



جمعية أسر التوحد  
Society of Autism Families





# WHAT IS *Autism?*

Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder, is a known brain development condition that manifests itself as difficulty in communicating or socializing with others and can affect an individual and their family throughout their life.

**It can be characterized through many facets, some of which may include:**

- Lack of desire to interact with other people
- Display of erratic behaviour that can seem hostile towards others
- Most commonly avoidance of eye contact when spoken to
- Display repetitive patterns of behaviour

Autism may have different severity levels of impact or strength, ranging from mild to severe Autism, and may impact the suffering person in many different ways, hence the terminology "Spectrum".

Indeed, the impact of Autism may range from a mild and controllable form that can be dealt with using minimal developmental training, to cases of Autism that may at some point lead the sufferer to health complications such as depression, self-isolation or heart problems and may voluntarily lead to more severe consequences such as suicide.

Therefore, with the early identification of any indicative Autism, it is highly recommended to seek medical help to tackle this condition.

The cause of Autism remains to be unclear as to what exactly may cause it. However, common medical practice and researches suggest that genetics and environment tend to play a part in its cause. It is worthy to note that males are four times more likely to be autistic than females. No two Autism cases are the same. Generally, however, sufferers have issues with social interaction and communication and display certain repetitive patterns of behaviour.



# ORIGINS & TYPES *of* AUTISM



*Psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler*

The word "Autism" was first used in 1911 by Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler while observing patients thought to be schizophrenic. The word itself is derived from the Greek word "autos", which literally means "self". It describes conditions in which a person is removed from social interaction. In other words, he becomes an "isolated self."

Over time, psychiatrists have developed a systematic way of describing autism and related conditions. All of these conditions are placed within a group of conditions called Autism Spectrum Disorders. Depending on how severe symptoms are, they are classified under level 1,2 or 3.







# DIAGNOSIS

Autism can be a very difficult condition to diagnose simply because it does not rely on blood tests or the like. However, there can be a number of developmental tests can be recommended and extensive observations that can assist medical specialists in properly diagnosing the condition. The diagnostic practices for Autism include observations on the child's behaviour and development to make that diagnosis. Universally, diagnosing an autistic person can be done in two steps:

## **Developmental Screening:**

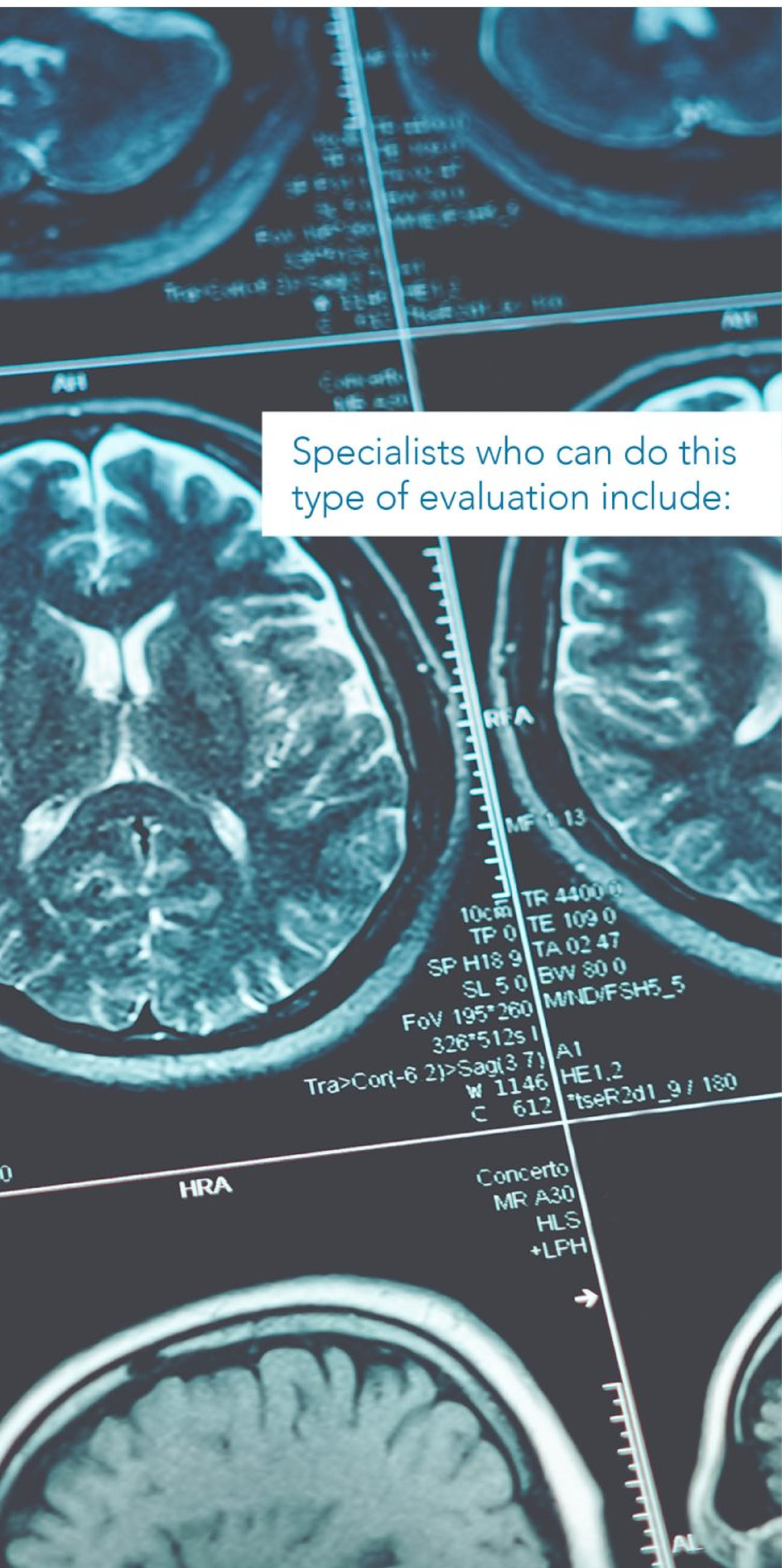
a short test to tell if children are learning basic skills when they should, or if they might have delays. During developmental screening the doctor might ask the parent some questions or talk and play with the child during an exam to see how she learns, speaks, behaves, and moves. A delay in any of these areas could be a sign of a problem.

