



School From Our Perspective

by Autistic Teenagers

The aim of this document is **to help you understand** the challenges us, **Autistic teenagers**, experience at school and how you can **support us**.

Four Sources of the Biggest Challenges



! **School Environment**



! **Uniforms & Clothing**



! **Classrooms**



! **Social Dynamics**



Sensory Nightmare



- **school corridors** noise, lights, crowds cause overwhelm
- **scratchy clothing** tight collars, sock seams feel like needles, itchy tags cause issues with concentration, emotional pain and distress
- we feel like we are **drowning in pain and expectations**



Transitions and Changes in the Routine



- **going from one class to another** can be very stressful especially with no warning
- **having exams, sub teachers, different classrooms** can cause a meltdown or shutdown



Exhaustion and Judgment



- **masking**: pretending to be somebody else, copying others, hiding real reactions to fit or blend in is exhausting
- **double classes, noisy environments, constant social pressure** drain us
- **asking for help is difficult** when we have been misunderstood or dismissed in the past

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IT IS NOT ABOUT AVOIDING SCHOOL. IT IS ABOUT SURVIVING IN A WAY THAT'S HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE.

Support That Helps



allowing **wearing noise cancelling headphones and using fidgets**



setting up **smaller groups or 1:1 support**



allowing **wearing sensory-friendly clothing like soft jumpers or tag-free shirts**



having **supportive adult check ins just once or twice a day**



planning **shorter days or scheduled sensory breaks**



providing **access to a quiet space when we feel overwhelmed**



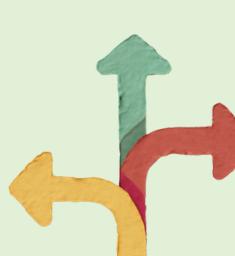
making space and allowing us to be ourselves



being told and warned ahead of time about fire drills



having a visual schedule showing what's happening that day



letting us **choose how we work**, like using a laptop instead of writing

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SUPPORT WORKS BEST WHEN IT'S CONSISTENT, RESPECTFUL, AND BASED ON REAL COMMUNICATION, NOT ASSUMPTIONS.

This document was made based on the video made by young Autistic people in a psychology group run by Enable Ireland. We thank the young people for their ideas and hard work.

