

# Goldilocks & The Three Bears

Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

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**Big Abilities**  
STRUGGLES TO STRENGTHS

# Introduction



This guide is to be used after listening to the Big Abilities podcast two-part series "Goldilocks and the Three Bears: Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder." Both can be found at [www.bigabilities.com](http://www.bigabilities.com) on the blog and on the Big Abilities podcast on iTunes, Spotify, and Google Play.



The story was written as a simplistic way to explain the most common characteristics of ASD to children and to promote a positive discussion on how to interact with people with ASD.



It should be noted that each person with ASD will have varying degrees of the characteristics described, including variances in challenges and abilities.



It is recommended to discuss with the person with ASD or their caregivers their unique struggles and strengths rather than to assume anything.

# ASD Vocabulary

Understanding these words might help you understand ASD a little more.

- 1) **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** - a developmental disorder of variable severity that is characterized by difficulty in social Interaction and communication and by restricted or repetitive patterns of thought and behavior.
- 2) **Echolalia** - when a person with ASD repeats what is being said to them because they may not be sure how to respond.
- 3) **Eloping** - when a person with a cognitive or intellectual disability leaves an area of safety, such as a home or classroom, without telling anyone.
- 4) **Interoceptive Awareness** - the ability to recognize the inner signals of the body and be able to answer the question, "how do I feel?" in any given moment. People with ASD often have under or over-functioning Interoceptive Awareness.
- 5) **Meltdown** - an extreme reaction a person with ASD may have from feeling overwhelmed.
- 6) **Nonverbal Communication Skills** - the ability to use gestures, body language, facial expressions and eye contact to express yourself and to be able to interpret these nonverbal cues in other people. People with ASD often have poor nonverbal communication skills.
- 7) **Proprioceptive Awareness** - the ability to tell where your body is in space without having to look achieved through sensory input from the joints, muscles, ligaments and connective tissue. People with ASD often have under or over-functioning Proprioceptive Awareness.
- 8) **Repetitive Behaviors** - when a person with ASD repeats a behavior over and over such as hand flapping, toe walking, or rocking.
- 9) **Restricted Behaviors/Interests** - when a person with ASD is persistent on doing the same things the same way or is obsessed with certain objects or topics.

- 10) **Scripting** - repeating memorized words, phrases or scenes from movies, tv shows, books or things other people have said. People with ASD may script because they aren't sure how to verbally respond to a conversation or question, as a form of self-stimulation (stimming) or as a coping mechanism in overwhelming situations.
- 11) **Sensory Processing** - the way a person reacts to sensory input such as temperature, taste, texture, or sound. People with ASD can be very sensitive to sensory input.
- 12) **Social Interaction** - how people interact with each other; often people with ASD don't behave or interact the way other people expect them to.
- 13) **Self-Stimulation or Stimming** - when a person with autism engages in repetitive behaviors for self-stimulation or self-regulation.
- 14) **Verbal Communication Skills** - the ability to use sounds and words to express yourself and to be able to interpret the use of sounds and words spoken by others through conversations.

# Goldilocks & the Three Bears

## Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

In this section, we will learn some of the common characteristics of a person with ASD, how these characteristics impacted Goldilocks, and how to be helpful and understanding.

### Autism & Echolalia



When Baby Bear said to Goldilocks, "I am a bear," she repeated it back. That's called echolalia, which is when people with autism repeat what someone else said. Sometimes they do this when they don't know what to say.



What should we do when someone with ASD speaks using echolalia?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: repeat back to them what they should say or ignore it)*

### Autism & Eloping



Goldilocks wandered away from her parents. This is called eloping. Eloping is when a person with ASD wanders away from a safe place, like their home or school, and doesn't tell anyone.



How can we help people with ASD not elope?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: never leave someone with ASD alone, hold their hand when in public)*

### Autism & Interoceptive Awareness



Goldilocks' didn't know she was hungry until she saw the porridge or that her feet hurt until she saw the chairs. People with ASD often have trouble with Interoceptive Awareness, which is understanding the body's internal signals like hunger, thirst, or pain.