## **Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation:**

A thorough review that may include looking at the child's behaviour and development and interviewing the parents. It may also include a hearing and vision screening, genetic testing, neurological testing, and other medical testing.

In some cases, the primary care doctor might choose to refer the child and family to a specialist for further assessment and diagnosis.





Specialists who can do this type of evaluation include:

**Developmental Pediatricians**

(doctors who have special training in child development and children with special needs)

**Child Neurologists**

(doctors who work on the brain, spine, and nerves)

**Child Psychologists or Psychiatrists**

(doctors who know about the human mind)

The quality of life for many children and adults is significantly improved by a diagnosis that leads to appropriate evidence-informed intervention or support that recognises individual strengths and interests.



# BEHAVIOUR

Through many years of research and medical observations, there have been many recorded behavioural patterns attributed to autism through which characteristics and symptoms of Autism have been identified.

## All individuals on the autism spectrum are affected to some degree in two main areas:

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**Social Communication:** May include difficulty understanding non-verbal communication, such as body language, difficulty understanding when and how to appropriately respond in social interactions, and trouble developing, understanding and maintaining relationships with others.

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**Repetitive Patterns of Behaviour:** Characterized by the autistic individual's repetitive use of movement, speech or objects, or easily upset by changes to routine, environment, and the familiar, and displays very narrow and intense focus on limited areas of interest.

Autistic people tend to behave in an unfamiliar manner and can have a reason behind it. Medical researches suggest that unusual behaviour from autistic individuals relates to their lack of ability to focus with the person who is

talking to them, or because the autistic individual is trying to send a message to the other person but is not able to express it, and that is due to lack of focus and the tendency for the autistic person of not making eye contact with the person they are talking to.

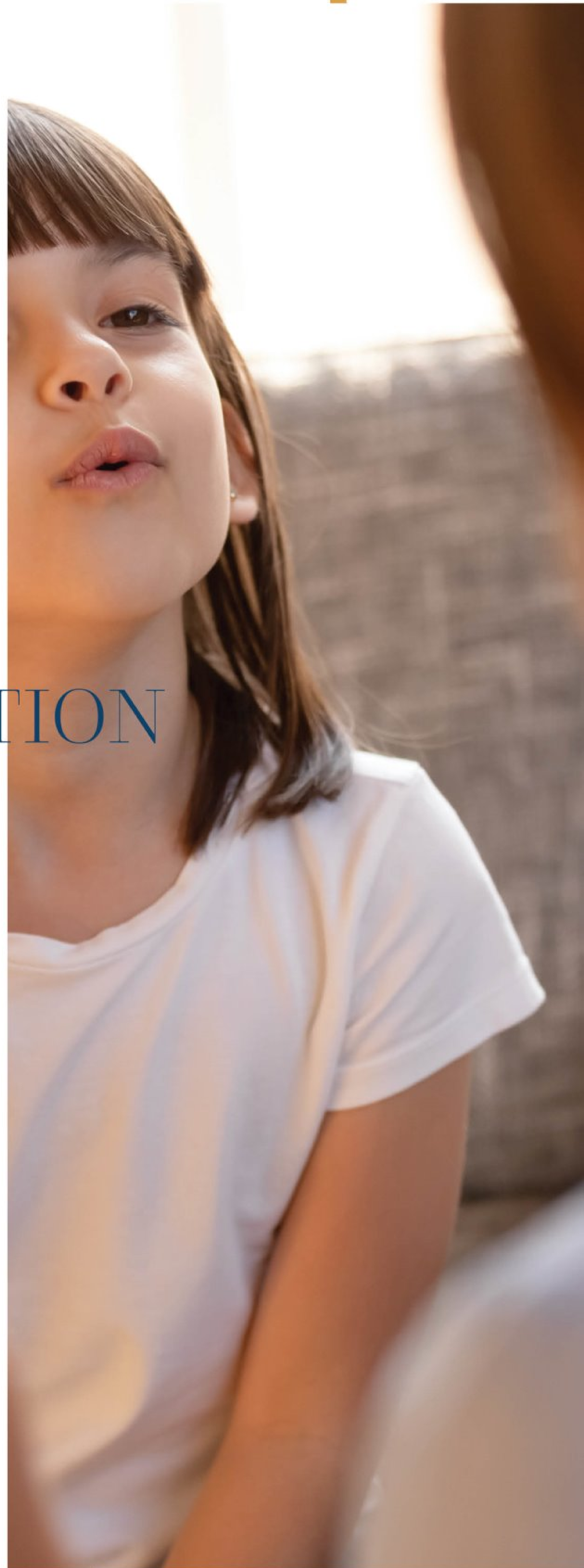
Many autistic people may experience something called a meltdown, which literally means the autistic person, when overwhelmed with a matter, tends to scream and have temper tantrums.

This meltdown can be expressed verbally such as shouting and screaming, or physically in ways such as lashing out, kicking and even sometimes biting. Another form of behaviour that accompanies people with autism may related to not being able to cope with a situation that promotes anxiety, and may lead to unusual conditions and behaviours, including, but not limited to, easily losing patience, difficulty concentrating, sleeping difficulty, depression, or being obsessive about a single subject.

# COMMUNICATION

Because of its isolating and withdrawing nature, autistic individuals tend to have a challenge and difficulty in communicating with their surrounding community, especially that autism itself can hinder a person's ability to focus on conversations for a long period of time.

However, studies have shown that autistic persons have the continuous will to be involved in their surrounding yet cannot control it. The will, however, is there, and this must be fostered and nurtured for





the purpose of making breakthroughs and overcoming challenges related to autism.

