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## AUTISM AWARENESS ACTIVITY

**Objective:** How do you think it feels to have autism?



This can be a family activity! It requires at least 5 people, however, one person might be able to do two parts. One person in each group will play the part of someone with autism. The other 4 people will each have different jobs. Have everyone take turns being Person 1 before you discuss it.

**Person 1:** You will play the part of someone with autism. Your job is to try and listen to what Person 5 is trying to talk to you about and answer their questions. Try to ignore everyone and everything else.

**Person 2:** Stand behind Person 1 and rub the edge of an index card (or piece of cardboard) against the back of their neck. You do not need to rub hard, but keep doing it over and over.

**Person 3:** Grab a book (any book will do), lean close to Person 1 and read in a loud voice the entire time.

**Person 4:** Pat Person 1 on the head and shoulder the entire time.

**Person 5:** Using a normal voice, tell Person 1 about your day. Try and ask them about their day and DO NOT try to drown out the other noises.

# 1



Outline the roles of each person in your group. If you do not have exactly 5 people, that's fine! One person can do two parts.

# 2



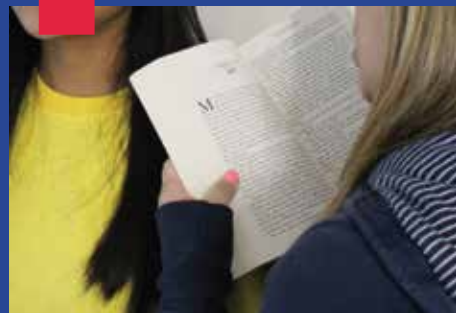
In a normal voice, Person 5 will begin telling Person 1 about their day. Person 1 will listen to what Person 5 is trying to say and answer their questions.

# 3



As Person 1 is listening to Person 5 talk about their day and answer their questions, Person 2 will stand behind Person 1 and rub the edge of an index card (or piece of cardboard) against the back of their neck. You do not need to rub hard, do it very gently over and over as they speak.

# 4



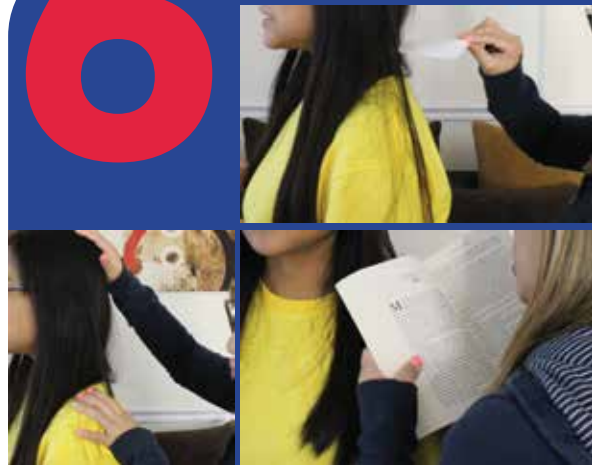
Next, Person 3 will grab a book, lean in close to Person 1, and read in a loud voice the entire time.

# 5



Then, Person 4 will pat Person 1 on the head and shoulder the entire time.

# 6



Remember! Person 2, 3, and 4 are doing their respective roles at the same time as Person 1 is trying to concentrate on speaking with Person 5. Person 1 should note how these simulations are affecting their conversation with Person 5.

# 7



As Person 1 is listening and the other people are doing their roles, Person 5 should keep speaking to Person 1 and not try to drown out their voices.

# 8



Everyone should take turns being Person 1! Afterwards, hold a discussion with your family or group about the activity and about what Person 1 is feeling and experiencing as they try to maintain a conversation while other stimuli are happening.

## DISCUSSION:

A child on the spectrum may experience one or all of these feeling simply while sitting in a classroom or at the dinner table.

## QUESTIONS:

- How did it feel to have so much commotion going on?
- Did it make you want to get away?
- Were you able to concentrate on the conversation, or what was being read?
- What might have helped you?



## CONCLUSIONS:

- The index card is meant to show how distracting and even uncomfortable simple things like t-shirt tags can be for children on the spectrum.

- The book reader is meant to simulate how many times children on the spectrum cannot separate different conversations. They might hear everything at once, making it extremely difficult to focus.



- The patting on the shoulder and head is meant to show how overstimulation is not just mentally and emotionally uncomfortable, but physically as well.

