

# ALL ABOUT AUTISM LESSON PLAN



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Autism Month Sponsor



**Family &  
Community Services**  
Ageing, Disability & Home Care



**autism  
spectrum**  
AUSTRALIA

## Welcome

April is Autism Month. Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) has put together some ideas about how you can raise awareness by teaching your class about autism. Aspect is the largest not-for-profit provider of autism services in the country. We work with more than 9000 people with autism and their families every year through diagnosis, early intervention, eight autism specific schools, education outreach into mainstream school, training for parents and professionals, social club programs, behaviour support and programs for adults.

We rely on the support of the community to provide all these services. If you would like to find out how you can help or get information on accessing services please call 1800 AUTISM (288 476).

This initiative has been made possible through the support of our Autism Month Sponsor - Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Department of Family and Community Services.

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## Understanding Autism Lesson Plans

### *Learning Objectives:*

Students will develop an understanding around the following topics:

- Autism definitions: what it is, incidence
- Everyone has strengths and needs
- Everyone learns differently
- Kids with autism are learning how to be good friends
- Kids with autism are learning how to talk to others
- Kids with autism might use their senses differently
- There are some ways to help a classmate with autism

*This is our first year offering lesson plans and we would appreciate your feedback and suggestions. Please email [ecameron@autismspectrum.org.au](mailto:ecameron@autismspectrum.org.au)*

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## Syllabus outcomes

These lesson plans are designed to cover a range of outcomes within the K-6 PDHPE syllabus.

### Stage 2 (yrs 3 and 4)

- COS2.1 - uses a variety of ways to communicate with & within groups
- INS2.3 - makes positive contributions in group activities
- IRS2.11 - describes how relationships with a range of people enhance wellbeing
- PHS2.12 - discusses the factors influencing personal health choices

### Stage 3 (yrs 5 and 6)

- COS3.3 - communicates confidently in a variety of situations
- INS3.3 - acts in ways that enhance the contribution of self and others in a range of cooperative situations
- IRS3.11 - describes roles & responsibilities in developing & maintaining positive relationships
- PHS3.12 - explains the consequences of personal lifestyle choices

The following lessons also support PDHPE values and attitudes.

### Outcomes

- V2: a student respects the right of others to hold different values and attitudes from their own
- V3: enjoys a sense of belonging.
- V4: increasingly accepts responsibility for personal and community health.

## Autism Specific Learning:

*Give some details about autism.*

- What is autism? Autism is something that some kids have. It means their brains are different to our brains.
- Everybody has some things that they are good at and that are easy for them and some things that are harder. That's the same for people with autism. People with autism usually have a harder time with things like talking to others, being a good friend, and using their senses the way we do.
- Although no one knows what causes autism, it is something you get before you are born or when you are very little. It is a lifelong disability that affects kids and adults.
- Autism is not an illness and you cannot catch it.
- Talk about how many people have autism. Try to put it in a context that they can understand. 1 in 100 people have autism. (So in a school of 350 there might be about 3 kids who have autism.)

# Understanding Autism Activities

## *Sensory Understanding Activity:*

### *Materials:*

Paper with thick, straight line down centre, one for each student; scissors for each student; papers with thin curved or jagged lines all over the page, one for each student; two or three of each item: gloves, sunglasses, loud music, rubber bands, tape

### *Procedure:*

- Give each student a piece of paper with a thick straight line and a pair of scissors. Ask them to try to cut on the line as exactly as possible. Give them a few minutes to do so. Ask them to show how they did.
- Then give each student one of the pages with crazy, difficult lines. Before they start to cut, ask them to try it in a more difficult way. Have half the class switch the scissors into their non-dominant hand. Give several students gloves to wear while cutting. Have some students wear dark sunglasses while cutting. Attach rubber bands to several pairs of scissors to make it more difficult to cut. Have several students cut while the paper is taped to their desk. Play loud music or noise near several students. Flash the lights on and off while they are cutting. Finally, give them only 30 seconds to complete their best cut. Discuss how this was more difficult than the first round.
- Explain that for some students with autism, all school tasks can be difficult if they require coordinating so many difficult things.

## *Art Projects*

Have the students do an art project that symbolises similarities and differences. Some ideas:

- Students trace their handprints on construction paper and decorate
- Students create cardboard images of themselves
- Students create a collage about ways they are similar to and different from classmates
- Using an overhead projector against a wall to cast a shadow, get students to draw the side silhouettes of their classmates on paper. Teacher cuts out silhouette and sticks it to black card. Students then have to write 3 things about the person they sketched (e.g. Jack has a great laugh, is good at sport, is a good at helping others). Comments are to be written up and mounted under silhouette. When displayed looks very effective. Teacher to hold a discussion about valuing individual differences.

