

Services & Programmes Unit  
(Dept. of Medical Science)



# SPECTRUM OF HOPE

AWARENESS TO ACTION: STORIES & CELEBRATIONS

## Celebration of AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH APRIL, MAY & JUNE 2024

### Contributors

Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran  
Ms. Shanthini Kalpurniya D  
Mr. Jeeva Prem  
Mrs. Sudha Balamurugan  
Dr. Sunanda Muralee  
Mrs. Kumari Shobha  
Mrs. Vimal Balachander  
Mrs. R. Malathi

### Lay out & Design

Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran  
Ms. Shanthini Kalpurniya D



National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple  
Disabilities (Divyangjan)

ECR, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post, Chennai-603112



**राजीव शर्मा**  
**संयुक्त सचिव**  
**Rajeev Sharma**  
**Joint Secretary**



75  
आज़ादी का  
अमृत महोत्सव

भारत सरकार  
सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय  
दिव्यांगजन सशक्तिकरण विभाग  
Government of India  
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment  
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)



As we go into "Spectrum of Hope: Awareness to Action," we are brought to the realisation of the enormous influence that Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has on people as individuals, families, and communities. This thorough booklet celebrates the abilities, accomplishments, and limitless potential that each person with ASD possesses in addition to highlighting the difficulties they experience.

I congratulate NIEPMD and team on celebration of the month with various activities to empower all including persons with autism and their families.

Let us pledge to improve the lives of persons with ASD and acknowledge the diversity of our human experience in the spirit of World Autism Awareness Month. We can create a world where everyone, regardless of ability, may live with respect, realise their full potential, and add to the diverse fabric of our international society if we work together.

(Rajeev Sharma)

Place: New Delhi  
Dated: 08<sup>th</sup> July, 2024



5वां तल, पं. दीनदयाल अंत्योदय भवन, सी.जी.ओ. कॉम्प्लेक्स, लोधी रोड, नई दिल्ली-110 003  
5th Floor, Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110 003  
Tel. : +91-11-24369069 Telefax : +91-11-24365014, E-mail : wb113@ifs.nic.in  
[www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in](http://www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in) @socialpwds



# Special Message



I am so appreciative of the amazing trip that we have all taken as we celebrate Autism Awareness Month. The previous several years have shown how courageous, resilient, and full of potential people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can be.

I am here today to reaffirm my steadfast dedication to helping people with ASD and their families. I have seen personally the difficulties and victories that come with this path from both my personal and professional experiences. The narratives provided by professionals, educators, and parents in this booklet highlight the value of advocacy, understanding, and acceptance in building a society where everyone can prosper.

Let's keep advocating for the rights of people with ASD, recognising their special skills, and working towards a time when everyone can live in dignity, realise their full potential, and add to the rich fabric of the world community.

By working together, we can create a society in which assistance, inclusion, and acceptance are valued fundamentally. Let's do more than just spread awareness—let's actually do something to help people with ASD live happy, confident lives.

With warmest regards

A handwritten signature in green ink, consisting of stylized, cursive letters and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**DR. NACHIKETA ROUT**

Director, NIEPMD, Chennai

# Message



As we celebrate Autism Awareness Month, let us take a moment to honour the incredible journey of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families. This month is not just about raising awareness but also about reaffirming our commitment to support, inclusion, and acceptance.

We have seen first hand the challenges and triumphs that come with this path. The stories shared by professionals, educators, and parents highlight the importance of advocacy, understanding, and acceptance in building a society where everyone can prosper. Let us continue to recognize the unique skills of individuals with ASD and work towards a time when everyone can live in dignity, realize their full potential, and contribute to the rich fabric of our global community.

Together, we can create a world where individuals with ASD can live happy, confident lives. Let us pledge to improve their lives and acknowledge the diversity of our human experience. By working together, we can ensure that individuals with ASD are welcomed and valued for their unique contributions.

Best wishes



**DR. A. AMARNATH**  
HoD, Medical Science  
Deputy Registrar (Admin)  
NIEPMD, Chennai

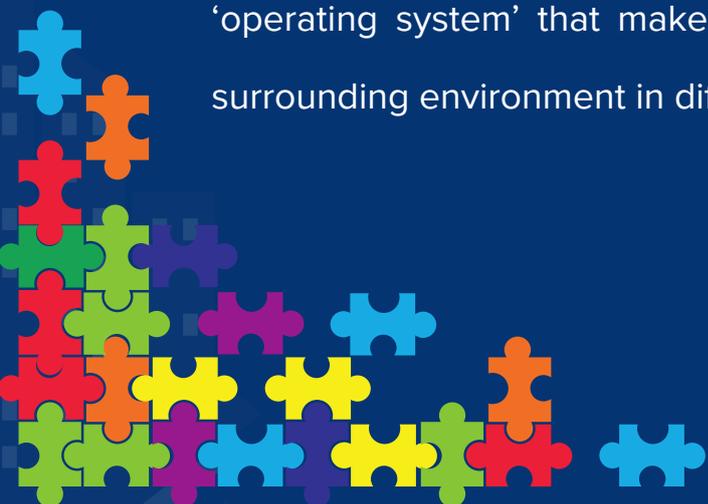
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?</b> <i>- Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran</i>	01
<b>How common is Autism Spectrum Disorder?</b> <i>- Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran</i>	02
<b>Characteristics of Autism</b> <i>- Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran</i>	03
<b>Intervention strategies for Autism</b> <i>- Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran</i>	07
<b>Rights of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder</b> <i>- Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran</i>	08
<b>Art Therapy and Autism</b> <i>- Ms. Shanthini Kalpurniya D</i>	09
<b>Educational Considerations for Individuals with ASD</b> <i>- Mr. Jeeva Prem</i>	12
<b>A Journey of Love and Resilience: A Mother's journey of embracing Autism</b> <i>- Mrs. Sudha Balamurugan</i>	14
<b>Blending expertise and empathy: A psychiatrist mom's heartfelt journey with her son</b> <i>- Dr. Sunanda Muralee</i>	17
<b>A Mother's Journey: Embracing the Strengths and Challenges of Raising a Visual Learner</b> <i>- Mrs. Kumari Shobha</i>	19
<b>Radiant Journey: Finding Joy and Strength in a Special Child's World</b> <i>- Mrs. Vimal Balachander</i>	21
<b>Navigating Autism: A Mother's Journey of Dedication, Education, and Advocacy</b> <i>- Mrs. R. Malathi</i>	22
<b>Support people with ASD</b>	24
<b>Programmes conducted towards celebrating World Autism Awareness Month</b>	25



