

Valentines Day when your child has autism



Valentine's Day is an occasion that can be so much more than just another commercial holiday. It's a day with a genuinely important message behind it – a chance to stop and appreciate the special people in your life.

It's also a special occasion children can get a lot out of, with fun experiences and rewarding lessons about social connections and nurturing relationships.

If you're a carer or parent of a non-verbal child or a child with autism, you'll know that the day also presents some potential challenges – from the commotion of parties to changes in routine and confusing concepts.

Scroll down to read our suggestions for helping children with autism get the most out of Valentine's Day this year.



1. Recognise and plan for the challenges

By identifying potential challenges and triggers for your child in advance, you can help them prepare for them and overcome them.

Challenges and triggers can include school parties, special activities and lessons that place lots of demands on children, as well as possible confusion over the sorts of phrases they could typically hear, such as “Will you be my Valentine?”.

From the pressures of social interaction, to displays of emotion and obsessive behaviour triggers, Valentine’s Day can certainly be a challenge, but with some preparation it’s also possible to help your child enjoy it and get a lot out of it.



2. Help them understand what the day is about

Like other occasions, Valentine's Day is a change to the regular routine and often comes with gifts, social interactions and parties, not to mention its own vocabulary and codes.

Find a quiet time that's comfortable for your child to sit down and talk about the day - why we celebrate it, what usually happens, and what sorts of things people usually say and do.



3. Role play card exchanges or gift giving in advance

You can help your child understand and prepare for likely scenarios, such as giving or receiving a card or a gift, by rehearsing with them.

Breaking down these scenarios into bitesize steps – from taking the card out of their school bag, to going up to a friend, family member or teacher, saying "Happy Valentine's Day", and giving the card to them – can help them develop confidence for the whole thing.



4. Incorporate their own interests

One way to encourage your child to get interested in the occasion is to incorporate something they like, whether it's a sport or a cartoon character. Use their interests as themes for cards, games and gifts.



5. Plan crafts around the occasion

Crafts such as making cards and gifts can be fun and useful opportunities for them to become familiar with the concepts surrounding Valentine's Day - and to express questions or concerns. You can encourage them to express themselves in these activities, whether physically or by using communication tools.

Activities focused on stimulating the senses can be great for non-verbal and autistic children, and you can find a number of ideas related to Valentine's Day here.

[\[link to other blog post\]](#)



Have you heard about **app2vox**?

app2vox is a free communication app that helps autistic and non-verbal individuals communicate with the people around them. Built to improve everyday lives, **app2vox** makes accessibility accessible.

Learn more about the app's features here or explore more resources – you can browse our helpful guides on everything from understanding meltdowns to diagnosing autistic adults and therapeutic activities for individuals with autism.

