

Elementary School Student Video Script

Client: Autism Alliance of MetroWest, Inc.

Writer: Jim Thompson

One Nine Creative
46 Prospect St
Ashland, MA 01721
Phone: 508.816.2613
Email: jthompson@oneninecreative.com
Web: OneNineCreative.com

Introduction

DOUG: Hi, I'm Doug Flutie. I'd like to thank you for watching this video program. Today we're going to learn a few things about people with autism. Right now over one million people in the United States have some form of autism. This disability affects families all over the world. My own son Dougie was diagnosed with autism in 1994. For the next twenty minutes we'll talk about children like Dougie and learn what it's like to have autism. After today, I hope you'll understand children who have autism a little bit better.

TED, PROGRAM HOST - Speaking among a small group of children

Hello and welcome to Straight A's - All About Autism. Today we'll learn about our friends and classmates who have autism. We'll find out what it feels like to have autism. We'll learn how to talk to people who have autism. And we'll discover that kids with autism like to do a lot of the same things that you and I like to do. So, does anyone have a question?

CHILD IN AUDIENCE: What is Autism?

TED: Well, autism is a disability that affects the way a person's brain works. Children with autism see, hear and experience the world differently than you and I. Kids with autism often struggle to communicate. And even though children with autism sometimes act different, they still need to make friends and have fun, just like you.

CHILD IN AUDIENCE: How do you get autism?

TED: No one knows what causes autism. You can't catch it from someone else - it is not contagious. Doctors can usually tell if a child has autism when the child is two or three years old. Right now doctors and scientists are working hard to find out what causes autism.

CHILD IN AUDIENCE: Are kids with autism the same as us?

TED: That's a good question. In many ways children with autism are the same as you. For example, they enjoy doing things like playing video games, swimming and drawing. Kids with autism each have their favorite foods, activities and clothes. But just like all of us, each child with autism is unique. Some kids with autism are able to go to school with you while others need to live at special schools during the week and then come home on weekends to be with their family and friends. Each child with autism is a unique person - just like the rest of us.

CHILD IN AUDIENCE: Is it hard to talk to someone with autism?

TED: Well to answer that question, I'd like to visit a teacher in her classroom. So, let's pretend for minute that it's the first day of school and we're sitting in class right now...

VISUAL: Student POV. Medium shot of elementary school TEACHER in a classroom setting (Students not visible), looking into camera and instructing class in the following exercise.

TEACHER: Ok class before we get started today, I need to make sure the school records are up to date. This morning I'm going to check our telephone records. I'd like to have each of you come to my desk and give me your home telephone phone number. We'll begin on this side of the room. Please come up one at a time.

TED: What if YOU needed to give the teacher your telephone number today? That's easy pretty easy, right? But let's pretend for a minute that you weren't able to speak. And let's pretend that you couldn't WRITE your phone number either. How would you tell the teacher what your phone number is? Can you think of another way to share your phone number?

It can be very hard to communicate with people if you have trouble speaking and writing. Communicating can be very frustrating when you can't answer questions or tell people how you're feeling. That's what it's like a lot of the time for children who have autism.

Kids with autism want to communicate but may not be able to share their feelings as easily as you and I. That's why children with autism sometimes use picture cards like these to communicate. Picture cards can help children with autism talk to their teachers, parents and classmates. We'll talk some more about picture cards later. Right now, let's learn a few more things about autism.

VISUAL: Cut back to TED in library setting.

TED: Sharing important information, like your phone number, is easy for most people. But when you have trouble speaking and writing, everyday things can become hard to do. Most people with autism WANT to talk to you. They just have trouble communicating. Later in the program we'll talk about ways you can communicate with your classmates who have autism.

CHILD IN AUDIENCE: Why do kids with autism act different?

TED: Children who have autism experience the world differently and sometimes act in unusual ways. Kids with autism can't always control what they say and do. Sometimes when people with autism are upset or excited, they comfort themselves by rocking their bodies or flapping their hands. Making noises, jumping and spinning can be comforting to a child with autism. Kids with autism may also calm themselves by covering their ears or repeating words and questions.

And your classmates with autism may not always look at you when they speak or when you speak to them. This might seem unusual at first but it is very common for kids with autism. Children with autism may get very close to you when speaking. This is also common and nothing to get worried about. Kids with autism may have trouble understanding body language and sometimes even words. You may need to repeat yourself when you talk to someone with autism and give him or her extra time to answer.

CHILD IN AUDIENCE: Do kids with autism get angry or upset?

TED: Children who have autism can be very sensitive to lights, sounds and even smells. What you and I might think is an everyday sound, may be upsetting to a child with autism. Kids with autism may be bothered by things like police sirens or flashing lights. Certain sounds and lights can be so strong for children with autism that they hurt inside. That's why you might see a child with autism who seems very unhappy and you can't tell why.

I'd like to show you what it can be like sometimes when you have autism. Suddenly the world can seem too bright, too loud and even painful. While you watch, think about ALL your senses working at the same time.

VISUAL: Cut to JAY getting in chair for senses montage.

TED: Imagine what school would be like if you had those feelings all the time. That's what life can be like when you have autism. See how hard it can be to concentrate when you have autism?

CHILD IN AUDIENCE: What can help kids with autism?

TED: Things can be easier for kids who have autism when they have a routine. For example, most children with autism need to have a set schedule. Most kids with autism do not like surprises or sudden changes. If their regular schedule is changed, kids with autism can become very upset and confused - like you might feel if you suddenly got lost and couldn't find your parents.

