

## **[www.autismhelp.info](http://www.autismhelp.info)**

### **Learning to ask for help**

#### **Points to note**

- A child with autism will often have difficulty asking for help; he may continue with a problem until he becomes so frustrated he has a tantrum. Children with autism don't seem to appreciate that other people may be able to help them.
- In children with autism, there is impairment in their ability to recognise the thoughts and intentions of other people. The child may not understand that someone else might be able to offer a solution to his problem.
- Even a child with good language skills may not recognise the need to tell someone that he is frustrated, that he wants something, or that something is troubling him. He may think that others already know what he thinks or how he feels without having to verbalise his thoughts.
- A student who is being harassed or bullied may not complain about or report incidents because he is unaware that teaching staff actually need this information in order to take action (he may just assume they already know).
- A student who appears lazy or avoids his work may in fact be unable to get on with the task because he is stuck.

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

- A child with autism needs help to understand his own emotions and how to convey them.
- If you ask an open question, the student may say 'no' when he means 'yes'. For example, instead of saying "Are you too hot?" you might say, "If you are feeling too hot then you need to take off your jumper." Instead of saying "Do you need help?" say "If it's hard then you need to say 'I need help'".
- Be aware of the tasks that cause the most difficulty. Work alongside the child and help him to recognise when he is having difficulty. Teach a standard phrase to use, such as "I'm stuck" or "I can't do this." Older children who don't want to draw attention to themselves could use an agreed signal to alert their teacher that they need assistance.
- Appoint an understanding peer or staff member to counsel and debrief the child following an incident.
- There may be a tendency for the child to apply one problem solving strategy and apply this rigidly. He will need encouragement and assistance to think 'outside the square'.