How can we help people with ASD with Interoceptive Awareness?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: remind them to eat or drink and tell an adult if they get hurt or sick)*

## Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

### Autism & Meltdowns



When Baby Bear told Goldilocks she wasn't a bear, she began to meltdown. This is when someone with ASD is overwhelmed and has a big reaction. Goldilocks had been through a lot of new experiences that day and began to feel overwhelmed.



How can we help people with ASD during a meltdown?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: speak quietly to them, wait until it is over, distract them)*

### Autism & Nonverbal Communication



When Goldilocks saw her mom crying, she said, "Mommy, you happy." People with ASD often struggle with nonverbal communication, which is things like recognizing emotions in other people as well as exhibiting appropriate emotions using facial expressions, eye contact, and body language.



How can we help someone with ASD with nonverbal communication?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: be patient and understand they might not recognize how someone else is feeling)*

### Autism & Repetitive Behaviors



Goldilocks repeatedly spelled words. Repetitive behaviors are common in people with ASD. Repetitive behaviors are doing things repeatedly, like lining up toys or doing things the same way every time.



How should we react when we see a person with ASD repeat the same behavior?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: suggest they try something new, but also let them enjoy what they like)*

## Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

### Autism & Restricted Interests



Goldilocks' father told Baby Bear that she loves the alphabet. People with ASD often have restricted interests. Restricted interests mean they may obsess over something talking about it all the time or only wanting to play a specific game or with a certain toy. This also means people with autism can become experts in things that interest them.



How should we react to the restricted interest of someone with ASD?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: suggest they try something new, but also let them enjoy what they like)*

### Autism & Scripting



When Goldilocks was falling asleep, she began to repeat the words from her favorite story. This is called scripting, and people with ASD often do this to relax or because they enjoy it.



What should we do if a person with ASD is scripting?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: you can try to change the subject or redirect them, or be patient until they stop)*

### Autism & Sensory Processing Sensitivities



The temperature of the porridge, the texture of one blanket, and the smell of another all made Goldilocks uncomfortable. People with ASD can have sensory processing sensitivities, which is how they react to things like temperatures, textures, smells, and sounds.



How can we help people with ASD who have sensory processing sensitivities?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: ask them or their parents if they have any sensory processing sensitivities)*

## Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

### Autism & Social Interaction



Goldilocks walked into the Three Bears' house without knocking and ate porridge that didn't belong to her. People with ASD don't often understand how to interact with others the way they expect socially.



How can we help people with ASD with social interaction?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: be patient, don't get upset or take their actions personally, show them)*

### Autism & Stimming



When Goldilocks was in Baby Bear's chair, she rocked back and forth, and when she saw Baby Bear, she flapped her hands. This is called stimming, which is when a person with ASD does the same thing over and over to feel calm or when they are excited



What should we do if a person with ASD is stimming?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: as long as they aren't hurting themselves or others it's okay, don't make fun of them)*

### Autism & Verbal Communication



When Goldilocks was ready to leave, she told her parents, "Goldilocks go home" instead of saying, "I want to go home." People with ASD often struggle with verbal communication skills. Verbal communication skills are things like the ability to speak, or if they can speak to use pronouns correctly, respond to questions or carry on a conversation.



How can we help someone with ASD and their verbal communication skills?



Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

*(examples: be patient and understanding and if they talk differently than other people, or don't speak at all, that's okay!)*

# Additional Information



For more information about Autism Spectrum Disorder and other developmental disabilities, visit [www.bigabilities.com](http://www.bigabilities.com).



For more resources in helping families impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorder and other developmental disabilities, visit [www.collaborativecorner.org](http://www.collaborativecorner.org).



To help families impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorder and other developmental disabilities build a system of support, check out my book [It Takes a Village: Get Your Hands Dirty and Build Yours From the Ground Up!](#)



Thank you very much! Please share this content with others you think it may help.

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