

# Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders

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# Autism Spectrum Disorders



- Autistic Disorder
- Asperger Syndrome
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified: PDD (NOS)
- Rett's Syndrome
- Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

# It is a SPECTRUM

**The range of areas of concerns within each of these disorders varies from mild to severe depending on the individual. No two individuals are alike with their range of abilities!**

# Three Main Areas of Need

- Qualitative impairments in communication
- Qualitative impairments in social interaction
- Restricted, repetitive, or stereotyped patterns of behavior, interest and activities

# Impairments in Communication

- expressive language skills are more developed than receptive language skills
- limited understanding of non-verbal communication skills such as gestures, facial expression or tone of voice
- demonstrates odd production of speech, including intonation, volume, rhythm or rate

# Impairments in Communication cont.

- demonstrates repetitive language or inability to initiate or maintain a conversation
- repeats or echoes words or phrases
- has limited eye contact

# Impairments in Social Interaction

- difficulty in relating to people
- demonstrates a gross impairment in the ability to make friends
- significant vulnerability and safety issues due to social naiveté
- may appear to prefer isolated or solitary activities
- misinterprets others' behaviors and social cues

# Restricted, Repetitive Behaviors

- demonstrating distress or resistance to change
- insistence on following routines
- shows lack of true imaginative play versus reenactment
- over reactions or under reaction to sensory stimuli.
- uses rigid or rule bound thinking
- has an intense, focused preoccupation with a limited range of play, interests or conversation topics



# Underlying Reasons for "Behaviors"



# Individuals with ASD can have difficulty...

- shifting and reestablishing attention.
- attending to foreground noises and blocking out background noises.
- with abstract learning. (They are “black and white” thinkers.)
- understanding Theory of Mind.
- following verbal directions.
- reading non-verbal cues.

# What can you do to help?

Have some "tools in your tool box"!

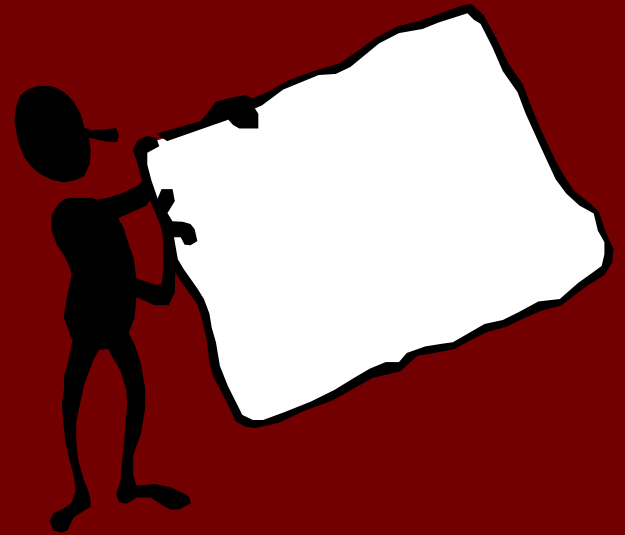


# Important

These strategies can be helpful for  
ALL children.

# Visual Tools

- Schedules and Task Lists
- If/Then and First/Then
- Social Stories



# Visual Tools

- Help to decrease verbal demands
- Help to clarify expectations
- Increase independence
- Are fixed, or non-transient. They can be referred back to when needed.
- Help ALL students

# Schedules and Task Lists

- Can address who, what, when, where
- Often help to decrease anxiety by clarifying expectations
- Break tasks down into steps
- Helps ALL students
- Can also help staff

# If/Then and First/Then

- Helps to teach consequence
- Teaches order and expectations
- Can be positive or negative
- Helps to decrease anxiety



# Social Stories

- Are Visual - written out
- Clarify situation and expectations
- Can be reviewed over and over again

# More Tools

# Direct Teaching

Take the time to stop and teach a skill that may seem simple or obvious.

Assume Nothing – Teach Everything

# Building Upon Interests

- Use interests to help with work completion (First work, Then you can tell me about Yu-Gi-Oh!)
- Use interests in assignments/projects when possible

# Resources

- Parents
- School Staff (Teacher or Autism Resource Specialist)
- Websites
- Books
- DVDs
- Articles

# Questions



# And Discussion