



Easy Read Edition

Inclusive Meetings: **The Autistic Self Advocacy** **Network's Community Living** **Summit**

Part 3: During the Meeting

3. During the meeting

Icebreakers



A lot of meetings start with **icebreakers**.



This is so people can get to know each other.



A lot of icebreakers are hard for autistic people to join in.



For example, “tell your life story to the person next to you.”



These icebreakers make people think of what to say on the spot.



Some autistic people can't think of what to say that fast.



There are better ways to do icebreakers.



You can give people a list of questions before the meeting.

These questions can be ones like:



- What is your name?



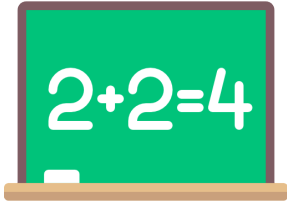
- Where are you from?



- What do you hope to get out of this meeting?



- What is your favorite food?



These questions help people learn about each other.



They make sure that people who need to think about their answer can still join in.

Relationship-building games



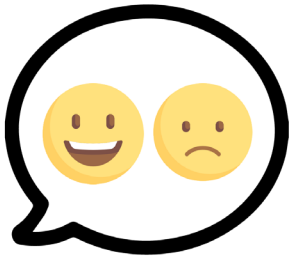
Some meetings have “mindfulness” or “relationship-building” games.



These are games to get people to feel closer to each other.



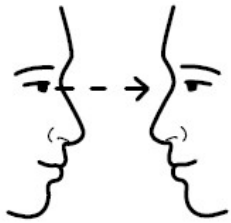
They usually happen at the start or end of a meeting.



Many of these games make people say how they are feeling.



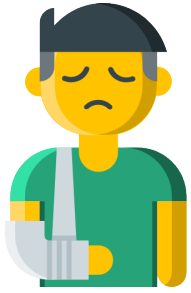
They make people touch each other.



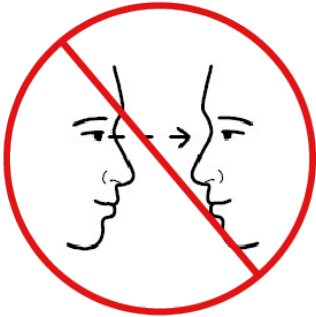
They make people look each other in the eye.



They make people move their bodies around.



These games can hurt autistic people.



It can hurt us to make eye contact or be touched.



We might not have the words to talk about our feelings.



You shouldn't do these games as part of your meeting.

Sharing ideas



You should share ideas in many ways at your meeting.



Don't just talk out loud about your ideas. Share them in other ways too.

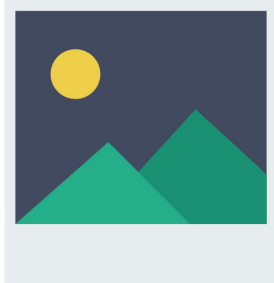
Let's say you want to share an idea. You could use:



- A PowerPoint



- Notes on a whiteboard

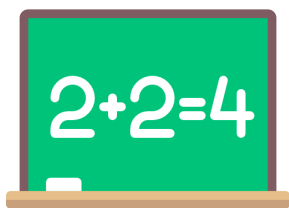


- Pictures (in your Powerpoint or drawn on the whiteboard)



- CART

You can use these things at the same time as you talk about your idea.



This lets every person learn in the way that works for them.



It shows that everyone is welcome at your meeting.



If people feel welcome, they will want to share more.



This makes the meeting better!

Stimming



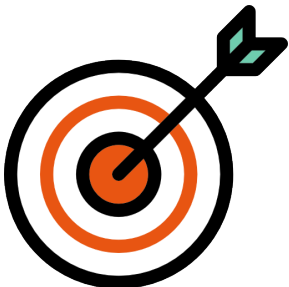
Many autistic people **stim**.



We might rock, flap, or play with a toy.



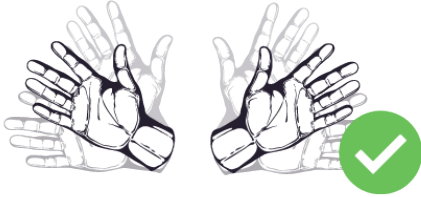
We might move around the room.



This helps us focus.



Don't try to get us to stop stimming.



You should let everyone at the meeting know that stimming is okay.



You should say it is okay to move around.



You can say so at the start of the meeting.



This helps autistic people feel welcome at the meeting.

Talking during the meeting



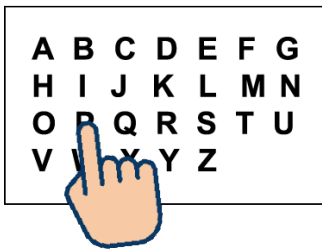
Autistic people may use AAC to talk.



AAC stands for **Augmentative and Alternative Communication**.



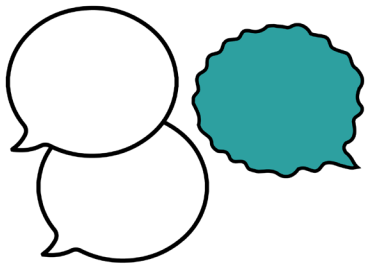
That means using something other than speaking to share ideas.



