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Lack of tact

Points to note

- The child may have great difficulty appreciating the thoughts and feelings of other people due to impaired 'theory of mind'. (Definition on [Introduction](#) page.) This impacts on the child's ability to understand how his comments affect others.
- The child might comment on a person's physical appearance, perhaps pointing out in a matter of fact way that they are overweight, bald or have bad skin! This is not done to hurt or embarrass the person; children with autism just tend to 'tell it like it is'. However, others in the class are likely to find these comments hysterical so it can cause disruption.
- Teaching staff may also face criticism of their teaching style and ability to keep the class under control. For example, this may occur if the student becomes stressed in a noisy environment; he may become angry and criticise the teacher for not controlling the noise level.

What you can do

- It would certainly help to have a thick skin and keen sense of humour. Remember the child is not being malicious.
- Choose a quiet moment after class to talk to the student, explain that the comments are disrupting the lesson.
- Talk to the rest of the class when the student with autism is absent. Encourage them to imagine what it must be like to have an impaired 'theory of mind'. Seek permission from the child's parents first.
- Social skills training using role play can assist all students to develop better interpersonal skills and increase awareness of the thoughts and feelings of others. See [Improving social understanding](#).