

Autism Friendly Communities

Sensory Considerations



Auditory/Hearing

- Reduce & limit background music
- Provide seating away from kitchens, snack bars, or other areas where there tend to be unexpected noises
- Offer noise cancelling headphones
- Provide a quiet place to take breaks
- Lower the volume to any sound that cannot be eliminated entirely



Proprioceptive (Knowing where your body is in space.)

- Communicate any structural differences that may cause someone to trip or fall.
- Clearly define walkways & exits.
- Secure rugs.
- Offer weighted lap pads or blankets.
- Provide visuals or your space that highlights key areas (restrooms, exits, sensory areas, etc.)
- Provide 360° tours online to help customers visual space and map out needs.



Visual

- Reduce lighting (or increase if too dark).
- Avoid use of overhead fluorescent lighting when possible.
- Or use fluorescent lighting covers and filters when they can't be avoided.
- Use natural light or lamps when possible.
- Turn off televisions or flashing lights/signs.



Tactile

- Provide easy to access small hand fidgets (squishy, soft, textured, etc.).
- Ask before touching. Example, "May I shake your hand?" or "May I touch your wrist to take your pulse?"
- Avoid unnecessary touch.



Smell/Olfaction

- Encourage staff to be fragrance/perfume free.
- Eliminate air fresheners and scented candles.
- Use scent-free cleaners and laundry products.



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General Considerations

Presume Competence

Always speak directly to the person you need to communicate with, despite any apparent difference. Never assume that someone can't understand you.

Be Kind & Respectful

Even if you don't understand someone's behavior, be kind, respectful, and assume the best intentions.

Welcome & Embrace Tools, Supports & Alternative Communication Methods

Welcome tools that people bring in to keep themselves regulated. These may include sunglasses, headphones, fidgets, visual supports, etc. or communication methods like picture strips, typed communication, voice output, etc.

Develop Social Narratives & Other Visual Supports

Social narratives can help people know what to expect when visiting your business. Other visual supports include visual menus, choice boards, visual schedules, etc. Add pictures & images to any written material. Call the Autism Society for examples.

Give Extra Processing Time

Give extra time for someone to respond before repeating yourself. Be clear and concise with verbal communication. Avoid jargon and figurative language.

Be Flexible & Patient

Always keep an open mind and try new ideas to accommodate all community members. Be patient and welcoming to all.



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