# Pragmatics



## How people interact, and use language, with each other

Pragmatics is the social part of communication. It can be thought of as the 'rules' that we use when we interact with other people. This includes:

- How much eye contact we make, and who we make eye contact with.
- How close we stand to each other.
- How we use humour and jokes.
- The type of conversations we have with other people, such as which topics we choose; if we ask lots of questions; tell lots of stories or; tell lots of information.
- How we use facial expressions and body language.
- How we show and understand emotions.

The expected pragmatics, or rules, are different for different groups of people and in different places. For example:

- Some cultures expect lots of eye contact. In other cultures, a lot of eye contact may be rude or aggressive.
- Some cultures use lots of gesture and facial expressions when they talk. Other cultures don't.
- In some places we are expected to speak quietly. In other places we are expected to yell and shout.
- Some cultures expect us to be still when we listen, and other cultures expect that we will need to move around when we listen.

Some of the groups of people that might have different pragmatic rules are:

- People from different countries or cultural backgrounds.
- People of different ages.
- People in different professions.
- People who have different personalities or **neurotypes**.

## Neurotype refers to the way our brains notice and respond to different sensory information.

If lots of people's brains respond in a similar way, it is a 'neurotype'. There are many different neurotypes: autistic, ADHD, dyslexic, anxious, etc. Because different neurotypes notice and respond to sensory information in different ways, the pragmatic rules that they follow is often different too. For example, autistic people often take in too much visual sensory information, so it is hard for them to listen **and** make eye contact. Someone who has ADHD might have an urgent need to say their thought and not realise someone else was talking. Someone who is an introvert might not make much small talk chatter.

If someone is following different pragmatic rules to us, it might feel like they are being rude.

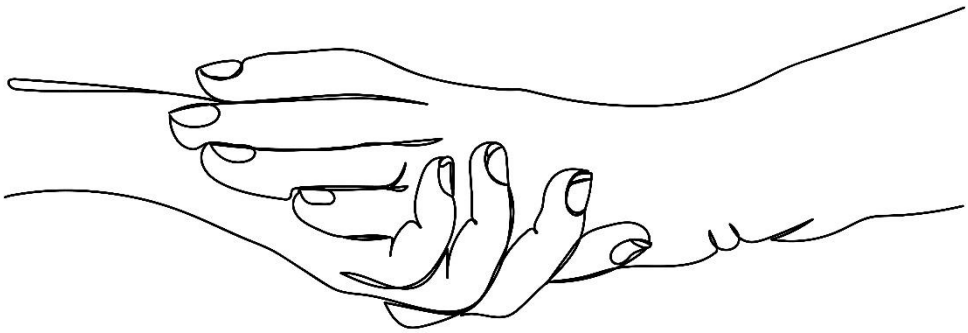
## But really each person is just following different rules.

They might feel like you are being rude 😉!

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## What can I do to help?

- ✓ Talk to your child about different ways that people communicate, and that no different social rules are 'better' or 'correct'.
- ✓ Read books and watch shows about people from different cultures and who have different neurotypes.
- ✓ Help bridge the gap between children who might be following different sets of rules. For example, "I can see Johnny is standing watching. He might want to play. Johnny could say "can I play?" or you could say "Johnny do you want to play?". Or "Sarah isn't looking at you, but she is still listening. Some people don't need to look at us to be able to listen."



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