

WHAT AM I TELLING YOU?

A GUIDE FOR JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS ABOUT INDIVIDUALS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

Created with support and reviewed by individuals on the spectrum.

WHAT YOU SEE/HEAR	WHAT YOU THINK	WHAT AM I TELLING YOU?
Little to no eye contact	Something to hide Trying to be deceptive	Eye contact makes me anxious and is difficult for me. I cannot look at you if you want me to hear and understand you. I may need a break from eye contact.
Aloof, inappropriate comments Outbursts or monotone speech	No remorse, rude Not listening, not paying attention	I do not understand the social implications of how I am speaking to you. I tell it like it is.
Mimicking what you are saying	He is mocking me or not taking me seriously	I have to repeat what you say to try to comprehend it and sometimes repeating things helps me calm down.
Unusual facial expressions and body language Excessive movement	Using drugs or other substances, has an intellectual disability, or appears rude	Autism causes my body to behave and react differently. I am trying to listen to you and do what you ask but sometimes my body won't let me. It is more difficult for me to communicate using "typical" facial expressions and body language.
No immediate response or no response at all	Not listening, not caring	I heard you but I need extra processing time. Please slow down, allow me time to answer your question before asking again, and repeat yourself as necessary.
Plugging my ears, closing my eyes	Non-compliance	It is too bright and loud in here, my senses are overloaded and my flight or fight response is in overdrive. Please give me some time to calm down.
Not wanting to be touched	Hiding Something	Even the lightest touch hurts me. Please warn me if you are going to touch me.
Refusing to comply	Deceptive, Uncooperative	My world is very chaotic. Routine helps make the world calmer. When my routine is disrupted I become very agitated and anxious. Please give me time to adjust to the change.
Very agreeable, admits to anything	Guilty	Making friends is hard. I have learned that doing what others want makes having friends easier. Sometimes I agree or admit to things because I have been told that that is the way to get along with other people.
Repeating the same directions numerous times	Not Listening	I learn better by seeing. Can you please show me what you want me to do?