



# UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PODCAST

## SHOW NOTES

### SEASON 1 EPISODE 3

### AVOIDING EYE CONTACT



*The Stress of Making Eye Contact*  
artwork by Nicole Kubilus



Why are some people on the spectrum uncomfortable with making eye contact? In this episode, we explore some of the reasons behind this and how to support those who struggle with eye contact.

#### ➤ **STEREOTYPES AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (0:00-5:30)**

- oblivious? indifferent? lack interest?
- Bret's observations with his son
- Nicole's personal experiences

#### ➤ **NEUROLOGICAL CAUSES FOR LACK OF EYE CONTACT (5:30-7:15)**

- 2017 Massachusetts General Hospital study
- over-activation of areas of the brain
- can create overwhelm and social anxiety

#### ➤ **SENSORY CAUSES FOR LACK OF EYE CONTACT (7:15-11:00)**

- having to process too many sensory experiences at once
- some avoid eye contact to have one less sensory stimulus to process
- environmental stimuli: observing patterns, colors, sounds can be overwhelming by themselves
- Ido Kedar's example

#### ➤ **EMOTIONAL CAUSES FOR LACK OF EYE CONTACT (11:00-12:16)**

- non verbal signal to move on to something else
- may have shorter attention span
- seeing and being seen can be by itself overwhelming
- defense mechanism due to prior experiences



# UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PODCAST

## SHOW NOTES

### SEASON 1 EPISODE 3 AVOIDING EYE CONTACT

## LINKS

Ido Kedar (books)  
[\*In Two Worlds\*](#)  
[\*Ido in Autismland\*](#)

[Maxfield Sparrow](#)  
*Unstrange Minds*  
(blogger)



Why are some people on the spectrum uncomfortable with making eye contact? In this episode, we explore some of the reasons behind this and how to support those who struggle with eye contact.

#### ➤ **MAXFIELD SPARROW (12:16-13:12)**

- forcing eye contact in therapy can be harmful
- "human connection is more important than forced eye contact"

#### ➤ **NEUROTYPICAL STRUGGLES WITH EYE CONTACT (13:12-16:00)**

- avoiding confrontation
- with strangers in an elevator
- trying to "keep it together"
- organizing our thoughts
- technological distractions

#### ➤ **CULTURAL VALUES OF EYE CONTACT (16:00-19:00)**

- Western culture perspective
- Asian culture perspective
- Middle Eastern perspective
- superior/ inferior relationships
- part of societal expectations

#### ➤ **SOLUTIONS (19:00-46:26)**

- not needed in EVERY social situation
- don't require eye contact at home = safe place to unwind and be themselves
- find teachers who don't require eye contact in their classes
- confide your needs in friends and in relationships



# UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PODCAST

## SHOW NOTES

### SEASON 1 EPISODE 3

### AVOIDING EYE CONTACT

## LINKS

Danny Raede  
Co-founder [Asperger  
Experts.com](https://www.aspergerexperts.com)



Why are some people on the spectrum uncomfortable with making eye contact? In this episode, we explore some of the reasons behind this and how to support those who struggle with eye contact.

## ➤ SOLUTIONS CONT. (19:00-46:26)

- at work: advocate for not requiring eye contact (let your employer know about ways to make your time at work less stressful)
- have a conversation with your child: when is it ok/ not ok to have eye contact
- some need to understand the 'why' behind eye contact
- as parents explain that all humans can experience struggles with eye contact and give examples
- body based therapy: yoga, somatic, craniosacral
- teach tricks to pretend to make eye contact
- home can be a safe place to talk about their struggles and to practice in a mirror
- as teachers we can address this as a common issue for *all* students in group work