### **Books to Read Aloud about Autism**

- “I Have Autism” by Pat Crissy
- “The Red Beast” by K.I. Al-Ghani
- “All Cats Have Asperger’s” by Kathy Hoopman
- “Ian’s Walk” by Laurie Lears
- “Asperger’s Huh?” by Rosina Schnurr
- “Taking Autism to School” by Andreanna Edwards
- “Autism Through a Sister’s Eyes” by Eve B. Band & Emily Hecht
- “Andy and his Yellow Frisbee” by Mary Thompson
- “To Be Me” by Rebecca Etlinger
- “Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes you Knew” by Ellen Notbohm

### **Online Videos for Teachers to increase their own understanding**

- There are a variety of online videos about Autism. Many of these can be accessed through websites such as [www.autismtraining.com](http://www.autismtraining.com). **This is also an invaluable site for teachers to access before teaching the Autism Awareness Lesson Plans**
- YouTube also has interesting videos about Autism that may be appropriate for a variety of age groups.  
Some examples:
  - <http://youtu.be/tf02fsWHubk>
  - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mQDF6R\\_cHk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mQDF6R_cHk)
  - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xwq3LtPWm5k>

### **Websites**

- The Positive Partnerships website [www.autismtraining.com.au](http://www.autismtraining.com.au) provides teachers and schools with a great deal of information about working with students with an ASD and also has an online learning platform with a range of learning modules for teachers and school staff and also for Parents and Carers of children with an ASD.
- On the Positive Partnerships website there are a number of FREE online learning modules covering a range of topics, one of which is **An Introduction to Autism**. This introductory eLearning module is designed to provide teachers, other school staff and parents/carers with an introduction to the characteristics and education of children and youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). Users can download a certificate of completion after working through this online course.

### **Films**

There are a couple of movies available that may increase your own awareness of autism but may not be suitable to show in the classroom.

- The Horse Boy (also a book)
- The Black Balloon
- Adam
- The Temple Grandin Movie
- Between Night and Day

## Go Blue in the Classroom

You could join us at Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) and “Go Blue” during Autism Month. You can theme activities around the color blue and help increase awareness of autism spectrum disorders. Here are some examples for younger students:

- Wear blue to school
- Blueberries – graph who likes them and who does not. Let the students eat the blueberries when they have finished *(math’s)*
- Blue letters cut out on blue card, laminated if you like. Include the letters that you will be learning that week, punch some holes in the letters and buy blue wool for the kids to do threading. *(Fine motor, literacy)*
- Blue balloons. In the morning allow students to put their hands in blue paint and press them on the balloons. Tie a blue ribbon to the end of the balloon. Allow children to run around with the blue balloons in the playground. *(Sensory, art and fun)*
- Create blue placemats, cut out anything they find blue in magazines, stick them on A4 paper, names on back then laminate them. They can use them for putting play dough on them or take them home for a placemat for dinner. *(Fine motor with cutting, sticking, also artwork)*
- Fill empty coke or lemonade bottles, with water. Add a drop of blue food coloring. Set up the bottles like you would see at 10 pin bowling, place numbers on the bottles if you like. Roll and knock them over with a ball. *(Fun, turn taking and social, gross motor)*
- Blue shaving cream; add blue paint to the shaving cream. *(Sensory & fun)*
- Blue noodle necklaces, color the noodles with food dye, dry and use for threading. *(Fine motor and something to take home)*  
You could number the noodles with a marker pen and see if students can put them in order on the blue wool/blue string. *(Math’s, fine motor)*



# Understanding Autism Lesson Plan 1

## *Different Types of Learners*

### *Objective:*

Students will identify their learning styles.

Students will learn that all children learn differently

### *Materials:*

- Appendix 1.
- Older students can complete an online test to determine their own learning style <http://www.ldpride.net/learning-style-test.html>

