

Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Part 1 of 4

Why is support critical?

Over 50% of individuals with Asperger's pursue higher education but...

- 12% hold fulltime jobs
- 83% have less than 2 social contacts per month
- 3% live independently

(National Autistic Society, 2001)

Profile of 400 adults on Spectrum

- .04% live independently
- 10% have some type of occupation
- 14% socialize outside the home
- 95% report no friendships

(Seltzer & Krauss USA, 2003)

Skills for Success

- o Personal responsibility
- o Life skills
- o Hygiene/appearance
- o Clothing
- o Transportation
- o Greetings
- o Responding to questions
- o Responding to authority
- o Understanding hierarchy
- o Accepting direction
- o Accepting correction
- o Not correcting
- o Looking busy
- o Understanding the looks
- o Respecting boundaries
- o Modifies behavior based on others moods

Autism is Like ...

SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH A KALEIDOSCOPE AND TRYING TO LISTEN TO A RADIO STATION THAT'S JAMMED WITH STATIC AT THE SAME TIME.

ADD TO THAT A BROKEN VOLUME CONTROL WHICH CAUSES THE VOLUME TO JUMP ERRATICALLY FROM A LOUD BOOM TO INAUDIBLE .

AND THEN IMAGINE A STATE OF HYPERAROUSAL WHERE YOU WERE BEING PURSUED BY A DANGEROUS ATTACKER IN A WORLD OF TOTAL CHAOS.

Temple Grandin

People with autism experience the world differently from those without autism, because they process information differently.

Part 2 of 4

The Difficulties

- Information presented in a temporal pattern
- Identifying relevant information
- Generalizing information
- Gestalt learners
- Sequencing information

A practical definition . . . **Asperger's Syndrome**

- ❖ Awkwardness in communication, despite strong vocabulary
- ❖ Difficulty in "reading" the behavior of others
- ❖ A preference for predictability
- ❖ A tendency toward specific and intense interests
- ❖ (Sometimes) inefficient organization and productivity, despite strong intellectual abilities
- ❖ (Sometimes) challenges in integrating sensory information
- ❖ (Sometimes) problems in regulating anxiety or mood
- ❖ (Often) clumsiness

Bolick, T. Asperger Syndrome and Adolescence

Autism vs. Asperger's Syndrome

Autism	Asperger's Syndrome
❖ Majority of individuals do not relate to others	❖ Majority want social contact but do not have the skills
❖ 50% of individuals have an IQ in the MR range	❖ 0.1 of 1% have an IQ in the MR range; most have average to above average intelligence
❖ Delayed academically	❖ Working in standard curriculum with modifications
❖ 50% are non-verbal; many have echolalia	❖ All are verbal

Autism vs. Asperger's Syndrome

Autism	Asperger's Syndrome
❖ Receptive language is higher than expressive	❖ Expressive language is higher than receptive
❖ Value and need sameness; may exhibit problem behavior with changes	❖ Rigid; may "meltdown"
❖ Perseverative, repetitive movements	❖ High stress level
❖ Difficulty responding to novel situations	❖ Difficulty responding to novel situations
❖ Sensory issues	❖ Sensory issues

Social Communication

- ◊ Problems with social communication may include difficulties with:
 - Eye gaze
 - Using or responding to gestures
 - Using or reading facial expressions
 - Social appearance
 - Preoccupation with topic rather than process
 - Understanding partner's perceptions, feelings and needs

Social Communication

- Problem solving
- Lack of understanding self
- Stress and anxiety
- Initiating and maintaining interactions
- Inappropriate comments
- Understanding the hidden curriculum

Strategies for Success

- ◊ Establish and use consistent routines
- ◊ Show don't tell - provide visual instructions, choices, rules, schedules, scripts for social situations, – refer individuals to these when appropriate
- ◊ Build in transition time
- ◊ Be aware of the physical space

Part 4 of 4

Strategies for Success

- Provide models of finished products
- Identify important part of a task
- Capitalize on areas of interests
- Establish a system for cueing behavior – sticky notes, cards
- Talk about new situations and possible scenarios that may arise develop alternatives – if appropriate write out plans

Strategies for Success

- Model procedure, expectations, thinking strategies or directions
- Identify auditory signal that will cue the individual to focus or respond in a given situation
- Multi-step tasks should be broken down and presented verbally and visually in a systematic manner
- Develop a means for the individual to ask for support or clarification
- Consider the individual's ability to draw comparisons to their own experiences - don't assume
- Be aware of difficulties and stress caused by fine motor and writing task

Strategies for Success

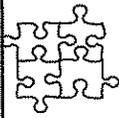
- Provide opportunities for movement
- Use watches, calendars – be on time
- Create a menu of stress release activities including an escape plan
- Be aware of auditory and visual distractions
- Be aware of crowded places
- Assist the individual in regulating their sensory needs- fidgets, water bottles
- Be aware of how you approach and touch the individual
- Lower your voice and help modify expectations when an individual is overwhelmed

Final Thoughts

- 7 positives to 1 negative
- Mean what you say and say what you mean.
- Maintain a sense of priorities
- Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.
- Don't personalize the behavior
- "Don't give a drowning man swimming lessons."
- Remember the Golden Rule.
- Keep an individual's perspective

What if autism is a mistake?
Someone else's mistake?
Ours; not theirs
What if autism really is
Flawed communication?
More ours than theirs
What If the Truth
Suddenly all came gushing out
Like vinegar spray or electric shock
from a Sibis?
What if they started handing out Nobels
For humanity's inhumanity?
Who do you think would win more?
Us or them?
What if autism is a mistake?
Someone else's mistake.

Bob Williams



**Major Strengths of People
with ASD**

- Can understand concrete concepts very well.
- Can memorize rote material easily and quickly.
- Can recall visual images and memories easily.
- Can think in a visual way.
- Can learn chunks of information quickly.
- Can learn to decode written language at an early age.
- Can have extraordinarily good long-term memory
- Can understand and use concrete rules and sequences.
- Can be perfectionistic in approach to tasks.
- Can be very precise and detail oriented.
- Can be depended upon to maintain schedules and to be on time.
- Can have average or even way above average intelligence.
- Can be honest even to a fault.
- Can be charming in their innocence.
- Can have difficulty being devious.
- Can have a strong sense of integrity.
- Can have an excellent sense of direction.
- Can be very compliant when expectations are clearly understood.
- Can be very genuine.

CT, Autism Resource Center,
2003, pp. 4
