



Special Thanks to:

EPD - The Evansville Police Department for initiating the search for resources to ensure safe outcomes for autistic individuals in crisis in our schools and the community.

Autism Evansville - for Inspiring Autism Spectrum Families in Evansville area

Optimal Rhythms' ACCESS Academy students and campers for their input and collaboration in the development of this resource

Optimal Rhythms' generous donors and sponsors who make life-changing projects like this possible

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Please understand. I cannot speak but I am not dumb. My body does not listen to my instructions or yours.

Live not to control me. I am never wanting to hurt anyone! Lead me to safety and treat me with respect to help me best!

-Noel, Age 20

Presume Competence

Not being able to speak or move reliably is not the same as not understanding. Autism affects motor control and sensory processing. Please assume the autistic individual is trying to respond cooperatively.



Contact Us

We are committed to creating optimal rhythms for life, learning, communication, and autonomy for those with complex communication, movement, and sensory difference.

✉ www.optimalrhythms.org

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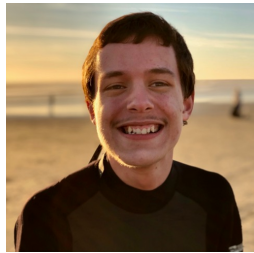
RETHINKING AUTISM for FIRST RESPONDERS

Guidelines for
successful interactions



Noel with members of the Evansville Police Department. Find his quote on back

Let's listen to **#actuallyautistic** people to understand the lived experience of those we aim to support and protect.



Joshua Greiner
Self-Advocate

"I'm really terrified of the police killing me. Police fear me because I try to respond but I can't control my body."



Ben Breaux
Self-Advocate

"The wellbeing and lives of autistic individuals are at imminent risk. We must also recognize when someone needs support, it's not a mental illness crisis."

"We are misunderstood. Perception is important, so stop assuming what you are told about us is really the true situation. Take time to ask us and give us a way to answer." - Ethan



1. An autistic person might not speak, follow commands, or respond in a typical way. Allow them to calm self with movement like rocking or flapping.

2. An autistic person might be experiencing apraxia - a speech and motor planning disorder. Talk to the body. Be clear. Give one instruction at a time. Provide written cues. Then, WAIT. Be patient and encouraging.

3. An autistic person might look away or not use eye contact when spoken to. They often listen better this way. Reduce input like lights and noise.

4. An autistic person, when their nervous system is overwhelmed or experiencing PTSD, may run away, instinctually fight to protect themselves, freeze or hide. Block, guide, or support the body. Avoid grabbing the body or using restraints.

5. An autistic person, when overwhelmed, may look mad, have a flat affect, laugh hysterically, cry, scream, or repeat words from a movie or previous conversation. Call someone who knows them and ask them to help.

THE KEY IS COMMUNICATION

Individuals who are unable to use speech for meaningful communication need respect, patience, and an alternate way to communicate with your support. Speak in an age-appropriate tone. Provide reassurance that you know they are listening and understanding. Offer choices.



JOIN THE KEEP ME SAFE CAMPAIGN

Autistic children and adults are at an increased risk of abuse, neglect, seclusion, physical force and unnecessary restraints, leading to injury or death.

Individuals and families affected by autism may:

- 1) Register for the KEEP ME SAFE REGISTRY
- 2) request a #RETHINKAUTISM SAFETY DECAL to voluntarily place on their home and/or car

to alert first responders that extra care and accommodations may be needed in an emergency or crisis to help ensure the safety of an autistic individual and those responding.



APPLY FOR REGISTRY BY
CALLING 812-490-9401 or
VISIT www.optimalrhythms.org