



THE CENTER FOR AUTISM & NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Understanding Autism: in the Boy Scout World!
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You have got to keep autistic children engaged with the world. You cannot let them tune out."

**TEMPLE GRANDIN,
PROMINENT AUTISTIC
AUTHOR AND SPEAKER**

April is Autism Awareness Month

Approximately 1 in 68 children diagnosed annually

4:1 boy are diagnosed

Approximately 1 in 50 in Orange County

Understanding Autism

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, sensory processing difficulties and engagement in repetitive behaviors.

Understanding Autism

Children with autism have many strengths!
Strengths may include but are not limited to:

- A strong sense of justice and rules
- Strong memory
- Curiosity and interest in learning
- Attention to detail
- Loyal and honest

Understanding Autism

Children with autism have many challenges!

Challenges may include but are not limited to:

- Awkward social interactions with peers
- Rigid thinking
- Difficulty communicating to others
- Difficulties communicating empathy
- Challenges with sensory input, including tolerating noise, tolerating clothing/uniform

Autism & Boy Scouts

- According to an article written by Temple Grandin, a university professor with autism, youths with autism need mentors to help them learn social skills. They need a chance to explore different areas of interest. These areas of interest may lead them to a career.
- Scouting offers such mentoring experiences. Many Scouts have explored interests which have later turned into careers or lifelong hobbies. Scouting can provide the mentorship needed for youth with autism to grow into successful adults.

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This manual is a MUST for all leaders

<http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/34059.pdf>

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The manual provides many tools, including Adaptive Approaches:

Materials Adaptation

Example: A Cub Scout has limited hand strength and is trying to carve.

Solution: Substitute a bar of soap or balsa wood.
(Use a plastic knife for safety.)

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- **Architectural Adaptation**

Example: A Scout using a wheelchair is unable to go hiking because the trail is inaccessible.

Solution: Substitute “field trip” for “hike” or select alternative route.

- **Leisure Companion Adaptation**

Example: A Cub Scout cannot stay on task and runs around.

Solution: An adult or youth can become a buddy for the Cub Scout.

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- **Cooperative Group Adaptation**

Example: A Cub Scout has difficulty remembering the steps in a project.

Solution: List the steps on a paper and work in cooperative groups to ensure completion for everyone.

- **Behavioral Adaptation**

Example: A Scout is unable to participate because of low concentration levels.

Solution: Identify the Scout's interests, provide a variety of activities, and if needed, talk with his parents or guardians about a behavioral plan. Plan activities of short duration.

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Many extracurricular options for children and teens include team sports and are not well suited for children with autism due to the social & communication demands as well as the coordination skills needed

Scouting offers a great deal to the child with autism!

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- Many children with Autism & other Neurodevelopmental Disabilities do not have a friend or a social network
- Scouting can help create a safe, fun, friendly community for children and teens with autism.
- The nature of the Scouting mission and philosophy is a natural opportunity for children!

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What leaders can do:

Meet with the parent and listen

Parents should be closely involved and guide you

Understand each child's:

- Strengths and interests> focus on this and use this information
- Challenges for the child and strategies that have worked

Consider and Individualized Scouting
Achievement Plan

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Peer understanding:

The most effective support often comes from the other members of the troop

While maintaining confidentiality, work with the other students in the troop to understand the child's strengths and challenges to improve understanding, acceptance and support

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Autism challenge:

- Struggles with attention
- Struggles with tasks/activities
- Struggles with communicating with peers
- Struggles with noise/sensory input

Tip to help:

- Visual schedule of activity & clocks/timers
- Break into smaller steps
- Partner with a peer
- Consider motivating rewards for completion- check with parents
- Arrange for simple, yes/no answers
- Prep peers to ask questions child could answer
- Provide a quieter break room if needed

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- Relax! Most leadership skills used with all boys will also work well for Scouts with autism
- Provide consistent, predictable structure. Be patient. Allow extra time for activities
- Have written rules for meetings, campouts, and outings. Scouts with autism love agendas
- Focus on games that develop social skills (good for all Scouts)
- Stress kindness and respect for diversity on the part of all Scouts
- Use politically correct language and encourage others to do the same (“Scout with autism, not “autistic Scout”)
- Respect and encourage the use of any type of communication that the Scout uses

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- Establish clear and consistent routines
- Scouts often function best in structured environments
- Let Scouts know what to expect and what is expected of them
- Reward efforts as well as work done well
- Positive feedback ~give immediate feedback so that Scouts can connect praise with specific actions
- Praise, praise, praise!
- Keep a sense of humor and maintain a positive outlook
- Be consistent
- Give adequate notice before starting or stopping activities
- Involve Scouts in the design and implementation of plans of action

Autism & Scouting

Check out this Boy Scouts & Autism Blog page:

- <http://scoutingnewsroom.org/blog/4-examples-scouts-autism-thriving/>

Thank you!

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/news/news-item/boy-scout-autism-donating-dozens-turkeys-quotgobble-hungerquot>





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