

HOW TO EXPLORE AUTISM WITH A NEWLY DISCOVERING CHILD



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Remember when Luke Skywalker first started his training as a Jedi? As he began to sense the Force through his feelings and meet other Jedi Knights, the more connected and purposeful he became. For many, that is what it feels like when they learn that they are autistic! Many autistics have reflected that learning about autism has helped them make sense of things that they have been through and gave them a whole community of others with shared experiences. These are reasons why talking about autism with a child can be so powerful, especially when it is framed as a new discovery instead of a diagnosis. Here are some tips on how to begin exploring autism with a child!

MAKE THE CONVERSATION INDIVIDUALIZED AND MEANINGFUL

- Autism is a complex individualized experience.
- Create a space where the autistic can identify what autism means to them. This can be done through art, talking, creating, or just being.

USE STRENGTHS BASED AND AFFIRMING LANGUAGE CHOICES

- Before talking about autism, learn about how medical/pathologizing language can be harmful.
- Start by describing autistic strengths!
- When talking about their challenges, connect them to other autistics who share similar experiences.

PROVIDE EXAMPLES

- Share examples of famous autistics.
- Identify other autistic or neurodivergent people that they know in their everyday life.
- Self-disclose if you are autistic, and how you experience it!
- Reiterate that every experience is unique!

CONSIDER HOW THE CHILD PROCESSES INFORMATION

- Provide information about autism in different forms.
- Watch movies and read books with autistic characters.
- Watch videos on YouTube for and by autistics!
- Strew books around the house about autism and neurodiversity.
- Provide plenty of time and space for processing. Revisit the conversation.

CELEBRATE THIS DISCOVERY!

- Learning more about someone's identity and way of being should be celebrated!
- Plan something special focused around what your autistic loved one truly enjoys!