Some people who use AAC have a letter board.



Others type on a computer or an iPad.



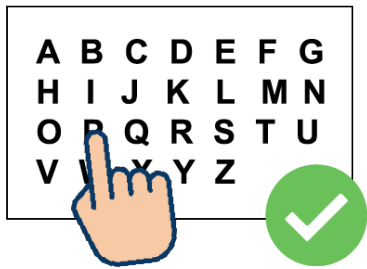
Some autistic people who can speak, speak in a different way.



We may not use complete sentences.



It may take us a long time to finish a thought.



Let people know that how they communicate is okay.



Make sure that people who use AAC get time to talk.



Make sure autistic people have enough time to say what they want.



Don't move on to someone else even if it takes a long time.



Don't call on anyone at the meeting who doesn't want to talk.



Autistic people need time to think about a question before answering.



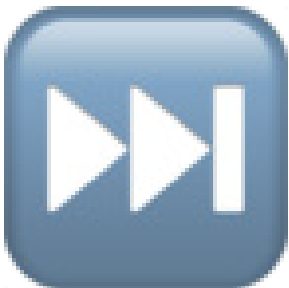
We may not be able to answer if you call on us on the spot.



Instead of calling on people, you could do a “round robin”.



This is when you go around the room and everyone gets a turn to share.



Anyone who doesn't want to share can “pass” their turn.



This can help when talking in a big group.

Working in groups



Sometimes a big group in a meeting can be too big.



It may help to split up into small groups.



Each group can talk on their own.



Then the groups can come back and share what they talked about.



Autistic people can have a hard time with lots of noise.



When lots of people talk at once, we can't tell what is going on.



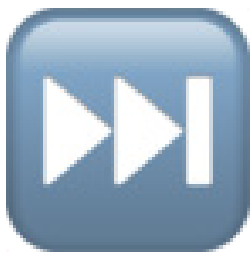
Make sure each small group has their own quiet space.



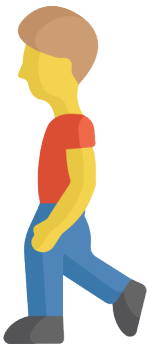
This way, everyone knows what is going on.



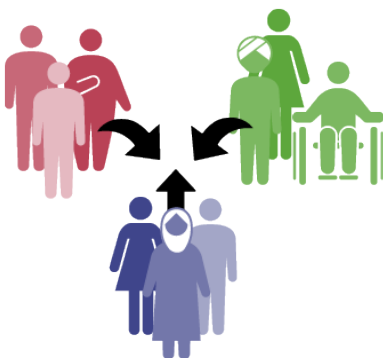
Autistic people need time to work through change.



It can take us more time to move from one thing to the next.



If you split into small groups, leave a few minutes for everyone to move.



Also leave a few minutes for everyone to come back to the large group.

Plan breaks



Taking breaks is an important part of meetings.



Breaks let people rest and get ready to do more stuff.



Without breaks, we would not get as much done.



Any long meeting should have a break.



You should have a 10-minute break for every hour of a meeting.



Eating lunch while meeting doesn't count as a "break".



Being part of a meeting is work, even if there is food.



Make sure that people have enough breaks.

Breaks on our own



Sometimes, autistic people get overwhelmed.



We might need to take a break during the meeting.



We might a quiet place to take a break.



You should have a break room set aside for the meeting.



Let people know where the break room is when the meeting starts.



Let people know it is okay to take breaks whenever they need.



Also let people know that the break room is a quiet place.



People shouldn't use the break room to make phone calls or listen to music.

Talking about hard things



Hard things sometimes come up in meetings.



Many autistic people have gone through bad things in life.



We may be hurt or **“triggered”** when talking about something.



Being triggered makes us remember when something bad happened.



It can make us feel like the bad thing is still going on.



Make sure people have a way to tell you if they get triggered in the meeting.



Don't ignore someone who gets triggered in your meeting.



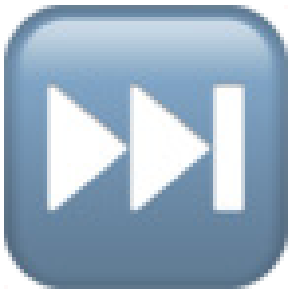
Don't make them feel like their feelings aren't a big deal.



Quietly ask them what they need.



You can give them space to talk it out if they need to.



You can move on to the next meeting topic.



You can let the person know that they can leave the room if they need to.



After, you should check in with the person again.



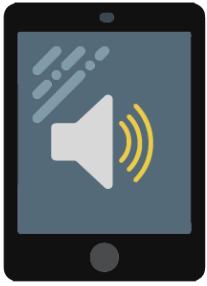
Say you're sorry that they felt hurt in the meeting.



Ask how you can help them feel safe for the next meeting.

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Words to Know



Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Using something other than speaking to share ideas. Some kinds of AAC are typing, sign language, or a letter board.



icebreakers

Games or talks people have to get to know each other at the start of a meeting.



stimming

When someone moves their body to help them focus. They may rock, flap, or play with a toy.



trigger

When something makes us remember a bad thing that happened in our life. It can make us feel like the bad thing is still happening.