

Activity 1—Different is good

The following activity is intended to be used with school-age peers of children with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). A teacher, parent, caregiver, or other advocate can lead this activity with children. If this activity is being done in a classroom setting, the child with ASD should not be present.

Materials needed:

- Newsprint/paper/board
- Markers or chalk

Preparation:

- Write the following questions on a sheet of paper or the board:
- What are three ways people can be different from each other?
 - How does being different make YOU feel?

Before asking peers to answer these questions, take a few moments to answer them for yourself. Think about your answers and the feelings they bring up. This will help you empathize with the students' feelings.

Procedure:

- Lead the peers through the above questions. Ask each question, giving peers time to say their answers out loud. Write their responses on the paper or board.
- Guide the peers through a short discussion of what autism spectrum disorders are and how children with ASD have some characteristics that are different from their peers. You may choose to use the Autism Classroom Connections video to provide more information on children with ASD. You may say: *Children with autism spectrum disorders experience the world differently. Some sights, sounds, feelings can be very overwhelming. Yet, we all have things that make us different, like we discussed before.*
- Then, ask peers:
 - How can having friends who are different than you be a good thing?
 - How can you be a good friend to someone with an autism spectrum disorder?