

Student Worksheet

DIRECTIONS

Read the following news story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions. Use additional paper if necessary.

STORY

Autism Diagnosis Rates on the Rise, But Understanding Lags, 03/10/08

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/health/jan-june08/autism_3-10.html

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is autism?

2. What is Asperger's syndrome?

3. How might a person with autism act?

4. What are some recommended ways to communicate with someone who has autism?

5. How is autism diagnosed?

6. What is the connection between autism and vaccinations?

7. Is there a cure for autism?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. Write down your thoughts about autism after reading this article. What new things did you learn? What other questions do you have? Discuss these questions as a class and assign small groups to research each question. Come back as a class and discuss the answers you found.

2. Why might the National Autism Association have a different perspective on the connection between vaccines and autism than the Center for Disease Control or the American Academy of Pediatrics? Does the disagreement concern you? If so, how do you decide who is right?

3. What is a health issue that concerns you and/or your family and/or your friends? How do you get information about that issue? Do you trust Internet resources? Which ones? How do you decide what is good information and what is bad information?

4. Sydney Ray, age 15, recently wrote about having a brother with downs syndrome.

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/speakout/health/jan-june08/down_2-26.html

How does it make you feel? Do you think essays like this about people's experience can change the behavior of other people? Why or why not?

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.