

PANAGIOTAPLISSI·ELENILOUVROU

AUTISM

The unwritten rules
of social behavior
for children 4-12 years old

WITH GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS AND SPECIALISTS



 PATAKIS
PUBLISHERS

LET'S LEARN ALL ABOUT
LIFE'S UNWRITTEN
SOCIAL RULES

*This book is dedicated to
the children and their families
that inspired us to write it.*

Panagiota Plissi ■ Eleni Louvrou

LET'S LEARN ALL ABOUT
LIFE'S UNWRITTEN
SOCIAL RULES



You often feel that you don't understand what is going on around you. People seem odd and they don't make sense. All you need to help you understand how the world works are the pictures and ideas in this book and the help of an adult that knows you well.

Let's learn all about life's unwritten rules

For children

4-7 years old



If you see a lady in a restaurant with long grey hair, don't shout out loud 'That lady looks like a witch!' Whisper it to the adult with you. Shhh!

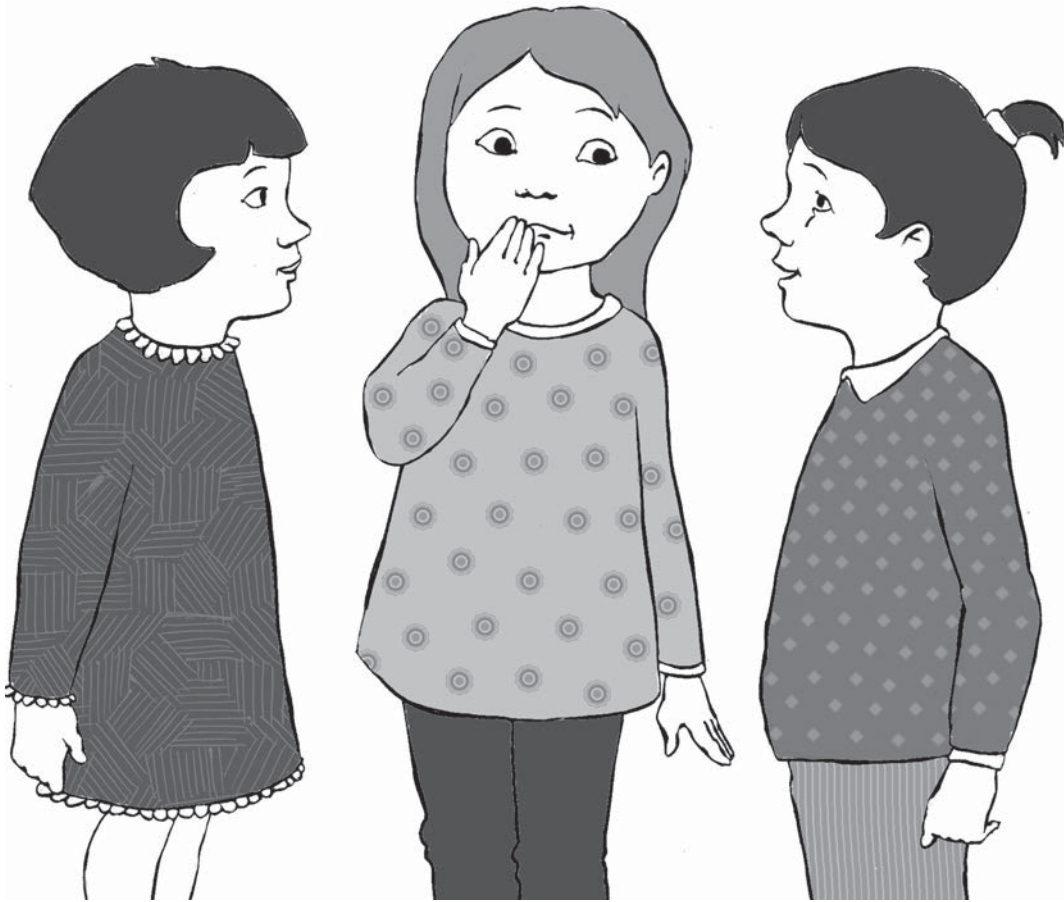


Auntie brought you a Christmas gift. You happily open the box and see something that you don't like. Say thank-you. If you wanted something different, tell your mom after auntie goes home.

Let's learn all about life's unwritten rules

For children

8–12 years old



Your mom had a tummy ache last night and had to use the bathroom a lot. That's not something that your friends need to know.



You're just about to take a test. Your stomach hurts and your heart is racing. You feel anxious! Take a deep breath and talk to your teacher about this later.

Explanations and suggestions

Part 1

(For children approximately 4-7 years old)

Page 11

This example took place in a restaurant with a young boy approximately 7 years old whose special interest at that time was witches and ghosts. When one specific woman walked in to the restaurant, he pointed at her and loudly commented on her long grey hair. Not only she, but also almost everyone in the restaurant heard him. Individuals' with autism often find theory of mind, the ability to put oneself into another's shoes, exceedingly difficult. This being the case, they often give the impression that they are being rude.

For their behavior to be more socially acceptable, it is essential that these children are taught how to put themselves into someone else's place.

This can be quite challenging and requires effort and repetition on our part. It should be noted that when teaching a child to not shout loudly in restaurants, to stress that this applies to all public places and not one specific restaurant. Thus, by doing this, the likelihood of the child generalizing the skill is increased.

In incidents such as that in the book, it is recommended to not to scold the child and acknowledge his lack of social awareness.

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This example refers not only theory of mind which was mentioned above, but also highlights a further characteristic of children with autism, being that they are usually very honest and say exactly what they are thinking. It can be generally said that they do not lie.

Because of this, it is helpful to teach them the situations where

lying is acceptable and perhaps even necessary. Specifically, that in certain situations white lies are allowed, so to not hurt someone's feelings.

Part 2

(For children 8-12 years old)

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Parents often report that their autistic children find it especially challenging to discriminate between what information concerning either themselves, or others can or should be shared. This of course, may create problems and misunderstandings. One method to help children gain a better understanding is to provide real life examples as to what constitutes private information and as a result, should be kept to themselves. It is also important to be especially careful when speaking in the presence of the child. If this not be possible, if necessary, it should be made completely clear to the child that the specific topic being discussed is confidential and should remain in the family.

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Stress is an emotion that most children are likely to face at some point in their lives. The intensity and frequency however of the stress experienced by children with autism is especially high. It is important to note that this may arise from a number of different factors which are not always evident to us. The stress levels of autistic children often escalate to the point where they are beyond control thus making it very difficult to decode the causes. It is of utmost importance that the situations provoking distress are identified so to be dealt with effectively. Teaching stress management techniques (e.g. taking deep breaths) when the child is in a calm state can make an enormous difference and is highly recommended.

FOR CHILDREN

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