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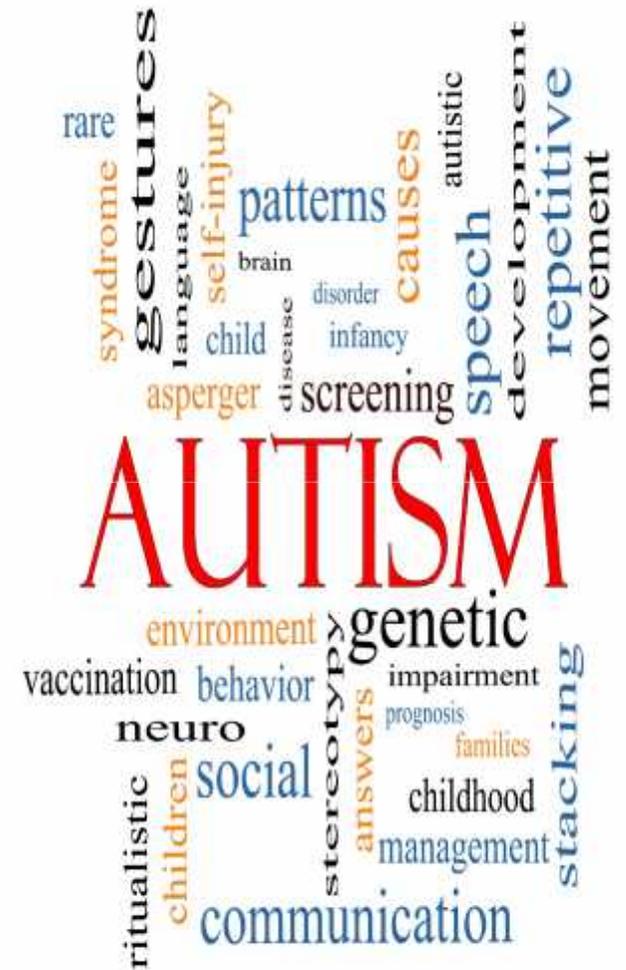
Understanding students with Autism

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WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism is a developmental disorder that impacts the way a person perceives and communicates, often resulting in challenges with social interactions and processing information. Although there are some common characteristics, no two individuals with autism are exactly alike.

It is important to understand how the characteristics of autism affect each student



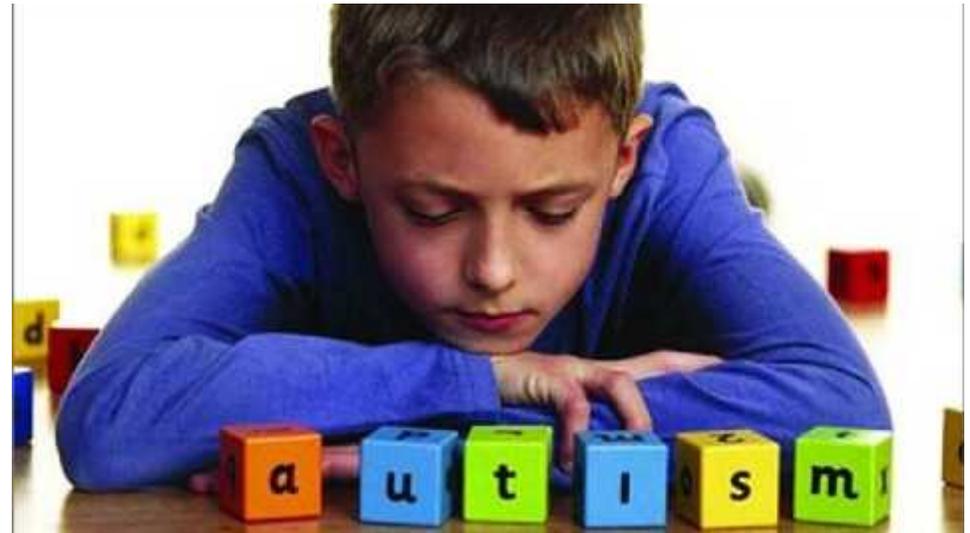
What is autism?

- Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder associated with abnormal development and functioning of the brain in early childhood.
- Symptoms of developmental abnormalities show up to the child's 36th month, that is, by the age of three.
- Autism is not a mental illness. It is a kind of completely different development of neurophysiological



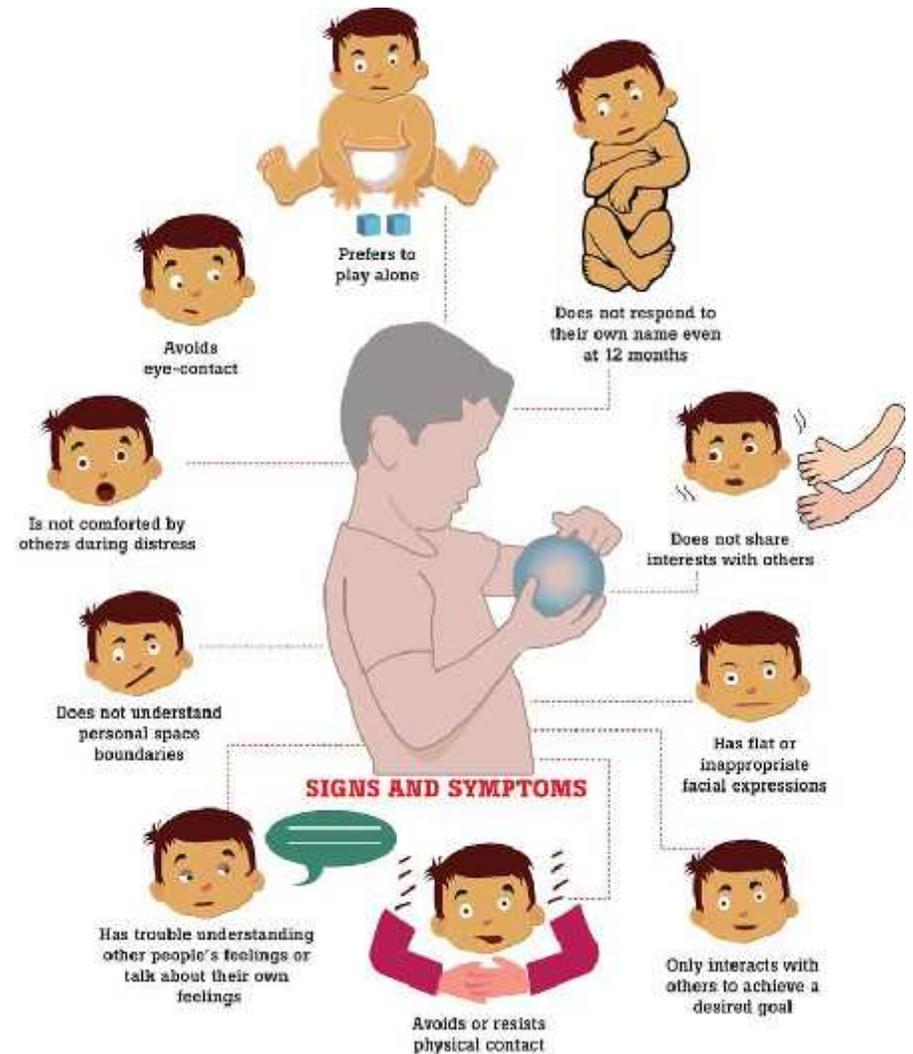
Causes for disability

- Genetic susceptibility and environmental factors play an important role,
- infections, abnormalities in metabolism, disorders of
- pregnancy and childbirth and many other as yet unrecognised



People with autism:

- have difficulties with contact skills and social relationships,
- have problems with communication skills,
- tend towards repetitive, rigid patterns of behaviour,
- have repetitive movements of the whole body, called mannerisms



Autism spectrum disorder

Profound autism.
syndrome.

Very severe symptoms.

Mild autism, Asperger

Minor symptoms



↓ avoidance of eye and physical contact,

↓ lack of speech development,

↓ serious learning difficulties

↑ problems with understanding and reacting appropriately in social situations social situations,

↑ problems understanding other people's emotions and behaviour,

↑ literal understanding speech, e.g. jokes, metaphors, etc.

An example of mild autism

People:

- not have impaired learning skills, their intelligence is within or above normal limits,
- do not have problems in the field of speech development,
- may have very well developed language skills.
- but may have problems adapting to social situations and understanding non-verbal messages such as facial expressions.
- may fixate very strongly on a chosen topic of interest
- may also have problems making friends and maintaining relationships with other people.



Specific features persons with autism

Social contacts

People

- may avoid eye contact eye contact with others, including parents
- do not like to be hugged or touched, although many children do enjoy hugs and firm squeezes
- may focus excessively on objects without paying attention to other people
- want to interact with other people, but because of problems in understanding social rules they are often perceived as bizarre



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSQLXVtTQg>

Communication

- speech development is generally delayed, a large group of children do not develop speech skills at all
- some people speak but do not fully understand the meaning of the words they say and have difficulty n keeping a conversation going
- may repeat single words or whole sentences just heard, for example, on television
- have problems responding to other people's voices, smiles and expressions of emotion, and understanding what they are being told



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsRdpPMAvfs>

Sensory sensitivity

People

perceive sounds, light, pictures, touch, smell, taste or pain differently.

may be irritable, anxious or, on the contrary, fascinated by certain stimuli, flashes of light or the sound of the school bell

sensory processing problems result in specific interests of autistic people in certain objects or parts of objects

sensory problems may also cause people with autism spectrum disorders will avoid being in groups of people, cover their ears, refuse to wear certain clothes, to eat certain foods, etc.

