

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR
OF TAMIL NADU AT THE TAMIL NADU MENTALLY CHALLENGED SPECIAL
CHILDREN PARENTS ASSOCIATION CHENNAI ON 07/04/2018 AT 10.30 AM**

Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam

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Thiru. N.V. Arujunan,

Distinguished Invitees

Friends from the Media

Ladies & Gentlemen

World Autism Awareness Day is observed in the first week of April with the objective of ending stigmatization and discrimination against those afflicted by autism. The UN General Assembly resolution passed in November, 2007 called for the observance of this day with a view towards bringing together all organizations around the world engaged in a research diagnosis and treatment of autism. Autism is a disorder of neural development characterized by impaired social interaction and communication and by restricted and repetitive behavior. It is estimated that approximately 1% of world population is autistic.

The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterre has given a call to be more understanding of the problems faced by autistic children and their families, by saying "let us all play a part in changing attitudes toward persons with autism and in recognizing their rights as citizens, who, like everyone else, are entitled to claim those rights and make decisions for their lives in accordance with their own will and preferences."

There are 5 main types of autism. They are

1. Asperger's syndrome:
Those diagnosed with this syndrome have normal intelligence and language development but possess severely impaired social skills.
2. Pervasive developmental Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS):
This disorder includes delays in development especially communication and ability to use imagination.
3. Autistic Disorder:
These young people may have below average intelligence and symptoms include inability to communicate and a tendency to become fixated on certain things. They may also be extremely sensitive to certain sounds and react excessively.
4. Rett Syndrome:
The symptoms of this syndrome include sleep problems, breathing difficulties slow cognitive abilities.
5. Childhood Disintegrative Disorder:
This condition is rare and little research has been done. The research suggests that the neurobiology of the brain plays a significant factor in determining the nature of the seizures of the brain.

Since autism is a lifelong challenge, it is important to develop and practice effective coping strategies like preparing schedules to help the child understand the tasks that need to be completed and in which order.

A crucial component of compensatory skills is concept development. The teacher or special educator can also utilize the visual abilities of the child with the use of pictures and drawings to teach different concepts to the child.

Teaching social intervention could start with the basic requirement of non-verbal social skills and then working on developing skills to read facial expressions, gestures and verbal skills to communicate needs/wants, etc.

Social stories are also used to help the child understand the social situation. Possible social responses may be included, in a positive way, to help the child understand a social situation or cope with a stressful encounter.

The child is thus prepared through role plays and is able to show the desired social behavior as learnt through the social story.

One important point to keep in mind is to start intervention as early as possible.

Early intervention programmes minimize and in some cases, prevent delays in development of infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Children whose special needs are identified and addressed during these crucial early years have a greater chance of reaching their full potential.

It's important to understand that autism is not a form of disease. The condition only reflects special and permanent emotional and psychological needs. Loving attention and a positive environment enhance their natural potential. These are the most valuable gifts parents can give to them. It is necessary to combine special and consistent attention by parent with personalised counseling by professionals. Parents should try to provide the child the best possible support.

Governments at the Centre and State have made efforts to provide services for persons with autism through Legislative framework and programs and schemes. Many NGOs across India and in particular, in Tamil Nadu are also providing services to people with autism.

I applaud the parents of autistic children and NGOs for the role played by them in handling the problems faced by autistic children with patience and understanding.

It is the duty of society at large to stand by such people. On my part, I assure of my good offices in promoting the greater welfare of all the children and families assembled here.

You know that the Raj Bhavan campus has been opened for visitors on all days. I request you to avail this facility and enjoy a tour of the Raj Bhavan amidst the deer and the colourful flowers.

Nandri, Vanakkam.