



Characteristics of Autism

General Characteristics of ASD

People with ASD often have problems with social, emotional, and communication skills. They might repeat certain behaviors and might not want change in their daily activities. Many people with ASD also have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things. Signs of ASD begin during early childhood and typically last throughout a person's life.



Children or adults with ASD might:

- not point at objects to show interest (for example, not point at an airplane flying over)
- not look at objects when another person points at them
- have trouble relating to others or not have an interest in other people at all
- avoid eye contact and want to be alone
- have trouble understanding other people's feelings or talking about their own feelings
- prefer not to be held or cuddled, or might cuddle only when they want to
- appear to be unaware when people talk to them, but respond to other sounds
- be very interested in people, but not know how to talk, play, or relate to them
- repeat or echo words or phrases said to them, or repeat words or phrases in place of normal language
- have trouble expressing their needs using typical words or motions
- not play "pretend" games (for example, not pretend to "feed" a doll)
- repeat actions over and over again
- have trouble adapting when a routine changes
- have unusual reactions to the way things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound

Behavioral Characteristics of Autism

Behavioral

People on the spectrum may exhibit unusual behavior due to the difficulties they have responding to their environment. Their behavior is generally an attempt by them to communicate their feelings or to cope with a situation. Behavior problems may occur as the result of their heightened sensitivity to a sound or something they may have seen or felt.

For people with autism, rigidly sticking to routines and spending their time in repetitive behaviours are ways for them to reduce uncertainty and maintain the predictability of their environment.

Other behaviors may include:

- unusually intense or focused interests
- stereotyped and repetitive body movements such as hand flapping and spinning
- repetitive use of objects such as repeatedly switching

- lose skills they once had (for example, stop saying words they were using

(www.CDC.gov)

Communication

Communication

People with an autism invariably have communication difficulties in one form or another. There are some people with an autism who speak fluently, others who are speech impaired to varying degrees and others still, who are unable to speak at all. Of those who can speak, they will often use language in a very limited or unusual way.

Their line of conversation may involve repeating your phrases or words back to you or asking the same questions over and over. People with an autism will usually only talk about topics that are of interest to them which makes the give and take in communication difficult. They have difficulty interpreting non-verbal forms of communication like facial expressions, hand gestures and other body language.

Impaired communication is characterised by:

- delayed language development
- difficulties initiating and sustaining conversations
- stereotyped and repetitive use of language such as repeating phrases from television

lights on and off or lining up toys

- insistence on sticking to routines such as travelling the same route home each day and doing things in exactly the same order every time
- unusual sensory interests such as sniffing objects or staring intently at moving objects
- sensory sensitivities including avoidance of everyday sounds and textures such as hair dryers, vacuum cleaners and sand
- intellectual impairment or learning difficulties

Social Interactions

Social interaction

People with an autism have difficulty establishing and maintaining relationships. They do not respond to many of the non-verbal forms of communication that many of us take for granted like facial expressions, physical gestures and eye contact. They are often unable to understand and express their needs just as they are unable to interpret and understand

the needs of others. This impairs their ability to share interests and activities with other people. For this reason they are likely to appear distant and aloof. Because they are often delayed in their speech and struggle to make sense of other non-verbal forms of communication, they may withdraw into repetitive play and behaviour and avoid interaction.

Their difficulties with social interaction may manifest in the following ways:

- limited use and understanding of non-verbal communication such as eye gaze, facial expression and gesture
 - difficulties forming and sustaining friendships
 - lack of seeking to share enjoyment, interests and activities with other people
 - difficulties with social and emotional responsiveness
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