



# AUTISM TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY

## NEWSLETTER

## Welcome to my final Autism Train Newsletter.

I set up Autism Train many years ago to give a positive message about Autism describing an individual's strengths but also explaining the differences and possible challenges the child or young autistic person might face. My consultancy work, training, conferences and publishing hopefully have all contributed to supporting individuals and organisations to make the world a more autism-friendly place.

I would like to take this opportunity to give a huge thank you to the Autism Train Team- Kay Al-Ghani and Jackie Powell who have worked alongside me.

Thank you, Kay. We have delivered training on all aspects of autism ranging from an introduction to autism to post graduate level courses and your extensive knowledge of autism has been invaluable. You are always reading the latest research for answers to further understand the enigma that is autism so that we can keep training up to date and find more ways to help autistic individuals, their families and professionals. Our training has never stayed the same! We have had a lot of fun delivering conferences. I think my most memorable was at the O2 with 750 participants where the noise from the trade show meant we could not hear each other speak and of course the episode with the collapsing chair! I would also like to thank you, Kay for proof reading my books and a big thank you to Haitham al-Ghani, her son for illustrating them.

Thank you, Jackie. You joined the team to support the family workshops. Jackie has personal experience of both communication difficulties and autism as her son at the age of four was diagnosed with ASDC. She learnt Makaton to support her son's communication and has since qualified as a Makaton tutor and runs a variety of courses to encourage the use of Makaton. I would like to thank her for the significant contribution she has brought to the training sessions, always friendly, smiling and supportive to parents, helping them to see there is light at the end of the tunnel if they are feeling upset or anxious.

Thank you, I feel privileged to have worked with such amazing people and have them as friends.

We have had such fun designing and delivering the training over the years and hopefully some of you that have attended our training and workshops have found it helpful. As well as imparting information on autism and strategies to support the child we aimed to give people confidence to feel that if they were feeling in a dark place we were there to support them to find a way through their journey with autism.

Although I am sad to be closing the website and no longer delivering training the good news is that I am passing on the training packages to Jackie Powell who will be delivering the training in the future.

Her email address is [jackiepowelltraining@outlook.com](mailto:jackiepowelltraining@outlook.com)

Please email her if you would like to receive details of future training opportunities

One of the things I am most proud of is my work towards increasing awareness and understanding of autism. Although attitudes to autism have changed over the years there is still a way to go which is why I wrote the book 'Creating Autism Champions'

# AUTISM CHAMPIONS

BY JOY BEANEY, MA *Changing attitudes of autism*

By encouraging children to act as 'Champions for Autism', schools can set up an inclusive support network that breaks down barriers and changes attitudes. This is essential, as the increasing number of children on the autism spectrum will, of course, result in increasing numbers of adults with autism in the community.

## IDENTIFYING THE NEED

In many schools, outreach teams and support personnel deliver staff training to raise awareness of autism and recommended practical strategies and approaches. For many children, when they reach 8 or 9 years of age, new issues begin to emerge surrounding the difficulties they have in developing friendships, which begin to affect their successful inclusion. Although children are often encouraged by school staff to behave in an inclusive way, awareness training for children without autism, promoting acceptance of differences and explaining ways to help children with autism, is often an afterthought. It is important to give a positive message about autism, describing the pupils' strengths, but also explaining the differences and possible challenges they may face.

The National Autistic Society states, "One of the best ways to help children with autism feel accepted in school is by increasing understanding of the condition amongst their peers and teachers." If others could have a better understanding of the possible reasons why a pupil with autism reacts as they do in a particular situation, misunderstandings may be prevented. Helping the child's peers to understand what they can do to be supportive and inclusive can also help them thrive.

## CHANGING ATTITUDES ABOUT AUTISM







Peer awareness motivation is a huge factor in making strides to true inclusion. One way to gain the interest and excitement of typical peers is to hold a school-wide assembly that includes peer awareness lessons for teaching pupils to be 'Autism Champions'.

