

How can I understand autism from a Somali perspective?



These are some **common worries** that Somali parents have about autism:

- It's a mental illness
- It means they are disabled
- They might be possessed
- It's because we live in a western country, people in Somalia don't have this problem

The truth is that autism is a 'neurodevelopmental' difference, which means the brain is wired differently.

Here are **some facts about autism**:

- It's not just a western condition, it exists everywhere in the world
- It's not the fault of the child, the parents or the family
- It affects both boys and girls and some families will have more than one child with autism
- It is a lifelong condition

Everyone with autism is different from each other.

A child with autism might have **difficulties with**:

- Understanding what people are saying and knowing how to respond
- Reading body language and facial expressions
- Doing the same things over and over again

Many autistic children will have different **qualities and strengths**, for example:

- A good memory for facts or the ability to focus on details
- Being more honest and open than other children
- Being happy in their own company

Your child will always have autism throughout their life, but it doesn't mean they can't succeed.

What will make a difference is early intervention and knowing how to support them.

Top tips:

1. **Help your child by reducing language**
2. **Use the 6 second rule of waiting to help them process information**
3. **Give them information in ways that suit how they learn, and use visuals before each activity or trip**



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