

The Do's and Don'ts

of Making Your Place of Worship Inclusive for Autistic Children

Below are some common occurrences — **and remedies** — for the statements, thoughts, and actions that parents of autistic children often experience at places of worship.

“If there’s any space that should be equipped to welcome autistic people, it should be places of worship.”

— Tonya Nash, Founder of the Autism Faith Network

— Don't —

Say

“Can you keep your child quiet?”

Think

“This child is disrupting the service.”

Say

“This child can't learn.”

Think

“This child should not be in our congregation.”

Say

“If your child can't handle being here, then keep them home.”

Think

“Why can't this child just behave?”

Think

“This behavior isn't Christ-like.”

Think

“Why can't this child just pay attention?”

— Instead —

Say

“How can we accommodate your child in our services?”

Think

“I'd like to get to know this family, so we can include this child in our fellowship.”

Say

“It's all of our responsibility to teach this child the ways of God.”

Think

“All of us can participate in our own unique way.”

Say

“How can we make the service more inclusive for your child?”

Think

“There may be something this child is experiencing that I am unaware of.”

Remember

“Christ was often ridiculed for fellowshiping with people who were different.”

Think

“What might help hold this child's attention?”