Characteristics attributed to autism and that may hinder social progress may include difficulty reading social cues and knowing when to speak or listen, in addition to facial expressions that can be impossible to read, resulting in social isolation. The ability of children with ASD to communicate and use language depends on their intellectual and social development. Some children with ASD may not be able to communicate using speech or language, and some may have very limited speaking skills

Others may have rich vocabularies and be able to talk about specific subjects in great detail. Many have problems with the meaning and rhythm of words and sentences. They also may be unable to understand body language and the meanings of different vocal tones. Taken together, these difficulties affect the ability of children with ASD to interact with others, especially people their own age.

**Below are some patterns of language use and behaviours that are often found in children with ASD.**

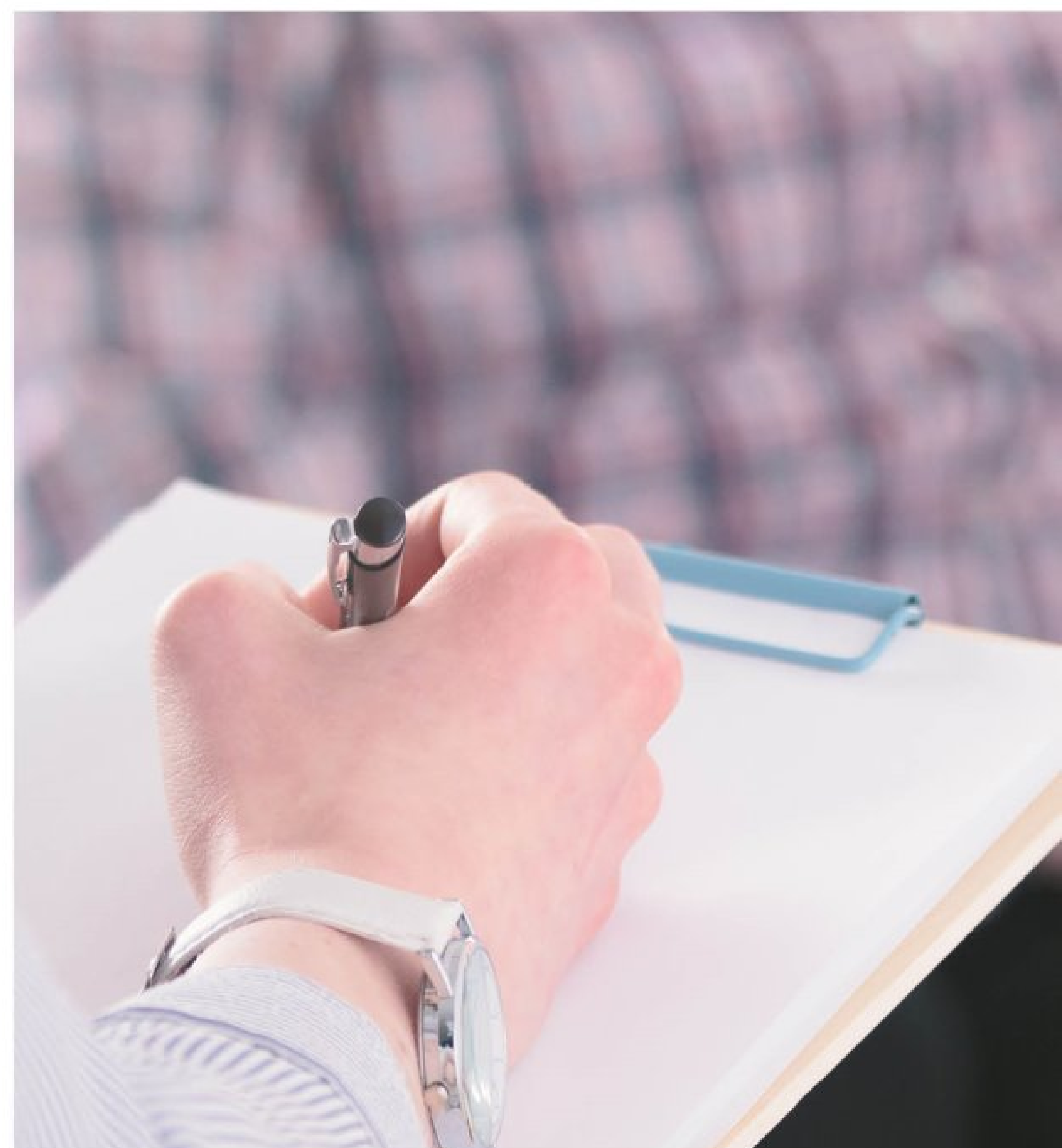
## I Repetitive or Rigid Language

Often, children with ASD who can speak will say things that have no meaning or that do not relate to the conversations they are having with others. For example, a child may count from one to five repeatedly amid a conversation that is not related to numbers. Or a child may continuously repeat words he or she has heard—a condition called echolalia. Immediate echolalia occurs when the child repeats words someone has just said. For example, the child may respond to a question by asking the same question. In delayed echolalia, the child repeats words heard at an earlier time. The child may say “Do you want something to drink?” whenever he or she asks for a drink. Some children with ASD speak in a high-pitched or sing-song voice or use robot-like speech. Other children may use stock phrases to start a conversation. For example, a child may say, “My name is Tom,” even when he talks with friends or family. Still others may repeat what they hear on television programs or commercials.

## 2

### Narrow Interests & Exceptional Abilities

Some children may be able to deliver an in-depth monologue about a topic that holds their interest, even though they may not be able to carry on a two-way conversation about the same topic. Others may have musical talents or an advanced ability to count and do math calculations. Approximately 10 percent of children with ASD show “savant” skills, or extremely high abilities in specific areas, such as memorization, calendar calculation, music, or math.





# 3

## **Uneven Language Development**

Many children with ASD develop some speech and language skills, but not to a normal level of ability, and their progress is usually uneven. For example, they may develop a strong vocabulary in a particular area of interest very quickly. Many children have good memories for information just heard or seen. Some may be able to read words before age five but may not comprehend what they have read. They often do not respond to the speech of others and may not respond to their own names. As a result, these children are sometimes mistakenly thought to have a hearing problem.

