Develop Cognitive Empathy & Emotional Awareness

Skill to Develop	How to Help
Interpreting Facial Expressions **Understanding the meanings behind facial expressions can be confusing for those on the spectrum.**	1. Exaggerate your facial expressions (smile widely, deeply frown, push eyebrows up when surprised, smoosh eyebrows together when confused). Eventually, you can skip this step. 2. Say how you are feeling with the facial expression (I'm happy! That's confusing!)
Emotional Self- Awareness **Understanding personal emotions can be confusing for those on the spectrum. To teach emotions, think how you would feel in that moment & say what s/he is likely feeling.** **Remember: identifying emotions is the first step in coping with emotions**	Say things like: "that sounds _____ (frustrating/embarrassing)" "I bet you felt _____ (sad/angry/nervous)" "Wow, how _____ (overwhelming/irritating)"
Cognitive Empathy **Understanding others' emotions can be very confusing for those on the spectrum. To teach emotions of others, talk about your own feelings and ask questions about how others (in books, movies, television) are feeling.** **Speaking about emotions of others will help develop the awareness of emotions in others**	Say things like: "I'm feeling angry right now" or "I feel overwhelmed" Added bonus: if you are with the person with autism, s/he is likely feeling the same thing and will also develop emotional self-awareness (When reading a book/watching tv or movie) Ask questions about emotions of the characters, such as, "How do you think they feel?". You can then reflect how you think they are feeling, especially if you get an answer like, "I don't know."