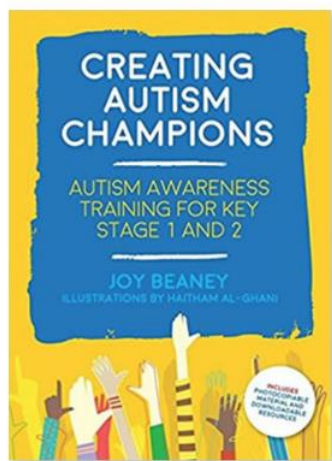
During such an assembly, children hold up large cards with the letters of the word AUTISM (shown in the image below) to deliver key messages and introduce some ways that children can help.

After the assembly, children can be asked if they would like to find out more ways to support their peers and become 'champions'. Lessons can then be delivered to the children who volunteer to increase their autism awareness and focus on accepting and valuing difference. Lessons should include both strengths and possible difficulties a child with autism might have in relation to communication, sensory differences, understanding feelings and being a good friend.

Following initial engagement education, the volunteers will be ready to help at transition, break and lunch times. Staff who have implemented "Autism Champions" within their school report that it helped reduce the pupil with autism's anxiety in these situations. The volunteers were able to suggest some ideas on how to ensure their school was a fun and positive place to be.



 Accept	 Understand	 Try to help	 Include me in what you do	 Show support	 Make friends
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*I think it has helped everyone in the school to recognize the gifts and talents of all children and value them'*

Teacher

*'I feel people understand me better'*

Pupil with autism

*'I was worried about telling people I had Aspersers but it has been good'*

Pupil with autism

### Some views on the impact of the peer awareness program

*'Through explaining to the class about autism they have worked out ways to help their friend with autism'*

Teacher

*'I appreciated being asked by the school what support I felt my child needed and the best way to share this with the other children in his class. He has been much happier going to school since the class has been doing the peer awareness lessons'*

Parent

*'I think they are more understanding and they now realize that T's angry reaction is not directed at them but that he is getting anxious as he didn't understand the rules of the game.'*

Teacher

## SECURING STRATEGIES PROMOTES SUCCESS

There are a variety of strategies that can be put into place to enhance peer support and inclusive classrooms. These can come in the form of:

- Using pictures to promote understanding.
- Asking if they need clarification or support of the expectations.
- Requesting a break for them if they seem to be becoming anxious.
- Encouraging everyone not to be too noisy.
- Being kind and being their friend.

What happens outside of the classroom is just as important as what happens inside. In fact, children with autism may find these more social environments much more demanding than taking pencil to paper. Ways that children can support peers who have autism at playtimes or during lunchtime are:

- Designate friendship benches on the playground.
- Special lunch clubs about the child's special interests, but open to other children too.
- Keep a protective eye out against potential bullying.
- Transition with a partner from the playground back into the classroom before play time ends, so that they don't have to get in the queue.
- Provide a lunch table in a quiet area where students can sit together.

## MAKING IT YOUR OWN

Implementation of "Autism Champions" should be tailored school by school. Peer awareness materials can be used successfully in a variety of ways to fulfill an individual school's needs. In some instances, just the assembly delivered to the whole school to raise awareness and part of the Personal, Social, Health Education Curriculum module focusing on differences are needed. Teachers can choose to deliver the lessons to all the pupils in their class or those identified through the process mentioned above.

Teaching peers about autism can take place in a generalized way when not related to an individual pupil. Or, it can be more specific to the needs of a particular pupil. Of great importance is that the child's views must be respected and it is vital to discuss what information about themselves they would like shared. Sometimes children with autism want to contribute to the assembly and lessons, others prefer not to be present but want staff to explain their sensory sensitivities, other difficulties and what help they would like from their peers.

Working in partnership with parents is essential, especially as some parents will not have told their child about their diagnosis. Even if the child is aware that they have autism, parents may not wish this to be common knowledge. Parents have an invaluable insight into their child and may be able to provide useful information and strategies.

