

www.autismhelp.info

Lack of awareness of others

Why does this happen?

- A child with autism may show a lack of empathy toward other people, but it is rare for them to deliberately hurt others. An impaired 'theory of mind' can lead to difficulty understanding the consequences of their behaviour.
- It is common for children with autism to display motor clumsiness. If a child with autism steps on, or bumps into others he may have poor spatial awareness or proprioceptive difficulties. This makes it hard to accurately judge distances and the position of one's body in space. Many children with autism have difficulty reading body language, so they have limited intuitive ability to anticipate when someone might move into their personal space.
- Due to a lack of social understanding, the child may be unkind or brutally honest, such as telling someone they are very fat or have wrinkles. There is no intention to deliberately offend – just a lack of awareness of how others think and feel. The child may not understand why he needs to say sorry if he does hurt or offend someone.

What you can do

- At group time, sit the child at the edge of the group to avoid him having to step over others. Allow him to move off first (or last.)
- A regular motor skills program can bring about improvements in spatial awareness.
- Role play can help the child with autism develop better social understanding.
- Use a social story to help the child understand the need to be aware of the feelings of other people.