A lot of children use schedule boards like these to plan out their day. Having a schedule board can be comforting to children with autism. Schedule boards let kids know what will be happening throughout the day. Knowing what is happening next can make things much more comfortable for kids with autism.

Remember, children with autism do not choose to have their disability. Their behavior is not meant to upset you or cause trouble.

CHILD IN AUDIENCE: Do kids with autism understand what I'm saying?

TED: That's another good question. To answer that, let's go back to the classroom we visited earlier in the program. We'll see that sometimes it can be hard to understand people when you have autism.

VISUAL: Student POV: Medium shot of TED in an empty classroom setting.

TED: In a moment a teacher on the television will ask you to work on a short exercise. The teacher may be hard to understand at first, so try to pay close attention. See if you can listen carefully and follow her instructions.

VISUAL: Student POV: Fade in to medium shot of elementary school TEACHER in a classroom setting, looking directly into camera, instructing class in the following exercise. (Members of class not visible)

TEACHER: (Speaking in French) I'd like everyone in the class to draw a picture. People on this side of the room draw a picture of your house. People on this side of the draw a picture of your family.

VISUAL: Fade in to medium shot of TED in empty classroom.

TED: I bet you're not sure what the teacher is asking you to do. Because she communicates differently than you and I, it's hard to know exactly what she is saying. It can get frustrating when you don't understand the instructions. Let's listen to the teacher again. This time look for some new clues about what she is asking.

VISUAL: Student POV: Fade in to medium shot of TEACHER - same as last shot except two pictures are now visible on the wall behind teacher. On the wall to the teacher's left is a picture of a house. On the wall to the teacher's right is a picture of a small family.

TEACHER: (Speaking in French) I'd like everyone in the class to draw a picture. People on this side of the room draw a picture of your house. People on this side of the room draw a picture of your family.

VISUAL: Fade in to medium shot of TED in the empty classroom.

TED: Now we're getting a bit more information but it's still hard to understand what the teacher wants us to do. Even though we can hear and see the teacher, we don't communicate the same way she does. Let's listen to the teacher one more time and see if we can understand the exercise.

VISUAL: Student POV: Fade in to medium shot of TEACHER - same as last shot. On the wall to the teacher's left is a picture of a house. On the wall to the teacher's right is a picture of a small family.

TEACHER: (Speaking in English) I'd like everyone in the class to draw a picture. People on this side of the room draw a picture of your house. People on this side of the room draw a picture of your family.

VISUAL: Fade in to medium shot of TED in the empty classroom.

TED: Now the teacher is easy to understand! Once she started speaking in a language that we're familiar with, it was easy to know what the teacher was asking.

Sometimes children with autism have trouble understanding people - as if everyone is speaking a different language. Even though most kids with autism can hear and see just fine, they may not understand what is being said. Just like we had trouble understanding the teacher earlier, kids with autism sometimes need extra help understanding others. Now let's take a look at some of the things in school that are available to help kids with autism.

CHILD IN AUDIENCE: How do kids with autism learn?

TED: Sometimes children with autism can be skilled in some subjects but have difficulty in other subjects. That's why kids with autism may need special classrooms to help them learn. Some of those classrooms may not look like classrooms that you've been in. Their classrooms may have swings and large balls. The swings and balls are actually tools that teachers use to help kids with autism sit still longer, concentrate harder and manage their bodies better. Kids with autism may be in your class for part of the day then in their own classes for the rest of the day.

CHILD IN AUDIENCE: How can I talk to someone who has autism?

TED: As we have learned, it can be hard to communicate with someone who has autism. But there are a few ways to make communicating easier. One way is using sign language. Many kids with autism understand sign language. If you would like to try sign language, here are a few signs you can learn.

TED: Using picture cards is another way to talk to someone with autism. Picture cards help kids with autism understand you. Because kids with autism sometimes have trouble speaking, picture cards can make communicating easier.

If you want to talk to a classmate with autism, sometimes it helps to draw a picture or use picture cards like these. (TED TO HOLD UP PICTURE CARDS) And sometimes giving a high-five is a good way to say hi to a child with autism.

So, what did you discover about autism today? Let's review what we learned on the program.

VISUAL: CU with each CHILD stating a fact discussed in the program.

CHILD I: Kids with autism sometimes have trouble communicating.

CHILD II: Kids with autism may use sign language.

CHILD III: Kids with autism like to keep a schedule.

CHILD IV: Kids with autism like video games and drawing.

GROUP OF CHILDREN: Kids with autism need to have friends!

VISUAL: Cut to TED, wide shot with children.

TED: Even though they sometimes act differently than other kids, children with autism like to have fun. Kids with autism need to make friends and be with their family. Don't forget, kids with autism have feelings just like you and I. Now that you understand autism a little better, don't be afraid to make a new friend.

Conclusion - Generic Version

DOUG: Thanks again for taking part in today's program and learning about autism. Even though children with autism may act and communicate differently, they still like to have fun and need good friends. By learning about disabilities like autism, we can help make our schools more fun for everyone.

Conclusion - Data Sheet Version

DOUG: Thanks again for taking part in today's program and learning about autism. Even though children with autism may act and communicate differently, they still like to have fun and need good friends. If you'd like to learn more about autism, your teacher should have some more information for you. By learning about disabilities like autism, we can help make our schools more fun for everyone.