

## **www.autismhelp.info**

### **Interrupting, repetitive questions and talking too much**

#### **Points to note**

- A child with autism may ask questions repeatedly because it helps relieve anxiety. Questions about 'what will happen next' may be due to anxiety about the future; children with autism have difficulty anticipating what might happen next.
- The child might be reassured by hearing the same response to his question over and over. He may become distressed if the answer differs in any way from what he wants to hear or what he heard the first time.
- For some children, questioning is the only way they know of holding a conversation. They lack the skills to chat naturally.
- A child who talks incessantly may miss the cues from others that it is inappropriate to continue with a conversation that is boring or repetitive. He may also interrupt conversations because he doesn't know how or when to join in.
- Repetitive questioning may be an attempt at mimicking the conversation of others – "What are you doing?" "What's that for?"
- The child may go on and on about a topic that he is passionate about. This is because he knows just what to say, however he doesn't understand that others may not be as fascinated as he is.

#### **What you can do**

- Be sensitive to the child's attempts at communication. Remind yourself that this questioning may be helping him to remain calm. Questioning is often a phase children with autism experience before they develop more meaningful communication.
- Some children love the repetition of asking questions and getting the same answer every time. Vary your answers, while still answering the question. For example, "When do we have Art?" answer "At 11 o'clock," "On Tuesday and Thursday," "After recess," "Before lunch" etc.
- Move the conversation on while still answering the question. For example, "We have Art at 11am, we are making collages today – what sort of picture will you make?"
- Create a visual timetable for the child. If he can see what will happen each day, he'll feel less anxious and may stop asking questions. You can print out a variety of activity cards by going to the [Visual Schedules](#) page or visit [www.dotolearn.com](http://www.dotolearn.com)
- On a visual timetable, list the times the child is allowed to ask questions. You may need to place a limit on the number of times you will answer the same question. Make a clear rule - "You can ask that question three times only." After that, suggest more appropriate conversation, "We've finished talking about that now, ask me about..."
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appropriate conversation, "Ask me about ...." Give the child a card with a list of alternative questions.

- Use the questioning to motivate the child by telling him that you'll answer his questions when he has completed his work.
- If the child constantly interrupts during group time, have an object that is passed around from one speaker to another. Make a clear rule - only the person holding the object may speak.
- The child may need help learning when it is appropriate to join a conversation, ie. when there is a pause or gap. He may need to be taught specific phrases such as "Excuse me." Teach the child how to pay attention and comment *without asking questions*, ie. by facing the speaker, making encouraging sounds or nodding.