

## Asperger syndrome: Guidelines for teaching and caring

1. **Respect the effort** these pupils have to put in to make sense of the world. Give them time, allow thought.
2. They have their own personality, with strengths weaknesses. **Allow it to blossom.**
3. **Talk to them** – singly and in a group. Know that they can respond to counselling, support and encouragement and attempts to understand just like any other child would.
4. **Criticise the behaviour**, not the child.
5. **Give pupils ownership** of rules and discipline. Children will be more responsible when given responsibility.
6. **Be patient.** Wait for them. Give time. Don't de-skill them through over direction. Allow failures. they are essential for progress.
7. **Be fair.** They are sensitive to injustice.
8. **Be sensibly tolerant of mistakes.** 'Compel them to succeed' as much as possible by setting targets in small steps.
9. **Respect their personal space** – invading it can cause stress and panic. The sense of what is comfortable can be disturbed in children with autism. A learning environment that is formal and structured suits them best.
10. **Recognise stress triggers.** Teach them coping strategies or remove triggers where possible.
11. **Restore self esteem.** It is vital to vulnerable and troubled children. It may not alter their ability, but it will help them cope with the destructive effects of failure and stress in their lives.
12. **Respect, goal setting, self appraisal and negotiated curriculum** are all fundamental in the education of the more able child.
13. **Listen to them.** Create a supportive atmosphere by talking and listening.
14. Remember they **don't learn naturally** in a group. It needs practise. It needs to be taught.
15. **Be enthusiastic.** Motivation is a problem, offer a motivating carrot, e.g. special interest time, free times, etc., when activity is completed.
16. **Help them to choose.** Choices are a problem area. **Don't nag, support.**
17. **Be creative.** Teach and encourage realistic leisure pursuits.
18. They interpret language literally so give clear instructions. **Simplify your own language.** Saying, "Can you draw another circle like this one?" will elicit the answer, "yes" rather than the picture you expect. Say, instead, "Please draw a circle".
19. **Use gesture, pointing, body language, etc.,** as you speak, to teach it 'in real situations'. Non-verbal communication is a problem area.
20. **Recognise anxiety.** Repetitive questioning can be a sign of an insecurity or need for reassurance – don't always suppress it. Find a way to address the underlying problem.
21. **Offer a routine** – let them have a shape to their day that they can follow. The more structured and predictable the more reassuring it will be.
22. **Teach right and wrong.** Don't wait for the development of a conscience.
23. **Talk about feelings and emotions.** Don't wait for the development of empathy. Make it an integral part of the language programme.

24. **Remember, dealing with others is stressful for them.** Don't expect them to deal with others continually. Look for non-social ways of varying the day, e.g. keyboard, TV.
25. **Be alert to bullying.** It comes second to child abuse as the act causing greatest distress in children. **Teach 'friend behaviour'.**
26. **Give predominantly factual material** to read/write rather than fiction. Build on strength areas. This does not mean fiction and creativity do not have a place – rather that strength areas equal success which equals confidence.
27. **Teach them to make decisions,** not just to follow rules.
28. **Take risks. Stand back.** Aid the transition from childhood to adult life. They do not learn from a peer group. Let them break minor rules, push out the boundaries, test their wings.
29. **Respect their different culture,** it is alien to ours. They derive their own meanings from events.
30. **Be sensitive.** They are not aware of their own need to 'talk' to reduce flare ups. They tend to assume that others should know what is on their minds without being told. They are not aware, etc. Conversely, they feel accountable for knowledge no one would expect them to have.
31. **Show them how to prioritise.** They do not discriminate the essential from the trivial. A timetable for practical everyday necessities may be helpful.
32. **Be consistent.** Plan and agree a strategy and work the plan.
33. **Work in harmony.** Parents, care workers, teaching staff and professionals must all work together in a 24 hour curriculum.