

## Talk about Autism – terms of use

Our Talk about Autism community is designed to provide a forum for peer-to-peer support for:

- parents, carers, families and advocates of people with autism
- All community members must be over the age of 16.

Ultimately, we want our online community to be a safe and friendly space to chat.

### 1. How do I join in?

You can sign up online to create your profile. You'll need a valid email address to register. You will be asked for your first name and surname. Only your first name and first letter of your surname will be visible to other members of the community.

You will receive a confirmation email to your registered email account once you have completed your registration. If you don't receive the email, please check your junk mail folder. We will be accepting people to the community to avoid fake accounts signing up, because of this, you may have to wait between two to four working days to be accepted.

### How to get the most out of our online community

- To get started, we encourage you to introduce yourself to the community. You may want to share a hobby or interest, or your connection with autism.
- If you've been a member of the community for a while, you might want to share a top tip or tell us how long you've been a member. You can share your thoughts and experiences, frustrations, joys and anything at all related to autism.
- You can look at resources and support section for tailored information about autism specifically for parents and carers.

### 2. Community rules and guidelines

These guidelines are here to help you get the most from our online community. We want to create a safe space, which provides an invaluable source of peer support. Members can post questions, provide information and share experiences with those who have first-hand experience or a deep connection with autism. Please do not post anything that will help others identify you (for example, your young person's school).

Our community is not a help or crisis service.

If you require urgent support, are worried about the safety and wellbeing of yourself, your child or a member of the community, the following free services are available to you:

- Samaritans helpline for crisis support: 116 123
- The NAS helpline for support is open with amended hours. Please call 0845 070 4004 or [check their website](#) for details.
- In an emergency, always call 999.

### Community house rules

Each time you use our Talk about Autism online community you agree to the following house rules:

### **Advertising, petitions and spam**

- If you have something to offer, which may be beneficial to our community, please do not register solely to post a link to your product, services, petition or website. We would love to hear about what you do, but only after you introduce yourself and make yourself an active part of our community. Then we can work on how to support each other.
- Once you have established yourself in the community you are welcome to share your work with us. However, we ask that you maintain a good balance in your contributions, i.e. post your content, but equally, contribute to the other discussions happening here. Community membership should be collaborative.
- Spam will be deleted, especially if you have posted the same information in multiple places.
- We don't allow links to products or services in signatures but linking to your blog or personal website is fine.

### **Moderation**

- Our forum is moderated by a small team of Ambitious about Autism staff during office hours, Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm. It is not moderated outside of office hours. This includes evenings, weekends and bank holidays.
- Moderators, including the Digital Community Officer, have the final say on anything. If you have a problem, you may complain to them directly and not publicly on the community.
- Creating discussions or posts that question or reference administrative decisions or potential decisions, such as post removals and discussion closures, will be removed.
- If you believe we have made a mistake in a moderation decision, please privately contact the Digital Community Officer and we will review the situation.
- If you would like a copy of your removed post so that you can adjust it and repost, please contact us. You can contact the Talk about Autism admin team by emailing [talkaboutautism@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](mailto:talkaboutautism@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk).

### **No bullying**

We operate a no-tolerance policy on bullying, including racism, disablism, homophobia, sexism or ageism. Any threatening or abusive language will be removed.

If someone offends you in this manner, report them immediately to the Digital Community Officer by clicking the 'report this content' link in the post. Do not enter an argument with them.

### **Research and surveys**

From time-to-time people visit the discussion forums to ask members to participate in research. Please read our section about [Staying safe](#) (below).

All research requests posted must be from an educational institution (eg. college or university) or charity. Please include your work/organisation email address with your research.

Please note that Talk about Autism and Ambitious about Autism do not necessarily support research or surveys taking place on this website - these are independent initiatives. For our own research, Ambitious about Autism follows the [British Educational Research Association \(BERA\)](#) ethical guidelines for educational research and the [Social Research Association](#) ethical guidelines.

