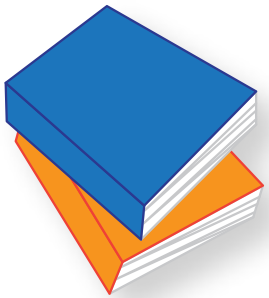
What's up with Nick?



"When school started, we had a new kid named Nick. He seemed a little different. My friends and I wondered, 'What's up with Nick?' Turns out, Nick has autism."

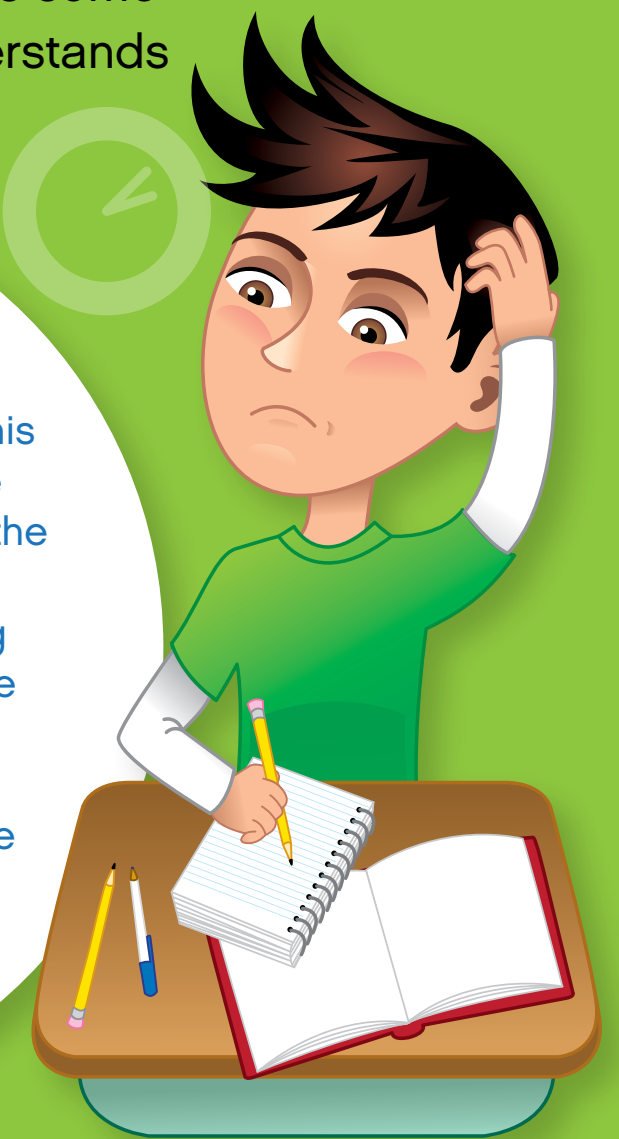


“This year, a boy with autism joined my class. Sometimes he makes loud noises and gets out of his seat. There is a lady in our classroom all the time that isn’t our teacher. She follows Nick around and takes him out of class when he distracts us. The first week, all the kids were confused—we didn’t know why he got to take breaks from class when we had to ask for a pass to leave the room. And why did he get to spend all this special time with one teacher?”



“After a while we learned that Nick has autism. It is called a ‘developmental disorder’ because it happens inside the body, in his brain. It does not mean he is sick with something like the flu—you can’t catch autism. Nick has had autism since he was little, so he understands some things in a different way, but he understands a lot of the same things too.”

“After learning about it, instead of being jealous or confused about his extra attention, we learned that he just needs a little more help than the rest of us so he understands what we are learning. The lady following him around is his aide. She is there to help him stay in the classroom, not spoil or baby him. When he leaves, he takes a break so that he doesn’t get too overwhelmed.”



Meeting a Kid with Autism

“While learning about Nick’s autism, we found out that everyone with autism is different. It is called a spectrum because no kid with autism is the same as another. Another kid with autism probably won’t act the same way Nick does. They probably won't look you in the eyes even when they are talking to you, but it doesn't mean they are ignoring you when you are talking to them. They are still listening even though they are looking somewhere else.

There are also kids with autism that don’t talk much and will use different ways to tell you what they want to say. Kids with autism might flap their arms or rock back and forth. You may not be used to this since other kids in your class don’t do it, but that is just what makes them comfortable.”



“Some kids with autism will talk a lot and it is polite to listen to them. They might tell you an activity they are really interested in that you can do together. But, if your friend with autism does not talk very much, you can suggest what you would like to do in a way that they can easily understand. This way, they can hang out with you without being confused about what you are going to do together.”