## OUTCOMES SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

In schools that have implemented peer awareness intervention, positive outcomes have been identified. Pupils with autism were observed to have more positive interactions with their peers and their self-esteem and confidence developed. The volunteers gained a greater understanding of the strengths and differences of the pupil with autism and were more empathetic.

We need to develop children who are aware of the various needs of people with autism and how they can work, grow and play together. Only in this way will we be able to cultivate an inclusive and accepting society that embraces and celebrates difference.

Joy Beaney, MA, is an experienced teacher and autism specialist based in the UK. She is a published author and autism trainer. [www.autismtrain.co.uk](http://www.autismtrain.co.uk)

Reference: National Autistic Society, The (2017a) 'Bullying and autism: Guidance for school staff.' Available at [www.autism.org.uk/professionals/teachers/resource/bullying.aspx](http://www.autism.org.uk/professionals/teachers/resource/bullying.aspx), accessed on 14/02/17.



# UNDERSTANDING AUTISM

**@The Firs, Elphinstone Road, TN34 2AX**

**FRIDAYS May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>  
9.30- 12:30**

**This FREE course for parents and carers in Hastings, with autistic children up to 12 years old, will:**

- **enhance your knowledge and understanding of autism**
- **increase your confidence so you can best help your child**
- **provide some strategies that will make a positive difference to your child**

**This course will be delivered by Joy Beaney and Jackie Powell of Autism Train. To book, call 01424 722241 or email [office@educationfuturestrust.org](mailto:office@educationfuturestrust.org)**

**Our children. Our families. Our community.**

**Registered Charity Number: 1146171 Company Number: 7852922**

The following organisations have been recommended by parents

## WHAT'S ON- events for children & young people



**Aspens** offers services for children and young people on the autism spectrum, and those with complex needs aged 8-25 across East Sussex. Their Children's Services support children and young people to develop skills required to become independent and confident young people, through a range of activities and support groups.

<https://aspens.org.uk/>



**The 1066 Specials Football Club** gives people with special needs and disabilities the opportunity to play football and receive expert coaching. The club provides opportunities to play the sport in a fun and friendly environment. We accept players from five-years-old, right through to our adult sides. All coaching is by qualified coaches who are trained and have been screened for their suitability for working with young people.

<http://www.1066specials.org.uk/>



**Owlets** is a pre-school playgroup for children and parents with Autistic Spectrum Conditions, Speech and Language delay or other Developmental delay. No diagnosis required - if you feel that your family would benefit from their small group size, sensory-friendly activities and understanding ring or email to let them know you would like to come along.

They are based at Sidley Children's Centre and are open on the last Friday of each month from 9.45-11.30am.

Call: 01424 725995.

<https://www.facebook.com/asdsupport/>



**The Hailsham Pavilion** offers autism friendly cinema screenings.

To find out more or to book contact the box office on 01323 841414

<http://www.hailshampavilion.co.uk/>



**Little Gate Farm** run clubs for children aged 8 to 18 with learning disabilities and autism. This gives children a wonderful opportunity to grow and learn on the farm, while having great fun and making friends. It also provides valuable respite time for families.

**Young Rangers** are aged from 8 upwards. They meet at weekends and in school holidays throughout the year. They run the activities as groups – one-to-one support can be provided but there would be an extra charge for this.

**Teen Rangers** are aged from 13 upwards with acres of farm and woodland to explore, they spend their days building dens, making campfires, baking, undertaking teamwork challenges, enjoying arts and crafts, caring for our farm animals and looking out for local wildlife

[www.littlegate.org.uk](http://www.littlegate.org.uk)

.email [info@littlegate.org.uk](mailto:info@littlegate.org.uk)

## Project Art Works

**Project Art Works** is an artist-led organisation working with children, young people and adults who have complex disabilities, alongside families, carers and professionals, on a wide range of creative projects. They have studios in Hastings. During the workshops and art breaks, children are given the opportunity to work collaboratively with professional artists. They will experience art as a tool for exploration, communication and self-expression.

