

Making a difference together: Understanding autism



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Introduction



The aims are to:

- Introduce autism
- Provide specific information about autism:
 - definitions
 - history
 - demographics
- Explore the associated characteristics, abilities, symptoms and challenges
- Highlight how good healthcare for someone with autism can be achieved



Definitions of autism



Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them.



Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a condition that affects social interaction, communication, interests and behaviour. It includes Asperger syndrome and autism.

About autism



Different terms to describe autism

In this PowerPoint presentation, 'Autism' is used to describe:

- Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Autistic Spectrum Condition
- Asperger's Syndrome
- Autistic Spectrum Difference and,
- Neuro-Diversity.



History and background of autism

1943 – Leo Kanner – An Austrian Psychiatrist.

Leo Kanner first used the term 'Autism' when he studied 11 children within his clinic and recognised that they had a similar group of behaviours from childhood like:

- Aloneness and a Lack of emotional contact
- Bizarre and elaborate repetitive routines
- Muteness, and what he described as
- Abnormal speech.



History and background of autism

1944 – Hans Asperger – An Austrian Paediatrician.

Hans Asperger noticed a similar pattern of behaviours in the children he studied like:

- Intense interest in particular subjects
- Inappropriate social approaches to other people
- Poor co-ordination and lack of common sense
- Good grammar but monotone speech, and also no two way conversation.



What we now understand by the term autism

- Autism affects how a person communicates with, and relates to other people, and how people make sense of the world around them
- No one knows exactly what causes autism, but the core idea is that the brain of someone with autism functions differently, receiving and processing information in a different way (Forrester-Jones, 2014)
- Autism is a spectrum condition which means there are lots of different ways that autism can affect individuals.



What we now understand by the term autism

Autism manifests in many different ways. Everyone is unique with their own abilities, talents, challenges and symptoms.



What we now understand by the term autism

- In the general population, many people have co-morbidities (i.e. more than one health condition at any one time)
- People with autism are the same, and can have other conditions too, such as a learning disability, mental health challenges, OCD, ADHD and Dyspraxia.



What we now understand by the term autism

- The amount of support therefore, that individual's may require can vary from constant to occasional
- Autism is a lifelong, developmental condition that affects the brain and it's functions
- Autism not only affects the person but the people around them like their family, friends and carers.



Support



Lifelong Condition



Family/Friends/Carers

What we know about autism: Facts and Figures



Autism affects about 700,000 people in the United Kingdom, which equates to 1:100 of the population (National Autistic Society, 2014).

- The number of children known to have autism has increased dramatically since the 1980's due to changes in diagnostic practice, yet many people still remain undiagnosed and without support
- It is estimated that at least 4 times more males than females are diagnosed with autism, and around a third of people with a learning disability may also have autism.



What we know about autism: Facts and figures

- Autism affects communication. The brain sees things differently, and it works differently
- The cause of autism is not known and there is no cure
- Autism can affect anyone, anywhere in the world. All people with autism share a difficulty making sense of the world
- Autism affects all and does not discriminate across sex, ethnic origin, country or class.



Understanding autism



Characteristics of autism

People with autism generally experience three main areas of difficulty:

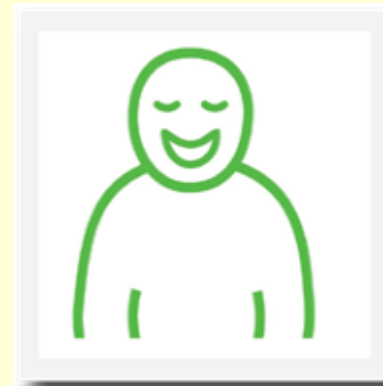
1. Social Communication,
2. Social Interaction and,
3. Social Imagination.



1. Social Communication

Social communication is where people with autism have difficulties understanding:

- Facial expressions
- Tone of voice
- Common gestures
- Eye contact
- Body language and,
- Giving and receiving verbal and non-verbal communication.



2. Social Interaction

Social interaction is where people with autism struggle with:

- Understanding their own and other people's feelings and emotions
- Forming relationships and making friends.

People can appear aloof, indifferent and withdrawn.



3. Social Imagination



Social imagination is where people with autism have difficulties comprehending:

- Abstract concepts and ideas
- People's actions, emotions, behaviours and consequences
- Solutions to life outside of their routines.

