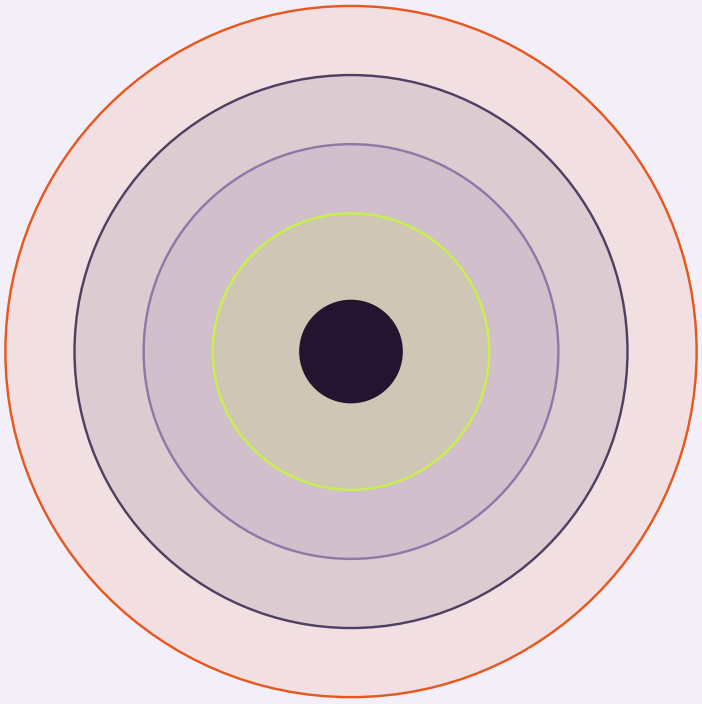


# Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism

A reading of the book by Barry M. Prizant, Tom Fields-Meyer (2015)

1. ACTION BOOK

CONTENTS

# Inside this edition


**The book in a minute** 3

**The takeaways** 4

**Your action book** 6

**Before you go** 7

PART TWO · THE ACTION BOOK

**The setup checklist** 9

**Ask why before you react** 10

**Warn before every change** 11

**Say less when they are overwhelmed** 12


ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

# The book in a minute

Barry M. Prizant is a speech-language pathologist who has spent decades working with autistic children and adults and their families, and he wrote this book with the journalist Tom Fields-Meyer. He argues that autistic behaviours are not symptoms to be stamped out but strategies a person uses to cope when they feel dysregulated: overwhelmed by noise, change, uncertainty or other people. His central advice is to ask why, and to understand what a behaviour is doing for the person before trying to change it. He writes about emotional memory, about trust and the need for control, and about enthusiasms, the deep interests he treats as strengths to build on. The stories come from families, classrooms and the autistic adults he has worked alongside, and the approach sits close to the SCERTS model he helped create. An updated and expanded edition came out in 2022.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

# The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### A behaviour that looks strange is usually a strategy, not a symptom.

This is the book's central move. Rocking, flapping, pacing or repeating a line are often how a person keeps themselves steady when the world is too much. Stop the behaviour without understanding it and you take away a coping tool while the stress stays.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Before you try to change a behaviour, ask why it is happening.

Prizant builds the book on this one question. What came just before? What was the person feeling? What does the behaviour get them? The answer usually points to something in the setting that can change, not something in the person that must be fixed.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Most hard moments come back to emotional regulation.

Prizant treats regulation as the core challenge: staying calm, alert and ready to take part. Noise, change, uncertainty, hunger and social demands all push a person off balance. Good support lowers what pushes and adds what steadies.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Call them enthusiasms, and use them as a way in.

Prizant prefers the word enthusiasms to obsessions. A deep interest in trains, weather or a TV show can calm a person, teach them and connect them to others. Treating it as a strength opens doors that banning it keeps shut.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Repeated phrases are often an attempt to communicate.

Prizant's early research was on echolalia, the repeating of words heard before. A line from a film may be a request, a comment or a way to calm down. Listen for the purpose and the repetition starts to make sense.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## When the world feels out of control, people grab control where they can.

Prizant ties trust, fear and control together. Insisting on a routine or refusing to move can be a way to make an unpredictable day feel safer. Predictable days, early warnings and real choices reduce the need to hold on so tight.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## A strong reaction may come from a memory, not the moment.

Prizant describes emotional memory: a place, a sound or a person can bring a past hard experience back in full. What looks like an overreaction to a waiting room can be a reasonable response to what happened there before.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## The people who help most are the ones who simply get it.

Prizant writes about the 'It' factor in parents, teachers and professionals who connect well. They show respect, stay calm, stay flexible and see the person before the label. These are habits anyone can practise.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## Autistic people are the real experts on autism.

Prizant gives weight to autistic adults who explain from the inside what helps and what hurts. Their accounts often overturn what professionals assumed. If someone can tell you what is going on for them, their answer comes first.

PUT IT TO WORK

# Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Keep a why log for two weeks
- [ ] Map the sensory load of one space
- [ ] Make tomorrow visible
- [ ] List their enthusiasms and use one
- [ ] Agree a calm-down plan together

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Ask why before you react
- ◯ Warn before every change
- ◯ Say less when they are overwhelmed

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

# Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

# The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

# The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

## Keep a why log for two weeks

For each hard moment, note the time, the place, what happened just before, how loud or busy it was, and what followed.

After ten entries, look for the pattern.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

## Map the sensory load of one space

Stand in the classroom, kitchen or car at its busiest time and list the sounds, lights, smells, crowding and touch.

Change one thing this week: a quieter seat, ear defenders within reach, softer light.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

## Make tomorrow visible

Write or draw a simple schedule for the next day and put it where the person can see it.

When a plan changes, change the schedule first, then say it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

## List their enthusiasms and use one

Write down the person's deep interests.

This week, use one to start a conversation, teach something new or ease a hard transition.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

## Agree a calm-down plan together

With the person if you can, choose a quiet spot, a few things that help (headphones, a blanket, a favourite book) and a signal they can use to ask for a break.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

# Ask why before you react

When a behaviour starts, pause for one breath and ask what it might be helping with.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
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| | | | | | | 1 |
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| 9 ○ | 10 ○ | 11 ○ | 12 ○ | 13 ○ | 14 ○ | 15 ○ |
| 16 ○ | 17 ○ | 18 ○ | 19 ○ | 20 ○ | 21 ○ | 22 ○ |
| 23 ○ | 24 ○ | 25 ○ | 26 ○ | 27 ○ | 28 ○ | 29 ○ |
| 30 ○ | | | | | | |

## December 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
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| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

# Warn before every change

Give a heads-up before transitions: a five-minute warning, a timer or a look at the schedule.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
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| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

# Say less when they are overwhelmed

In a meltdown, cut your words, lower your voice and drop demands.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
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## December 2026

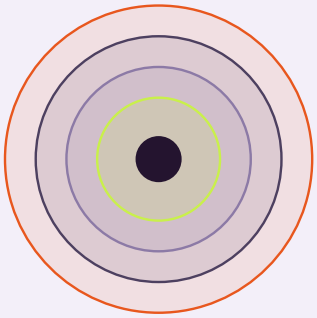
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



**Ask why before you ask them to stop. The behaviour is often the person doing their best.**

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER BARRY M. PRIZANT