[www.projectartworks.org](http://www.projectartworks.org)

For more information contact [info@projectartworks.org](mailto:info@projectartworks.org)

**If you know of a support group for parents and carers or a suitable club/venue for an autistic child which you think other families would find helpful please email me on [info@autismtrain.co.uk](mailto:info@autismtrain.co.uk)**

**SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES**

## NATIONALLY



**The National Autistic Society** has lots of information and helpful advice  
<https://www.autism.org.uk/>



**The Autism Education Trust** provides lots of free resources to support Autistic children  
<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/parents>

## EAST SUSSEX SUPPORT

### CLASS+

**CLASS+** works across East Sussex to support families/carers of young people with ASD.

<https://czone.eastsussex.gov.uk/inclusion-and-send/isend-services/communication-learning-and-autism-support-service-class/classplus/>  
/

You can access support from CLASS+ at [CLASS@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:CLASS@eastsussex.gov.uk)

Their Advice Line is open on Mondays 10:00- 1:00 Call 01273 336887



**Amaze** is a charity that gives information, advice and support to families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Brighton & Hove and Sussex.

<https://amazesussex.org.uk/>

Amaze's **SENDIASS Advice Line** is open Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 2.30pm.

Call for information and advice on anything to do with special educational needs and disabilities for 0-25s.

Call **01273 772289**



This is a forum for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in East Sussex which aims to place your views at the heart of decision making.

<https://www.espcf.org.uk/>



**Little Gate Farm's Parent Forum** is an opportunity for the families of people with learning disabilities or autism, of any age, to get together and share information and advice

[www.littlegate.org.uk/what-we-do/children-and-families/support-for-families/](http://www.littlegate.org.uk/what-we-do/children-and-families/support-for-families/)



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The service is for school aged children who have social, emotional and mental health needs that result in challenging or distressed behaviours. They provide digital resources, intervention programmes, training events, coaching services, and support groups for families and professionals

<https://www.childtherapyservice.org.uk/>



**Open for parents** is funded by East Sussex County Council and the NHS Hastings and Rother Clinical Commissioning Group. It provides information, advice and support for parents and carers who want to support their child's development and wellbeing, who may be experiencing some difficulty with managing their child's behaviour or who simply want some tips and strategies for dealing with common childhood and teen issues.

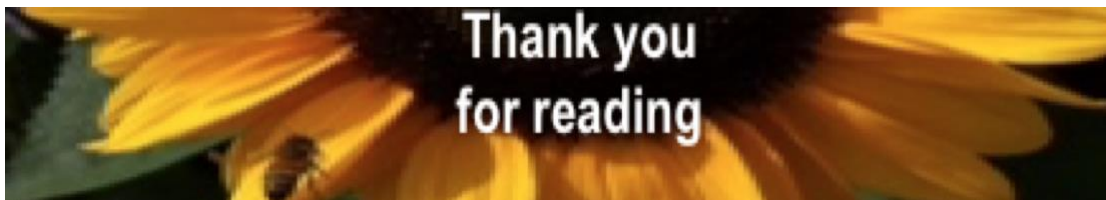
The website describes what support is available in your area [www.openforparents.org.uk](http://www.openforparents.org.uk)



**123 Walks** describes over one hundred short walks to help you to connect with nature. Nature walks are a great way to make the most of the beauty around us and feel better within ourselves. The website describes one, two and three mile walks around local parks, woods, nature reserves and rural footpaths in East Sussex. They are ideal for families who do not fancy a massive hike and like to know it is a distance they can manage in a time that suits them. Each short walk has a simple map and a selection of photos to inspire you and give you an idea of what to expect.

[www.123walks.org](http://www.123walks.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/123Walks>



*Joy Beaney*

[www.autismtrain.co.uk](http://www.autismtrain.co.uk)



Wishing you all the best for the future

Joy