



The Centered Space

Free guide: parents and carers

Talks for twenty minutes. **Quiet** in a group of four?

Why an autistic child who talks at length one-on-one goes quiet in a group of four, and three things to try before the next lunchtime.

A boy in his Where's Wally outfit, sharing a joke.

— Why is a group of four a different task?

Several things at once



Track who is speaking. Spot the half-second gap. Follow a topic that keeps moving. Have the words ready when the gap arrives.

The words are there. The room is not.



Going quiet is often a sensible response to overload, not a lack of interest in the friends at the table.

The gap sits between people



Research on the double empathy problem shows communication breaks down between people who communicate differently, not inside the child.

What it is not



Not shyness, not rudeness, and not something to fix by masking harder. Masking harder spends the energy they have left.

— What does a check-in look at?

How your child uses language in a pair and in a group, how they follow a fast-moving topic, and what you and the teacher see. Goals are about being understood and included, never about looking less autistic.

— Three things to try before the next lunchtime

- 1 Build a two-person bridge. One friend, one shared interest, one activity with a structure. Success in a pair is the base for a group.
- 2 Name the entry move and the exit move. "Can I add something?" to come in, "Back in a sec" to step out. Options your child owns, not lines to perform.
- 3 Ask the school for a quieter place to land, such as a library club. While you are there, ask what the teacher sees in group work.

What does it cost and who pays? This guide is for people who already have an NDIS plan, **plan-managed or self-managed**. NDIS funding may cover speech pathology where it aligns with the participant's goals and approved plan. Not all NDIS plans include speech pathology supports. We are not NDIS-registered. \$193.99 an hour, the NDIS price limit. Check your plan, and take your time.

— How do I start?

Fiona Wright, speech pathologist, works Tuesday to Thursday. Her books open **Tuesday 10 November 2026**.

- 1 Book a free NDIS consult with Liz, our NDIS specialist, on the page below or scan the code. She goes through what your plan can fund.
- 2 Or book a free clinical consult with Haylee, our senior speech pathologist, to talk through your child's situation first. Nothing is booked until you say so.

Liz, our NDIS specialist

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Sources: Milton (2012), Disability and Society; Crompton and colleagues (2020), Autism.