



Getting to Know The Faces of Autism

An Introduction

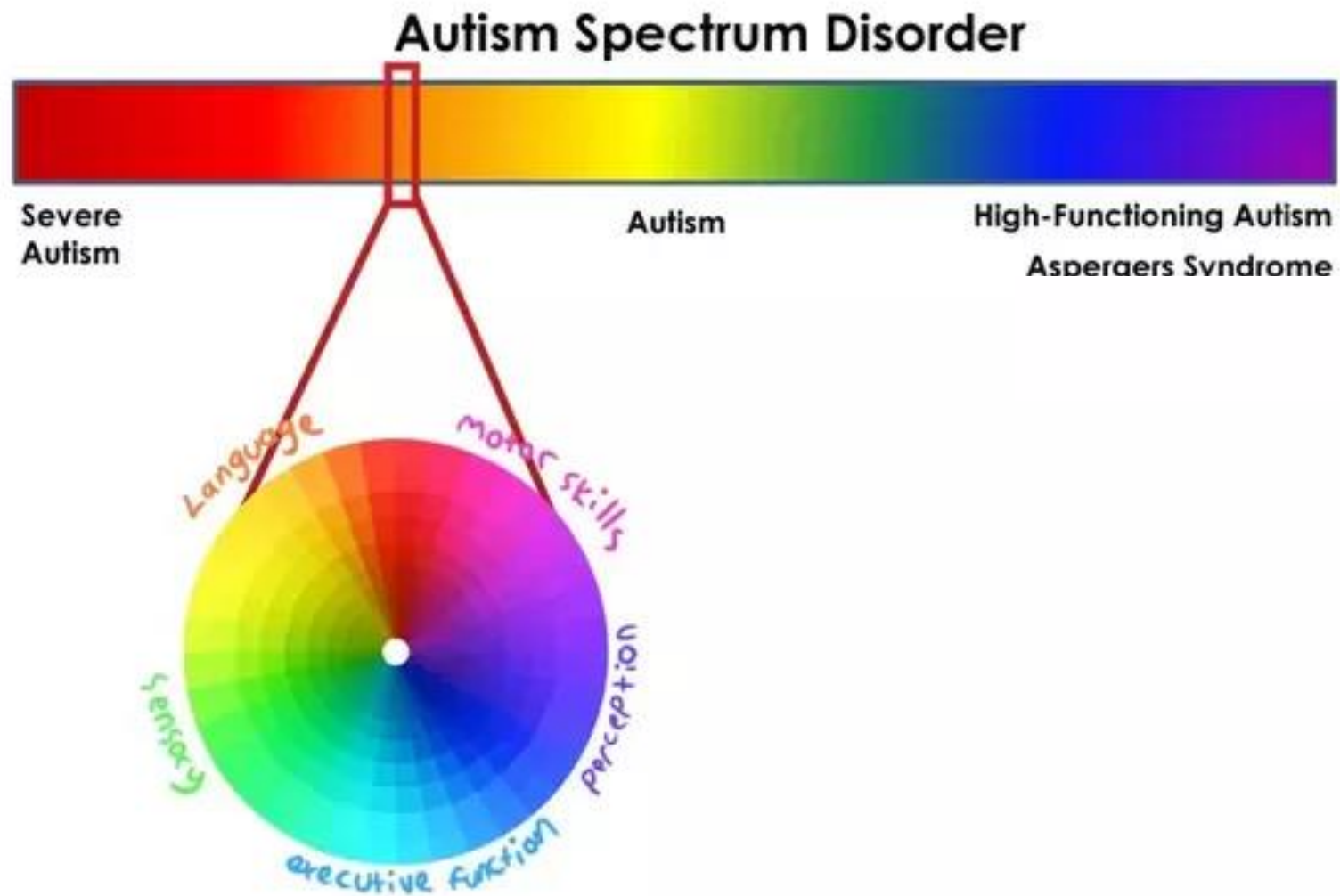
What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex, lifelong developmental disability that typically appears during early childhood and can impact a person's social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation

Other conditions must be ruled out

See DSM-5 ASD guidelines and criteria

It is a spectrum...



Symptoms will include:

Problems with back-and-forth communication that may include difficulty with conversation, body language, eye contact, and/or facial expressions.

Difficulty in developing and maintaining relationships, often due to difficulty with imaginative play, making friends, or sharing interests.

Preference for repeating the same actions, activities, movements, or words over and over again, even if there is no obvious reason for doing so. (Lining up toys over and over again is a classic example.)

Restricted interests combined with in-depth knowledge. An autistic child, for example, might be fixated on a video game about which he knows everything there is to know.

Hyper- or hypo- reactivity to sensory input, in which a person doesn't notice or is overly sensitive to sound, light, smells, pain, or touch.