### *Activity:*

- Use your own experience as an example. Share with the students your strengths and weaknesses. (Example: I am really good at reading, but terrible at basketball, even if I try really hard)
- Ask the students for their own examples. What are they good at? What are they still working on?
- Talk about how everyone's brains are different. Some people's brains work really well when it comes to maths but not so well when it comes to spelling. Use yourself as an example. (Example: My brain works really well when it comes to reading but my brain does not work so well when it comes to basketball). Use the students' examples as well. You can ask older students to circle sentences that are true to them and calculate how many similarities and differences there are. (Appendix 1) Highlight that not everyone is the same and people are unique. You may want to put students in small groups for this activity. You may be able to illustrate this to younger students through playing a game of Simon Says. For example put you hands on your head if you have brown hair, put your hands on your head if you like painting.
- Introduce autism as a neurological disorder by talking about brains. (Example: I have a lot of friends who have something called autism. That means that just like you, some parts of their brains work better than other parts. Some of my friends with autism can do high school maths but can't tie their shoes, because the maths part of their brain works really well but other parts of their brain does not.)
- For very young students, a graph on the board or on a flip chart can list various aspects of physical appearance and personal preferences, such as the colour of hair, eye, clothes, height, and favourite game, hobby, sport or book. The classroom teacher asks for students who have one specific aspect to raise their hands, for instance, all children with brown eyes. Then, those children are told to form a group on the rug or at a table.

Other eye colours are called out with the same instructions. At the end, all students will be in a group. The teacher can then explain that eye colour makes the children in each group the same, but they are different because there are other things that they do not share. The eye colour groups are sent back to their chairs or circle. The teacher forms new groups for a different aspect, such as everyone who likes jump rope in one group, everyone who likes playing ball in another group. The children are asked if everyone from their first group is in the new group. The answer should be no, thus demonstrating for the students how they can be both the same and different. In the event that the answer is yes, (it does happen from time to time) the teacher can find something that would show how the students are different, for instance some are short and some are tall or some have long sleeve shirts and some have short, thereby demonstrating the differences.

#### For older student you could go on to discuss

- Autism gives people a very unique perspective on many different things; this different perspective makes them valuable members of our community and to society at large.
- Many people on the autistic spectrum participate in artistic ventures such as film, television, music, and writing. Individuals on the Autism Spectrum

#### Asperger's Syndrome

- Craig Nicholls, front man of the band The Vines
- Phillipa "Pip" Brown (aka Ladyhawke), indie rock musician
- Clay Marzo, accomplished professional surfer and aquatic athlete
- Julian Assange, computer hacker and founder of WikiLeaks
- Satoshi Tajiri, creator and designer of Pokemon

#### High Functioning Autism

- Stephen Wiltshire, British architectural artist
- Temple Grandin, a designer of humane food animal handling systems

Albert Einstein (1879–1955), Nikola Tesla (1856-1943) and Isaac Newton (1643–1727) all died before Asperger Syndrome was known and professionals in the field believe their personalities are consistent with those of people with Asperger Syndrome.

## Understanding Autism Lesson Plan 2

### Verbal Skills

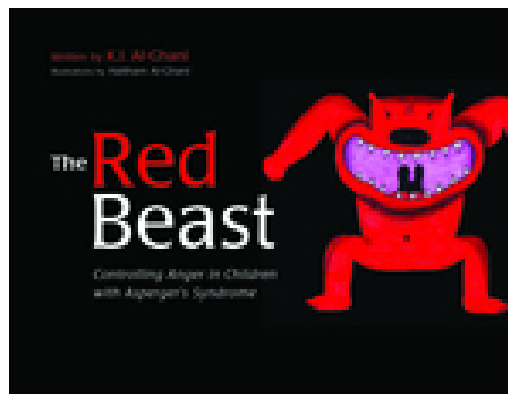
#### Objective:

Students will develop an understanding of the difficulties people have with autism may feel when communicating.

**Materials:** The Red Beast by Kay and Haitham Al-Ghani

#### Activity:

- Ask the students how old they were when they learned to talk. Explain that most kids learn to talk when they are around 1 or 2 years old.
- Explain that some kids with autism learn to talk when they are 1 or 2 just like them, but some don't learn until they are much older, and some adults with autism are still learning how to talk.
- Ask the students how they would feel if they couldn't talk. What kinds of problems might that cause? What would they do instead?
- Explain that some kids with autism are very good at talking, but when they get upset they might forget some words or use the wrong words or put words in the wrong order. How might these cause problems?
- Read the book "The Red Beast" and discuss how the boy found it difficult to express himself and began to get very angry.



