



ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTION: ADOPTION + AUTISM

What's Inside ?



Listen

This podcast episode delves into the intersection of neurodivergence, trauma, and adoption, offering strategies from both therapeutic and personal perspectives.



Read

Hannah Andreasen, MEd, BCBA, shares how using an individualized treatment approach works best when treating an individual both on the spectrum and who has experienced trauma. That approach is known as trauma-informed ABA.



Watch

Dr. Morénike Giwa Onaiwu, adoptive parent and Autistic adult, shares about her challenges raising two children with Autism.

7 FOUNDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING NEURODIVERGENT ADOPTEES

- 1 Build Safety Through Structure and Predictability
- 2 Focus on Connection Before Correction
- 3 Understand Behavior as Communication
- 4 Support Emotional Regulation
- 5 Embrace and Celebrate Neurodiversity
- 6 Address Identity and Belonging
- 7 Build a Support Network

Learn more in our newsletter below!





7 FOUNDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING NEURODIVERGENT ADOPTEES

Adopting a child is a powerful, life-changing commitment—and when your child is also on the Autism Spectrum, your parenting journey will include additional layers of understanding, advocacy, and support.

Build Safety with Structure

Children with Autism and a history of adoption thrive on predictability. Use routines, visual schedules, and sensory-friendly spaces to help them feel secure and in control.

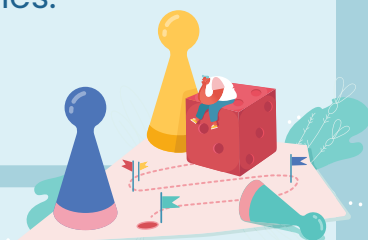
01



Connect Before You Correct

Children from hard places need connection before correction. Use calm tones, shared activities, and choices to build trust. TBRI® techniques are especially helpful for adoptive families.

02



Behavior = Communication

Every behavior—especially challenging ones—has meaning. Ask yourself:

- Is my child overstimulated or overwhelmed?
- Are they trying to express a need they can't put into words?
- Is this behavior rooted in fear or past trauma?

Reframing behavior helps you respond with empathy instead of frustration.

03



SCROLL FOR MORE!

Support Emotional Regulation



Your child may struggle to manage big emotions. You can help by:

- Teaching coping strategies like deep breathing or using a calm-down corner
- Offering weighted blankets, fidgets, or other sensory tools
- Naming feelings and modeling how to handle them

Progress in this area is often slow and nonlinear—and that's okay.

04

Celebrate Neurodiversity

Help your child understand that autism is part of what makes them wonderfully unique.

- Avoid trying to “fix” or force conformity
- Highlight their strengths (creativity, honesty, pattern recognition, etc.)
- Share books and media that reflect neurodiverse identities

Encourage self-acceptance and pride in who they are

05

Nurture Identity & Belonging

Adopted children with Autism often navigate layered questions about identity. Being both adopted and neurodivergent means their sense of self is shaped by two distinct experiences that can make them feel different from their peers. Your child may wonder:

- *Why was I adopted?*
- *Where do I fit in?*
- *What does being Autistic say about who I am?*



06

Give space for these questions without rushing to offer neat answers. Let them write their own story. Encourage them to attend camps or social groups that recognize both identities, like [Adopteen Camp-Conference](#), [Adoptive Family Camps](#), [Heritage Camps](#), or [camps for Autistic children and teens](#).