Poor self-regulation due to difficulty managing intense emotion, sensory overload, or rigidity in thinking

Signs and Symptoms of Mild Autism

*Symptoms must be present before age three



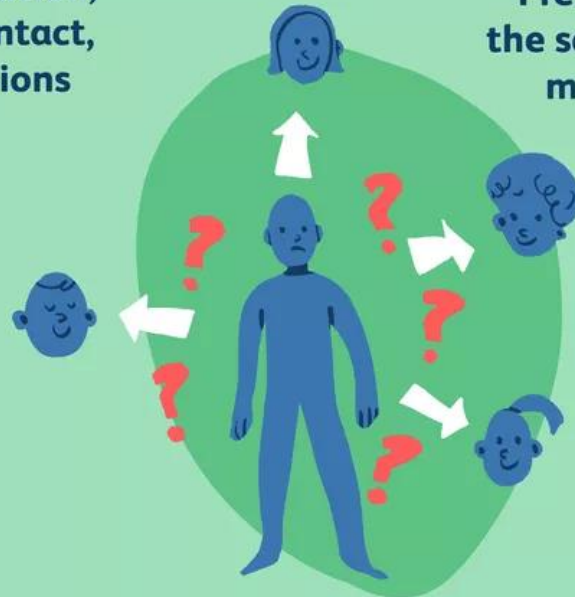
Difficulty with conversation,
body language, eye contact,
and/or facial expressions



Preference for repeating
the same actions, activities,
movements, or words



Hyper- or hyporeactivity
to sensory input



Difficulty developing and
maintaining relationships



Intense restricted interests

The Three Functional Levels of Autism

ASD Level 1 Requiring Support



difficulty initiating social interactions

organization and planning problems can hamper independence

ASD Level 2 Requiring Substantial Support



social interactions limited to narrow special interests

frequent restricted/repetitive behaviors

ASD Level 3 Requiring Very Substantial Support



severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills

great distress/difficulty changing actions or focus

Symptoms of Level 3 Autism



Inability to use spoken language



Extreme sensitivity—crowds, bright lights, loud noises are overwhelming



Lower IQ



Many repetitive behaviors, like violent rocking and door slamming



Physical symptoms like sleeplessness and epilepsy



How does autism
affects everyday
functioning?

At School

Rigidity: dealing with changes, mess, transitions, unexpected incidents

Executive functioning: seeing the bigger picture, organization and planning

Environmental elements: noise, too bright, too many people, textures

Working together with peers or “group project”

Interaction with peers; interest, communication understanding, friendship



At Home

Difficulty with
everyday
activities e.g. hair
wash or brushing
hair or teeth

Stressed
out parents

Frequent
breakdown
(which
teachers do
not see)

Picky
eater/nutrition
issues





What are their strength?

MEMORY

Excellent recall
and memory

INTEGRITY

Honest and
trustworthy

TRUE

KINDNESS

Kind and pure

VISUAL SKILLS

Visual learner,
detailed focus

EXPERTICE

In-depth
knowledge, high
level skills

ATTENTION TO DETAILS

Through and
accurate

DEEP FOCUS

Concentration and
responsiveness to
structure

Analytical

Problem-solve,
identify
pattern

How can we
help?



Work with their strength!

- ◆ Establish routine with them
- ◆ Use visual tools when possible
- ◆ Give them projects to master
- ◆ Integrate their interest
- ◆ Encourage and compliment



Provide support

- ◆ Conducive learning environment
- ◆ Manage changes and transitions
- ◆ Work closely with parents/carers
- ◆ Inclusiveness
- ◆ Clear communication
- ◆ Take care of yourself



How to communicate with kids with autism?



eye contact

Many people with autism have difficulty making eye contact, but it's important to look people with autism in the eyes (instead of a quick, uncomfortable glance), and greet them with a warm welcoming smile.



age appropriate conversation

Speak to autistic kids and adults at an age-appropriate level; don't talk down to them.



don't ignore

Even though a person with autism may seem like they are ignoring you, they probably aren't. Never ignore or pretend the person isn't there, acknowledge them as you would anyone else.



be aware of your mood

Those with autism can be very sensitive to other people's moods and behaviors. If you're nervous or tense, they may pick up on that and respond the same way. By relaxing you'll help take the pressure off and everyone will feel more at ease.



be non-judgemental

If you encounter someone with autism displaying what might be considered inappropriate behavior (yelling, tantrums, laying down, grabbing objects, etc.), be patient and compassionate, don't stare or shake your head. The less self-conscious someone with autism feels the more likely the situation will resolve. You may offer help to the parents of autistic children in these situations, but if your offer is declined, politely step away.



use kind & encouraging words

Even if a person with autism may not directly respond to your positive words, they will likely register them. This will help put them at ease and not feel self-conscious.