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EXPERIENCE SHEET ON AUTISM

Dear Dadi/Dada/Nani/Nana

I have something called Autism. Let me tell you what it is.

- Each and every one of us is a complete person within ourselves. Each and every one of us is also different. We feel differently. We dream differently. We sense the world around us differently. **We all have a different way of being.**
- **Autism** is a **lifelong developmental disability** associated with poor social skills. It is sometimes referred to as an “invisible disability” as there is often nothing about how people with autism look that sets them apart from other people. However, people with autism may communicate, interact, behave and learn in ways that are different from most people.
- Individuals with autism have **emotions** and are able to form attachments with others although they may express them differently. Similarly, many individuals with autism are able to **communicate**. This may be through the thorough use of language, use of gestures, picture exchange, sign language, spoken language, or computer technology. Individuals with autism will also display a range of **sensory needs** that can affect their behaviour.

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- **Autism is sometimes referred to as a “spectrum condition”.** This means that just like people without autism are different from each other, people with autism are different too. Autism can translate into a wide range of symptoms. The intensity with which it affects their ability to function also varies from mild to severe. The range of consequences is also extensive. At one end, the autism of a computer scientist may not be noticeable to others; at the other, a quarter of children with autism do not speak.
- Research on autism continues. There are currently no known **causes**, although genes are considered as one of the risk factors that can make a person more likely to develop autism. So, you may know other people in the family with autism even if they were not diagnosed.
- Autism also does not have a **known cure**, although research shows that early intervention therapies can help an individual’s overall prognosis.
- You as grandparents have a special role to play in our lives. As my *Nani, Nana, Dadi or Dada*, you will have a very important part in shaping who I become and providing emotional and physical support to me, my parents and my siblings.
- To find out more on what you can do, including on practical tips and thoughts please visit www.oursmallwonders.org

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