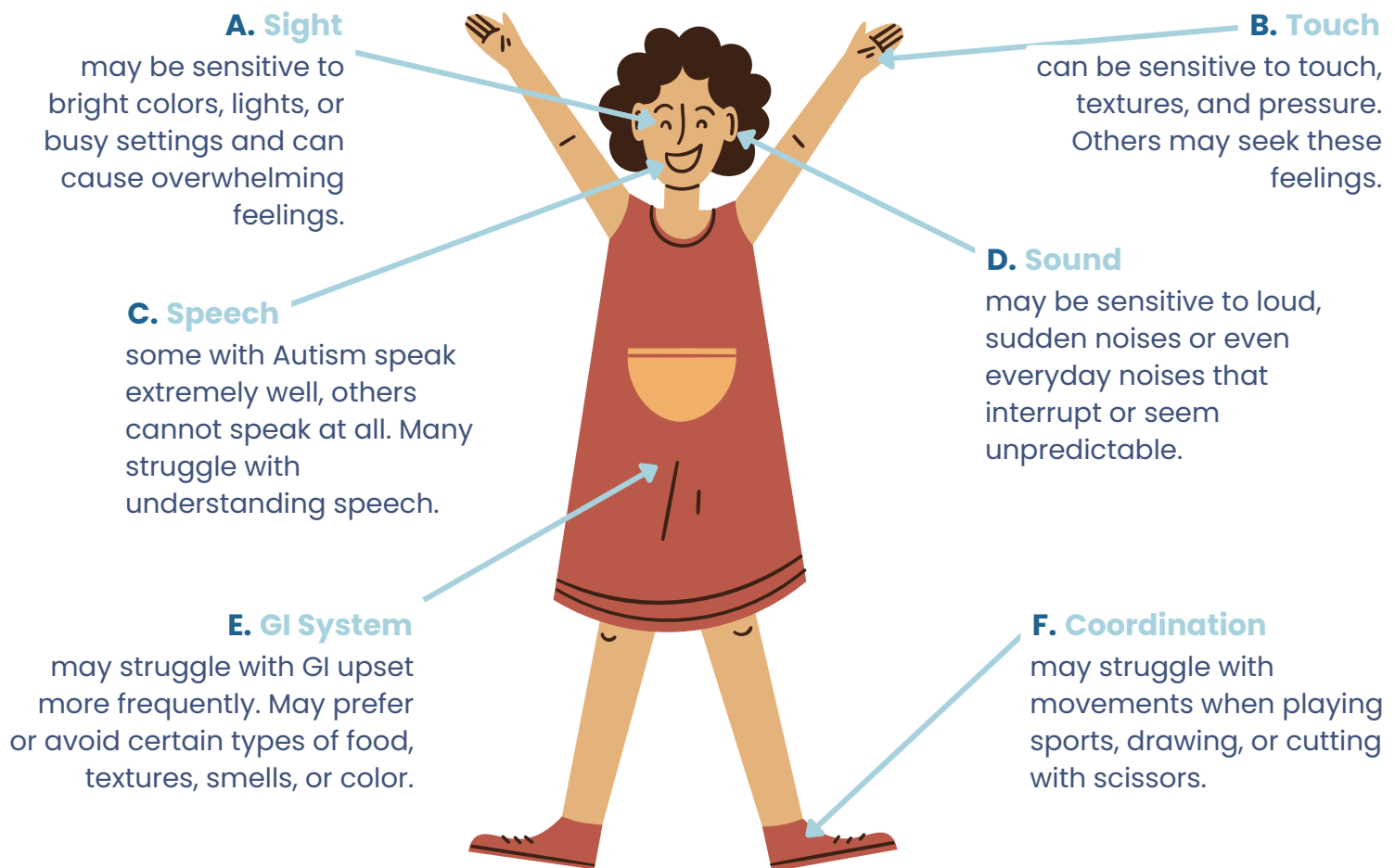


Build a Support Network

You don't have to do this alone. Connect with support groups, such as C.A.S.E. Parent Support Group, professionals, and schools that understand adoption and Autism. Advocacy is a journey—celebrate progress, no matter how small.

07

HOW AUTISTIC PEOPLE EXPERIENCE THE WORLD



HOW YOU CAN HELP!

A

Turn off lights, use a dimmer, reduce clutter, & problem solve ways to calm (ie- sunglasses, hat, etc)

B

Use sensory items: weighted vests & blankets. Remove tags in clothing and provide sensory kits if helpful.

C

Use simple & direct language and leave time for processing the information. Visual supports always help!

D

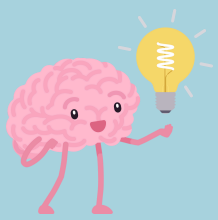
Use carpets/silent counters, snap/wave instead of clapping, & offer headphones or quiet space to reduce stress.

E

Offer incremental changes if diet is lacking. Invest in a good probiotic and seek medical help if necessary.

F


Help them explore a sport they enjoy—like climbing or esports—and support them with local rec center resources.



HOW AUTISTIC PEOPLE VIEW THE WORLD



UNIQUE SENSORY EXPERIENCES



Autistic individuals often experience the world through unique sensory perceptions—not just hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity. They may notice subtle sounds, tastes, or textures that others overlook, finding joy and meaning in these details. Recognizing these differences helps us better understand and appreciate their perspective.

