

Common Traits of Autism

Every person with autism is completely unique. Like snowflakes, no two are alike, and each has his or her own individual characteristic behavior and habits. Below is a list of common traits that may affect autistic persons. It's important to know that not all these traits will be found in every person, and some may have severity of one trait, and little or no sign of others. Each person must be individually evaluated but will generally be consistent in the areas they exhibit.

Social Interaction Traits

- Very little or no eye contact.
- Resistance to being held or touched.
- Tends to get too close when speaking to someone (lack of personal space).
- Responds to social interactions, but does not initiate them.
- Does not generally share observations or experiences with others.
- Difficulty understanding jokes, figures of speech or sarcasm.
- Difficulty reading facial expressions and body language.
- Difficulty understanding the rules of conversation.
- Difficulty understanding group interactions.
- Aversion to answering questions about themselves.
- Gives spontaneous comments which seem to have no connection to the current conversation.
- Makes honest, but inappropriate observations.
- Seems unable to understand another's feelings.
- Prefers to be alone, aloft or overly-friendly.
- Difficulty maintaining friendships.
- Finds it easier to socialize with people that are older or younger, rather than peers of their own age.
- Unaware of/disinterested in what is going on around them.
- Talks excessively about one or two topics (dinosaurs, movies, etc.).

- Overly trusting or unable to read the motives behinds peoples' actions.
- Minimal acknowledgement of others.

Language and Communications

- Abnormal use of pitch, intonation, rhythm or stress while speaking.
- Speech is abnormally loud or quiet.
- Difficulty whispering.
- Repeats last words or phrases several times. Makes verbal sounds while listening (echolalia).
- Often uses short, incomplete sentences.
- Pronouns are often inappropriately used.
- May have a very high vocabulary.
- Uses a person's name excessively when speaking to them ("Bob, we are having lunch. Right, Bob?").
- Repeats someone's name, often adding a musical tone ("Bob, Ba, Ba, Ba, Bob, Bob, Bob, Ba, Bob").
- Speech started very early and then stopped for a period of time.
- Difficulty understanding directional terms (front, back, before, after).
- Cursing when angry (some have Tourette Syndrome and repeat 'bad' words uncontrollably).

Emotions

- Sensitivity or lack of sensitivity to sounds, textures (touch), tastes, smells or light.
- Difficulty with loud or sudden sounds.
- Unusually high or low pain tolerance.
- Intolerance to certain food textures, colors or the way they are presented on the plate (one food can't touch another).
- Inappropriate touching of self in public situations.
- Desires comfort items (blankets, teddy, rock, string, pet dog or cat).
- Laughs, cries or throws a tantrum for no apparent reason.
- Resists change in the environment (people, places, objects).

- An emotional incident can determine the mood for the day – emotions can pass very suddenly or are drawn out for a long period of time.
- Becomes overwhelmed with too much verbal direction.
- Tends to either tune out or break down when being reprimanded.
- Calmed by external stimulation – soothing sound, brushing, rotating object, constant pressure (hammock, rolled in a blanket).
- May need to be left alone to release tension and frustration.

Behavioral

- Obsessions with objects, ideas or desires.
- Ritualistic or compulsive behavior patterns (sniffing, licking, watching objects fall, flapping arms, spinning, rocking, humming, tapping, sucking, rubbing clothes).
- Fascination with rotation.
- Unusual spelling habits, such as using the European spelling of some words like behaviour or individual spellings like attourney.
- Play is often repetitive.
- Many and varied collections.
- Unusual attachment to objects.
- Quotes movies or video games.
- Difficulty transferring skills from one area to another.
- Perfectionism in certain areas.
- Frustration is expressed in unusual ways.
- Feels the need to fix or rearrange things.
- Transitioning from one activity to another is difficult.
- Difficulty attending to some tasks.
- Gross motor skills are developmentally behind peers (riding a bike, skating, running).
- Fine motor skills are developmentally behind peers (hand writing, tying shoes, scissors).
- Inability to perceive potentially dangerous situations.
- Extreme fear (phobia) for no apparent reason.

- Verbal outbursts.
- Unexpected movements (running out into the street).
- Difficulty sensing time (Knowing how long ten minutes is or three days or a week).
- Difficulty waiting for their turn (such as in a line).
- Causes injury to self (biting, banging head).

Learning & Education

- Exceptionally high skills in some areas and very low in others.
- Excellent rote memory in some areas.
- Difficulty with reading comprehension (can quote an answer, but unable to predict, summarize or find symbolism).
- Difficulty with fine motor activities (coloring, printing, scissors, gluing).
- Short attention span for most lessons.
- Resistance or inability to follow directions.
- Difficulty transitioning from one activity to another in school.

Health and Body

- Walks on toes.
- Unusual gait.
- Difficulty changing from one floor surface to another (carpet to wood, sidewalk to grass).
- Odd or unnatural posture (rigid or floppy).
- Difficulty moving through a space (bumps into objects or people).
- Walks without swinging arms freely.
- Incontinence of bowel and/or bladder.
- Constipation.
- Frequent gas (flatulence, burping) or throwing up.
- Appearance of hearing problems, but hearing has been checked and is fine.
- Seizure activity.

- Allergies and food sensitivities.
- Irregular sleep patterns.
- Apparent lack of concern for personal hygiene (hair, teeth, body odors).