

Activities For Autistic Children

Please can you offer some activity-based suggestions and PE/games options for autistic children that they can do at home or at school. Looking at two age groups here 7 ? 10 and 11-16.

Parents, teachers, and other caregivers often get so caught up in educating and providing structure to the lives of autistic children that they forget that, above all, he or she is a child. Like any other child in his or her age group, your autistic child wants to have fun. While some activities may not be suitable for those suffering from autism, there are a number of fun games to play with autistic children, many of which can get them involved with others or help them further develop motor or social skills while just focusing on having a good time.

Autistic children in the elementary school age range can benefit greatly from song. Even children who do not verbally communicate with words can learn to hum along or play simple instruments, such as tambourines or whistles. Using sounds that are repetitive and with educational lyrics helps autistic children learn school lessons but also gives them an outlet for some of the sensory stimulation they need, such as yelling. Play follow the leader with the instruments to help the children focus their attention and improve socialization skills.

Depending on how mature your child is, he or she may also not only be able to participate in regular childhood games, but greatly benefit from them as well. These activities, including tag and other games, can be learned more easily than you think. Stick with games in which the autistic child is not forced to have close physical contact with other children, as this may be hurtful for autistic individuals. Also, remember to play to your child's strengths or what he or she wishes to learn. If he or she has a problem with yelling inappropriately, for example, encouraging him or her to be involved with a game of hide and seek may help curb this behavior.

Autistic children often wish to be included in games with non-autistic peers, and so this may help with the learning process. At home, focus on games that involve closer contact with trusted family members. For example, make it a game to get across the room without touching the floor. Perhaps the only route in some instances is to be carried. Remember that each child is different developmentally, so stay in tune with how challenging the activities should be.

As your child matures, he or she may want to be involved with organized sports. This should be encouraged, but choose your sport carefully. Golf, baseball, and other sports that do not involve strong personal sensory stimulation may be better for your child than something like tackle football. However, be open to all possibilities. Be sure the team's coach understands your child's disability and is willing to work with him or her.

At this later developmental stage, also continue encouraging learning activities. Sensory games work well to further teach these children, and as they mature emphasize the importance of appropriate behavior as you are playing these games. Using things like water balloons in games your child already enjoys is often as fun for children with autism. Also realize that an autistic individual has trouble seeing things from another's point of view. Therefore, they may be less likely to enjoy games in which something must be kept a secret from another person (like go-fish).

Overall, you and your child need to grow together. Remember that although he or she has many special needs, sometimes your child needs to simply be a kid as well. Encourage play along with work, and realize that games and activities for autistic children may fulfil two key elements, socialization skills for life and learning to enjoy playing with their peers.

Short note about the author

Rachel Evans has an interest in Autism. For further information on Autism please visit <http://www.essential-guide-to-autism.com/autism.html> or <http://www.essential-guide-to-autism.com/blog/2006/10/03/activities-for-autistic-children/>.

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