# 4

## **Poor Nonverbal Conversation Skills**

Children with ASD are often unable to use gestures—such as pointing to an object—to give meaning to their speech. They often avoid eye contact, which can make them seem rude, uninterested, or inattentive. Without meaningful gestures or other nonverbal skills to enhance their oral language skills, many children with ASD become frustrated in their attempts to make their feelings, thoughts, and needs known. They may act out their frustrations through vocal outbursts or other inappropriate behaviours.





# QUESTIONS *and* ANSWERS

*This section lists down the frequently circulated inquiries about autism in its many dimensions and disciplines:*

## **Q: Can Autism be treated?**

**A:** There is no known uniform method of treating autism due to the fact that autism affects individuals in different ways and behaviours from one person to another display differently. However, there is a set of developmental practices and medications that may help some autistic individuals grow out of their condition in time or at least allows the patient to live with their condition in the least impacting way possible, most essentially through a joint effort, patience and dedication from both the treating physicians and the autistic patient's family.

Q: What treatment types are there related to dealing with Autism?

A: Treatment strategies to Autism can fall within either one of two methods: Interventions or Medications.

Interventions may include developmental and assessment-based practices such as:

**Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA):** In ABA, an instructor at first tries to learn about the particular behaviours of a person with ASD. They will also want to know about the effects of their environment on this behaviour, and how the person learns. ABA aims to increase desirable behaviours and reduce harmful or isolating ones by using positive reinforcement. ABA can help improve communication, memory, focus, and academic performance. By analyzing current behaviours and teaching new actions step-by-step, an instructor can provide both a person with ASD and the people around them with tools for support.

**Early Start Denver Model (ESDM):** This type of behavioural therapy occurs during play and helps children between the ages of 1 and 4 years old. A psychologist, behavioural specialist, or occupational therapist uses

joint activities and play to help a child with autism build positive relationships with a sense of fun. Parents can then continue the therapy at home.

**Floortime:** This involves parents joining children in the play area and building relationships. ABA therapies might also use floortime to support treatment and vice versa. Parents let the children lead the game, allowing the child's strengths to develop.

**Occupational therapy (OT):** This helps a person with autism develop the skills for everyday living and learn independence.

**Pivotal response treatment (PRT):** This therapy aims to support motivation and the ability to respond to motivational cues in children with ASD. It is a play-based therapy that focuses on natural reinforcement.

**Relationship development intervention (RDI):** This treatment revolves around the importance of dynamic thinking, or the ability to adapt thoughts and process situations flexibly, to help improve quality of life in people with autism.



**Speech therapy:** This helps to address the challenges in communication that people with autism might experience.

**TEACCH:** This program helps to integrate the needs of children with autism into a classroom environment, with an emphasis on visual learning and support for the attention and communication difficulties that might arise.

**Verbal behaviour therapy (VBT):** This helps a child with ASD connect language and meaning. Practitioners of VBT focus not on words, but the reasons for using them.

**Q: As an adult, is it likely that I have undiagnosed autism? I demonstrate a lot of the symptoms.**

**A:** Yes, sometimes people who have mild symptoms of autism are not diagnosed until adulthood. Symptoms of autism can mimic symptoms of other disorders, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or obsessive-compulsive disorder, causing confusion regarding an exact diagnosis. Occasionally, doctors will diagnose an adult with autism after they have a child who is diagnosed with autism and the adult notices symptoms in themselves.

**Q: How early can autism be identified? What should parents do if they are concerned their young child may have autism?**

**A:** Some of the signs of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may be noticed before the age of 1, although a reliable diagnosis by an autism specialist can be made in children as young as 18 months of age. Unfortunately, many children end up waiting until after their 4th birthday to be diagnosed with ASD. Delays in seeking an initial assessment and limited access to specialists are just a couple of factors that help to explain this delay. Children who have less severe ASD, or are from minority backgrounds, tend to be diagnosed later than those with severe symptoms. Researchers are developing ways of being able to diagnose autism at even younger ages, such as using eye

tracking technologies. The diagnosis of autism is typically based on a clinical examination, which is often supported with other information and tests. There is no single scan or blood test that can independently diagnose autism. Our advice to parents is to trust their gut instinct when they are worried about their child and to seek the advice of their primary care pediatrician. This general assessment may then lead to a referral to a specialist who will perform a more comprehensive evaluation. Parents should also feel empowered to ask for a specialist opinion if they do not feel adequately reassured by a primary care evaluation.

**Q: Can children “grow out” of autism?**

**A:** A small minority of children show considerable improvement in their ASD symptoms following diagnosis. While ASD has historically been considered a life-long condition, recent research has shown that the outcomes associated with an ASD diagnosis can vary considerably. Some people who were diagnosed with ASD in their youth may improve dramatically and show little difference to people who have never had the diagnosis. Whether these individuals “grew out” of autism, or simply responded exceptionally well to the therapeutic interventions, remains up for debate. One should also question if the initial diagnosis of ASD was accurate in these cases. At the moment it is difficult to identify which children will “grow out” of autism,

although those who have less severe symptoms and those who obtain early access to the appropriate therapies appear to have better outcomes.

**Q: There is so much information about therapies, treatments and diets for children with autism — how do I know what’s right for my child?**

**A:** Parents naturally want the best for their child, and many will try different treatments, diets and therapies to help their loved one. It is difficult to cover all of the numerous therapies but here are the key points:

1. Medical and psychiatric conditions that co-exist with ASD should be identified and treated by a suitably trained physician. These can include immune problems, digestive problems and ADHD.
2. Natural therapies or treatments are often advertised as being safe and effective. Unfortunately, most of these treatments do not have high quality scientific evidence that supports either claim. Some parents have described improvements in their child by using specialized diets. The most important point here is to make sure the child receives enough calories and nutrients regardless of the dietary change.
3. Parents should be very cautious of treatments that are advertised as being able to “cure” autism; these claims are often uncertain.