# What is Autism Spectrum Disorder ?

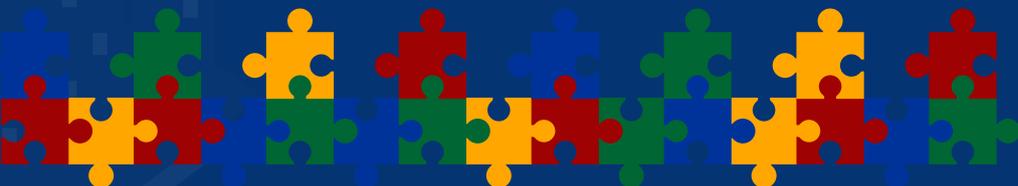
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a range of conditions that affect a person's social skills, communication and behaviour. For example; imagine everyone's brain works in its unique way, like how all phones do not have the same operating system. However, people with ASD have a different, unique 'operating system' that makes them process information and relate to the surrounding environment in different ways from others.





## How common is Autism Spectrum Disorder ?

Autism Spectrum Disorder is considered one of the more common and heterogeneous neurological disorders which in the last decades has changed to a well-recognized and researched condition. Research and awareness have led to an increase in the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder in recent years. It is currently assumed that approximately 1 in 36 children in the United States has Autism Spectrum Disorder. The prevalence of ASD varies across regions and countries, but in general, it is considered to be relatively a common disorder. In India, there are some studies or reports showing prevalence of ASD as 1 in 500 or 1 in 66 children.





# Characteristics of Autism

The characteristics of autism can vary widely from person to person, reflecting the diverse ways in which individuals experience the condition. However, there are common features that can help in understanding the spectrum of autism. These characteristics are typically grouped into two main categories: social communication challenges and restrictive or repetitive behaviours.



# Social Communication Challenges



## DIFFICULTY WITH SOCIAL INTERACTIONS:

- Challenges in understanding and responding to social cues such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice.
- Difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships and friendships.



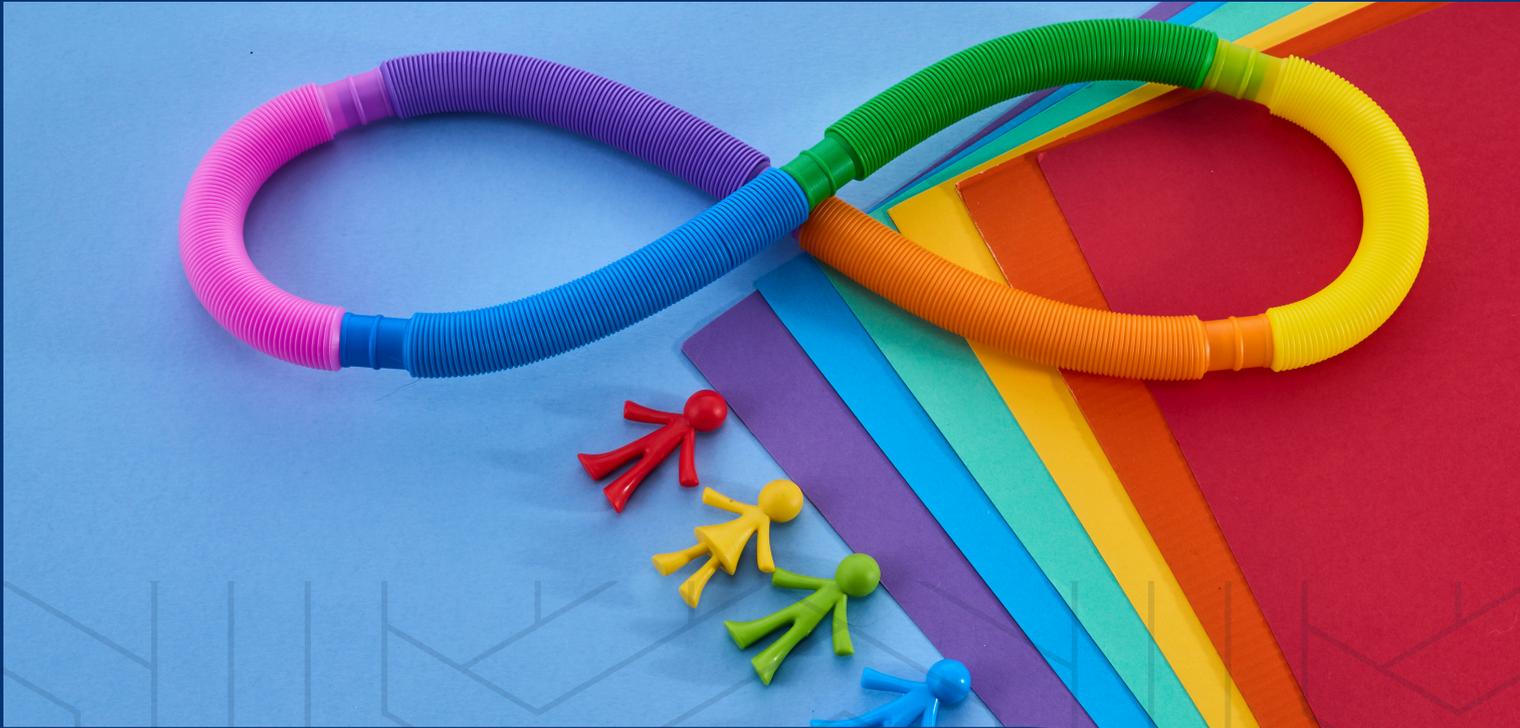
## COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

- Delayed speech and language development in some individuals.
- Difficulty starting or sustaining conversations.
- Limited use of gestures to communicate.
- Atypical use of language, such as echolalia (repeating words or phrases).



## NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION ISSUES

- Limited eye contact.
- Few or unusual facial expressions.
- Limited use of gestures to express needs or emotions.



---

## Restrictive or Repetitive Behaviors

### 1. Repetitive Movements or Speech:

- Stereotyped behaviors such as hand-flapping, rocking, or spinning, Repetitive use of objects, such as lining up toys or spinning objects and Repetitive speech patterns, such as repeating the same phrase (echolalia).

