

AUTISM AND COMMUNICATION

The Basics

Autism

- What is Autism?
- Effect on Communication.
- Treatment of Communication Disorders
- How about Asperger Syndrome

True or False – what do you think?

- Most children with autism are geniuses.
- Disconnected mothers cause autism.
- Most children with autism are non-verbal.
- Vaccines can cause autism.
- Children with autism do not interact with others.
- Special diets can cure autism.
- Mostly affects males.
- Runs in Families.

Example of Range of Symptoms

Following the chart below - a person might have average intelligence, have little interest in other people, use limited verbal language, experience intense self-stimulatory behaviors such as hand-flapping, under-react to pain and over-react to sounds, have very good gross motor skills, and have weaknesses in fine motor skills. These symptoms may vary widely from person to person.

MEASURED INTELLIGENCE

Intellectual disability ————— Gifted

SOCIAL INTERACTION

(Making eye contact, enjoying interaction with others, etc.)

Not interested in others ————— A variety of friendships

COMMUNICATION

(Using words correctly to communicate)

Nonverbal ————— Verbal

BEHAVIORS

(Repetitive behaviors, unusual behaviors such as hand flapping, etc.)

Intense ————— Mild

SENSORY

(Response to touch, smell, sound, taste, and feel)

Not very sensitive ————— Very sensitive

Pain Sounds

MOTOR

(Gross motor, such as walking)

(Fine motor, such as using fingers to grasp a small item)

Uncoordinated ————— Coordinated

Fine Gross

CDC 2011
DATA

Effect on Communication

- *From National Institute on Deafness & Other Communication Disorders*
 - Repetitive or Rigid Language
 - Narrow Interests, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders, and Exceptional Abilities
 - Uneven Language Development
 - Pragmatics

Treatment of Communication Problems

- Evaluation needed to rule out hearing loss. Speech/Language Eval needed to evaluate relative strengths and weaknesses.
- Develop short and long term goals.
- Early stages of treatment involve pre-language skills
 - Eye contact, gestures, body movement, babbling
- Basic speech and language skills
- 25% of children never develop verbal language and may need alternative communication systems. e.g. ASL or gesturing

Asperger Syndrome

- Considered a high-functioning Autism
- Narrow Interests, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders, and Exceptional Abilities
- Difficulty with pragmatics
- Speech and language skills are more likely to be normal.

Summary