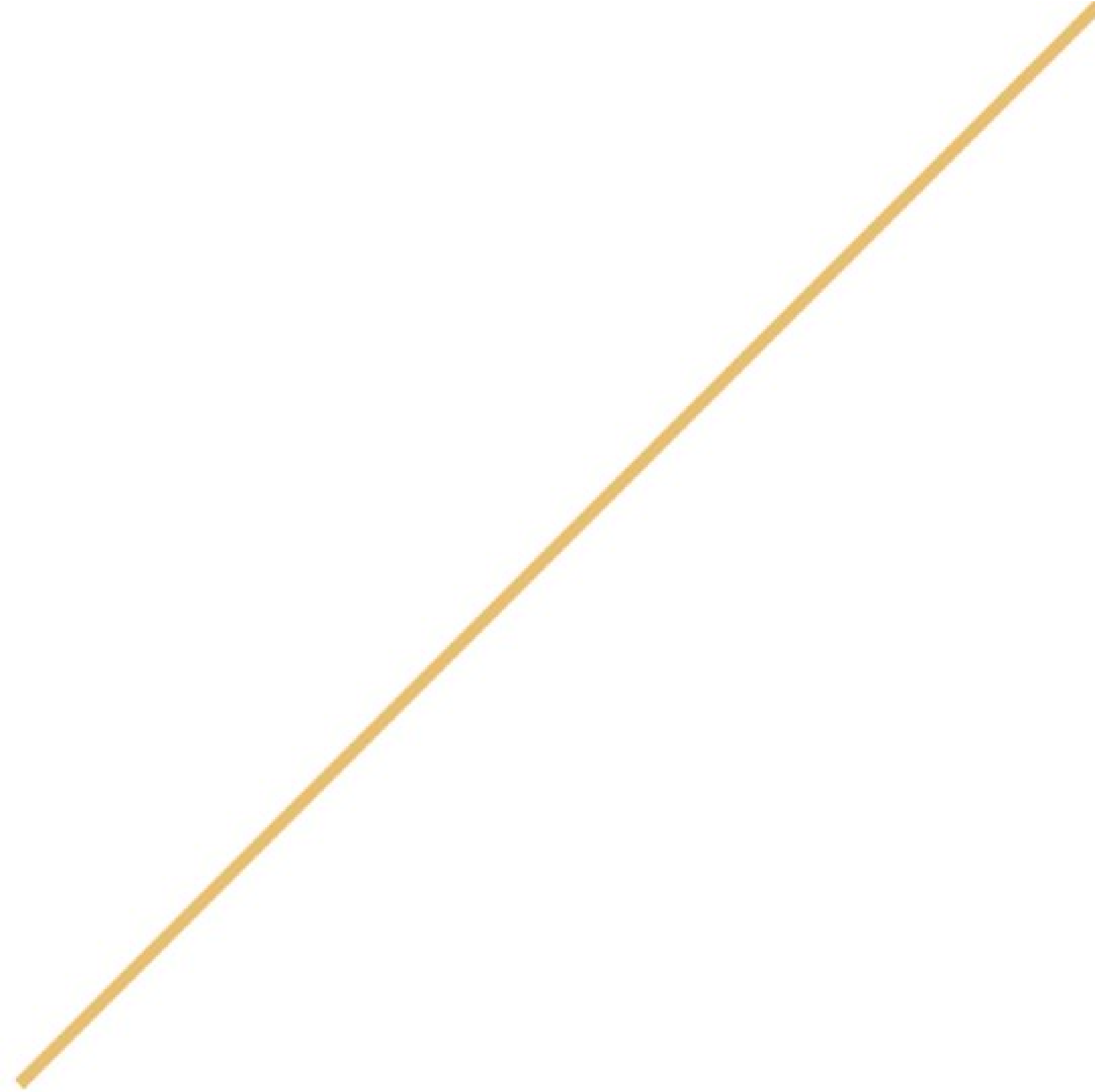
# ABOUT *the* SOCIETY

## WHO WE ARE

The Society of Autism Families is a non-profit charitable organization that brings together autism families' experiences and multi-discipline expertise in counselling services, awareness programs and courses, as well as other various social initiatives.