### 2. Insistence on Sameness:

- Strong preference for routines and difficulty with changes in routines or surroundings. Resistance to changes in schedule or environment.

### 3. Highly Focused Interests:

- Intense focus on specific topics or activities, often to the exclusion of other interests. Deep knowledge in areas of interest, which can sometimes be very narrow in scope.

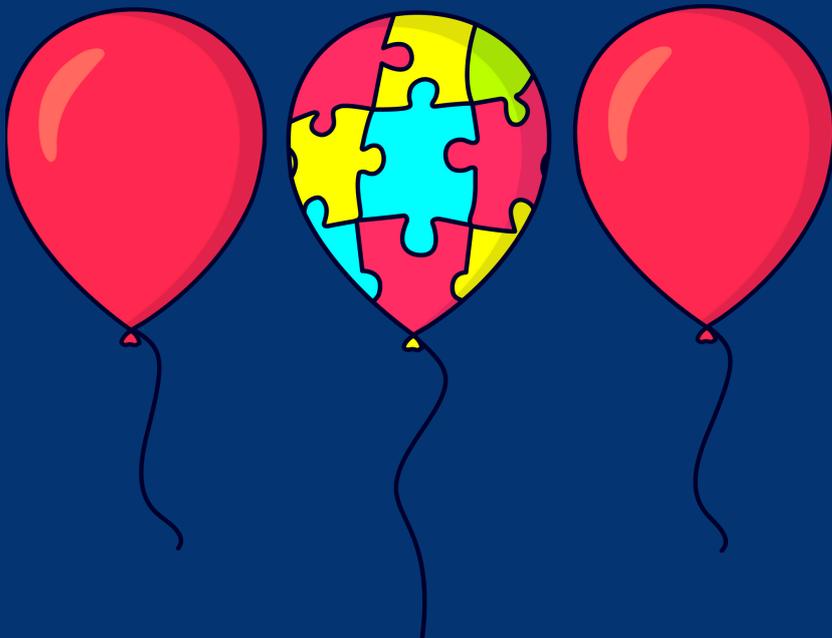
### 4. Sensory Sensitivities:

- Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input such as sounds, lights, textures, or tastes. Unusual responses to sensory experiences, such as covering ears to block out sounds or fascination with certain lights or textures.

---

# Additional Characteristics

- **Cognitive Abilities:** Cognitive abilities can vary widely among individuals with autism, ranging from intellectual disability to above-average intelligence.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Difficulty in understanding and managing emotions, which can lead to anxiety, frustration, or meltdowns.
- **Motor Skills:** Some individuals may have motor skill challenges, such as clumsiness or difficulty with fine motor tasks.





---

# Intervention strategies for Autism

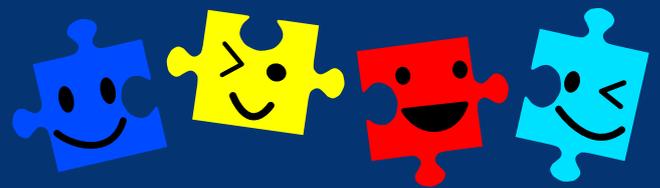
Intervention strategies for autism focus on enhancing the individual's development, communication skills, and social interactions while reducing challenging behaviors. Early intervention is crucial and can significantly improve outcomes. One of the most effective approaches is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), which uses techniques and principles to bring about meaningful and positive changes in behavior. ABA programs are highly structured and individualized, teaching skills through reinforcement and systematic instruction. Speech and language therapy is also vital, helping individuals develop communication skills, whether verbal or nonverbal, through personalized techniques and exercises.

Additionally, occupational therapy plays a crucial role in addressing sensory processing issues and improving daily living skills. Therapists work with individuals to enhance their motor skills, coordination, and ability to engage in everyday activities. Social skills training, often conducted in group settings, helps individuals learn how to interact appropriately with peers, understand social cues, and develop friendships. Integrating these therapies with family involvement and support ensures that interventions are consistent and reinforced across different environments, maximizing the potential for success and improving the overall quality of life for individuals with autism.

---

# Rights of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

In India, the rights of persons with autism are protected and promoted through various laws and policies, particularly under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act). The RPWD Act is a comprehensive piece of legislation that aims to uphold the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities, including those with autism. Here are the key rights of persons with autism as per the RPWD Act:



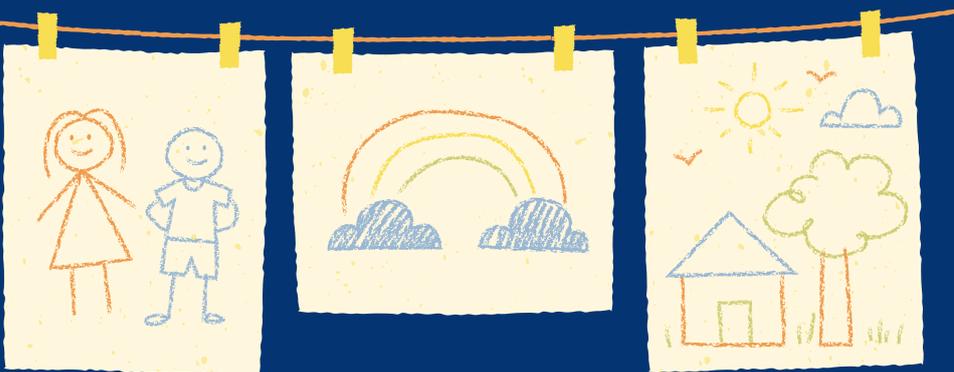
1. Right to Equality and Non-Discrimination
  2. Right to Education
  3. Right to Employment
  4. Right to Live in the Community
  5. Right to Social Security, Health, Rehabilitation, and Recreation
  6. Legal Capacity and Access to Justice
  7. Protection from Abuse, Violence, and Exploitation
  8. Special Provisions for Women and Children
  9. Accessibility
-

---

# Art Therapy and Autism

## What is Art Therapy?

Art therapy is a form of expressive therapy that uses the creative process of making art to improve a person's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. It combines the creative process and psychotherapy, facilitating self-expression and self-awareness. Licensed art therapists use art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to explore feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior, develop social skills, reduce anxiety, and increase self-esteem.





