

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR INTERACTING WITH KIDS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

1. Thou shall not yell when speaking to me.

My Autism does not impair my hearing and I am extremely bright. Perhaps even brighter than you are.

2. Thou shall not ignore me, talk negatively about me, speak unnaturally slow, or ask questions to others in the room that pertain to me.

I can comprehend what you are saying just fine.

3. Thou shall believe in me and help me believe in my skills and self worth.

Note the good in me and do not merely point out my negative behaviors. Believe in me and I will believe in myself.

4. Thou shall not perceive me as dumb.

I am extremely intelligent. I do not learn in the same way as you, and maybe not as quickly as you expect me to. Have patience with me. Once I recall information, I never forget.

5. Thou shall not judge my behavior.

I can get overstimulated in certain environments. I may be hypersensitive to sound and loud noises may hurt my ears. Fluorescent lights are distracting for me. They have a humming noise, and can pulsate. All the noises in a room can blur together. Please make accommodations to help me.

6. Thou shall not be so quick to scold me.

Do not tell me that "I know what I did". I do not. Tell me what my infraction was in a simple, concise manner. I want to please you, but I have difficulties inferring meaning within a vague statement. For instance, do not say please clean up your bedroom. Tell me exactly what you want, such as "Please make your bed and pick up your toys".

7. Thou shall not compare me to others.

Please remind me, and note the talents that I possess. This increases my confidence and positive self worth. Learning disabled or not, we ALL have talents to contribute within society. I need you to help me realize what mine is. Believe in me and I will believe in myself.

8. Thou shall not exclude me from activities.

Please do not mimic me, ignore me, or bully me. Please invite me to play with you. It hurts my feelings when I am excluded. I like to run and jump in the playground, and be invited to birthday parties too. Grown ups can help me make friends by encouraging other children to play with me. I can be a loyal friend if you get to know me.

9. Thou shall give me choices.

I do not like being ordered about any more than the other children. Give me choices so I know you value my capabilities and opinions. Make them simple and concise. Present two options or so. I get confused when too many questions or directions are given at one time due to my processing speed. For instance, ask me if I would like to wear my blue sweater or green one, rather than asking which sweater I would like to wear.

10. Thou shall not judge me by my diagnosis, but by my character.

I am an individual, just like other children.