

Accessible Customer Service for Emergency Responders An Emergency Management Ontario E-Learning Utility

Autism Video Transcript

Bruce McIntosh, Father & Autism Advocate: I think the important thing to remember is, I guess in the vein of not judging a book by its cover. Autism isn't a visible disability, and many developmental challenges aren't. The person that you see doesn't "look" like they have autism.

Liz Cohen, Mother & Autism Advocate: Something though that's very important to know about people that have autism is that they're all very different. Even though it's a disorder that affects so many people. They're all different and they all behave in a different way. Communication is a big, big issue in people that have autism. Even those that speak a lot and are very, very verbal, may not necessarily follow a conversation. It's difficult to have a conversation with someone, with autism; they might want to talk about their specific interest.

Bruce McIntosh, Father & Autism Advocate: Under stressful situations, simple communication is probably the most important thing. Few words. We say things like "Do you want to come with me?" No. "Come with me, now." Not, "I'm here to sort this out" or whatever other, "I'm here to help, come with me." Simple, direct and to the point as possible. If something is going to take a certain length of time be specific, not "We're going to stay here for a while." "We're going to be here for five minutes," but be five minutes. It's the understanding of exactly what's going to happen, that structure and predictability is huge. Respect, I have to say is the big one. We all owe it to one another, but it's also important to remember, particularly about autism, it's not an intellectual challenge. It gets back to those three aspects; communication, behavior and social skills.

Liz Cohen, Mother & Autism Advocate: Because it's so individualized, it's very hard to say, step one step two step three. But keep in mind that communication is an issue and keep in mind about the anxiety. Because that is really tough and it's not something that, you know, you think, "Oh come on now snap out of it." It's very hard for a child with autism to pull themselves out of that.

Bruce McIntosh, Father & Autism Advocate: So don't talk down, just be direct and it'll work.