

# Autism Acceptance Month: Celebrating the Spectrum

**April is Autism Acceptance Month!** This month, we are excited to celebrate and promote acceptance, appreciation, and awareness for autism. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, autism occurs in one out of 36 children (CDC, 2024). Autism Acceptance Month encourages individuals to focus on acceptance, celebrate differences, and advocate for inclusivity. This month also serves as a reminder to be empathetic, warm, and welcoming to individuals with autism and their families.

## WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism, often referred to as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is a neurodevelopmental disorder caused by genetic mutation and sometimes environmental triggers. ASD may affect an individual's behavior, ability to socially or physically interact, and communication skills. Autism is a spectrum due to the wide range of symptoms.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS OF AUTISM?

ASD can vary in severity of symptoms, age of onset, and the presence of various features such as language and intellectual ability. Individuals with ASD may:

- **Interact with others differently.** Individuals with ASD may have difficulty understanding and expressing emotions.
- **Have echolalia.** Some individuals have echolalia, which means that they may repeat words or phrases. People with autism often have difficulty understanding social cues, body language and vocal qualities (such as pitch, tone, and volume).
- **Have differences in play.** Individuals with autism may have a strong need for "sameness." Children with autism may not play with toys in the same manner as their peers and may become fixated on specific objects.
- **Have reactions to sensory stimuli that they see, hear, touch, feel, or taste.** Or, conversely, they may not react at all to various stimuli from the environment.
- **Have varying rates of development, especially in the areas of communication, social, and cognitive skills.** However, motor development may occur at a typical rate. In some cases, skills that appear at the expected age may disappear later.

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a lifelong diagnosis that is typically made before the age of three years old. However, children are often misdiagnosed or not diagnosed until later in life.



## COULD MY CHILD HAVE AUTISM?

The key to getting supports for individuals with autism is early intervention. Autism is a lifelong spectrum disorder that affects individuals differently and in varying degrees. Getting the right help at the earliest stage of life can help a child gain the skills they need.

- First and foremost, **follow your instincts**. Don't assume that your child will catch up.
- **Share your concerns with your pediatrician**. Consider seeing a doctor who is familiar with autism. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) offers an online pediatrician referral service, searchable by specialty and location.
- **Know your rights**. As the government mandates services, consult the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities and your local early intervention lead agency. The lead agency is required to provide a timely evaluation, typically within 45 days of being contacted. If your child is experiencing developmental delays in one or more of the following areas, you're eligible for free early intervention services: cognitive, physical, communication, social, emotional, or adaptive skills.
- **Get a diagnosis**. Autism can be diagnosed as early as 18 months old. Many children are diagnosed before age five, although too many children are still misdiagnosed or not diagnosed until later in life.
- **Seek help** from community service and treatment providers like Easterseals MORC.

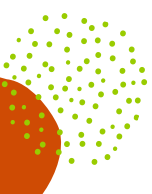
For more information and to know more about possible signs, click [HERE](#).

## BOOKS THAT DISCUSS AUTISM

- **Ella Auite**: A story of a 4th grader with autism battling societal challenges, written by an individual with autism.
- **My Brother Charlie**: A story about a young boy who has autism, showing the challenges he faces but also highlighting the talents he has.
- **All My Stripes**: A Story for Children with Autism – teaches people to embrace who we are and the people around us. Helpful for children with autism as they follow a young zebra who learns and understands how he is different from his classmates.
- **Uniquely Wired**: This heartwarming story features Zak, a young boy living with autism who wants you to understand how he experiences the sights and sounds of the world around him.
- **My Brother Otto**: The story of two young crows, Otto and Piper, navigating communication and daily life as a non-verbal and verbal duo.
- **Lila's Morning Adventure**: Written by ABA technician Ivory Mamo, this book inspires children to embrace their unique qualities and celebrates the joy of everyday moments.

## MOVIES & SHOWS THAT SHOWCASE AUTISM

- **Pablo**: A children's TV show that follows a 5-year-old boy on the autism spectrum and his imaginary friends on fun adventures.
- **Please Stand By**: A family-friendly film that follows a young woman with autism on a journey to deliver her 500-page *Star Trek* script to a writing competition in Hollywood.
- **Temple Grandin**: A film showcasing the story of Temple Grandin, a woman on the spectrum, and all of her achievements.
- **Carl the Collector**: A children's TV show following Carl, a raccoon with autism who loves to collect things, and his friends who live in Fuzzytown.
- **Loop**: A short film about Renee, a girl with autism who is nonverbal, and Marcus, a chatty young boy, learning how to communicate with one another while they're canoeing at summer camp.



## RESOURCES

- **Seal of Approval** - April 2025 edition: See which businesses made our Seal of Approval for being inclusive to all abilities!
  - To be considered for the Easterseals MORC Seal of Approval, the activity, event, or location must be (or have accommodations for) sensory and/or disability friendly. Check out the list by clicking **HERE**.
- Are you or a loved one looking for autism services? Click **HERE** for more information on how to get started.
- **Autism Resources:**
  - **Autism Alliance of Michigan**
    - **Independent Living Toolkit**
    - **Community - Autism Alliance of Michigan**
    - **Upcoming Webinars**
  - **Profound Autism Alliance**
  - **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)**
  - **Autism Society of America (ASA)**
  - **Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)**
  - **Golden Steps ABA**
  - **Center of Disease Control and Prevention: Autism Information Center**



## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Easterseals MORC has many free downloadable resources, like this one, available for the community. To access more free resources or learn more about services, please visit [www.EastersealsMORC.org](http://www.EastersealsMORC.org)