---

# Art Therapy and Autism

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often face challenges with communication, social interactions, and sensory processing. Art therapy offers numerous benefits to these children, providing them with a non-verbal, sensory-rich medium to express themselves and process their experiences. Some key benefits include:

## Enhanced Communication

Art provides an alternative means of communication for children who might struggle with verbal expression. Through drawing, painting, or sculpting, they can convey emotions and ideas they might find difficult to articulate with words.

## Improved Social Skills

Engaging in art activities in a group setting can help children with autism practice and develop social skills. They learn to share materials, take turns, collaborate on projects, and communicate their ideas with peers and therapists.

## Sensory Integration

Many children with autism have sensory processing issues. Art therapy can help them engage their senses in a controlled, therapeutic environment, allowing them to explore different textures, colours, and forms. This sensory engagement can help them become more comfortable with sensory experiences in daily life.

## Reduction in Anxiety

The act of creating art can be calming and grounding. For children with autism, who might experience heightened anxiety, the structured yet flexible nature of art therapy provides a safe space to explore their feelings and reduce stress.

## Boosted Self-Esteem

Completing art projects can give children a sense of accomplishment and pride. This boost in self-esteem is crucial for their overall mental health and confidence.

## Emotional Expression

Art therapy allows children to express complex emotions in a tangible form. This can help them understand and manage their emotions better, contributing to improved emotional regulation.

---

# Art Therapy Activities for Children with Autism

## Clay Modelling

Working with clay can be a highly tactile experience, helping children with sensory integration. They can mold and shape the clay, which can be both soothing and stimulating. It also allows for creative expression and can improve fine motor skills.

## Painting with Fingers or Brushes

Finger painting can be particularly enjoyable and therapeutic, providing a direct sensory experience. Using brushes can help with fine motor control and coordination. Children can experiment with different colors and textures.

## Collage Making

Creating a collage allows children to explore different textures and materials. They can cut out images from magazines, use fabrics, and add various objects to their artwork. This activity can help with decision-making and organizational skills, and it provides an opportunity for storytelling and self-expression.

## Sensory Art Projects

Using materials like sand, rice, or beads can provide a rich sensory experience. Children can create sensory bottles, sand art, or textured paintings. These projects can help them become more comfortable with different sensory inputs and can be very calming.



# Educational Considerations for Individuals with ASD

We know that Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental disability characterised by problems with social interaction and communication; and restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviour, interests, and activities.

There are different levels of severity associated with autism disorders ranging from mild to severe. Characteristics of autism include sensory issues, lack or low quality speech/communication, trouble staying focused on an object or task for extended periods of time



When teaching children with ASD, one thing that can help when dealing children with ASD is to better organize steps rather than overwhelming them all at once. For example do uppercase letters first for 3-5 minutes then lowercase. This keeps sensory overloads at bay. Also, we should pay attention to the fact that children with autism can be overwhelmed by sounds or furniture arrangements located near them. If this occurs the child might end up being completely non-complaint or even violent, when his/her stress letdown stage is passed.

When encountering such behaviour stay calm, be firm but gentle, create a space or provide a fidget tool and have an escape plan if things escalate. An example is to relocate the desk of your child into another corner of this space with lesser level lighting, less degree of noise and allowing privacy by closing doors. It can be also very good to work beside her or to have him under control view in case that they are trying to hurt themselves.

## Teach Your Child With Autism to Read



Things to teach focus on 3 main areas: Language, Play skills and Social interactions. Turning these subjects into lessons can be just as easy, for instance when teaching the concept of emotions you could talk about your child's favourite character from a TV show or movie.

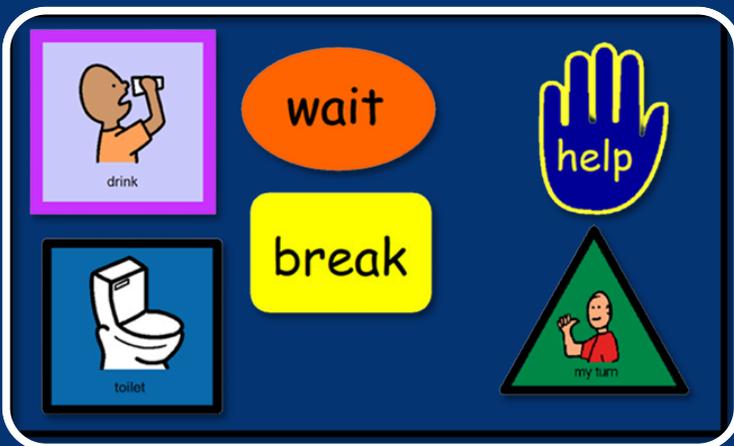


By doing this you make learning fun and increase positive interaction between yourself and the student.

A great valuable teaching resource for children with autism is using visual schedules to help them follow what they are doing during daily life including going to school or putting on clothes.

Other visual teaching strategies for autistic children are visual cues, and symbols which can help them understand things like feelings or weather. Some common symbols include pictures representing emotions, objects related to an upcoming task

### Visual Supports For Children with Autism in School



Visual strategies to support students with autism can be used to help children with autism learn and comprehend new material and work on fine motor skills, along with encouraging independence and conversational language skills.

- Use high contrasting levels of colours that are strong appealing to the eye

- Use symbols over words as much as you can (e.g. 😊 maybe even emojis or photo icons of items)
- Try symbol-based systems or combine symbols with words e.g., a picture of an apple followed by Eat, so they know where the “apple” is at the market or store.





## TESTIMONIAL

### ***A Journey of Love and Resilience:***

### ***A Mother's journey of embracing Autism***

My son Akilan was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at the tender age of one year and six months. From the moment Akilan was born, our journey has been filled with unexpected challenges and profound moments of growth. His journey, and ours as a family, has been a tapestry of challenges, growth, and profound love. As a mother, my heart ached when I saw my little boy struggle, but it has also soared with each small victory he has achieved.

Akilan has an elder brother between the age gaps of 8 years. I have conceived Akilan at the age of 32. I had gestational diabetes at 8th month and I was under medication for diabetes from then till delivery. Akilan entered this world on a normal delivery at Ramachandra Hospital, Porur, despite our request for a cesarean due to his significant birth weight of 3.750 kg. The birth process was complicated, leading to a fracture in his left hand during delivery, necessitating a 10-day stay in the NICU and a six-month recovery for his fracture. Yet, his early months were marked by normal developmental milestones, including single-word communication, which gave us hope for a smooth journey ahead.

