



Autism Association of the ACT Inc

Postal: S.H.O.U.T, PO Box 717, Mawson, ACT, 2607
Telephone: (02) 6290 1984 Facsimile: 02 6286 4475
Email: autism@coombs.anu.edu.au Internet: <http://autism.anu.edu.au/>

Asperger's Syndrome Children

Children who have Asperger's Syndrome face a world that is frightening, confusing and distressing. They are frequently anxious and sometimes angry. Understanding what the world is like for a child with Asperger's is the first step to helping. With this understanding, it is then possible to construct the appropriate educational programs, tailored to the child's individual needs. Such a program will do much to help and it is a basis of effective education.

What is Asperger's syndrome?

Asperger's syndrome is a pervasive developmental disorder. It is one of a number of related pervasive developmental disorders called Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). It is believed to result from problems in the way a person's central nervous system functions, in particular how it processes and organises information. What is true is that the style of parenting used for raising and managing children does not cause this condition.

With diagnosis and appropriate educational and other intervention, the effect of this impairment upon a person's life can be reduced. Asperger's syndrome impairs the quality of life in many areas; most noticeable is the lack of friends, difficulty in integrating in job or school, despite the desire to fit in.

Educational programs for Asperger's children must take into account the nature of the syndrome and what that means for the child. Children who have Asperger's Syndrome tend to exhibit these characteristics:

- Solitary play or play with much younger or older children.
- Unusual social behaviour may not be apparent until the child is 4-5 years.
- Lacks empathy-seeing others point of view -unaware how their behaviour affects others.
- Disproportionately upset by failure or criticism.
- Limited understanding of emotional expressions.
- Non-verbal expression is usually impaired with restricted or inappropriate expression.
- Clumsy use of gesture and unusual eye gaze.
- Over sensitivity to sensory stimulation.

Areas of difficulty

Communication

A child with Asperger's syndrome usually speaks at the age expected. A full command of grammar is usually acquired. The content of speech may be abnormal, tending to be pedantic and often centering on one or two favourite topics. Sometimes a word or phrase is repeated over and over in stereotyped fashion. Usually there is a comprehension deficit despite apparent superior verbal skills. Non-verbal communication, both expressive and receptive is often impaired.

Asperger's Syndrome Children

Social Interaction

There tends to be impairment in two-way social interaction due in the most part to an inability to understand the rules governing social behaviour. A lack of empathy with others and little or no eye contact may be evident. Asperger's children perceive the world almost exclusively from their own point of view.

Social Behaviour

Social behaviour is often naive and peculiar. They tend to become intensely attached to particular possessions. They engage in repetitive activities and are resistant to change, coping best when life is predictable. They are rigid and prefer structure and may concentrate exclusively on matters in which they are interested. May appear non-compliant as they have difficulty taking direction and coping with negative feedback.

Common characteristics

Most people with Asperger's syndrome will exhibit the following characteristics:

1. Severe difficulties with social interaction

They will be unwilling or unable to interact normally with others of their own age, and show a lack of appreciation of social cues - resulting in inappropriate, embarrassing or 'eccentric' behaviour.

2. Obsessive interest in a subject

Although the particular interest may change over the years, it will always be taken to the extreme, carried out to the exclusion of most other activities, and be a subject that relies on rote memory rather than meaning and connection.

3. Stereotyped routines

The person will attempt to impose such routines on many aspects of their day-to-day life.

4. Speech and language problems

They can appear as:

- delayed language development;
- superficially perfect language which is formal and pedantic; or
- mild or moderate impairment of language comprehension and a tendency to take every statement literally
- Unusual and uneven development of receptive and expressive language abilities
- Problems with metaphors and similes
- Literal interpretation
- Prosody often a flat or unusual tone or a 'foreign accent'
- Pragmatics; e.g. interrupting, turn taking, unsociable comments.

5. Nonverbal communication problems

The person has limited or clumsy gestures with little, or inappropriate, facial expression and experiences difficulty in reading body language and social cues.

6. Motor movement

Almost all children, and some adults, with Asperger's syndrome suffer from a degree of clumsiness which is out of step with their other abilities. They display poor co-ordination in both gross and fine motor skills. (Catching, balance, walking, writing)

Asperger's Syndrome Children

7. Impairments in understanding:

- Feelings;
- Language
- Social behaviour

8. Resistance to change

The Asperger's child finds any unexpected change a source of anxiety and even panic.

The Autism Association of the ACT, Inc

The Autism Association is a voluntary organisation. It works to improve the life and opportunities for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, their families and their carers. The Association is a non-profit charitable organisation. All donations to the Association are tax deductible. The Association provides:

- Support to people who have ASD, their families, carers, teachers and therapists;
- Information on autism;, on living with ASD, and Information on the services available in the ACT;
- Advocacy to improve services and opportunities;
- Close work with service providers to improve service delivery;
- Seminars and workshops and information forums;
- A newsletter, "Autism Awareness"
- Monthly meetings and speakers;
- Membership of the Association is open to any person with ASD, their family, carers, teachers or other interested person.

If you would like to join the Association or attend our meetings or assist in any other way, please contact us at the SHOUT offices.

Autism Association of the ACT, Inc

SHOUT Offices
PO Box 717
Mawson ACT 2067

Phone: 02 6290 1984

Fax: 02 6286 4475

Email: autism@coombs.anu.edu.au

Internet: <http://autism.anu.edu.au>