



## Autism 101 - Coping

Coping with “the news” and what lies ahead...Autism Advocate Foundation can help.

Parents whose children have received “the diagnosis” face an emotional ride. First, there's the initial shock, which may leave you feeling embittered and confused. Though naming the problem does ultimately explain the concerns you had as you noticed hard-to-explain patterns in your child's behavior. You may grieve for the lost experiences with your child and ask “why”. You may become angry and sad, relieved and encouraged, riding the waves of these emotions as they come and go. One conclusion you will ultimately come to is that you are not alone. There are answers for treatment and a support network that wants to help. Know that it is okay to ask for help. Know that Autism does not have to defeat you or your child. The Autism Advocate Foundation consists of families, facing the same challenges, ready to lend you the support you need.

Like other parents with children on the spectrum, you will face many challenges, starting with the incomprehension and insensitivity of others unfamiliar with your situation. They may think your child is "misbehaving" and, consequently, deem you a parent unable to "control" your child. Ignorance can bring out the worst in others, and sometimes, when they're not privy to your child's issues, don't understand, or simply won't accept the diagnosis, they may be more judgmental. As the parent, remember that structure is important to children on the spectrum, as it makes them feel secure and grounded. Unfamiliar social situations unnerve them, so prepare your child. Talk to your child describing what to expect before the situation takes place or they reach a destination. Consistency is often overlooked for convenience, but will reduce anxiety and emotional reactions for both you and your child. Implementing these key elements will assist you in coping with difficult situations and difficult people. As difficult as it is for parents to go through this journey, it's even harder for the children themselves who have to work through their own personal challenges and other people's ignorance as they make their way in the world. Let your children know you are there for them, and help them understand they are not alone. Participating in community autism activities and programming where parents can connect with other parents and children can meet new friends can replenish emotional and spiritual needs.

The Autism Advocate Foundation can help you connect with other families that share similar daily challenges. Families that support and access Autism Advocate Foundation all have children with various needs, but come together for a simple mission of helping each child achieve their personal goals and dreams. All of our children may be labeled with a *disability* but together we can give them the *ability* to be successful.