The initial months passed with Akilan hitting all the typical milestones. By one year, he was communicating with single words, much like other children his age. It was only after he turned 18 months that I noticed a regression in his speech, toilet control, and attention span. Comparing him to a talkative and active female child in our family, the differences became more apparent. Concerned, I took him back to Ramachandra Hospital where he born. There doctor told to take audiology and speech and hearing assessment and he was diagnosed with autism and an intellectual disability.



The diagnosis was a shock that plunged our family into a period of trauma and disbelief. The transition from initial denial to acceptance was arduous, compounded by my own health challenges. Following Akilan's diagnosis, I developed diabetes, likely exacerbated by the stress and emotional strain. During this time, we kept Akilan's condition private, fearing the stigma and misunderstanding from others.

Despite these challenges, we sought the best possible therapies for Akilan. Over six years Akilan has diagnosed Autism with Intellectual Disability, he received speech and occupational therapy from various private centers. The financial burden was immense, and we also provided home-based therapy by hiring therapists. In 2018, a therapist recommended the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD) in Chennai, which offered free therapy services.

Transitioning to NIEPMD was a turning point. Akilan began receiving a comprehensive range of therapies, including behavior modification, speech and hearing therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and special education. The inclusion of arts practices and group activities has significantly enhanced his development. Since starting at NIEPMD, Akilan has shown remarkable progress. He now has better toilet control and can independently manage his daily living activities (ADL) such as bathing, brushing, eating, toileting, and dressing. He even helps me with household chores, like washing and cutting vegetables. After started to avail therapy at NIEPMD, I have enrolled Akilan in a Govt. School in Panayur, ECR where teachers are very supportive.

Akilan's speech has also improved; he now uses selective words and participates in group speech therapy, where he interacts with peers. Expressive art therapy has been particularly beneficial, helping him explore various art forms and reduce sensory issues. Beyond therapy, NIEPMD encourages children to participate in national and state-level events, sports, marathons, yoga, and cultural celebrations, fostering a sense of inclusion and community.

The support system at NIEPMD extends beyond Akilan. Parents receive invaluable support from each other, clinical staff, and even housekeeping staff. This community has become a lifeline for us, providing encouragement and understanding that we didn't always receive from our extended family. NIEPMD not only focuses on the children but also offers parents opportunities to enhance their skills, access counseling, and participate in recreational activities.

Reflecting on our journey, I am filled with gratitude for the NIEPMD community. Their support has been a beacon of hope and positivity, helping us navigate this challenging path. I urge other parents to seek early intervention if they notice any developmental changes in their children. Whether through affordable centers or those offering free services like NIEPMD, early therapy can significantly accelerate recovery and improvement.

Our story is one of resilience, love, and the relentless pursuit of a better future for Akilan. Despite the hurdles, the progress he has made is a testament to the power of dedicated therapy and a supportive community. Akilan's journey continues, and with the foundation laid by NIEPMD, we are optimistic about the future.

- Mrs. Sudha Balamurugan  
(Mother of Ma. Akilan)

---





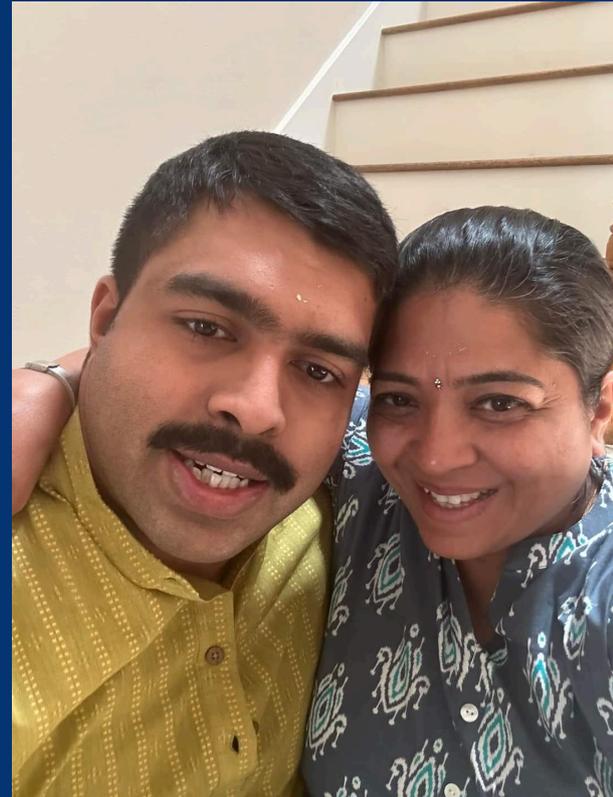
## TESTIMONIAL



### *Blending expertise and empathy: A psychiatrist mom's heartfelt journey with her son*

My son (Vaishnav) is a 22-year-old young man. He was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder when he was two and a half years old. When we were first given the diagnosis, we went through all the emotions of shock, disbelief, anger, sadness and absolute denial. How could this happen and why did it happen to my son, to our family, which has continued to haunt me for the past 2 decades. However, every time I look at my son, I see nothing other than perfection! He is my purpose and being his mom was what God intended for me. After the initial roller coaster of emotions, I very quickly realized that from that moment forward all my energy needs to be focused on optimizing my son's strengths and minimizing his weakness. It certainly has been a challenging yet spectacular journey!!

In his younger days, the challenges included speech delays and getting him appropriate services in the school system. We were fortunate that with support in school he made progress and at age 5 he started talking, slowly his gross motor and fine motor skills were developing as well, and he was able to do more and more activities independently. As he got older, areas of difficulties were different. Unlike what is expected for someone on Autism Spectrum in the social realm, my son was more social, but was having difficulty understanding that he could not just go and say hello to everyone. Gradually we noticed that he was more comfortable with adults than with peers his own age. Adults were more willing to engage with him and he enjoyed that attention.



