

## The Finnish Association for Autism and Asperger's Syndrome

The objective of The Finnish Association for Autism and Asperger's Syndrome is to assist individuals with autism spectrum disorders to attain their basic rights through promotion of change in society.

The primary tasks of The Finnish Association for Autism and Asperger's Syndrome are:

- Promotion of interests
- Supporting regional associations
- Provision of information
- Guidance and advice
- Library service
- Training

### Member associations of The Finnish Association for Autism and Asperger's Syndrome

For contact information for member associations, visit [www.autismiliitto.fi](http://www.autismiliitto.fi)



## The Finnish Association for Autism and Asperger's Syndrome

Kaupintie 16 B  
00440 Helsinki, Finland  
Tel. +358 (0)9 7742 770  
Fax +358 (0)9 7742 7710

### Regional Office for South-Eastern Finland

Kauppamiehenkatu 4  
45100 Kouvola, Finland  
Tel. +358 (0)9 7742 7771

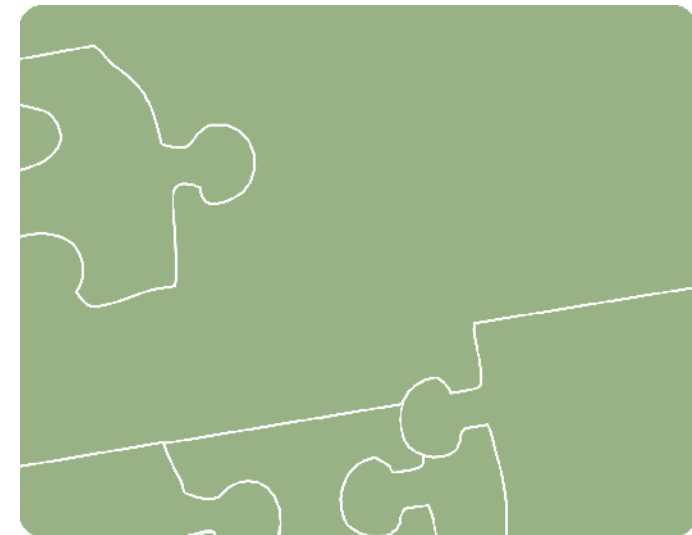
### Regional Office for Northern Finland

Companionship Centre  
Isokatu 47  
90100 Oulu, Finland  
Tel. +358 (0)9 7742 7791

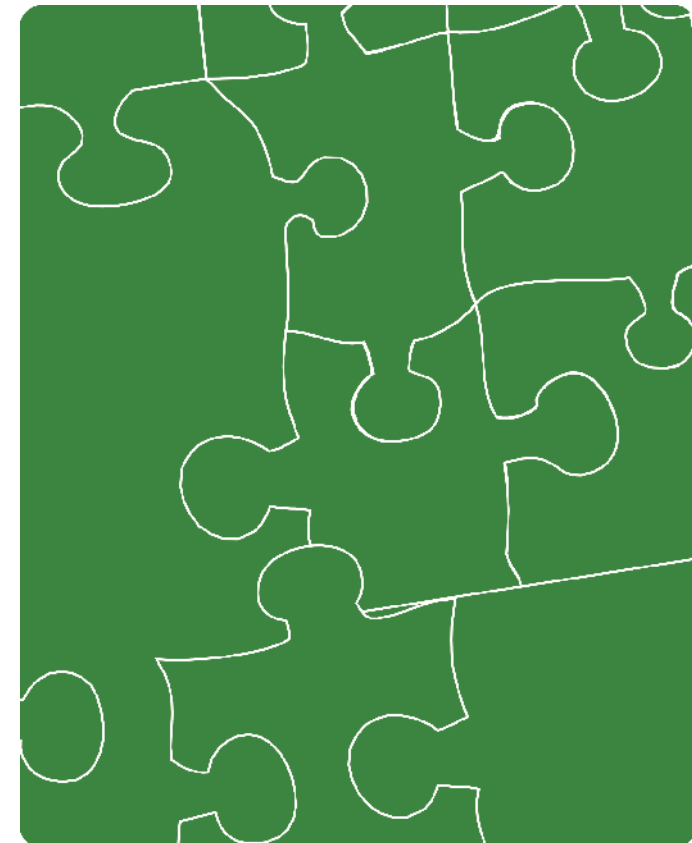
[www.autismiliitto.fi](http://www.autismiliitto.fi)

Supported by RAY

1st edition (12/2008)



## Early Habilitation of Autism Spectrum Disorders



## AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Autism is a neurobiological developmental disorder of the central nervous system, which causes diverse functional deficits. People with autism spectrum disorders perceive and interpret sensory information in individual ways that are considerably different from the norm. The disorder is usually detected at the developmental stage where a child should start to learn interactive skills. A person with an autism spectrum disorder communicates differently and thinks, understands and perceives meanings and his or her environment in a different way. Characteristic behaviour includes limited or stereotypical behaviour, limited or aberrant social interaction and communication as well as abnormal responses to sensory stimuli. In addition to autism, autism spectrum disorders include Asperger's syndrome and Rett syndrome. In Finland, there are approximately 50,000 people with autism spectrum disorders.

