

April: 30 Days of Autism Action Ideas to Help Friends, Family

By Cathy Jameson

Awareness: (noun) knowledge or perception of a situation or fact

Action: (verb) the fact or process of doing something, typically to achieve an aim; a thing done; an act.

April is labeled Autism Awareness Month. When it comes to autism, with 1 in 68 children diagnosed by a potentially life-long disorder that affects one's independence, communication and socialization skills that can also impact the neurological, digestive and sensory systems, awareness only does so much to help those affected. For some time now, activists have been asking for autism action instead.

Awareness is merely knowing. It lets someone watch the epidemic grow without having to do anything about it. Action gives someone options. It gives people the chance to get up and do something about autism. Autism happens every day of every month of every year. Awareness or action. Which will you choose?

If you choose action, consider picking one of the following things that can be done now, today, this month to assist someone affected by autism:

1. Visit and get to know a family in your community that's affected by autism
2. Offer respite for a family
3. The siblings need some time and space to themselves too--take the typical siblings out for the day
4. Find out what autism books the parents are reading, and read the book with them
5. Order the book, and donate it to the local library
6. Autism parents read a lot--give the parents a book store gift card so they can continue to educate themselves on their child's disorder
7. Find out what equipment the child needs (communication device, therapy swing, chewies, etc.) and help purchase it
8. If an item or piece of equipment is needed and is out of reach financially, start a fundraiser
9. Learn what dietary restrictions the family has and read why that diet has helped
10. Donate a bag of groceries to the family with safe foods for their child
11. Learn how to make a meal family can eat and bring it to them
12. Go grocery shopping with the family to learn more about diet intervention (or to help with the kids if mom has to bring them with her while she shops)
13. Offer to do some yard work or housecleaning if the family needs an extra pair of hands
14. Attend a local autism workshop or conference
15. Join one of the local autism events in your community (fun run, sensory movie screening, festival, etc.)
16. Get an autism-related magazine subscription
17. Learn what therapy and interventions are helpful for autism families and help support them get that therapy
18. Donate toys, books or supplies to an autism therapy center or classroom

19. Find out what stims are; if a child stims on a toy, DVD, or other object, offer to get another one in case his favorite one ever needs to be replaced
20. Ask to attend an IEP meeting to see how the education process works and why it's important to have supports in place for the child
21. Attend a special education parent association meeting to find out what support they need and why
22. Volunteer or cheer on a local sports team that includes children on the autism spectrum
23. Find out which stores and business support autism families and thank them
24. Shop at the stores that support, train and hire individuals with autism or other disabilities
25. Ask your local Representatives what they are doing to encourage autism families in your community
26. Learn what legislation affects autism families
27. Sign up to receive a newsletter to an autism group who directly supports autism families (Charity Navigator is a great place to look at how a group's monies are allocated.).
28. Learn which organizations give directly back to autism families and donate in a specific family's name
29. Simply reach out to a friend, relative or neighbor with a phone call or letter
30. Pray, light a candle or make an offering for all of those affected by autism

A child with autism has much more on his plate than a typical child. His parents have a lot to juggle as well. His whole family requires more physical and emotional support than they are sometimes able to muster. Some of what a family needs is out-of-reach, must be paid for out-of-pocket or is miles and miles away. Everyone is busy. Everyone's lives are important. But what can you do now, today and this month to ease some of the extra work, emotions or burden for that child or his family? Keep a journal of what you do and what you learn. Finally, thanks. Thanks for doing something this month instead of just watching. Your efforts, enthusiasm and action will be a refreshing and welcomed addition to the autism community.

Reprinted from www.ageofautism.com