When he was transitioning to his adolescent years, he went on a summer vacation to India with my mother and grew very attached to life in Chennai. He expressed that he would like to continue to be in Chennai. I thought it was a passing phase and that if I was not with him for a couple of months he would want to come back home and so my mother and him stayed back in India at the end of that summer. Vaishnav has been the apple of my parent's eye from the minute he was born. Hence, my mother was overjoyed to look after him and we enrolled him in a special education school in Chennai. Not only did he have no difficulty with the transition, but he also thrived, flourished and made good progress. He was able to graduate from High School and matriculate to University in India and complete his bachelor's degree in social work and plans to pursue his master's in social work. He visits the United States every year but refuses to stay back. In the past 12 years that he has been in India, we have had many challenges. Being geographically far away breaks my heart, but it is imperative for me to work here to support Vaishnav and also to ensure his future financial security. I have been very fortunate that I have had a lot of support from my parents, Vaishnav's teachers and lots of family and friends who have been with us and continue to be with us through this ongoing journey.



In conclusion, suffice to say in the past 22 years there has never been a dull moment. It has been filled with joys, sorrows, anxieties, apprehensions, fears and it has taken a great deal of hard work and courage to be optimistic about what the future holds. In my experience with Vaishnav every day I have learned something new, every day he has showed and proven that he has unique talents and interests and I have learned more from him than I could ever fathom to teach him. I have learned about innocence, unadulterated joys and doing things with no expectations. There are challenges every day in every aspect of daily functioning, however there is so much pride and sense of accomplishment as together we navigate and find unique solutions to problem solve even the simplest tasks.

Dr. Sunanda Muralee (MD) Mother of Mr. Vaishnav  
Assistant Prof., Menninger Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Sciences,  
Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, USA



## TESTIMONIAL



### *A Mother's Journey: Embracing the Strengths and Challenges of Raising a Visual Learner*

My son, Nikhil, is a 23-year-old young man who was diagnosed with autism when he was 1 year and 8 months old. When our son was diagnosed, we were shocked and devastated, unable to understand what was happening. It felt like life had come to an end. We questioned why God had done this to us.

However, we soon composed ourselves and realized that God had entrusted us with Nikhil because we were capable of taking care of him. This realization made us stronger, and we committed to doing everything possible to support and help our son.

Nikhil is non-verbal and can only speak few basic sentences. He struggles with communication. When he was 2 years old, I started taking him to a special school for remedial classes and occupational therapy. I stayed with him during these sessions. On the advice of a special educator, I also began training him at home. Alongside medical treatment, we provided him with speech therapy, yoga, and opportunities to socialize by attending a regular school.

At home, I made special handmade flashcards and taught him to identify vegetables, learn the alphabet, and read and write. We saw significant improvement in Nikhil, who previously did not even respond to his name. Sometimes he laughed to himself without reason or engaged in hand gazing. He would roam around and cry without any apparent cause.

Whenever we had time, we took him to markets, beaches, and movies. During car rides, he would look out the window and observe the surroundings. Nikhil is a good visual learner, quickly absorbing information by looking at it. He would recreate houses he saw with building blocks, which always amazed us.



When Nikhil was 14, a serious incident occurred. He unlocked the house early in the morning and went out while we were sleeping. We were frantic when we discovered he was missing, eventually finding him with the help of the police, social media, and parents of other special children. The following year, he went missing twice from his special school, but thankfully, we found him each time.

Being a visual learner, Nikhil has a keen ability to observe and imitate the behaviours of those around him. This trait can be both an asset and a challenge. On one hand, it allows him to quickly pick up on new skills and activities by watching others, making visual teaching methods particularly effective for him. However, it also means that he is susceptible to adopting negative behaviours if he observes them frequently.

We decided to keep him at home and resumed training him with the help of a special educator. Now, Nikhil has a set routine that includes cycling, walking, and going to the gym. His behavior is gradually improving. We have started giving him vocational training at home, taking him to markets to teach him how to shop, and including him in visits to friends' houses, functions, and beaches.

Our hope is that our hard work will bring some improvement in his life. As parents of a special child, our primary worry is what will happen to Nikhil after we are gone. How will he live in this world without us? We will continue to do our best to ensure he can live independently and happily.



- Mrs. Kumari Shobha  
Mother of Mr. Nikhil

---



## TESTIMONIAL



### *Radiant Journey: Finding Joy and Strength in a Special Child's World*

A special child is a blessing in a parents' life but it takes time to realise that and keep remembering that. Many a time it seems a burden too heavy for the mother, but then when she sees the positive happy soul, inside the special body, she remembers, and is grateful.

Dhruv is one such a blessing. He loves to sing when he is alone, play with his toys, tease his Mom, play with his pet dog, cycle, watch his favourite you-tube channels and when he sees paints, he itches for working with them on large canvases. The colours, so exuberant, dance with joy in his hands.

Dhruv has fragile X syndrome a rare disorder in which the neurons in his brain are not formed properly. This causes intellectual disability, speech delay and overall cognitive defects. He is on medication which helps him to control himself.

He went to Vexcel, Srihari Vikasam, Roots School, and took speech and occupational therapies at various centres, he learnt to skate, swim and bicycle. Now at age 23, he is a calm loving fellow, likes to help around the house and is generally a joy to be with. As parents we hope he will continue becoming more independent, more capable in small ways and a value addition to society in the future.



- Mrs. Vimal Balachander  
Mother of Mr. Dhruv



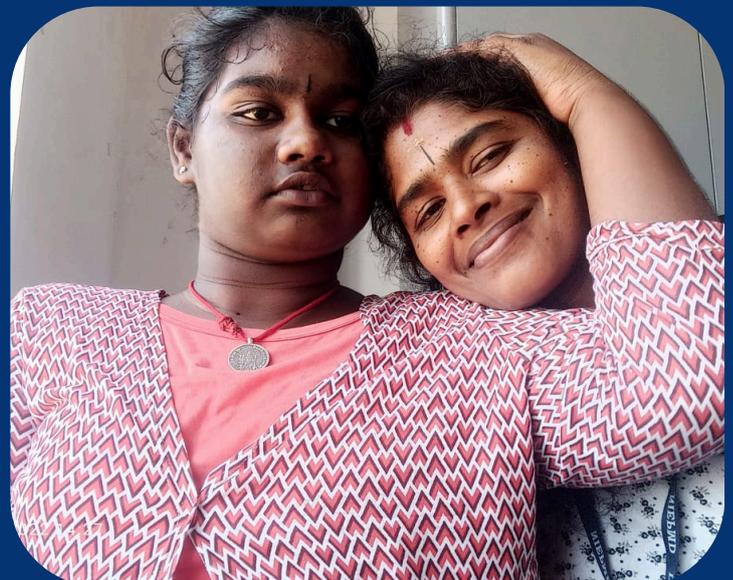
  
**TESTIMONIAL**



***Navigating Autism: A Mother's Journey of Dedication, Education, and Advocacy***

My daughter, Jayashree Mahima, was diagnosed with autism at the age of 3 years and 6 months. However, for the past three months, I have noticed changes in her actions that I don't understand. When she was 1 year and 6 months old, I observed differences in her behaviour, such as the way she cried, her communication, and social interactions. When I mentioned this to my husband, he disagreed. At 3 years and 6 months old, I read an article about autism awareness in the newspaper and was alarmed to see that all the characteristics described matched my daughter. I took her to a psychologist in Trichy, who confirmed that she had autism. They explained that she was significantly behind in eye contact, communication, and social interaction. I found it hard to understand what they were saying because I went to the consultation alone, and no one in my family except me accepted that my child was special.