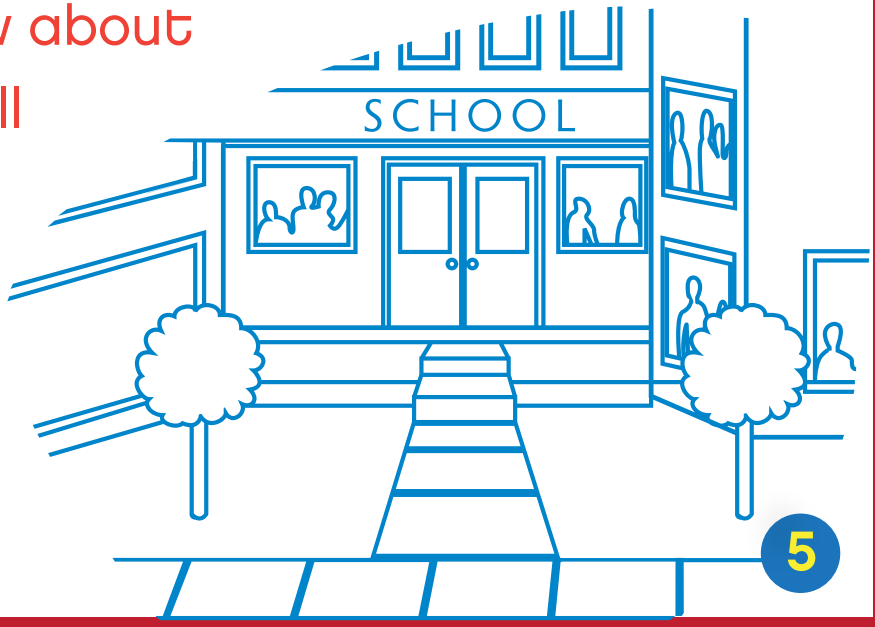
“Kids with autism might only want to play with one toy or talk to you about only one thing that they like. Sometimes they like to do this because these are the things that make them happy, but it is ok to suggest things you want to do sometimes too! Your friends with autism might like to dance to music or make art projects. This is something fun that you can do together, even though they may draw or dance in a different way than you do.”

“Your friends with autism might seem like they don’t want to play with you sometimes. Remember that they still want to be your friend but they might be having a hard time and are doing the best they can. You can ask your teacher or another adult for an idea that can work for both of you!”



Autism sounded like a big deal when we first heard about it, but there is nothing scary about autism. Nick is just a kid and part of the class just like everyone else. Sometimes we forget he has autism! Now that we know what's up with Nick, autism is no big deal.

Thanks for reading about Nick and autism. Now that you know about autism, you can tell people what's up if you know a kid with autism in your school!



The 5 Senses and Autism:

"We learned that Nick gets upset sometimes because his senses work differently than ours. But we found ways to make it easier for him to stay in class with us…

- ✓ Hearing- When lots of kids are yelling or playing at once, it overwhelms Nick. So does the sound of the chalk on the board, or when we slam our desks shut. We all try to remember to be gentle with our desks, and our teacher has started using a board with markers instead of chalk.
- ✓ Seeing- The lights in our classroom are really bright and bother Nick's eyes. When it is bright outside we turn off all the lights, or maybe just keep a couple of them on.
- ✓ Smelling- When we paint or do something else that smells weird, it is hard for Nick to concentrate on anything but the paint smell. When we play with something that smells, we open the windows, or do another craft that doesn't smell weird to everyone.
- ✓ Touching- When the class gets crazy and everyone is running around, sometimes people bump into each other. We have to be careful not to bump into Nick, but we are all supposed to keep our inside playing calm so it is important for all of us to remember that we can't be crazy inside the school.
- ✓ Tasting- When we take turns bringing in a snack, sometimes Nick doesn't like the food. We have a list of foods he likes to eat, and sometimes he brings the food from home that he likes the best.
- ✓ Our teacher explained that we all have different things that bother us, but because of Nick's autism, he just has a few more. But we can adjust to him while he works to adjust to us!"

Things to Remember about Autism

"Autism is a spectrum. Every kid with autism is different!"

