

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): The Basics

An OCALI Parent Package









Ohio Department of Education
Ensuring a bright future for every child



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Objectives

- Participants will be able to describe the characteristics of autism spectrum disorders (ASD)
- Participants will gain knowledge of how the characteristics/differences may affect individuals with ASD






"This child has good eye contact and is so affectionate. He acts nothing like the character from the movie *Rainman*. It can't be autism!"




Autism Spectrum Disorder

A neurobiological disorder that affects how a person thinks, communicates, and interacts with others

Classic Autism ← High Functioning Autism (HFA)/ Asperger Syndrome



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Autism Statistics

- Currently affects 1 in 110 (according to CDC)
- 1.5 million Americans have some form of ASD
- More prevalent in males

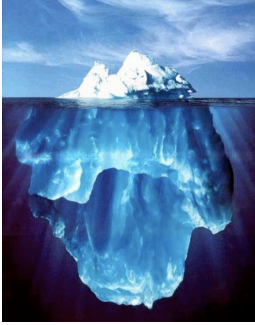
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Recognizing Autism

- Child displays characteristics prior to 36 months
- Average age of diagnosis is 4.5 to 5.5 years of age
- Typically, parents report concerns prior to age three
- 41% of identified children have an IQ of 70 or below and the range extends from average through gifted abilities

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Underlying Characteristics




The image shows a large iceberg floating in the ocean. Only a small portion of the iceberg is visible above the water's surface, while the vast majority of the iceberg is submerged below the surface. This visual metaphor represents the concept of 'underlying characteristics'—the visible behaviors are just the tip of the iceberg, and the much larger submerged part represents the internal, often invisible, traits and challenges.

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Underlying Characteristics

- Social differences
- Communication differences
- Restricted patterns of behavior
- Sensory differences
- Cognitive differences
- Motor differences
- Emotional vulnerability
- Medical or biological differences



The image shows a group of children in a classroom setting. One child is standing and looking towards the camera, while others are seated or standing in the background. This image likely represents the 'social differences' mentioned in the list, such as difficulty recognizing thoughts or feelings of others.

For further information about underlying characteristics see
[The Ziggurat Model, Aspy & Grossman, 2007](#)

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Social Differences

- Difficulty recognizing thoughts/ feelings of others
- Poor eye contact or fails to orient to others
- Difficulty maintaining personal space

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Impaired Theory of Mind

- Inability to understand beliefs, thoughts, desires, perceptions, intentions and feelings
- Difficulty knowing what others are thinking



This limits the ability to explain and predict the behavior of others

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More Social Differences

- Difficulty joining activity
- Difficulty waiting
- Difficulty with nonverbal communication
- Naïve, may be bullied

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Communication Differences

- Has little or no speech
- Does not respond or shows delayed response when name is called
- Asks repetitive questions




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Communication Differences

- Fails to initiate or respond to greetings
- Has difficulty following instructions
- Has difficulty with rules of conversation
- Displays immediate or delayed echolalia

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Restricted Patterns of Behavior, Interests and Activities

- Strong need for routine or "sameness"
- Repetitive motor movements (e.g., flaps hands, paces, rocks) 
- Difficulty engaging in activities other than intense special interests
- Difficulty with transitions

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Restricted Patterns of Behavior, Interests and Activities

- Displays difficulty engaging in activities other than intense special interests
- Has difficulty transitioning from a preferred activity

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Sensory Differences

- Responds in an unusual manner to sounds, pain, light or color, temperature and smells
- Seeks or avoids activities that provide movement, touch or pressure
- Makes noises such as humming or singing frequently



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Cognitive Differences

- Has excellent memory for details
- Literal understanding of concepts
- Has poor organizational skills
- Has attention problems



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Cognitive Differences

- Difficulty understanding the connection between behavior and consequences
- Demonstrates learned skills inconsistently
- Displays academic skill deficits
- Difficulty applying learned skills in new settings



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Executive Dysfunction

- Working memory
- Behavior inhibition
- Planning
- Mental flexibility
- Task initiation
- Performance monitoring
- Self regulation



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Motor Differences

- Has atypical or weak grasp
- Poor motor coordination or is accident prone
- Displays atypical activity level (e.g., over-active/hyperactive, under-active/hypoactive)
- Displays an awkward gait
- Has difficulty starting or completing actions

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Emotional Vulnerability

- Becomes stressed when presented with new task or novel situation
- Has unusual fear response
- Injures self
- Has low frustration tolerance



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Emotional Vulnerability

- Has low frustration tolerance
- Has difficulty tolerating mistakes
- Exhibits rage reactions
- Has a limited understanding of own and others' emotional responses



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Medical/Biological

Examples may include:

- Mood instability
- Eating/digestive issues
- Sleep challenges
- Attention difficulties
- Neurological disorders

These may contribute to emotional vulnerability

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Medical/Biological

- Learn what issues exist and what supports are needed
- Communicate between home, school, and medical personnel
- Research medical/biological issues

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**What you see
on a daily
basis....**

**Might really
be impacted
by what is
happening
below the
surface...**

**Work
Communication
Behavior**

**Comprehension
Emotions
Sensory
Anxiety
Medical**

AUTISM INTERNET MODULES
Linking research to real life.

recognizing autism	Recognizing Autism
autism at home	Assessment for Identification ▼
autism in the classroom	Overview of Social Skills Functioning and Programming ▼
autism in the workplace	Restricted Patterns of Behavior, Interests, and Activities ▼
autism in the community	Sensory Differences ▼

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Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism

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