### **Sharing advice**

We hope this community will be a useful way of sharing information and resources. However, this should not be substituted for professional diagnosis, advice and support. Any health and medical advice is intended for general discussion and educational purposes only. It is in no way intended to serve as actual, individual medical advice. It is possible that some information may be inaccurate, incomplete or otherwise flawed.

Take any recommendations on the communities as you would treat any personal recommendation – check that it is authentic and suitable. Please do not offer legal advice. Be careful in sharing information yourself – don't present opinions as facts and only share trusted resources.

Please note that Talk about Autism and Ambitious about Autism do not necessarily support any of the recommendations given on the community. We assume no responsibility for any posts.

### **You must not post:**

- Any content with excessive self-publicity, advertising, selling or soliciting.
- Unlawful material – such as indecent, racist or defamatory material or harassments and threats.
- Copyrighted material that infringes any legal rights.
- Posts promoting therapies deemed to be potentially dangerous.
- Anything intended to disrupt or vandalise the website.
- The same information in multiple places.

You must join the site as an individual, not as an organisation, website or cause. Profiles under the names of (or including the names of) organisations, websites or causes will be removed from the site.

Talk about Autism will ban anyone who continues to break the rules. We reserve the right to remove content if it is unsuitable but will send you a message if this happens. If you break the rules we will allow up to two warnings before a ban is placed and your profile is deleted without notice. Serious offences will result in an immediate ban without notice.

### **Guidelines, inappropriate posts and good practice online**

The following information is provided to help to make our online community a safe, accessible and friendly environment that all members feel they can contribute to.

- We encourage lively debate and discussion. However, please take care to exchange ideas in a civilised way, tactfully presenting ideas and NOT SHOUTING BY USING CAPITALS!
- Take care with humour, which might be misinterpreted on screen. Using a discussion forum means that body language and intonation is lost – so language may more easily offend.
- Assume goodwill in others – consider that a negative sounding post may be misinterpreted. Listen to other members and be sensitive to their feelings and viewpoints.
- If by chance someone does misinterpret your words and you receive an angry-sounding reply, or if you've read something and you are preparing to post an angry reply, we encourage you to use the count-to-ten method. This means you step away from the computer, count to ten, and then come back and compose a response which gives the benefit of the doubt. If someone is not responding to your attempts to be kind, please contact the Digital Community Officer for intervention.
- We hope that each of you will recognise that personal beliefs are deeply engrained and not likely to change, and we ask that you recognise when to let things go.
- Please don't ask other members for personal or confidential information. Any posts doing this will be removed.
- Naming and shaming of professionals, specialists and other service providers is not a good idea. For your safety, if you wish to refer to specific people, please replace their names with fake names or use 'X's.

### 3. Your privacy

This is a public forum that anyone can join (although they will need to be accepted by Ambitious about Autism). Please be careful what you post – do not post anything confidential, contact details or personal information, which could put you or someone else at risk. Mobile numbers and personal email addresses must not be posted. However, we do allow work and university email addresses to be posted. Please [read our guide](#) for parents on how to stay safe online.

We hope you will make friends within the community but do not share personal information unless you absolutely trust that person is genuine. If you plan to meet anyone you have befriended on the internet, never go alone and always meet in a public place. You can [read our full Privacy Policy](#) on our website.

#### Stay safe

We will keep your information confidential. If you wish to remain anonymous you can use a pseudonym (no offense words or email addresses).

Like any other website, please keep your password safe and always log out of shared computers.

Each user is allowed one account. Any false profiles (pretending to be someone you are not) or duplicate profiles will be deleted.

### 4. Leaving the community

We understand that people will have to leave our community (of their own free will or otherwise). If you would like to delete your account, please contact [talkaboutautism@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](mailto:talkaboutautism@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

If you wish to no longer be identified with our community, we will be glad to close your account and alter your profile information to remove all identifying characteristics. After account closure, you will no longer be able to participate in this community. You may re-join at any time.

These guidelines are subject to change at any time and apply to our social networks. We reserve the right to deactivate a member's account and remove content without warning but will try our best to give notice whenever possible.