

EXCERPTS FROM:

TEN THINGS EVERY CHILD WITH AUTISM WISHES YOU KNEW

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**“I am first and foremost a child. I have autism. I am not primarily “autistic.”**

My autism is only one aspect of my total character. It does not define me as a person.”

**“My sensory perceptions are disordered.**

This means that the ordinary sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches of every day that you may not even notice can be downright painful for me. The very environment in which I have to live often seems hostile. I may appear withdrawn or belligerent to you, but I am really just trying to defend myself.”

**“Please remember to distinguish between won’t (I choose not to) and can’t (I am not able to).**

It isn’t that I don’t listen to instructions. It’s that I can’t understand you.”

**“I am a concrete thinker. This means I interpret language very literally.**

It’s very confusing for me when you say, “Hold your horses, cowboy!” when what you really mean is, “Please stop running.”

**“Please be patient with my limited vocabulary.**

It’s hard for me to tell you what I need when I don’t know the words to describe my feelings. I may be hungry, frustrated, frightened or confused but right now those words are beyond my ability to express.”

**“Because language is so difficult for me, I am very visually oriented.**

Please show me how to do something rather than just telling me. And please be prepared to show me many times. Lots of consistent repetition helps me learn.”

**“Please focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can’t do.**

Like any other human, I can’t learn in an environment where I’m constantly made to feel that I’m not good enough and that I need “fixing”. Look for my strengths and you will find them.”

**“Help me with social interactions.**

It may look like I don’t want to play with the other kids on the playground, but sometimes it’s just that I simply do not know how to start a conversation or enter a play situation.”

**“Try to identify what triggers my meltdowns.**

Meltdowns, blow-ups, tantrums or whatever you want to call them are even more horrid for me than they are for you. They occur because one or more of my senses has gone into overload.”

**“If you are a family member, please love me unconditionally.**

Banish thoughts like, “If he would just --,” and “Why can’t she --.” You did not fulfill every last expectation your parents had for you and you wouldn’t like being constantly reminded of it. **I did not choose to have autism. But remember that it is happening to me, not you.**”

**“And finally, three words: Patience, Patience,Patience.**

Work to view my autism as a different ability rather than a disability. Look past what you may see as limitations and see the gifts autism has given me.”