

My Child is Autistic-and I don't Know what to Do...

Discovering your child has autism may be a distressing ordeal, and unfortunately, time is of the essence. As a parent, you do not have the time to consider why or how this happened, only what to do next. The most important thing to remember is that you are not alone in your struggle. By researching the disorder and finding others going through similar situations, you can help you child while still dealing with your own emotional response.

Join a support group for parents with autism. You can find these by contacting the national Autism Society of America. From there you can find local branches, many of which offer support groups for parents and families with an autistic child. Being in contact with other parents in a similar situation can not only help you feel less alone, but it can provide you with a myriad of resources. A parent support group will also help point you in the direction of the best doctors, intervention programs, and workshops for both your child and your family. Find a support group for any other children you have as well. Many parents forget that they are not the only ones who must learn to live and communicate with an autistic child. By locating a support group for your other children, you can help them from acting out or acting against the autistic child by teaching them about the illness. As a parent, you must create a supportive environment for the entire family in order to properly manage your child's illness.

Consider marriage counseling if you are married. An autistic child can put serious strain on a marriage, leading to escalating arguments, neglect of each other, and even perhaps blaming each other for the situation. Marriage counseling from the very beginning can help a couple through this discovery and rough transition, and help build a better supportive environment for your children. Your marriage should not end as a result of having an autistic child, but the sad fact is that many of them do. Prevent this by using one another for support and by understanding that you may need help to deal with one another now and in the future.

Most importantly, start on the path to becoming an expert. Many times pediatricians or psychiatrists are not experts on autism, which can lead to improper diagnoses or incorrect treatment options. As your child's best advocate, you must know everything you can about autism. Parents of Autistic Children can be a great resource; this organization offers training and workshops. The ASA has a newsletter and also offers a variety of information, from diagnosing to treating. As always, remember that a support group of parents with autistic children can always provide you with books and research that focus on the reality of the situation. Educate yourself and those around you to

provide the most beneficial things for your child-love and guidance.