

Autism Spectrum Disorders in the Courtroom Setting

Common Characteristic	Implications for Effective Interaction
<p>Extreme difficulty with perspective-taking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > person may be unable to perceive others' motives > person may not be able to predict or understand the impact of his/her behavior on others 	<p>Consider potentially rude or offensive statements within the context of incomplete knowledge and lack of social skills</p>
	<p>Do not assume shared knowledge of words denoting relationships such as "friend" or "neighbor"</p>
<p>Irregularities in use and understanding of verbal language</p>	<p>Avoid use of words with multiple meanings, figurative or slang language</p>
	<p>Use short, clear, concise sentences and questions</p>
	<p>Do not ask leading questions, or they may just give the answer they think you want</p>
	<p>Consider supporting spoken language with printed language or other visual supports</p>
<p>Great difficulty understanding or "reading" complex social situations</p>	<p>Provide individual with a "primer" describing courtroom roles and relationships, procedures and expected behaviors</p>
	<p>and/or</p>
<p>Great difficulty discerning expected behavior without explicit instruction</p>	<p>Provide cues, reminders and explanations of expected behaviors throughout proceedings</p>
	<p>Consider breaches of protocol within the context of lack of knowledge and/or inability to read and adapt to changing situations and expectations</p>
<p>Slower processing, especially of language</p>	<p>Consider slowing pace and allowing additional time to respond to questions</p>
<p>Irregularities in emotion, body language, facial expression and presence of stereotypical and repetitive behaviors</p>	<p>Consider that facial expressions and non-verbal messages may not be indicative of internal states and that lack of expression may not reflect lack of feeling or remorse</p>
	<p>Increases in stereotypical behaviors likely indicate increased anxiety and decreased capacity for effective communication, consider use of breaks to ensure effective outcomes</p>