.autismtogether.co.uk](http://www.autismtogether.co.uk)
- **Space 4 Autism**, macclesfield - 01625 617884
- [www.space4autism.com](http://www.space4autism.com)



- **NAS (National autistic society) local branches.** : [www.nas-cheshire.org.uk](http://www.nas-cheshire.org.uk) or <http://naswarringtonbranch.webeden.co.uk> or [www.nas-shropshire.org.uk](http://www.nas-shropshire.org.uk) or [www.autism.org.uk/inyourarea](http://www.autism.org.uk/inyourarea)
- **Shropshire Autism hub -** <http://shropshireautismhub.moonfruit.com/>
- **Geeks united** (Flintshire) [www.alexlowery.co.uk/autism-social-group](http://www.alexlowery.co.uk/autism-social-group) A technology based club for young people.
- **Autism inclusive** (Crewe) <http://www.autisminclusive.org.uk/groups/> run activities in Crewe.: <https://www.facebook.com/Autisminclusivenews>
- **Autism support hub Cheshire,** [autismlibrarynas@gmail.com](mailto:autismlibrarynas@gmail.com).
- **Meet up events (countrywide)** [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)

# Summary

*We hope that you have learnt some information about social skills and communication tools, and about ways of developing social skills and socialising*