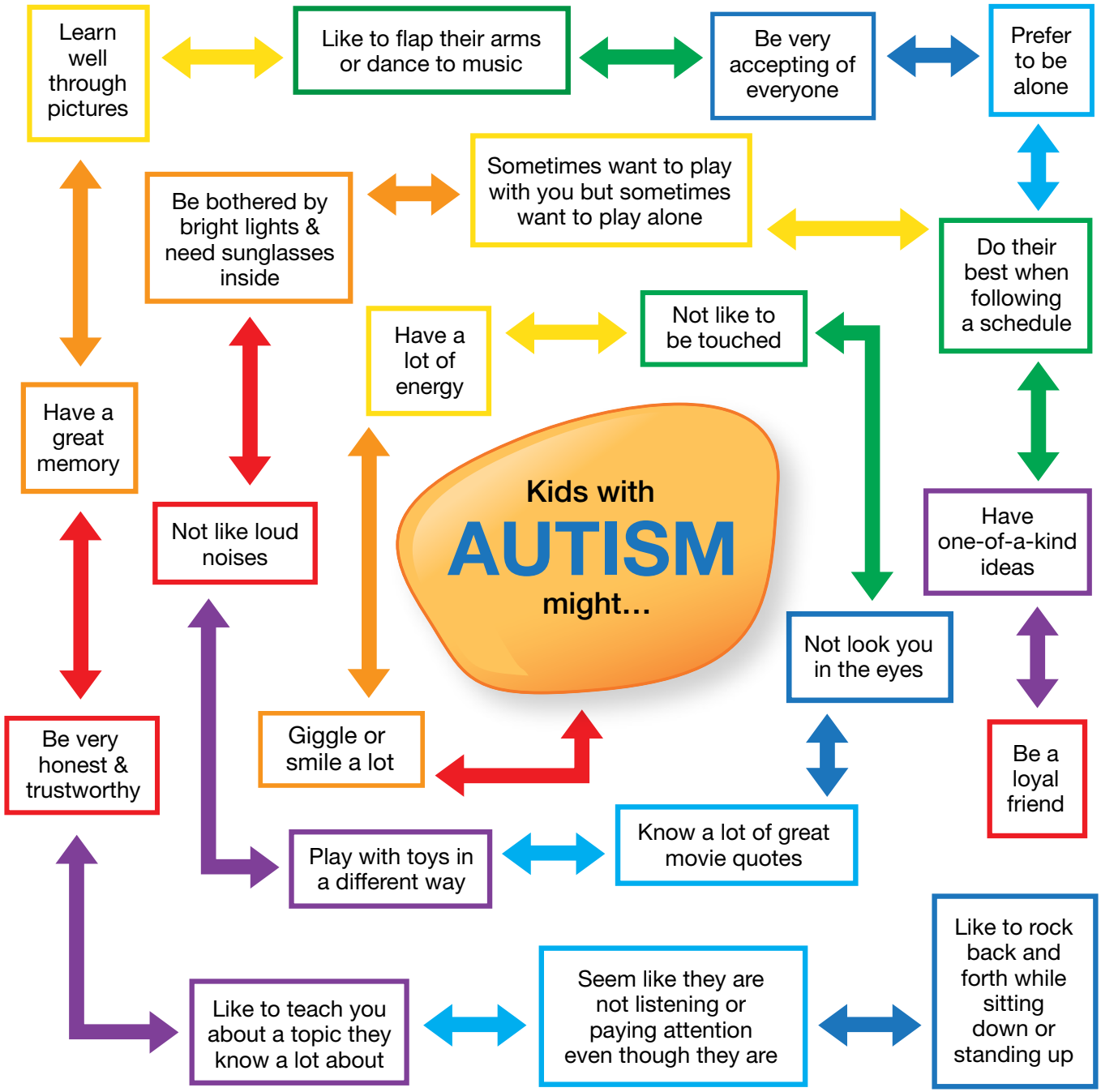
"It may seem like your classmates with autism are getting more special attention in class which can seem unfair. Remember that they might need a little bit more help than you to do well. It would be extra nice for you to help them sometimes too, if your teacher says it's ok!"

"Your friends with autism might really want to play some days but not others. Don't let this stop you from being their friend- they might just be having a hard day."

"Just because kids with autism are not looking in your eyes or at your face does not mean they aren't listening or paying attention."

"Accepting the differences of kids with autism is the first step to becoming friends and having fun!"




Kids with
AUTISM
might...
Learn well through pictures
Like to flap their arms or dance to music
Be very accepting of everyone
Prefer to be alone
Be bothered by bright lights & need sunglasses inside
Sometimes want to play with you but sometimes want to play alone
Do their best when following a schedule
Have a great memory
Have a lot of energy
Not like to be touched
Not like loud noises
Have one-of-a-kind ideas
Not look you in the eyes
Be very honest & trustworthy
Giggle or smile a lot
Be a loyal friend
Play with toys in a different way
Know a lot of great movie quotes
Like to teach you about a topic they know a lot about
Seem like they are not listening or paying attention even though they are
Like to rock back and forth while sitting down or standing up



Organization for Autism Research

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