The world around them may appear as chaotic, tangled



- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hs97c_HOah0

Interests

- children with autism play in a specific, repetitive and schematic way.
- people repeat performance of the same and a specific interest in certain features of objects or using them in a bizarre way
- may have interests in specific topics that they return to frequently, usually without considering whether the other person is interested in the topic.
- may talk for hours about trains, trains, trains and trains
- may talk for hours about trains, dinosaurs, historical events or bus routes.



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTUUfjkLdp0>

Useful tips for dealing with with people with autism

- Remember and respect different perceptions. Beware of over-stimulation.
- For a person with autism every new event, meeting a new person may be give them time to get used to the new situation. Be clear in your facial expression and display of emotions, name what you feel in a given situation.
- Speak in simple, understandable language, avoid metaphors, words and phrases that may have a double meaning. If you come into contact with a person who does not speak or who speaks poorly, don't be afraid to use alternative ways of communication, use pictures, photos use pictures, photos or pictograms to support your words.
- Teach non-speaking or weakly speaking persons with autism to use pictures and other ways to communicate.
- People with autism have difficulty understanding the realities around them. Try to announce what is going to happen, use plans, write down the sequence of events



CHARACTERISTICS OF AUTISM

- **IMPAIRED COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS**

Students with autism may have difficulties with comprehension, casual conversation skills, and understanding the subtleties of language (e.g. jokes, sarcasm, idioms, clichés).

- **REPETITIVE BEHAVIORS**

Students with autism may engage in repetitive body movements, such as rocking back and forth or flapping their hands. Some repetitive behaviors may be less prominent (e.g. cracking knuckles, chewing on pencils or pens, perseveration on thoughts or topics).

- **RESTRICTIVE INTERESTS AND DIFFICULTY WITH CHANGE**

Some students have very specific or fixated interests (e.g. Civil War battle strategy, carnivorous houseplants) and often display anxiety when routines are disrupted.

- **SENSORY SENSITIVITIES**

Students with autism can be unusually sensitive to certain aspects of the classroom environment. This may include but is not limited to the humming of a computer, the glow of fluorescent lighting, the smell of dry-erase markers, or the [sound of] turning of a page.

LEARNING STYLES

Students with autism have unique learning styles. Lecturers can support these students by incorporating their strengths and needs when planning for instruction.

This thoughtful preparation will help students with autism maximize their potential and make valuable contributions to class discussions and activities.

- Students with autism are visual learners

They need the opportunity to see information in order to interpret its meaning.

- Students with autism are literal learners

They need expectations, instructions and feedback to be explicitly stated.

- Students with autism need consistency and predictability

They need well-structured, predictable classrooms and schedules

What can we do to help autistic pupils in the classroom?

- (1) When communicating with the student, bear in mind the possibility of conflicts arising from the student's difficulty in reading non-verbal messages, such as tone of voice or body language, and thus the inability to read the other person's intentions, mood or moods of the other person.
- (2) A pupil with autism may understand our statements literally, therefore in conversations with the student we should try to be precise and avoid non-literal statements.
- (3) During classes with child with autism, in order to facilitate the process of learning, we should underline the most important information in our speech, and take short breaks during the speech.
- (4) In order to increase the chances of the student completing the task during the exercises, we should discreetly check whether the instructions given to the group were also well understood by the student with autistic student. In addition we can present the task in smaller steps and give instructions in written form.



(5) It may also be helpful to present the material in a variety of ways: as presentations, diagrams, charts, additional concise descriptions.

(6) It may be particularly difficult for child with autism if the order to which they have become accustomed is disturbed. In such a situation, the student may be more irritable, so let them express their emotions, and keep them calm while doing so.

(7) When a student needs to ask questions or make long statements during class, which may be disruptive to other students, let them speak, and at the same time provide a framework for what they have to say, e.g.: Could you tell about it in three sentences? I will answer the rest of your questions during the consultation.

(8) Children with autism may have unusual interests in which they are experts so if there is an opportunity. Therefore, if possible, initiate a situation where the student can share his/her knowledge and thus build a positive image in the peer group.

(9) Any support for a student with autism should be tailored to their individual needs. Therefore, when in doubt we can also talk to the student after the lectures.

Thank you for your attention! 😊
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