



Natural Learning Concepts

<http://www.nlconcepts.com>

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15 TIPS FOR SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

One of the most endearing qualities of children on the autism spectrum is their forthright nature. Free of pretenses, unswayed by public opinion and not concerned with making a good impression, spectrum kids simply are who they are! This refreshing quality sometimes makes us **LAUGH** and sometimes makes us **GASP!** Let's take a **lighthearted** look at this charming quality along with 15 tips for social etiquette.

1. Telephone manners

Your child has finally learned to talk on the phone and you're glowing with pride. He's on the phone with his Grandma and you're smiling from ear to ear when suddenly you're appalled to notice the phone has been abandoned, your child is nowhere to be seen and Grandma is still yakking away.

Social Etiquette Tip

When you're finished talking to someone on the telephone, it's a good idea to say good-bye and then hang up. If you just put the phone on the desk and walk away, the other person won't know the conversation is over.

2. In a restaurant

The waitress leads you to your table with your child in tow. As your family is being seated you look around for your child. To your horror and everyone else's your child is sampling other people's food on the way to your table.

Social Etiquette Tip

Other people's food might look delicious and smell delicious but it's their food. It might be tempting but you can't take food off stranger's plates and start eating it.

3. Expressing gratitude

Your child thanks his uncle for the gift and rips open the wrapping paper. His uncle sits next to him, eagerly anticipating his reaction. To your dismay, your son glances at the gift for one second before he disinterestedly drops it on the floor and runs off to get his train.

Social Etiquette Tip

People spend a long time looking for gifts we like. Even if you don't like the gift, it's important to smile and say "Thank you."

4. Respecting people's space

Retrieving a book from the library shelf, you turn around to ask your child a question. You're frozen in shock when you notice a gentleman seated and trying to read a book while your son is an inch away from his face, staring into his wire rimmed glasses.

Social Etiquette Tip

Some people have big eyes and some people have small eyes. Sometimes glasses make their eyes look different. Sometimes glasses have interesting frames. Even so, you cannot put your face right in front of theirs to take a closer look.

5. Tact and diplomacy

Upon entering an ice cream shop you notice an acquaintance sitting at one of the tables. You greet her and introduce your son. As she smiles and says "Hi" to your son, he points his finger to a large mole on her cheek and in a very loud voice asks "What's that?"

Social Etiquette Tip

A mole is a dark bump on somebody's skin. If somebody has a mole, you should not point to it, you should not touch it and you should not ask in a loud voice "What's that?" You should try not to look at it if it bothers you.



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6. Sensory issues

Seated in the waiting room, the woman next to you is wearing a beautiful shirt. It's red and silky with bits of gold thread. The receptionist beckons you for a moment. As you turn back you're horrified to see your son run his hand down the front of her shirt because he wants to feel the silky material.

Social Etiquette Tip

People might have nice things and might wear nice things. These things might look good to touch but it's important to respect people and keep our hands to ourselves.

7. Feigning Ignorance

You've spent the last hour enthusiastically telling your friend how much your son has progressed. "His comprehension is right on track" you explain. When your son arrives home with your husband, your friend happily greets him. "I hope school was fun" she says "What's your teacher's name?" It's an easy question for him but much to your distress, your son stares at her and answers "I don't know."

Social Etiquette Tip

If you don't want to answer a question you can say "I don't want to talk about it" but you shouldn't pretend you don't know the answer.

8. Halloween

Glowing with pride you watch your son walk up to the door and ring the bell. Within earshot, you're thrilled when the door opens and he says "Trick or Treat." Your smile widens as you watch the lady handing him some candy. Your son looks at the Snickers Bar distastefully, puts it back into her hands and walks back down the drive, leaving the lady stunned and you aghast.

Social Etiquette Tip

Trick or treating is fun. Sometimes we get candy we like and sometimes we don't. This is because people don't know what we like to eat. If you get candy you don't like, you should say "Thank you" and put it in your Halloween bag. Someone in your family might want to eat it later.

9. Expressing concern

As your neighbor enters your house she trips over the step and almost goes flying on the floor. Your son is standing nearby and thinks it's hilarious. To your dismay, he bursts into laughter while pointing at your neighbor.

Social Etiquette Tip

You should not laugh if somebody trips or falls. They might get hurt or need help. You should ask "Are you OK?"

10. Unexpected meetings

Strolling through the mall you run in to your son's previous teacher. "Look who's here." You tell your son, "Do you remember Miss Halden?" Seeing the recognition in his eyes and knowing full well that he does, you're dismayed when he looks at her blankly and responds "No."

Social Etiquette Tip

We often see people in unexpected places. There's no need to worry because they just want to greet you. The doctor won't start examining you and your teacher won't start teaching you. You should smile and say "Hi."

11. Repetitive

"Produced by DreamWorks and coming to a theater near you" says your son to his aunt for the 38th time in a row. As patient as she is, even she can't bear to hear it one more time and she says "I know. You already told me that."

Social Etiquette Tip

When somebody says "You already told me that" it's time to change the conversation. You could ask "What do you want to talk about?" or you could think of something new to say.



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12. Sometimes things change

Your husband's business partner stopped over for a quick meeting. You never noticed that he always wears a baseball cap but your son has and he doesn't like this change. In his mind, this man belongs with a baseball cap. No matter what you say, and to your utter embarrassment, you cringe as your son continually finds a way to try and put a baseball cap on this his head.

Social Etiquette Tip

It feels good when things stay the same but sometimes people change and things change. If people change the way they look, it might seem different. If you give it some time, you will see that even though it's different, it's still OK.

13. Staying on topic

Your son is playing at a friend's house and you're relieved it's going smoothly. Just then the hostess asks your son "Do you want some juice?" to which he replies "The car fell in the prickly pear. Ha Ha Ha!" She looks at him oddly and your heart sinks.

Social Etiquette Tip

We all think lots of thoughts every day. When someone asks you a question you should answer them. If you didn't hear the question you should ask "What did you say?" After you answer you can say "I want to tell you what I was just thinking."

14. Avoidance

Eating lunch in the mall you unexpectedly see your son's school teacher. "That looks delicious" she tells your son. "What's your favorite food?" Having tried to convince her for weeks that your child's comprehension is better than she thinks, you're distraught when your son says "Peanut butter" a food you both know he's severely allergic to and hasn't eaten in years.

Social Etiquette Tip

Giving the wrong answer is not a good way to get someone off your back. It's better to say "I don't feel like talking now. Let's talk later."

15. Giving a gift

At the end of year class party you encourage your son to hand his teacher a thank you gift. He takes the gift and walks towards his teacher while you eagerly watch from your chair. He approaches the teacher who is talking to someone else. Without a word and without looking at her, he thrusts the gift in her belly and continues walking, leaving the gift falling to the floor.

Social Etiquette Tip

Getting a gift makes people happy. If you're giving a gift to someone you should walk up to them. If they're talking to someone else you can say "Excuse me." If they're not looking at you it's a good idea to tap their arm to get their attention. Then hold the gift out to them and say "This is for you."

- By Jene Aviram

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