

Quirky Kids

There are many shades of quirky, and many children, over the course of their childhoods, move into and out of different phases. All children, quirky and not, wrestle with school issues, social life issues, and family issues. All these issues are harder, more complicated, and sometimes more painful when you're growing up on a different path. There are many issues in the different domains in which your child must live. However, the first and most basic domain of all, is his sense of self.

What is your child's understanding of why he needs to attend physical and occupational therapy once a week? How does he think about his inability to ride a bike or swim? How would he explain the reason he gets pulled out of class for extra help or why nobody else in the second grade is interested in train schedules?

Kenneth Hall, a ten-year-old boy in Northern Ireland who wrote a short book about himself, *Asperger Syndrome, the Universe and Everything*, stated that he was relieved to find out about his Asperger Syndrome. He writes, "When I heard that I had AS I was very pleased because I had been wondering why everyone else seemed to be acting strangely."

There seems to be a strong feeling on the part of many adults with Asperger's and some of the groups that advocate for people with this syndrome that early and full disclosure to the child is almost an obligation and usually a blessing for all concerned.

But how do you go about talking to your child?

- The single most important determinant of what you say and how you say it is where the child is developmentally. Suit your language and your images not just to your child's chronological age but to your child's developmental stage.
- Talking to your child is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. As your child grows, he will refine his understanding of himself and his quirks. The early discussion is just to open the door to the understanding.

- You want this to be a positive experience. Presenting the information in a positive light can help them accept their own quirks. Do not talk about it in the wake of a negative event such as a meltdown or social frustration. Wait until things are calm and you are both removed from a negative experience.
- Listen to the questions your child is asking and answer them fully, but again keeping in mind their developmental age and ability to understand.

There are no hard and fast rules or guidelines for **talking to your child** but there are a lot of great resources available. For more information on ideas for talking to your child, your family, and service professionals about your quirky kid you can check out “*Quirky Kids*” by Perri Klass, M.D., and Eileen Costello, M.D. in the Lending Library at FISD’s Early Childhood School (10330 Red Cedar Dr, Frisco).

The Lending Library is open to all families from 9a.m.-2p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday during the school year (if school is in session).