EMOTIONAL PROCESSING IN AUTISM

Autistic individuals often process emotions differently due to sensory overload. Difficulty filtering sensory input can delay emotional responses and make feelings feel intense or overwhelming. Emotions may take hours or even days to fully process, which can lead to strong reactions to small triggers while deeper emotions are still unfolding.




PERCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES

- **Detail-Oriented Thinking:** Many Autistic people are naturally detail-focused, often noticing things others miss. This can make it harder to grasp the big picture quickly but often leads to more accurate, realistic understanding in the long run.
- **Concrete Processing:** Abstract concepts may be harder to grasp, not due to lack of intelligence, but because Autistic individuals often process information in a more literal or concrete way. Clear, explicit communication is often more effective.
- **Perceptual Strengths:** Autistic individuals may have heightened senses or an exceptional ability to spot patterns and connections. These strengths offer unique insights into the world that are just as valuable as neurotypical perspectives.



SOCIAL INTERACTION AND AUTISM



Autistic individuals often face unique challenges in social situations. They may struggle to interpret body language, facial expressions, or tone of voice, making it difficult to know how to respond or engage with others.

Despite these challenges, building social skills is essential. It helps foster friendships, boost confidence, and create a sense of belonging. This can also ease anxiety by adding predictability to social settings.

Effective strategies include role playing, games, and direct social skills training. Visual supports like picture cards or videos can also make social expectations clearer and easier to understand.

<https://www.brighterstridesaba.com/blog/how-do-autistic-people-see-the-world/>

Practical Next Steps for Parents

- 1 Schedule an evaluation with a developmental pediatrician or psychologist experienced in trauma and autism.
- 2 Download a visual schedule template or create one using tools like Boardmaker or Canva.
- 3 Look into TBRI® training for caregivers through the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development.
- 4 Read books on trauma-informed parenting like The Connected Child by Dr. Karyn Purvis or Parenting with Theraplay by Helen Purperhart.



Just A Reminder!



You Are the Right Parent for Your Child

You may not always have the perfect strategy or the right words. That's okay. What your child needs most is a parent who shows up, listens, and loves them for exactly who they are. With every meltdown comforted, every school meeting attended, every conversation or activity together—you are building a foundation of lifelong safety and belonging. There is no one-size-fits-all roadmap, but you're not alone on the journey.

Need additional support? Contact our post adoption team!



HELPFUL RESOURCES

Supporting adopted children with Autism involves integrating trauma-informed care with autism-sensitive strategies. Here are some resources that provide valuable insights and guidance:

- **Trauma-Informed Care in ABA:** This article emphasizes the importance of recognizing past trauma in behavior therapy and offers compassionate, individualized approaches for children with Autism. [TherapyWorks](#)
- **TBRI® and Autism Spectrum Disorder: Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®)** is designed to assist children from backgrounds of abuse, neglect, and trauma. This resource explores its application for children with Autism, highlighting the need for trauma-informed interventions tailored to their unique experiences. [Karyn Purvis Institute](#)
- **Supporting Children with Autism in Foster Care and Post-Adoption:** This guide offers strategies for caregivers to create safe, structured environments, empower children to express their needs, and proactively teach calming and coping techniques. [Autism Society of NC](#)
- **Trauma-Informed Parenting of Your Child with a Disability:** This article discusses the importance of valuing a child's experiences and recognizing trauma symptoms, providing insights on how parents can advocate effectively for their children with disabilities. [Navigate Life Texas](#)
- **Trauma-Informed Support for Adopted and Foster Children:** This podcast episode delves into the intersection of neurodivergence, trauma, and adoption, offering strategies from both therapeutic and personal perspectives. [The Neurodiversity Podcast](#)
- **Adoptee Voices- Adoption Trauma and Neurodevelopment: Misdiagnosis or Coexisting Conditions?** This adoptee blog asks the question: "Are the struggles I face – whether with attention, impulsivity, or social interactions – the result of trauma from being adopted? Or could these challenges be signs of ADHD or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?" [Adoption Trauma: Misdiagnosis or Actual Impact Creating ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorders?](#)
- **Autistic Voices- Autism and Adoption:** Video interview of Dr. Morénike Giwa Onaiwu, adoptive parent and Autistic adult raising two children with Autism. [Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange](#)

Need additional support? Contact our post adoption team!



CCAI



THE PARK
ADOPTION COMMUNITY CENTER