



# Restricted Interests: What You Need to Know

Many people with autism spectrum disorder have restricted interests. Your loved one's restricted interests are a unique part of them. In this handout, you will learn about restricted interests. You will also learn how you can use those interests to connect with and support your loved one.

## WHAT ARE RESTRICTED INTERESTS?

**Restricted interests** are strong or intense interests in specific topics or objects. Restricted interests are common in people with **autism spectrum disorder (ASD)**. For example, a person might be interested in a specific TV show, math or drawing.

People with restricted interests are often experts on the topics or objects they enjoy. Sometimes they share their interests with others. Other times, they like to enjoy them alone.

## DO MY LOVED ONE'S RESTRICTED INTERESTS NEED TO BE FIXED?

Restricted interests do not need to be fixed. Trying to fix or dismiss restricted interests can cause stress or anxiety. It can also make your loved ones feel isolated from friends or family.

You and the care team can use your loved one's restricted interests to address many concerns, such as:

- Social skills
- Managing emotions
- Learning different skills
- Connecting and relating better in therapy

## HOW CAN I USE MY LOVED ONE'S RESTRICTED INTERESTS TO HELP THEM AT HOME?

There are many ways you can use your loved one's restricted interests to help them at home:

- **Show interest in what your loved one enjoys.** If they feel comfortable, encourage them to share what they love with you, family and friends.
- **Respect your loved one's preference for enjoying their restricted interests with others or by themselves.**
- **Look for teaching moments.** For example, if your loved one enjoys a TV show, ask them what is happening and how it relates to their own life or experiences.
- **Encourage back-and-forth communication.** Sharing in your loved one's restricted interests can help them develop conversation and social skills. It can also help them share their own point of view and understand others.



**Watch a video about restricted interests from the Lurie Center for Autism.** *Video courtesy of Vidscrap®.*

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