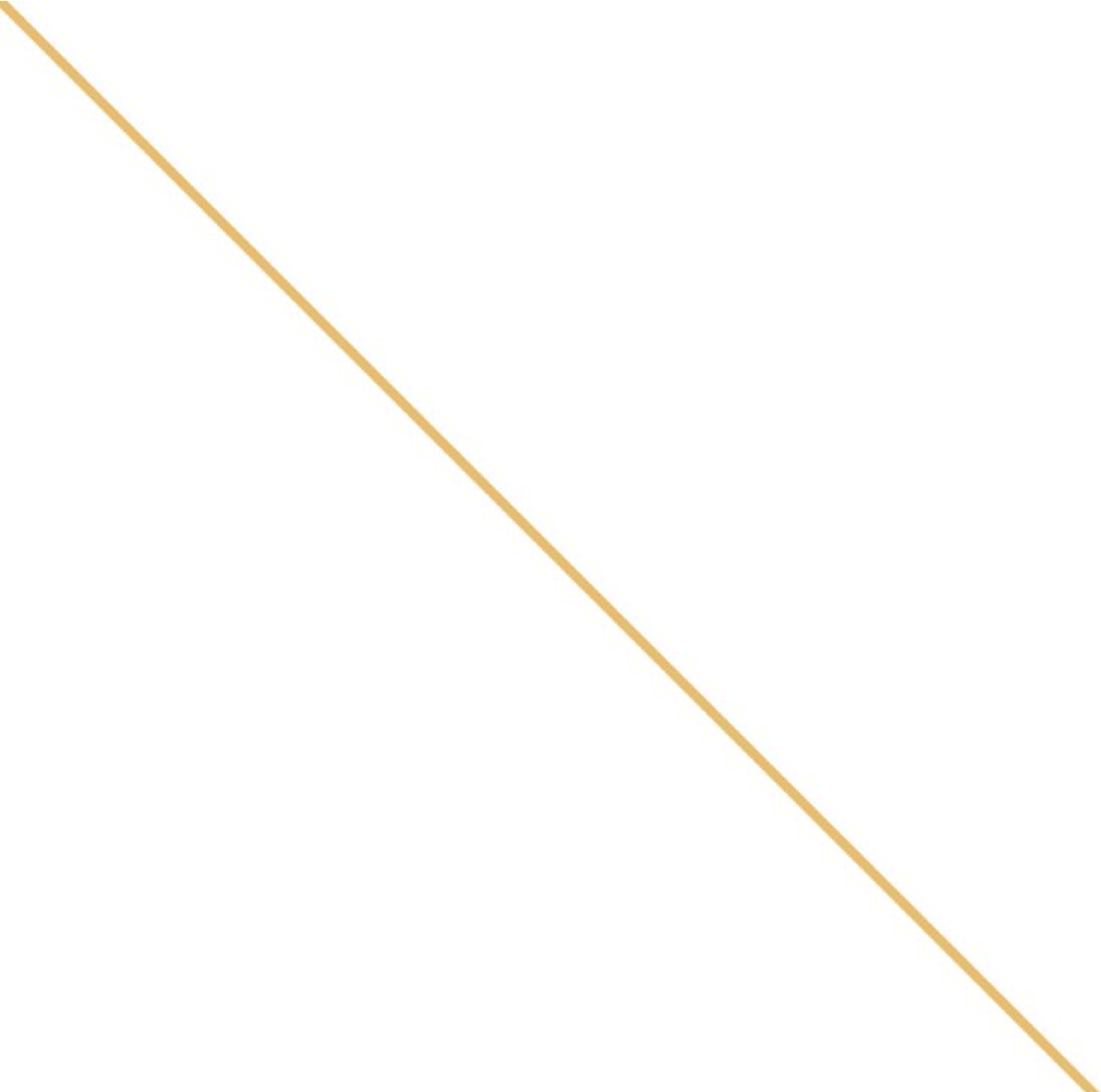




Autism Spectrum Disorder, or simply Autism, is a trending condition that has impacted several families, households and their surroundings due to the difficulties related to communication and behavioural adaptation barriers. It surely has exhausted families and parents equally emotionally and physically, which brought about a sense of despair and negative impact to their lives.

We firmly believe that, with the proper training, awareness and knowledge and continuous support, families with Autism cases can seamlessly adapt to dealing with their members' autistic cases in order to lead healthy and active lives.

After all, everyone deserves a normal and healthy social life, free of any disturbing hindrance. It is what keeps hope alive in everyone and lights the torch of progress and happiness in facing every-day challenges that come with Autism.



In its purest form, The Society of Autism Families' members, which include various members of our community, thrives to combine various social initiatives, projects and other activities on a national level, and with the assistance from various sources (governments, non-governmental organizations, individual contributors and volunteers), to promote great efforts that foster activities that help families deal with the matter of autism in all its spectrums and dimensions, and in the best way possible to give the autistic family members the care and attention they need to lead a socially and professional healthy lifestyle. Through one of our major initiatives, Kafalah, we offer

autistic children with a wide array of training, orientation and rehabilitation programmes that help them develop their life-linked social and academic skills while minimizing the impact of their autism spectrum condition and dealing with society in a healthy manner through highly qualified training centres and training modules.

Because Autism is a life-long condition, we at the Society of Autism Families focus on being life-long partners to parents and guardians and their autistic family members to be there for them and help them co-exist with autism through comforting skills and knowledge.





# OBJECTIVES

*Despite our diversity in many activities and initiatives, our sustainable existence and our continuous look into making a brighter future to autism patients are built upon a solid foundation of cornerstone objectives:*

Provide social and psychiatric support to autism families

Foster exceptional autism cases

Raise Autism awareness to the community

Cooperate with specialized entities in compiling activities, sports and entertainment programmes that help alleviate autistic patients' social interactivity

Collaborate with all governmental and international foundations in realizing our objectives

Launch and maintain a charitable "Waqf" that fosters autism spectrum.

Promote and advocate service to autistic patients through volunteer work and campaigns

Activate and galvanize the privileges to which the autistic child is entitled





# CHAIRMAN'S *Message*

My Dear Friends and Colleagues,  
I would like to welcome you to our digital presence. I hope that it will serve as a beneficially contributing platform that united us all, helps promote long-lasting and cohesive relationships across all levels, and serves our community through only the best means and to the greatest of extents.

Our digital presence on the Internet serves many objectives, one of which concerns the need to relay information and have it readily available for anyone interested in learning about the commonly occurring condition of Autism Spectrum Disorder. This also allows us to provide information regarding upcoming activities, publications, guidelines, programmes and collaborations with many organizations and educational facilities through which milestones are achieved, success stories are celebrated, courses and training materials are offered, and a global source of information to anyone at any time.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has remained a mystery with respect to its causing factors – despite the great advancements recently in the medical world. This neurobehavioral condition has brought upon many questions raised and wondering on why would any human, regardless of their age range, would have to suffer from disturbing repercussion and results that not only would keep that patient in a mental prison; but also may lead to dire situations that scar that person for life on many levels, and perhaps may lead to serious medical complications, even mortal

results.

Moreover, many years of medical research, observations, and documented tests have not been capable of finding a cure or a certain treatment that would completely cure a person of this social life destroying entity. As such, many patients and their families have gone into desolation, with hopelessness dwelling into their hearts.

But with our efforts, as equally with our local, regional and global counterparts and medical colleagues, we were able to establish a creed that dictates to us that even though there is no cure to Autism and its effects, there will always be hope to cure autistic patients, and until that happens, we have a passion in fostering and sponsoring activities, initiatives, and programmes that help autistic patients to co-exist with their condition through innovative developmental programmes, and lead a normal life enriched with great social activities, and nurtured by families, friends, and volunteering heroes.

At the Society for Autism Families, we strongly believe that there is a cure for almost everything, and autism is no different from



any other medical condition with its characteristics, types, and treatment. Until a cure is found and indoctrinated, we extend our helping hands to those in need to love with autism in the best ways possible.

