

Ten Things You Should NEVER Say To An Autism Parent by Jen

1. Are you sure he/she has autism? He/she seems fine to me!

I was unaware that you were actually a medical doctor! Congratulations! Wish I had known so that I didn't have to go through the two year wait to get a diagnosis through my child's physician. Oh, you're not a doctor... were you aware that autism is a spectrum disorder? This means simply, that each individual on the spectrum is not going to show the same symptoms as another. If you've met ONE person on the autism spectrum, you've done just that... met ONE person on the autism spectrum.

2. Your child just needs proper discipline!

Proper discipline will stop my child from having autism and any related behaviours? A time out will mean that his/her sensory issues will disappear? WOW, where was I when this news bulletin came out? Seriously people?!? Do you really think that when a child on the spectrum has a meltdown that a time out is going to solve the issue? May I redirect you to an earlier post that I did explaining the difference between a meltdown and a temper tantrum.... read that and then we'll talk!

3. Your child needs to be medicated.

This is truly a very personal decision! There are NO medications specifically for autism. There are medications that MAY offer some benefit with symptoms (such as impulse control and focus), but this is for each family to weigh the risks and the benefits. Some of the medications that are prescribed for children on the spectrum have EXTREME health risks. If you haven't thoroughly researched the options available to families dealing with autism, it's best to just keep your opinion to yourself!

4. If you knew he/she might have a meltdown, why did you come here?

Do you really want to go there? So should I just lock my doors and never go out again? Does my child not have the right to be out in public? Did you know that you MIGHT walk out the door and get hit by a bus?... perhaps you should stay home! Believe me, no autism parent wants to have to deal with behaviours out in public... it's exhausting and incredibly stressful! Saying something like this is truly pure ignorance... and I can almost guarantee there will be some backlash!

5. Aren't there special schools/programs for children like that?

Have you heard of integration? There is no better way for ALL children to learn about acceptance than to spend time together... that could be in school or just a social environment. Sure, there can be some benefit for children with autism participating in programs that focus on their needs... but they are not meant to segregate them from the rest of society! Check out our autism karate program.

6. Have you tried what Jenny McCarthy did?

Oh, which thing is that? Posing nude?... Creating so much fear among society that parents are choosing to not vaccinate their children?... Or are you speaking about

the fact that she apparently cured her son of autism? There are NO cures for autism! There are many other diagnosis that have symptoms which mimic autism... if you are able to cure your child of autism, there may be a good chance that it wasn't autism in the first place. NOTE: I am not saying vaccines cause autism... nor am I saying that they don't contribute... so please don't jump all over this statement!!

7. Autism is over diagnosed.

Autism isn't over diagnosed! Autism also isn't the 'diagnosis of the month'! Changing the diagnostic manual so that the numbers seem lower isn't going to make it go away! It is alive and well all over the world! 1 in 88 children have autism... and my son is one of them. Did you know that those statistics are based on findings from about four years ago... so the statistics would really be much higher today!

8. You poor thing... it's such a shame!

Thanks for the pity! It really helps me feel good and get through my day! Thanks so much for your words of encouragement! Next time, why not ask a parent a question about autism? Most of us love to share a little autism awareness to help you better understand and leave us a little more informed than you were when you first said something!

9. Will he/she be able to go to college, get married or hold down a job?

Good question... unfortunately I can't predict the future! Will your child be able to?

10. You should take more time for yourself!

I should... you're right! Are you offering to babysit? I'd sure love to go to a movie or something that isn't rated G!!

Everyone who has a child with autism has had to deal with the stares, comments and lack of understanding. It comes with the job! When you deal with it all the time, you learn to ignore ignorant people!

As a word of warning, statements like these will be ignored by some parents and cause others to bite your head off. If you don't want to take that risk, it's best to keep your thoughts to yourself. Never assume, that just because a child is having a behavioural problem, that it is related to bad parenting!