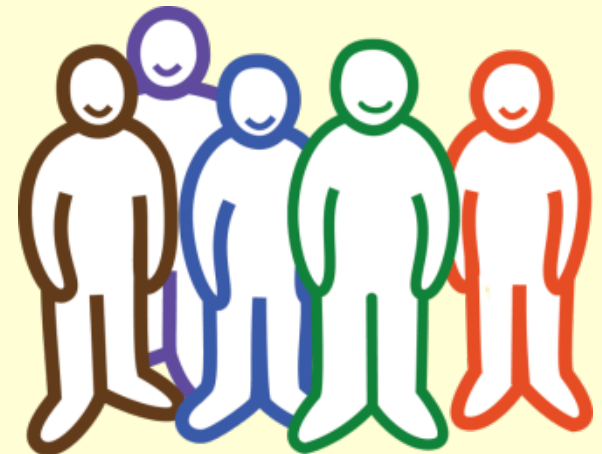
Stereotypes and individuals



Stereotypes

Stereotyping is a way of thinking about everyone in a group as being the same or similar. People with autism are not all the same and **do not** always exhibit these traits:

- Have incredible talents like savants, and everyone like 'Rain man' having special abilities in math's and art
- Rock back and forth and shake their hands
- Weird and unusual because not like everyone else
- Disruptive intentionally
- Badly behaved individual
- They are all disabled.



Stereotypes

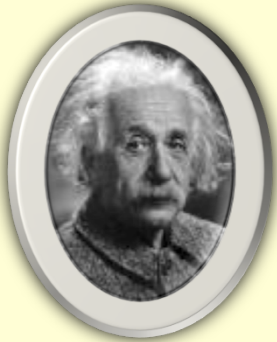
- Have a low mental capacity (many people with autism have capabilities that match or exceed their age)
- Little or no ability to talk
- Distant and in their own world
- Are all child like.



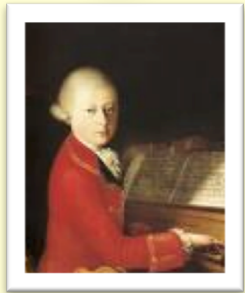
Never rely on stereotypes as everyone is unique and has the right to be accepted and valued for who they are.

People with autism are in good company

People from the past with suspected autism:



- **Albert Einstein** – He had an obsession with physics (his interest). Albert Einstein also had a lack of social empathy and a lack of tact



- **Mozart** – Repeated facial expressions and constant movement of his hands. Mozart also had very sensitive hearing



- **Isacc Newton** – Not good at making or keeping friends. Isacc Newton also relied constantly on routines, also he used to forget to eat. Isacc Newton was also not interested in people.

People with autism are in good company

Fictional television character from 'The Big Bang Theory'



Theoretical Physicist:

Dr Sheldon Lee Cooper B.S., M.S., M.A.,
Ph.D., Sc.D.

- Capacity to remember complex information and solve mathematical problems
- Photographic memory
- Doesn't like hugs or physical contact

People with autism are in good company

- Fiercely guarding **his** spot on the couch or
- Strict routines about what he eats on each day and having particular pajamas for each night of the week
- Doesn't like change and struggles to adapt
- Sheldon struggles to pick up sarcasm in conversation and most non-verbal cues.



Good healthcare for everyone



Quotes from the autism Focus Group – 04/07/2014 -AD



Seen as aggressive and bad as people do not understand them and their condition.

Just because someone is a professional doesn't mean they understand the day to day life of someone with the condition.

Autism is a spectrum condition, preferred now as I don't like the word disorder as it feels like it puts people down.

A person is a person, respect the person not the condition.

No-one is the same, everyone is unique.

People are proud of the condition.



Good healthcare for everyone



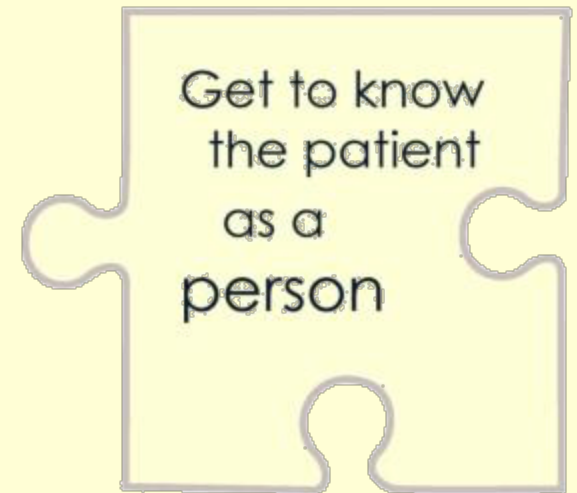
What you can do to help someone with autism

- Speak clearly in short sentences using plain language
- Give the individual time to process the information that they are asked
- Be patient, give them time and do not rush them
- A persons frustrations and anger may come from their fear and anxiety
- Talk to family and carers to find out about the person



What you can do to help someone with autism

- Be prepared to explain complex information and repeat it often
- Support the person and prepare them for change
- Be mindful of the importance of their routines and structure, it makes them feel safe and secure
- Everyone is unique, accept difference and do not discriminate.



References and further information

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