Determined to learn more, I studied about autism from books and consulted psychologists. Despite receiving no support from my family, I took my daughter to various places like temples, parks, and department stores by myself. I faced many insults and negative remarks, but I persevered and enrolled in a D.Ed. Special Education (ID) program at the college where my daughter received training and therapy. People warned me that studying would prevent me from taking care of my daughter, but I managed both. By the time she was 5 years old, she had made progress in sitting still, daily activities, and social interaction.



I continued to work on her functional activities, sensory integration, behaviour, and social skills. When she was 9 years old, we went to Chennai for me to pursue a B.Ed. in Special Education (ASD). She reached puberty at the age of 10, which I thought would be a major challenge, but she adapted quickly to what I taught her. When she was 12, I pursued an M.Ed. in Special Education (ASD), and my daughter accompanied me. I have always paid close attention to her behaviour to ensure there are no negative changes.

Now, at 14 years old, despite all the progress we have made, it is heart breaking to see that due to hormonal changes, autistic girls often reach puberty early and face challenges.

As a dedicated mother and advocate for my daughter, I remain committed to her well-being and continued development. Through ongoing education and tailored support, I strive to ensure that she leads a fulfilling and independent life, while also raising awareness about the unique challenges faced by individuals with autism and their families.



- Mrs. R. Malathi  
(Special Educator with M. Ed in Special Education- ASD)  
Mother of Ms. Jayashree Mahima

---

# SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH ASD

- Explain at every stage what you are about to do, what will happen next and why
- Give the person enough time to understand the information you are sharing and wait for a few seconds for a response if it is not given immediately
- Questions being asked should be clear and direct using language that is easy to understand and pictures where necessary
- People with ASD might take what you say literally so avoid words with double meaning and humour that could be misunderstood.
- Maintain a routine- familiarity is often important to some people with ASD

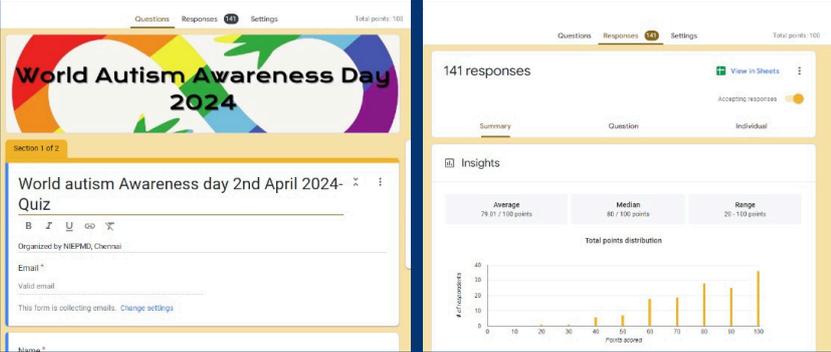


- Social difficulties may include lack of eye contact and unusual body language, talking at inappropriate moments or about inappropriate topics
- Repetitive behaviours might be a coping mechanism and therefore should be respected
- The environment is important - some people with ASD are particularly sensitive to light, movement, sounds, smell and touch. Try to keep the immediate environment as calm as possible to help alleviate any anxiety
- Always consider the person's behaviour in terms of his or her autism, even if it becomes challenging
- Ask the person and/ or parent, carer or advocate what support they might need



# PROGRAMMES CONDUCTED TOWARDS CELEBRATING WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

April to June 2024



On 2nd April 2024 conducted quiz in online in the view of celebrating World autism Awareness day. Total no of participants - 141.

On 16th April 2024, conducted free online webinar "E Information Series-7: on the topic "Effect of Parent Based Intervention among individuals with ASD", commemorating Autism Awareness Month through Google meet. 162 rehabilitation professionals participated in this program. Lt. Col. (Dr.) Lata Mandal from IIN, Kolkata was the resource person and Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran, Rehabilitation Officer (S&P) coordinated this event.



On 2nd April 2024, Art Practices for Inclusion conducted by Snehdhara Foundation, Bengaluru. Ms. Shanthini Kalpurniya conducted play therapy for parents under the parent professional partnership under the guidance of Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran and mentoring by Ms. Sumathi Ramjee, faculty from Snehadhara Foundation, Bengaluru on the occasion of World Autism Awareness Day at Respite care G 7 building. 15 students of services attended the session on visual arts and 10 parents attended the play therapy session.



On 25th April 2024, conducted parent training program on various topics by Mr. Iniyalakshman Raj, Mr. Jeeva Prem and Mr. Sadha Sivam were the resource persons on Management of skills for children with MD at home. 30 parents benefitted from this PTP.



