



Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): The Basics Discussion Questions

1. The primary characteristics of autism are: differences in social interaction, communication differences, (nonverbal and verbal) and repetitive behaviors and/or restrictive interests. In what way does your child exhibit these characteristics?
2. The continuum of differences in social interactions for individuals with autism range from avoiding social interaction to accepting social interaction with much encouragement, to participating in social interactions, but with odd mannerisms to desiring social interaction but doing so in an immature fashion. Where along this continuum would you place your child?
3. Echolalia refers to the repetition of vocalizations or verbalizations made by another person and it can be immediate or delayed. Like all characteristics it can be displayed in different ways. Have you observed echolalia in your child? Have you observed it in the children of others?
4. Some examples of challenges that individuals with autism may demonstrate in the area of communication may include: violating rules of conversation, avoiding eye contact, lack of the ability to understand and accept others perspectives, and difficulty in understanding nonverbal communication like tone of voice or facial expressions. Which, if any, of these characteristics does your child demonstrate? Will you share examples?
5. Executive functioning refers to the ability to attend, focus/filter and mentally plan; the ability for individuals to inhibit actions and thoughts; the ability to multi-task and problem solve; the ability to initiate and stop actions, and the ability to shift attention from one topic to another. Can you identify any of these challenges in your child? How does it impact your child's functioning?
6. How have biological/medical differences challenged your child?
7. Challenges individuals with autism may face pertaining to motor skills can include: difficulty with writing; difficulty using hands in a coordinated fashion for things such as tying shoes, buttoning, zipping; clumsiness in gross motor activities; difficulty starting or stopping tasks. Can you describe if and how these challenges have affected your child?
8. Differences in the social and communication areas can result in emotional vulnerability, which can result in a meltdown. What are some triggers that may precipitate a meltdown for your child? Are they related to social and communication deficits? Are there other triggers?