



Autism Association of the ACT Inc

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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. 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. The features of Asperger's Syndrome appear in early childhood and remain constant throughout life. Asperger's syndrome is rarely recognised before the age of three.

The level of disability varies between individuals. With appropriate intervention the effect of the disability can be reduced; however, the effect of the disability, even when progress is made, is never entirely eliminated. Most Asperger's syndrome children attend primary and secondary schools.

While Asperger's syndrome children share many features of the syndrome, they may vary enormously in other ways especially in the areas of intelligence and temperament. The high level of intelligence and reasonably good speech of some may mean that Asperger's people are dismissed as 'eccentric' or 'naughty', and go for many years without receiving a diagnosis. Some children who have classic autism as young children can be later diagnosed as having Asperger's Syndrome.

Causes

The causes of Asperger's syndrome are not known for certain, and there are many theories. There does not appear to be a single cause.

Diagnosis, intervention, and education

People with Asperger's syndrome can make significant progress and the effect of their disability can be reduced. They make best progress, however, when early diagnosis occurs and they receive early intervention and appropriate and ongoing educational services. Recognition and diagnosis is a vital first step. However, recognition and diagnosis at any time in a person's life will provide basis for appropriate programs and an improvement in that person's quality of life.

Incidence

Owing to advances in knowledge and ongoing research, the level of incidence is not agreed. What is agreed is that ASD is more common than previously thought. Recent research suggests that ASD affects, to some degree or another, one person in one hundred. Most of these people are thought to be high functioning people with Asperger's syndrome who may never be diagnosed. Their behaviour may be regarded as obsessional or eccentric, but they will be able to function, with more or less difficulty, in the community.

What is Asperger's Syndrome?

Some Common Features of Asperger's syndrome people

- Excellent rote memory and an ability to absorb facts easily.
- Difficulty reading body language, facial expressions and gestures.
- Incessant talking about one topic
- A narrow range of interests
- They can do some things very well and very quickly
- They have difficulty performing tasks or engaging in activities that involve social understanding
- They have difficulty interacting with peers
- Interaction is often one-sided
- May display indifference to other people and their feelings
- They are resistant to change
- They generally perform well at maths and science
- They are generally anxious children who are unable to cope with any form of criticism or imperfection
- They can be the victims of teasing (e.g. in school). This may cause them to withdraw into isolated activities
- They find it difficult to generalize learned skills and appear to need to re-learn the procedure for each situation.
- They often appear clumsy and may have an unusual gait and stance
- They are often seen as being odd and/or eccentric
- Language often appears good but may have limited content and poor social understanding.

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 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.

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