

Support Strategies for Specific Learning Differences

11 Support strategies for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Please find these strategies that may assist a child, teen or adult with ADHD. It is important to stress that a **formal identification** of a specific learning difference **is not a prerequisite** for putting these support strategies in place. It is also important to note that many of the strategies below will make learning more accessible to all individuals, whether they have an SpLD or not.

In these tips sheets, you will notice that a number of strategies are recommended for more than one SpLD. This is intentional and aims to highlight the overlapping nature of SpLD's and their associated challenges. For example, a strategy listed for ADHD may work equally as well for a student with dyspraxia.

Remember, there are no hard and fast rules. Be prepared to experiment, to talk through different ideas and strategies with your child, teen or adult, and to discover what works for them.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- 1. Use visual timetables** to show what is coming up next and throughout the day – it could be a 'now and next board', a daily timetable, or a calendar to visually show the structure of the day.
- 2. Present instructions visually / in writing** – depending on abilities; provide visual or written instructions as a back-up to verbal instruction for them to review and look back to if needed.
- 3. Allow processing time (thinking time)** – a processing delay is very common in ASD; give them time to process what you have said before repeating / asking other questions. You can check understanding by asking them to repeat back instructions using different words.
- 4. Provide a sensory / quiet space** – try to find out the sensory differences they may have and adapt their environment accordingly. Provide a safe quiet area for them to use if they begin to feel anxious; make sure they know they can visit this space at any time.
- 5. Understand how they prefer to communicate and use that method.** Establish a non-verbal method of communicating at times of increased anxiety when they may not be able to communicate in their usual method – e.g. a card that they can show you if they need to access a quiet space / time.

6. Communicate with the school daily to let each other know of any events that may have occurred during the day / night. With ASD, it can be a culmination of events that may cause a challenging behaviour and it is beneficial for professionals to understand the child's recent activities and modify demands accordingly. It can also be useful to record activities in order to notice any patterns in behaviour to understand causes.

7. Use time management aids (e.g. egg timer, mobile phone timer)

8. Use literal language – avoid sarcasm / idioms. Be careful with language used and try to keep instructions simple and straightforward.

9. Support the generalisation of skills from one environment to another and use everyday activities to embed learning (e.g. shopping trips to practise life skills).

10. Prepare for transitions – structure and routine are very important for a child or young person with autism. To help manage anxiety and stress; try to introduce any changes to routine and structure with advance warning to help them prepare for a transition. When visiting new places, support the transition by using pictures, photos, Google maps, pre-visits or journey familiarisation.

11. Utilise special interests – many people with ASD will have a special interest. If possible, utilise this interest in a subject and incorporate it into learning to increase levels of interest and motivation.