There is an urgent need for basic information, support and training. Increasingly accurate detection and diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome has generated an increasing need for more information in the public sector (social sector, health care and educational administration). Diagnosis, habilitation and welfare services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders vary considerably in different parts of Finland.

### EARLY HABILITATION

Early habilitation and early childhood education comprise the individually planned actions to support a child's development. The objective of early habilitation is to achieve age level skills and competences. An essential element is to guide parents to support their child's development in everyday family life. The earlier the habilitation starts, the better the results. The ability of people with autism spectrum disorders to function can be significantly improved through early habilitation. Educational habilitation is implemented through multiprofessional co-operation in the child's living environment. A child with an autism spectrum disorder needs intensive habilitation, which in turn requires good, close-knit co-operation between the family, day-care or school and other professionals.

### GLOSSARY

**AAC methods:** Augmentative and alternative communication, such as pictures, sign language and Bliss symbols.

### PREREQUISITES OF HIGH QUALITY EARLY HABILITATION

- Early intervention
- Parents' participation in assessments and habilitation
- Goal-oriented, individual habilitation plan
- Professional resources
- Basic education
- Knowledge of autism spectrum disorders and habilitation
- Interest and motivation
- Adequate facilities and equipment
- Effective planning and continuous assessment
- Explicit tasks and commonly agreed principles and rules
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Flexible, multiprofessional co-operation

**Cars, Varsu, Portaati, PEP-R and CHAT:** Rating scales and methods for planning and assessing habilitation for people with autism spectrum disorders.

**Sharing:** Disseminating information increases its value.

**Educational habilitation:** Goal-oriented learning of everyday skills.

**Writing down:** For example, Verso, the Porttikirja guide and the Reissuvihko notebook are methods for writing down and sharing messages and information to ensure that all parties share the same information.

**Learning baskets:** Organising individual learning objectives into regular learning sessions – also suitable for learning social skills.

**House calls:** Professionals are mobile too.

**Arm in arm:** Supporting interaction between parents and children through mutual activities.

**Physical exercise:** A prerogative of all children, supports habilitation.

**Music:** Often supports communication.

**Family-oriented habilitation:** Partnership between parents and day-care staff in early childhood education.

**Therapies:** Therapist competences in the everyday lives of children.

**Structuring:** Giving form to time, space, place, people and actions.

**Peer support:** Exchanging experiences and measures; important for coping.

### A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AAPO

To achieve the different objectives of habilitation through ordinary daily routines, the day programme of Aapo aged four and a half is planned at a Habilitation Meeting between the different participants. The day programme will be visualised using the child's individual methods of communication.

- 7.00 M (Mother) wakes him up
- 7.10 M goes through the day programme
- 7.15 Morning routines according to programme M/F (Father)
- 7.25 Bob the Builder
- 7.45 Car journey to day-care centre F
- 8.00 Day programme at the day-care centre KT (Kindergarten Teacher)
- 8.15 Breakfast KT
- 8.30 Morning circle KT/SNA (Special Needs Assistant)
- 8.50 Free-choice play SNA
- 9.00 Learning baskets SNA/KT/ST (Speech Therapist)
- 9.30 Free-choice outdoor activities CN (Child Nurse)/SNA Structured play exercise
- 10.45 Returning indoors – Table Monitor CN
- 11.00 Lunch, tasting using spoon pictures SNA
- 11.30 Music session SNA/MT (Music Therapist)
- 11.45 Nap
- 13.30 Small group activities KT/SNA
- 14.00 Snack CN/SNA
- 14.30 Outdoor activities – structured play KT/SNA
- 16.15 F picks him up
- 16.30 Journey home, checking evening programme F Free play time S (Sister)
- 16.45 Laying the table M/AT (Activity Therapist), children's programmes
- 17.50 Dinner Outdoor activities, guided play and free-choice activities M/F/S
- 19.30 Evening snack M/F evening routines and the next day's programme
- 20.00 Good night!