## Understanding Autism Lesson Plan 3

### *Friendship Skills*

#### *Objectives:*

Students will learn to treat their peers as equals

Students will learn that people can think differently

#### *Materials:*

- Appendix Two Sally Anne test.
  - Sally Anne Test Video:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mQDF6R\\_cHk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mQDF6R_cHk)
- Video from people with autism describing difficulties they face at school:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mQDF6R\\_cHk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mQDF6R_cHk)

#### *Activity:*

- Remind the students that for everyone, some things are easy and some things are hard.
- Ask the student how many of them think they are good friends. Ask how many think that recess is easy and playing is fun.
- Explain that some kids with autism think these things are hard. The friendship/social skills parts of their brains do not work as well as theirs. Describe how conversation skills and play skills might be different in a child who has autism. Talk about Mind Blindness (not able to put yourself in someone else's shoes and understand how they feel – or what they might want, or be interested in or what someone else might want to do or play. They might also not be able to read people's non- verbal cues – like facial expressions or body language so they would not be able to know when you don't like something or not want to do something.). Refer to [Appendix Two](#).
- Ask the students, "If someone is having a hard time being a friend, what can you do?"



## Understanding Autism Lesson Plan 4

### *Sensory Needs*

#### *Objectives:*

Students will identify the five senses.

Students will learn that people's senses are unique.

#### *Materials:*

- Appendix 3
- Video: [http://youtu.be/7\\_VRVq5o16M](http://youtu.be/7_VRVq5o16M)

#### *Activity:*

- Remind the students that some sections of your brain work better than others. Ask the student if they remember what their senses are. List the five senses. Tell the students that their brains control their senses. For example, your nose sends smells to your brain. Use yourself as an example of how some senses are stronger or weaker than others. (For example, I wear glasses because the section of my brain that controls signals from my eyes does not work well. But my hearing is really good because that part of my brain does work well)
- Explain that for some people with autism, certain senses work very well (sometimes even too well) and other senses are not very good at all. For example, some kids with autism might be able to hear every teacher in the building, or a fire alarm that is very far away that no one else can hear. Loud noises (or even regular noises) might hurt their ears.
- Ask students to think about their senses and what things they can and cannot tolerate. For example does anyone have difficulty listening to a conversation when his or her favourite TV show/song on the radio is on? Who has an acute sense of smell and can differentiate between huge ranges of different smells? Is anyone scared of heights? Who is ticklish? Who likes to eat hot spicy food? Who hates to jump in the pool on a cold morning?

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Similarities and differences

Please circle the sentences that are true for you. You can add more sentences in the blank spaces.

- *I am good at cricket*
- *I have a sister*
- *I have a brother*
- *I am a good drawer*
- *I like to cook*
- *I am good at maths*
- *I am a good dancer*
- *I like to read*
- *I am a good runner*
- *I like to play a musical instrument*
- \_\_\_\_\_
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Appendix 2

Theory of Mind

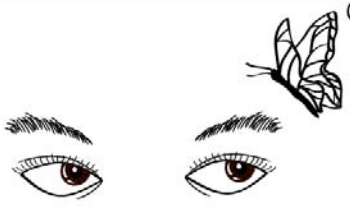
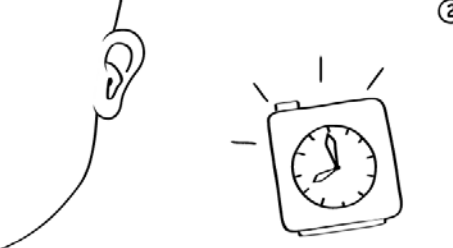





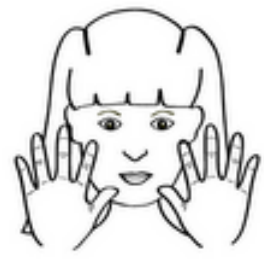
A test used to test children's Theory of Mind (ToM):



Someone who has a full grasp of ToM will know that Sally will look where she last left the ball. She does not know that the ball has been moved. A person with poor ToM skills will believe that Sally will look for the ball in the box, because they do not fully grasp that Sally will not know what Ann has done. People with autism are thought to have poor Theory of Mind (ToM).

Appendix 3

Senses

<p>①</p>  <p><b>I can see with my eyes. A butterfly looks beautiful.</b></p>	<p>②</p>  <p><b>I can hear with my ears. An alarm clock sounds noisy.</b></p>
<p>③</p>  <p><b>I can smell with my nose. A pie smells good.</b></p>	<p>④</p>  <p><b>I can taste with my tongue. Ice cream tastes sweet.</b></p>
<p>⑤</p>  <p><b>I can touch with my hands. A cat feels soft and warm.</b></p>	<p>⑥</p>  <p><b>I can see.</b> <b>I can hear.</b></p>
<p>⑦</p>  <p><b>I can smell.</b>      <b>I can taste.</b> <b>I can touch.</b></p>	<p>⑧</p>  <p><b>I am very special!</b></p>