

AUTISM

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A Time for Awareness, Acceptance, and Nurturing Your Child's Strengths

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We will all walk around this month wearing blue, trying to spread awareness of autism and its prevalence in the country. We will volunteer at local organizations that specialize in advocacy and do our best to understand and embrace Autism, which affects 1 in 110 children – an overwhelming statistic that reflects the growing number of children with Autism today. But being aware this month is not enough.

It is important for us to have a sense of awareness throughout the year and not just during Autism Awareness Month by lending support and embracing children with autism. Support acceptance, and understanding of a child with autism lies in recognizing and empathizing with their differences and engaging them at an early age so that they can be accepted by their peers.

Treating a child with autism just like everyone else while providing them with the resources and therapies that they ultimately need, helps to normalize the experience of being different. For teachers it means creating a room of toys designed to address the specific

needs of autistic students that all children can enjoy. For parents it means understanding your child's strengths and weaknesses and encouraging growth in both areas by focusing on what your child is good at. It is important to create opportunities for your child to learn through play and activities that focus on building emotional skills, language development and sensory integration that can help your child achieve his/her potential and help them overcome the obstacles they may face in their daily routine. For friends and neighbors it means including your classmate with autism on a play date and making them feel as if they are part of the crowd.

In addition to championing research development, legislative changes, and funding for autism we can also make a tremendous change daily, right in our classrooms, homes and neighborhood. Let us be reminded during Autism Awareness Month to make it a year of awareness and acceptance for the autistic children in our lives and around the world.