

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AT A GLANCE

OVERVIEW

“If you have met one person with Autism, you have met one person with Autism.”
Dr. Stephen Shore, Adelphi University

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) impacts everyone differently and to a varying degree. It impacts the brain’s ability to process information by altering how nerve cells and their synapses organize.

STATISTICS



AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990

The ADA provides protections against discrimination and mandates the provision of reasonable accommodations to create accessible learning environments for those with disabilities.

COMMON MANIFESTATIONS OF ASD

REPETITIVE BEHAVIORS

May feel the need to repeat the same behaviors or phrases again and again. This is also known as stimming.

COMMUNICATION

May experience trouble understanding or communicating their thoughts and needs to others, as well as understanding directions, vocal cues, and facial cues.

SENSORY PROCESSING

May experience difficulty with maintaining eye contact, physical touch, and coping with loud environments. Students may be hyper- or hypo-sensitive to sensory input.

INFORMATION PROCESSING

May experience trouble in this area due to an alteration in how the brain’s synapses are connected.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

May exhibit challenging behaviors, have a decreased ability to understand social cues, and may experience difficulties with group work dynamics.

THEORY OF MIND

May exhibit difficulty understanding other’s thoughts, feelings, desires, and intentions that may differ from one’s own.

KEY ELEMENTS TO SUCCESSFUL EDUCATION

Successfully supporting an individual with ASD involves understanding the unique way the characteristics impact his/her educational life. Here are some ways to make education more successful:

Coordinated Team Approach

Structured Learning Environment

Functional Approach to Problem Behaviors

Provision of Regular Feedback to Student & Support Team

Provision of Classroom and Social Support

Positive Attitudes from All Involved

Proactive Resolutions to Problems

Individualized and Regularly Reviewed Accommodations

Meaningful Connection with Peers and Educators

STRATEGIES TO HELP

VISUAL AIDS

Supply visual schedules, PowerPoints, lecture notes, and other visuals to reduce stress, confusion, and anxiety.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Use of notetaking devices, recording devices, etc. are often used as a way to bridge the gap in working memory.

STRUCTURE

Adopt a predictable structure and routine to help reduce stress, confusion, anxiety, and behavior problems.

NOTE BEHAVIORS

Note any out-of-character behaviors as they may be a sign of distress, and consult the student’s support team.

VISUAL AND VERBAL CUES

Provide a visual cue alongside a verbal cue to increase awareness of classroom norms and expectations.

REDUCE DISTRACTIONS

Reduce distractions caused by lights, sounds, and smells provides a conducive learning environment.

