

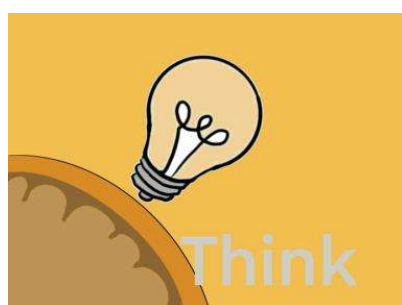
Dealing with stigma



Parents of Autistic people may experience stigma. Autism is considered to be an invisible disability and this means that other people may misunderstand an Autistic child's way of being in the world or mislabel their actions as "naughty". Parents can feel pressurised into encouraging their child to "conform" or to have "treatment" so they are less autistic. Parents may want the absolute best for their child and be fearful for their future – they may have few sources of support. Parents of Autistic people can also face stigma when they fully embrace their child's differences and don't want them to change one bit.



Parents of Autistic people may have few sources of support and they may feel that other parents don't understand their situation or are judgmental. They may avoid activities where their child's differences stand out. Parents may be exhausted and feel unable to share their needs.



Parents who experience stigma may not be listened to by professionals. They may feel unable to share the reality of their situation and seek help, or they may feel that "experts" do not take their situation seriously because their child presents differently in different situations.



It can be important to recognise that an Autistic child who has been holding in their distress all day may feel safe enough to share that distress at home with their parents. This is not a sign of poor parenting. Offering a parent a non-judgmental ear or a break from caring responsibilities can make a big difference to the family's wellbeing.