Autism Leader Training

Created as part of "Girl Scouts for ALL Abilities" Gold Award Project by Alyssa Lee
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Training Guide Contents

This training guide is intended to support troop leaders in providing the best Girl Scout experience for girls of all abilities. If you have a scout in your troop or service unit with autism, this training guide will:

- Define autism
- Explain difficulties your scout might encounter during meetings, outings, and overnight trips.
- Provide a list of strategies, techniques, or equipment that will assist you in providing the best Girl Scout experience for a scout with austim.
- Provide a list of other resources that might be helpful.

Create a Welcoming Girl Scout Troop

Every scout experiences the world in her own way. By creating a structured, flexible, and supportive environment, troop leaders can help scouts with autism feel safe, included, and successful.

What is Autism?

Autism (or Autism Spectrum Disorder) is a developmental disability that affects how a person communicates, interacts with others, and experiences the world around them. Autism is called a “spectrum” because it presents differently in each individual.

Some scouts with autism may have strengths in areas such as memory, attention to detail, or

specific interests. They may also experience differences in social communication, sensory processing, flexibility, or understanding expectations.

Some scouts may use verbal communication, while others may use alternative or augmentative communication (AAC), such as communication devices, pictures, or gestures.





Impacts of Autism

Autism can affect participation in troop meetings, activities, outings, and overnight trips in a variety of ways.

A scout with autism may:

- Prefer routines and may feel uncomfortable with unexpected changes
- Have difficulty with social interactions, such as understanding conversations, taking turns, or reading social cues
- Experience sensory sensitivities (to noise, lights, textures, crowds, etc.)
- Need extra time to process information or respond
- Become overwhelmed in busy or unpredictable environments

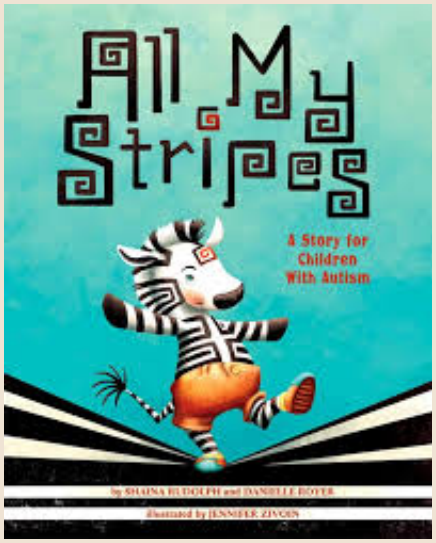
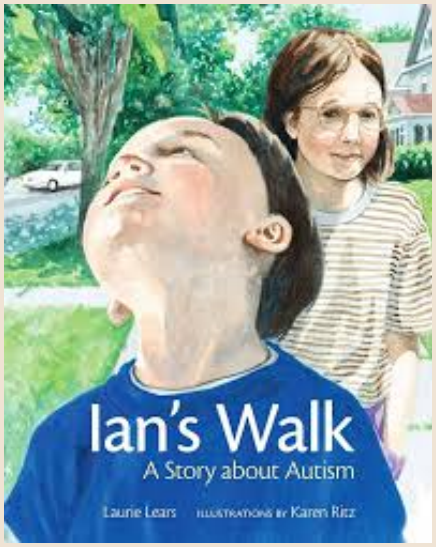
During group activities or outings, changes in routine, loud environments, or unstructured time may be especially challenging. However, with supportive strategies and understanding, scouts with autism can fully participate, build friendships, and succeed.

How to Help Mitigate Challenges Realated to Autism

In order to provide a scout with autism equal access to being a Girl Scout, here are some helpful strategies:

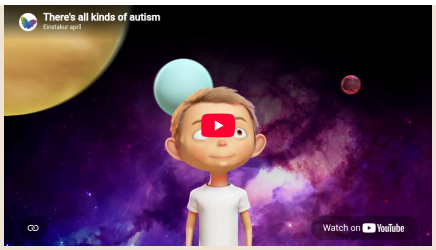
1. **Communicate with the scout and her family** to understand her strengths, needs, triggers, and supports that work best.
2. **Provide structure and predictability**, such as sharing a schedule or outlining what to expect during meetings and activities.
3. **Give advance notice of changes** whenever possible to help reduce anxiety.
4. **Use clear, concrete language** and avoid relying on implied directions or figurative language.
5. **Incorporate visual supports**, such as schedules, checklists, or step-by-step instructions.
6. **Be aware of sensory needs** and offer breaks or quiet spaces if a scout becomes overwhelmed.
7. **Support social interactions**, such as modeling conversations, pairing with peers, or guiding group participation.

Additional Resources for Leading Scouts with Autism

Books	Video Links	Websites
All My Stripes by Shaina Rudolph  (Children's book)	 Amazing Things Happen (Children's Resource)	 Autism and Outdoor Play: Tips for Successful Outings (Adult Resource)
Ian's Walk by: Laurie Lears  (Children's Book)	 What is Autism for Kids Facts about Autism (Children's resource)	Inclusion: Ensuring Access for Everyone (Adult Resource)
The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin by Julia Mosca		



(Children's Book)



There's All Kinds of Autism

(Children's Resource)

Way to Promote Autism Inclusion in Your Community

(Adult Resource)

Conclusion

The Girl Scout experience should be accessible for girls of all abilities. If you need additional support to help with inclusion, please contact your local service unit or council.



Girl Scouts for ALL Abilities

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