

Understanding and Supporting Patrons with Autism Spectrum Disorder



Jenna Johnson, Masters of Social Work, Associate Clinical Social Worker, Pupil Personnel Services Credential

- Paraprofessional for a school district
- In home behavior support specialist
- Behavior Consultant
- Mental Health Clinician

- Focus: Behavior and working effectively with a variety of people

Today's Objectives

- My #1 Goal is to have you walk away with something valuable
- Review the common characteristics of individuals on the Autism Spectrum
- Review types of Behaviors you might observe while working with an individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Strategies for communicating effectively
- Strategies for de-escalating an upset patron
- Discuss questions or specific scenarios from participants.



Please keep an open mind...

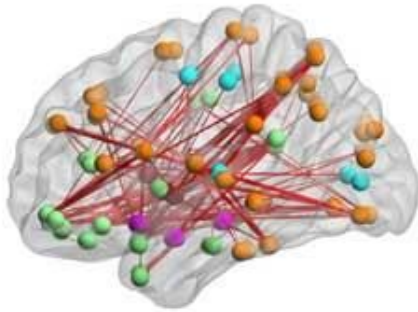
Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Developmental Disorder
- Observed early
- Pervasive

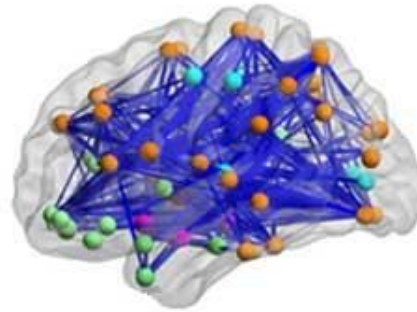


Structural Brain Differences

Typically developing children



Children with autism



Differences Managing Emotions, Language Development, Social Perspective



Autism Spectrum Disorder

1) Social Interactions

3) Interests


2) Verbal and Nonverbal
Communication

4) Behavior



Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorders (DSM- 5)

- 1) Differences in Social Interaction:
 - Lacking in Social-Emotional reciprocity
 - Struggles in developing, maintaining, or understanding relationships



Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorders (DSM- 5)

2) Differences in Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

- Spoken language
- Body language/gestures
- Facial Expressions
- Voice modulation

I want



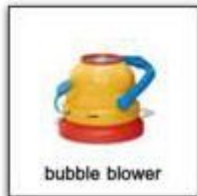
big wheel



golf



trampoline



bubble blower



sand and water table



sidewalk chalk



Characteristics of Autism Spectrum

Disorders (DSM- 5)

3) Restricted, repetitive patterns of interests & activities

- Very restricted areas of interest that are especially intense or focused
- Adherence to routines, sameness, or rules in an inflexible manner



Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder

4) Behavior

- Hyper or hypo reactivity to sensory input (hearing, vision, taste, texture, smell, etc).
- Repetitive physical movements, repetitive movements with items/toys, or repetitive speech



Recap- Commonly Observed Behaviors

Hand flapping,

Limited facial expressions

Walking on tip toes

Wiggling fingers or items in front of the eyes

Avoiding eye contact

Spinning items

Repeating words/phrases

Reactions to Sensory information

Use of sounds instead of language

Tantrums

Hand leading

Self- injurious behavior (biting hands, slapping face)

Additional Variables....Often individuals with

 Autism *Also* experience other challenges such as:

