

Autism Spectrum Disorders

Adult Information: In April 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced the national prevalence rate for Autism Spectrum Disorder is as many as 1 in 59 according to a study conducted in 2014 on eight -year-old children in 11 communities across the United States.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. There is often nothing about how people with ASD look that sets them apart from other people, but people with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged. Some people with ASD need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less.

* In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association merged four distinct autism diagnoses into one umbrella diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). They included autistic disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and Asperger syndrome.

The characteristics of ASD begin before the age of 3 and last throughout a person's life. It occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups and is four times more likely to occur in boys than girls. The CDC campaign [Learn the Signs. Act Early.](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html) is a fantastic resource to monitor developmental milestones at <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

Autism Spectrum Disorder Station Activities – Beige Station (New 10th Station)

1. Start this station by explaining that Autism is a spectrum disorder. That means that people are affected at different levels. Some people are extremely smart and others have an extremely difficult time learning new things. Some people can speak well and others cannot speak at all. Some are extremely sensitive to sounds, lights and touch, while others are not bothered.

2. Next read the sign that states the following: People who have an Autism Spectrum Disorder may have challenges in:

Making Friends and Playing
Communicating
Using their Senses
Learning

3. Finally point out to the participants these four areas on the table and then let them try everything. Feel free to comment as everyone explores the table.

Making Friends and Playing

1. These are examples of Social Stories. They explain how a common event happens. Some people have a hard time understanding social situations. Reading a social story just before the event reminds them of what to expect and how to act or behave.

2. Oakland County students who have Autism Spectrum Disorder wrote these Social Facts. Notice the level of detail and social cues that they required, reminding themselves how to successfully participate in common eating situations. Writing down social facts ahead of time and then referring to them during times of stress or uncertainty is helpful to people who have Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Communicating

1. A person with ASD who cannot speak may show a picture card, point out words in a communication book or use a Picture Exchange Communication System (PECs) like these examples.
2. Some people with ASD use pictures to help them communicate. A traveling communication book or ring allows the person with ASD to take the pictures with them to different settings. Examples include school subjects, recess, lunch, shopping, sporting events, work, family outings, holiday parties, etc. To find the needed picture quickly, pictures used in the same setting are usually grouped together.
3. Some people with ASD have difficulty writing quickly and neatly when taking tests, filling out forms or doing certain school assignments. It may be very difficult to think of the answers and write too. A person with ASD may use a label maker to type and print out the answers. Then the answers are peeled off and placed in the correct location.

Using Their Senses

1. Sit down on the Movin Sit Disk. This device may help a person with ASD stay seated. They can wiggle and balance while staying in their seat. The smooth bumps make pressure points that help the person feel where to stay seated.
2. Try the sensory brush. Some people with ASD have senses that do not work well. Their senses tell their brain too much or not enough information. This brush is used to adjust a person's sense of touch. Rub the brush firmly up and down your arm. How does it feel?
3. Put on the weight vest. Some people with ASD have senses that do not work well. This vest gives people with ASD deep pressure that helps calm them, similar to a big hug. Weighted vests come in different sizes and weights. They are worn for short periods of time (10-30 minutes) as needed. Put on the weighted vest. How does it feel?
4. Try a fidget. Some people with ASD have senses that do not work well. Their senses tell their brain too much or not enough information. Squeezing and handling fidgets often helps their hands quiet down and their brain pay more attention. Using fidgets may reduce finger flicking, hand flapping, tapping and clapping.

Learning

1. Try the schedules and choice boards. Some people with ASD need to see what the order of events will be. Schedules help them to know what will be the same and what will be different every day. Choice boards show a person with ASD their choices for free time, meals, or any other topic. Seeing their choices helps them make a choice. Schedules and choice boards can be made with objects, pictures, drawings or words.
2. Try the routine boards. Sometimes people with ASD need to see what to do next in order to finish a daily routine, chore, or activity that has many steps. Routine boards help them finish the activity all by themselves. It breaks the work down into smaller details that are easier to understand. Routine boards can be made from pictures, drawings or words. Some people with ASD have a hard time understanding social situations. Social Stories explain in simple detail the rules, proper behaviors or how common events happen. Social Stories can be written to reassure someone with ASD who is worried, explain how other people feel, or explain what to expect.
3. Work Systems are organized so that it is easy to see how many tasks must be completed before you are finished. In this example, the student finds the task with the same letter. Then the student completes that task and continues until the three tasks are finished. Work Station activities generally have a work material area and a finished area. They are organized so that it is easy to see how much work is required, what you need to do and when the work is finished.