Our message to the world, and specifically to autistic patients and their families is clear: you are not alone. We are here for you and together we shall prevail with the will of Allah. Our pledge is to put all our efforts and spare no initiative to make sure that you can live healthy and happy lives, interacting, communicating with great hope.

We invite you to join us in our amazing journey of innovation, clear initiatives and being the leaders in quality research and information. With everyone's support, we can bring hope to the community and be a driving force in mitigating this condition to great extents. We were able to establish a creed that dictates to us that even though there is no cure to Autism and its effects, there will always be hope to cure autistic patients, and until that happens, we have a passion in fostering and sponsoring activities, initiatives, and programmes that help autistic patients to co-exist with

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# BOARD MEMBERS

### *Our Caring Leadership Team*

The beauty that embraces our very existence lies within the professional individuals and entities, both internal and external, that work in harmony and in a unified vision to bring together innovative and constructive programmes and initiatives to serve the community wherever possible and needed. Our Board members are very well aware of the plight brought forth by this condition because they themselves have family members with autism and share the community's concerns and passion to dealing with it. Our leadership team members are continuously exploring, planning, and brainstorming on sophisticated ideas, activities and fostering their implementation to the best extent at all times, contributing their ever-growing expertise, energy and efforts towards making the Society a powerful force of hope to the world of Autism.



# MISSION *and* VISION

## **Vision**

A strong community that supports those with Autism and their families.

## **Mission**

Our ultimate goal is to harness all available efforts, contributions and resources ensuring that all families and those with Autism are given the deserved multifaceted support means for great hope.

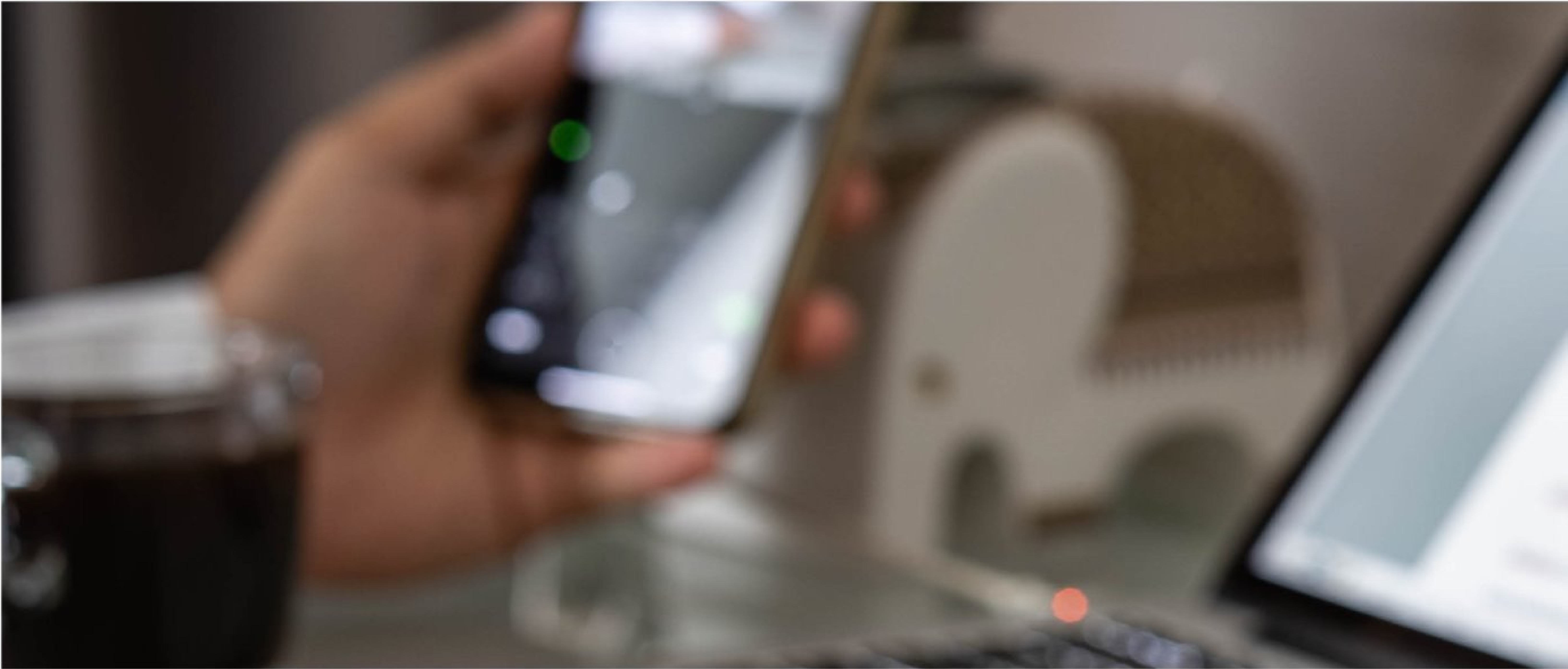
**Get Involved**  
**Join The Community/Volunteer**

Your involvement in various social activities, workshops and events that address Autism is a rewarding experience in its own right.

By doing so, you are lending a heroic helping hand to families and patients altogether to deal with Autism and eventually stimulate constructive growth and development to those in need. Moreover, you are becoming a part of a growing task force that sponsors and operates various activities through well-tailored volunteer programmes that include, but not limited to:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Extracurricular activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Awareness Programmes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Developmental Enablement and Aptitude Workshops
- \_\_\_\_\_ Educational modules and Training
- \_\_\_\_\_ Social development and support