Anxiety

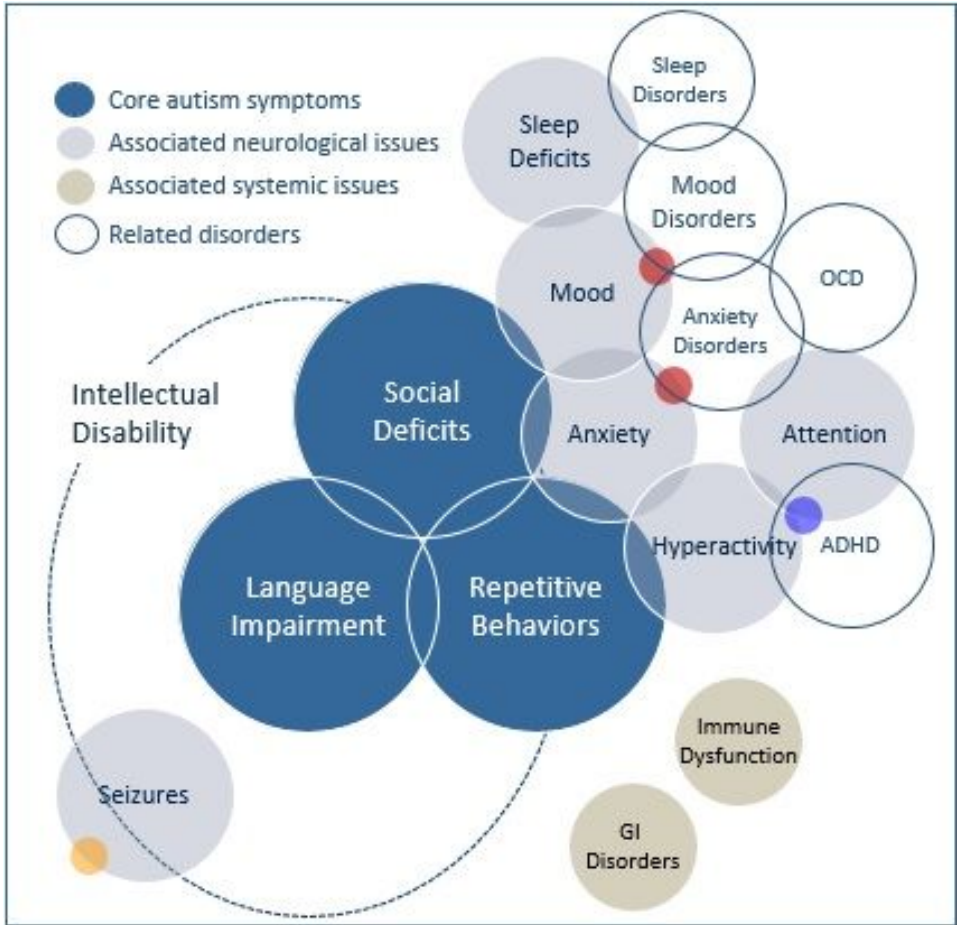
Additional Sensory Integration
issues

Sleeping disorders

Obsessive Compulsive
Disorder

Reactions to new
medications

Food allergies



Source:
<https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/symptoms>

Children vs. Adults



Questions about what we've covered?

Coming up next.... Strategies for improving our environments and our interactions to best serve a variety of patrons...



Understanding What You are Seeing



We will typically not know someone's diagnosis....thus

We must rely on the Behaviors we see in front of us.

- Behavior is a Major form of communication
- Behavior can be “read” and interpreted, like a book



Practice...

Example: An individual visiting the library avoids making eye contact, turns their body sideways when speaking to you, and covers their ears when you speak to them....

What does this behavior tell you?

Calming Interactions



Preparing Yourself... Communication Strategies

Respect

Use clear, direct, literal language

Avoid metaphors

Avoid relying on subtle body language

Allow time for processing

Practice examples:

- Times almost up!
- Please stop that
- Excuse me?!
- *The computer needs to be shut down in 10 minutes.*
- *I need you to set the book down on the table.*
- *Please follow these rules (point to rules poster).*

Social Modeling as a strategy

- Social modeling... using ourselves as an example of how a person would behave in a specific situation.
- Social modeling works as a cue to others how we expect them to behave/treat us
- When you might use this: when introducing yourself, when following library rules, when talking to patrons



Practice: Bringing Calm to a Situation

Scenario:

An individual in the library becomes escalated, raising their voice, not following directions of staff, and disrupting other patrons.

Question:

How do we deescalate this situation in a safe and respectful manner?

Ways to Respond...

Step 1: Take a breath & “Read” the behavior

Calm, *quiet* voice

Clear, precise, direct questions/statements

Try visual prompts- taking a deep breath yourself, visibly relaxing your own body, pointing to a quiet sign/or easily accessed exit

Remove stimulation- ask patrons to move to another area temporarily, dim lights if possible, reduce noise, etc.

Welcoming Spaces



Preparing your Library Environment...

things to consider

- Visual prompts/reminders can work wonders
 - Post rules with visual cues
 - Prepare maps of the library (versions for children and adults)
 - Have handouts prepared (ex: “The Three Steps to obtaining a library card”)
- Complete a walk through of your library and look/listen/feel/smell for sensory irritants
 - Are there any flickering lights? Can you dim lights in a certain area? Are there quiet/calm areas with fewer posters or decorations? Are there times when a parent can bring in a louder child?

STORYTIME



Friends or the teacher reads books to us.



I sit with my legs crossed.



I keep my hands in my lap.



My mouth is closed and I listen.



I look at pictures in the book.



I am quiet when friends or my teacher read books.

BOOKS ARE
DUE BACK:



LIBRARY SCHEDULE



SIT QUIETLY
ON THE FLOOR



WELCOME
TO THE
LIBRARY



LIBRARY SCHEDULE



STORY TIME
RULES



CHECK OUT HERE



READ WITH CLEAN HANDS



SCHOOL LIBRARY POSTERS



SUPERHERO THEME

Rules, schedules, welcome posters, book care and more!
Most posters in portrait and landscape to give you more choices.



LIBRARY RULES



- L**isten to the adult in charge
- I**f you need help, please ask
- B**e respectful to others
- R**emember to treat books nicely
- A**lways use your shelf marker
- R**eturn books on time or renew them
- Y**elling is for outside, use inside voices

Non-Fiction



Fiction



Atlases



Computer Lab Rules



Do not change
any settings



Save often



Follow log off
instructions



Work
quietly



Don't share
password or
login



Surf
safely

Final Points



If you encounter odd/"rude" behavior- it's not personal

If a difficult situation arises, ask the caregiver calmly if they would like any help

Calm/quiet reactions are best

Short, simple directions Or visual prompts

Allow for time to process

Social modeling

Creating sameness/routine

Questions?

Scenarios you've encountered?

Additional Resources



Autism Internet Modules

<http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/>

National Autism Association

<http://nationalautismassociation.org/>

Autism Speaks

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/>

Libraries and Autism: www.librariesandautism.org/video/htm

● Recommended video

“What is feels like to be Autistic- Temple Grandin”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qPFAT4p8Lc>