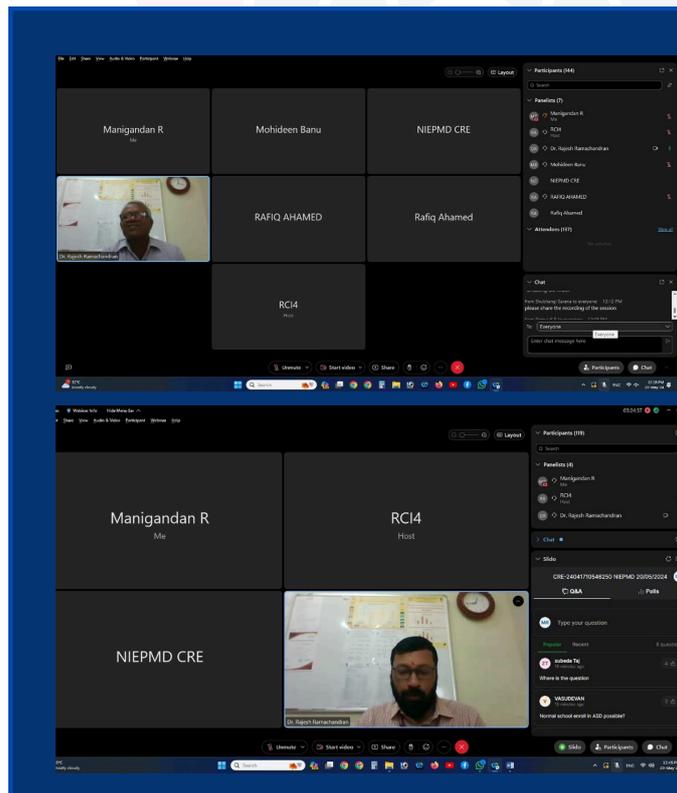
On 26th April 2024, Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran presented on Exploring Robotics: Innovative Intervention Strategies for Autism Spectrum Disorder in the National Conference on Autism under the theme “Translation of Research into usable intervention for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, CRE Accredited at SRM Institute, Kattankulathur. The National conference was organized by SRM College of Occupational Therapy, SRM Institute of Science & Technology. The conference Organizing Secretary, Dr. Ganapathy Shankar, Dean, SRM College of OT felicitated Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran during the conference.





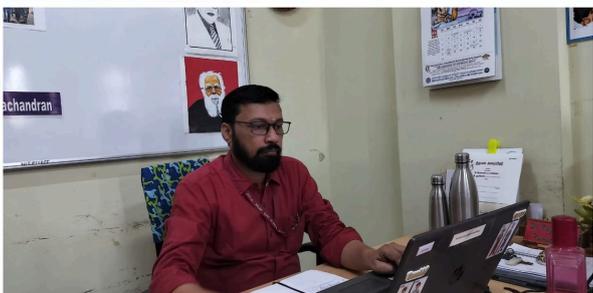
On 30th April 2024, conducted free online webinar E-Information series -9 on “Accessible Classrooms for Children with ASD”. A total of 131 participants were participated. Dr. K. K. Dhanavendan, Special Teacher, NIEPMD was the resource person for this programme. The programme was coordinated by Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran, HoU. S & P Unit.

On 9th May 2024, conducted free online webinar "E Information Series-10: Structured Training in home Environment for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder" through Google meet. The resource person was Smt. I. Anusuya, Rehabilitation Officer, NIEPMD, Chennai. 140 professionals from across the country participated. Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran coordinated the programme



National CRE Webinar on the title “Moving from surviving to Thriving for Autism Spectrum Disorder” conducted in the view of celebrating Autism Awareness month was held on 20th May 2024 Mr. K T Rafiq Ahamed and Mrs. M Mohideen Banu were the resource persons. A total of 140 participants participated the CRE webinar. The CRE webinar was coordinated by Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran.

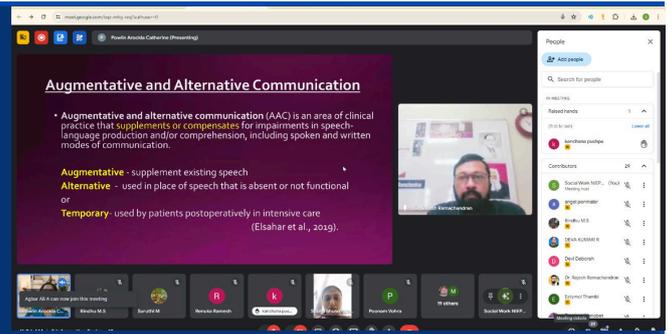
On 27th May 2024, conducted free online webinar E-Information Series-11 on the topic “Sensory Processing Disorder in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder” through Google meet. 202 rehabilitation professionals, Parents and students have actively participated in this webinar.



On 4th June 2024, conducted free online webinar E-Information Series-12 on the topic “Interventions for Autism Spectrum Disorder Based on Principles of ABA” through Google meet. 92 rehabilitation professionals, Parents and students have actively participated in this webinar. Dr. Merreen Punen, Director and Clinical Supervisor, Reeta Peshawaria Centre for Autism & ABA services was the resource person and coordinated by Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran

***Autism doesn't come with an instruction manual. It comes with a family who will never give up (Kerry Magro)***

# 18TH JUNE - AUTISTIC PRIDE DAY



A free online webinar "E Information Series-13: Augmentative and Alternative Communication for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder", celebrating Autistic Pride Day (18th June). This webinar was held on 18th June 2024, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM, through Google meet. Dr. S. Powlin Arockia Catherine, Speech Language Pathologist, Chennai was the resource person and the programme coordinator was Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran, Rehabilitation Officer (S&P). Attendees comprising of rehabilitation professionals, parents and students participated in the webinar



Children and parents participating in the outreach programme at Hindustan College of Arts and Sciences, Padur, Chennai as a part of Autistic Pride Day celebration (18th June)



"If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism."

– Stephen Shore



## REGISTRATION/ HELPDESK



### UNIQUE DISABILITY ID (UDID)

Visit for UDID registration  
**Monday to Friday 12 Noon to 1 PM and 3 PM to 5 PM**  
**& Saturdays 12 Noon to 1 PM**

or contact reception/ registration  
**(044-27472423, 27472113, Toll free no: 18004250345)**

**National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (Divyangjan)**  
 Accredited by NAAC ISO 9001: 2015  
 Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)  
 Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India  
 ECR, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post, Chennai, Tamilnadu India

## REGISTRATION/ HELPDESK



Under the National Trust Act 1999 and specific to; Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Intellectual Disability & Multiple Disability beneficiaries registration for Niramaya health Insurance Scheme

Visit for Niramaya Health Insurance Scheme registration  
**Monday to Friday 12 Noon to 1 PM and 3 PM to 5 PM**  
**& Saturdays 12 Noon to 1 PM**

or contact reception/ registration  
**(044-27472423, 27472113, Toll free no: 18004250345)**

**National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (Divyangjan)**  
 Accredited by NAAC ISO 9001: 2015  
 Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)  
 Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India  
 ECR, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post, Chennai, Tamilnadu India

Follow us on



SP Niepmd



NIEPMD S & P

AUTISM RIBBON



978-81-974145-1-0