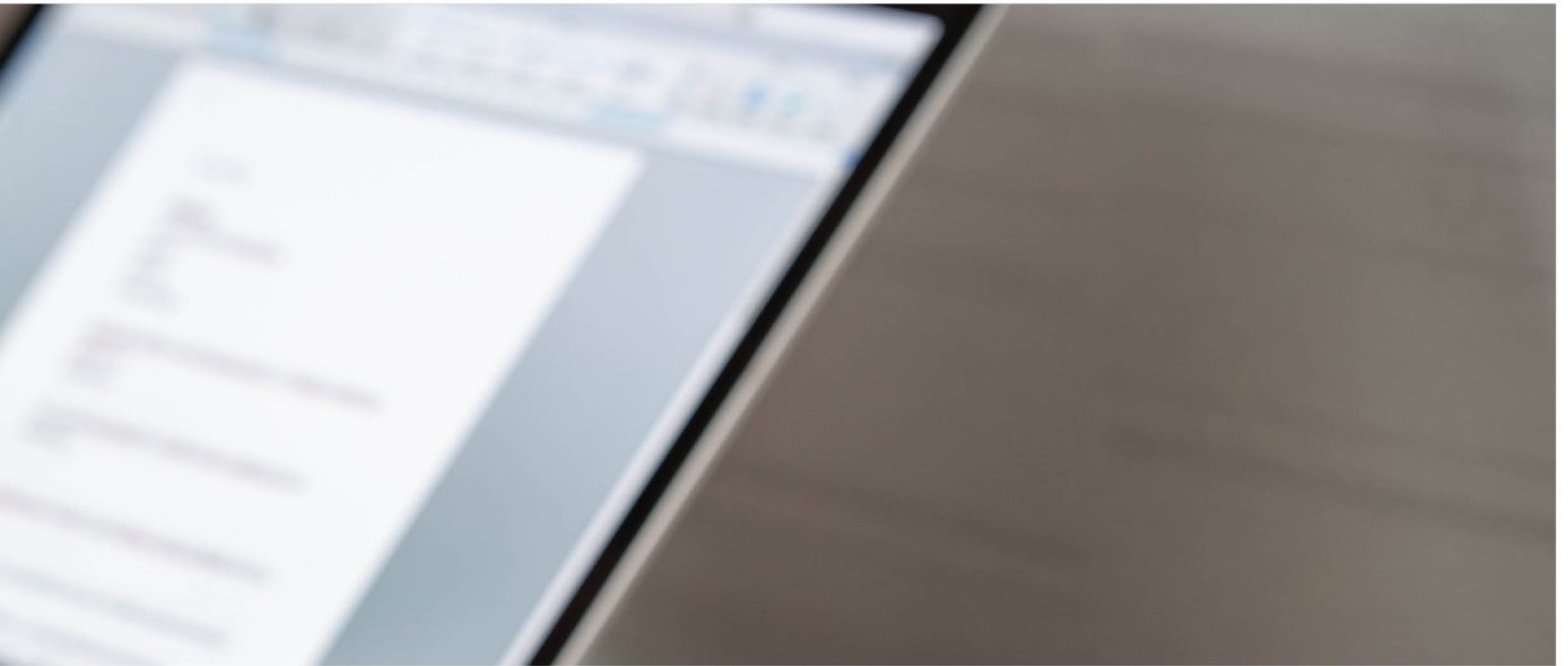
**Join our fulfilling and promising journey now by channelling your talent, your energy and passion to a great cause. Make a difference. Give Hope.**



## MEDIA CENTER

Stay on-track and updated about our various activities, events, milestones and achievements. At the Society for Autism Families, we are passionate about spreading and showcasing our news updates, our sponsored events, as well as our professional works and publications to keep interested individuals informed about our growing programmes that mark a memorable humanitarian impression.

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# AUTISM FAMILIES VIRTUAL CENTRE

Because we are moving towards a globally digital ecosystem, we believe that our electronic presence is crowned with a virtual existence through which our visitors have access to great resources, training and awareness courses, seek counselling services from our contributing professionals and much more.

We invite you to browse through this section and all its entailing pages and modules to electronically interact and book your seat in our many training courses and even to further your career path in Autism to become a fully-fledged trainer to students and registered individuals. You may search through our offered courses and book your seat with ease and a seamlessly simple process.

You will have access on information about upcoming events and workshops and learn of their modules and objectives to participate in a growing audience, expand your network and gain new acquaintances and share ideas.

# WORKSHOPS *and* EVENTS



This section will enable you to search and browse through our growing instructor-led courses taught in-class with great interactivity and by experts in the field of Autism. Look courses that best fit your requirements or needs and contact us to book your seat today.





### ***Counselling Services***

Are you in need of professional help? Our Society offers you a team of highly knowledgeable experts who are available to provide you with great counselling services, guidance and approaches that increase your confidence and know-how on dealing with the various cases of Autism. Contact us today to request an appointment.

### ***Become a Trainer***

Becoming a professional trainer who fosters and guides Autism families and other individuals is a rewarding matter. Become a trainer today to branch out the awareness, provide training and deliver courses with all the needed resources and materials. Contact us today for more information.

# AUTISM FAMILIES *Circle*

At the Society for Autism Families, our creed deepens when the community around us acts as one close family that comes together to discuss experiences, ideas, and most importantly, listen to one another. It is proven to be a groundbreaking approach that brings the Autism Families closer and share concerns. After all, we are in the same trench that fights against this developmentally destructive condition, and need we need each other to stand against it as one large family. Moral support and communication tend to have beneficial effects that comfort us and grow that cohesiveness towards a positively productive outcome every time.







# *The* STORY WALL

One of the best ways to become a unified, cohesive and cooperatively helping and supportive family is to talk about it.

Share your stories, your experiences, your tribulations and even your successes. You never know when or how your story can be an inspiration to someone out there or give hope to those suffering, and to even show a family in that growing community that they are not alone. Feel free to share your stories or ideas, it may change someone's life.

Whether you are a parent or friend of an autistic child, or someone willing to make a difference, or want to learn further about our society, we welcome your reaching out to us at any time.

If you have an inquiry or would like to drop a suggestion or even an idea, please fill in the form below and one of our representatives will contact you shortly and will be pleased to attend to your request.

You may also call us on  
01 1203 7374

Or write us an email at  
[info@saf.org.sa](mailto:info@saf.org.sa)

Or feel free to visit our offices  
at the following address:  
Prince Mashur Bin Abdulaziz Road,  
Riyadh- Saudi Arabia

