

Parenting Autistic Kids

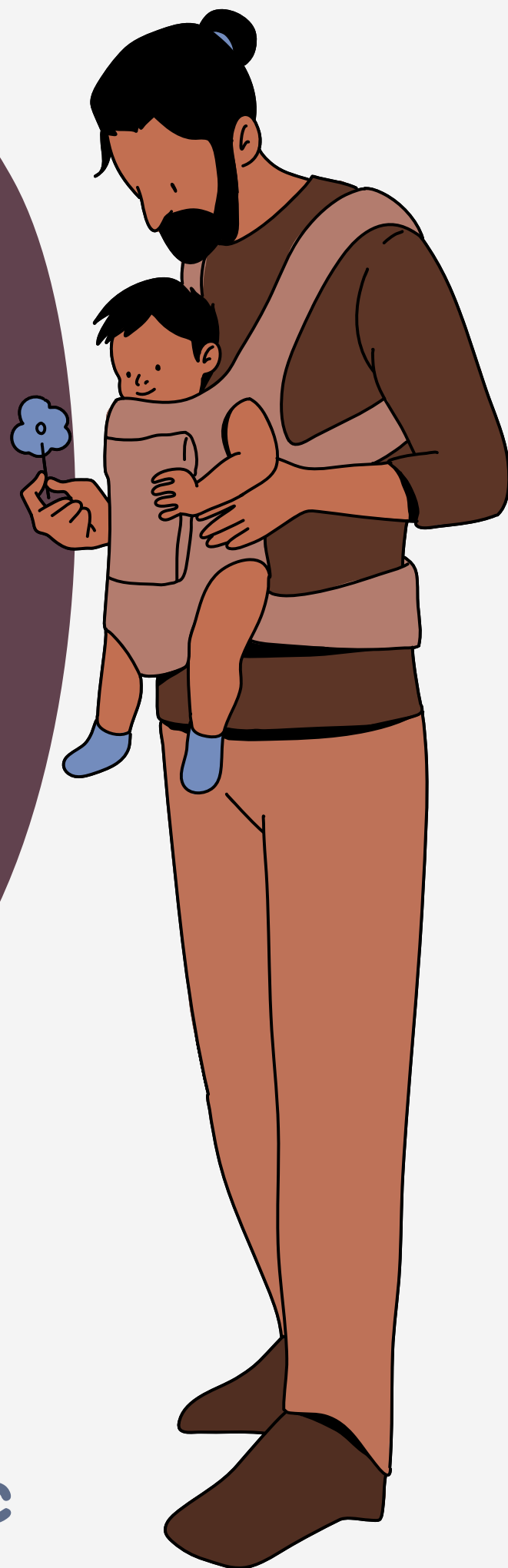
On healthy touch



@NeuroClastic

Society pushes the importance of frequent physical touch from birth as a critical part of child development.

Breastfeeding, skin-to-skin contact, and baby wearing are often recommended—sometimes aggressively—to increase touch.



@NeuroClastic

But sometimes, autistic kids resist physical touch.

Parents may worry they are not giving their children what they need if they avoid cuddles and hugs.

Many therapists push “tolerance” approaches— basically, touch them until they “get used to it.”



@NeuroClastic



But in order for touch to be healthy, it must be consensual. You don't want to accidentally send your kids these messages.

Due to sensory differences, autistic kids can struggle with even necessary touch parents cannot avoid.

Car seats and high chairs

Diaper changes and bathing

Doctor and dentist visits

Holding hands in parking lots

Dressing cuts and scrapes

Brushing teeth or clipping nails



@NEUROCLASTIC



So, we focus on helping our kids to understand that we value their consent and will not touch them unless it is necessary for health and safety. Try these statements.

TOUCH CAN BE DIFFICULT FOR SEVERAL REASONS

UNDERSTANDING TACTILE DEFENSIVENESS (TOUCH AVERSION)



They may struggle with "intimacy overwhelm," or feeling too overstimulated by emotional closeness.

They may not enjoy light touch, but they might love bear hugs and horseplay.



They may experience pain or distress from most touch and be very sensitive to any pressure or heat differences.

They may feel claustrophobic and panic with physical proximity or things moving toward their face.



@NeuroClastic



Touch habits can teach you a lot about your child's sensory needs

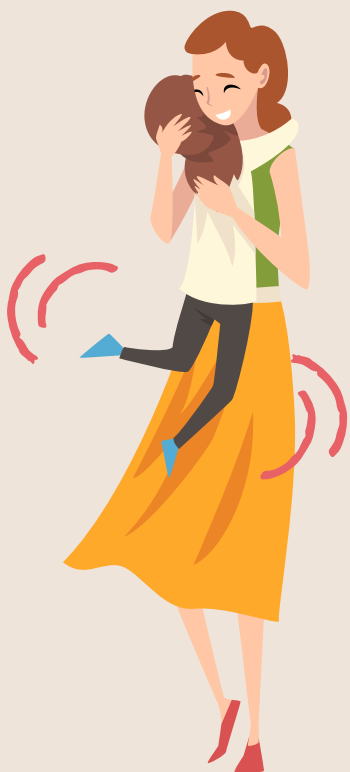
@NeuroClastic



Are you your child's favorite jungle gym? That's seeking proprioceptive feedback—the "push/pull" sense that loves climbing, jumping, and wedging into tight spaces.

This child may not love regular cuddles because they are looking for deep pressure input, but you might invent some variants they love.

The Swuddle



A swuddle is a live action cuddle that involves holding your child in the air and swinging their feet back and forth. The gravity and motion give them the sensory feedback they're seeking for their joints.

The fluddle



The ruddle





Does your child love to spin? Hang upside down? Jump? Bounce? They're seeking vestibular input (the balance system)! Maybe try some hardcore rocking in a rocking chair, or jump on a trampoline together!

On the flipside, a person may be a vestibular avoider and be terrified by movement. Maybe try a buddito! A buddito is wrapping them tightly in a weighted blanket to help them feel grounded (also a proprioception bonus)!

The buddito



Softer sensitivities

Some children have extreme sensitivity to touch. They may find it hurts, burns, or feels like an electrical sensation on their skin. It can feel like having no skin, so even a gentle breeze is overwhelming.

Thick clothes that have evenly-distributed pressure may help for some kids. Others may need very lightweight and loose fabrics with no seams or tags.





Ways to support your autistic child with touch

Let them know that their body belongs to them and they can choose what touch they want (if any).

What feels healthy to you might be very unpleasant or even painful to them. Respect their communication and feelings.

Understand that your autistic child may give and receive affection in ways that are different from others— and that's okay!

Sensory needs change and depend on lots of factors. Focus on consent and follow your child's lead!