



Parent Discussion Notes about *Pepperpot*

Pepperpot has been written as an enjoyable picture book for all about a quirky cat who does not like change. It has also been constructed so that Pepperpot's behaviours mirror in some ways the challenges and strengths experienced by children living on the autism spectrum. Reading the book with your child might allow for conversations about what life is like for children who are different and how they can be supported and accepted.



PLEASE NOTE - The *Pepperpot* books have **not** been written to be a diagnostic tool for identifying children with autism spectrum conditions **nor** have they been written to comprehensively list all the symptoms and possible behaviours demonstrated by children with Autism or Asperger('s) Syndrome.

Evidence suggests the difficulties for people living on the autism spectrum are in two main areas: deficits in social communication and intense fixed interests with repetitive behaviour (including sensory challenges). Children on the autism spectrum find making and maintaining friendships challenging because they may have trouble expressing their own feelings and also have difficulty interpreting the thoughts, feelings and needs of others.

[For further information visit www.autismspectrum.org.au or www.autismspeaks.org]

The following discussion notes and questions are provided to assist parents in conversation with their child as they read the book together.



Her life is calm and peaceful. Nothing can change that.

Ask: What does Pepperpot normally do each day?

Ask: Can every day be the same for us? Why not?

Why might Pepperpot worry about **change** happening?

Pepperpot likes to plan her day...

[Visual schedules or a written timetable for activities during the day can be reassuring and helpful for children living on the autism spectrum as it allows them to know what is coming up ahead.]

Ask: What activities do they normally do each day before and after school?

How do they feel if something different happens that they don't normally do?

On her timetable when does Pepperpot normally wake up?

How does she know she has finished things on her timetable for the day?



Mealtimes are important...

Discuss: Pepperpot has some special interests. What are they?

What special interests do you have? How often do you do them?

Can we **do** our special interests all the time? Why not?

Can we **talk about** our special interests all the time? What happens if we do this?



Pepperpot's mornings are routine...



Explain: Pepperpot has a place she goes to sleep and hide where she feels safe.

Ask: Do you have a place you like to go where you feel safe? Where is it?

Discuss: It is important that we have special places to go or things we like doing that help to calm us down.

Pepperpot was woken by a scream ...

[Many people living on the autism spectrum have sensory sensitivity and can be overwhelmed by sounds, sights or smells.]

Explain: Pepperpot has very good hearing and could actually hear Queen Bee squawking outside when Buster jumped on her.

Explain: Pepperpot doesn't like loud sounds as they frighten and upset her.

Ask: Can you think of a time when you suddenly heard a loud sound or something gave you a fright? What did you do?

Explain: Listening to sound is one of our senses. Discuss the senses they might know and how people can be very sensitive to touch, taste, sight, sound and smell (for example might only feel comfortable wearing soft clothes next to their skin).



Grandma could not save the day

[Children with high functioning autism or Asperger syndrome do want to interact with others but may be socially awkward, not use eye contact or are unable to read other people's body language]

Discuss: How does Grandma's face look in this picture of the book?

Ask: What might she be feeling?

Ask: How do you think Buster felt when Pepperpot unravelled his panda? How do we know Bam Boo the panda is special to Buster?



Pepperpot was a smart feline.

[People living on the autism spectrum can view the world in a very intense way. This can sometimes help them come up with innovative and amazing ideas particularly in their fields of special interest. Perhaps Pepperpot's special interest in food, particularly love of fish, helped with her idea...]

Ask: What idea did Pepperpot come up with for saving Queen Bee?

Discuss: Can you think of a time you came up with an idea for solving a problem?

Ask: How could you share your special interests with your family or friends to help them?

