

Autism and psychology

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Autism: " Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human... "(Aristotle, 328 B. C. in Aronson, 1995). We have been designed from birth to need and trust and socialize with one another in various ways. Yet, why is it so difficult for some but not for others. I have a four year old Autistic son that also has severe developmental delays due to prematurity and birthing complications. There are days that he gets frustrated at not even being able to communicate basic needs or just wants to be in his own world, left to his own device.

That for anyone is rough, but knowing I am his mother makes it worse. Social interaction is such an important part of growing as not only a human being, but also for the brain. Even from the beginning of time man has leaned on the premise of needing that companionship and contact with the world around them. Being from the South, you are instructed and taught from day one to be cordial and have social interactions regularly with others in and out of your class, race, or religion. But what if you cannot convey and relate to the social customs? Does that mean you are to forever be labeled as a deviant, eccentric, or antisocial?

If it is funding that you have mental issues you don't discuss them or you are forever looked at as a child. Traditionally, that means that these individuals were ostracized, stigmatized and even eliminated for the good of the whole, as they compromised the very fabric of society by proposing to build a group of individuals, somewhat like a cult, that were interconnected forever(Aronson, 1995). Animal test subjects have been well conditioned to run through mazes or pressed bars for food or to avoid electric shocks

administered by researchers; likewise humans comply within similar consequences.

Furthermore, it has also been documented that behavior motivated by external consequences is relatively short-lived, ceasing with the consequence is no longer available (Thompson, & Iwata, 2001). This can even be seen when a mother is watching her children, and then steps out. The children understand to behave in both situations and the latter situation may have a punishment if that direction is not followed properly. Yet, as soon as the mother steps out, the non-conformist child will misbehave, only because of the punishment, even if the other sibling(s) is behaving themselves properly.

Something stops a child like this from comprehending why this is wrong and what is truly acceptable. This may be in part to some issues with the connections to neuro-transmitters or lack thereof. Often times these children are not even motivated by reward systems, they will continue to misbehave at some point even when the mother returns, almost challenging her. Therefore, they will never be in society as an integral part, but as part of the problem. This, however, is not true for Autistic children.

They wish to be the same, but again, the neuro-transmitters misfire and do not allow for them to 'compare apples to oranges'. In 1943 Leo Kanner named such children as, socially withdrawn. He outlined the social disorder in 11 boys that he studied as an "autistic disturbance of affective contact" because of their apparent disinterest in other people and inability to be socially influenced (Kanner, 1943, in Frith, 1989). In spite of this, in 1984 the

American Psychiatric Association, deemed this as a pervasive disorder, among others, and now it is simply known as Autism (APA, 1984).

Over the past ten years Autism has been redefined again as the most complicated neurological disorder affecting the central nervous system of a large number of people. It is also the most confusing and pervasive of the developmental disorders as little is known for a cause, there is no cure, and treatments vary among individuals (Frith & Happe', 1994). The typical stereotype of an individual with autism describes a withdrawn, mute child with an inverted gaze engaged in repetitive activities or self-stimulatory behaviors, ASD or Autism Spectrum Disorder, ranges from severe to very mild (Mesibov & Burack, 2001).

Yet, the ones that have such disorders, have recently been labeled as Autistic due to lack of social prowess and extreme knowledge and fixation on one profession. These subsets of children can often times appear normal within the first year but start regressing in knowledge and skill, or not improving or gain skills at all. Eventually, one can build a wall to even keep family out, or fixate on something so hard it becomes an obsession or routine that if stopped could be mentally, physically, and socially detrimental (Kennedy & Shukla, 1995).

Although, it is also important to remember that individuals with ASD are not totally withdrawn, socially and may even interact from time to time, but this can be limited. I know as more going from hearing your child say ' I love you' and hug often, to once or twice week is difficult. The first time my son ran and hugged me and looked me in the eye was very emotional for me, but he did not understand. This leads to my next point: cognition. As I said before <https://assignbuster.com/autism-and-psychology/>

many ASD children do not understand emotions or are seldom empathetic. They may ask questions about the emotions you are showing but do not fully understand what you are telling them.

This again is due to a misfiring of neuro-transmitters. That is why so many ASD children really like Thomas the Train. He teaches them emotions and what the facial expressions mean. My son now understand crying, anger, and excitement. Therefore, while they have a social desire, the interference in the cognitive system proves to be the main problem (Happe, 1999; Baron-Cohen, 1985; Dodge, 1980). Cognitive processing systems such as motivation, decision making and emotions are believed to be prompted when one responds to stimuli.

These stimuli characterize the different mental states (desires, imagination, emotions, etc.) that psychologists believe to be the cause of ones actions. Yet, without appropriately developed social cognition individuals have difficulty forming social relationships with others and this is evidenced by poor social behavior (Baron-Cohen, 2000). A study was designed to test this theory, and it found that 64% of individuals with ASD have first degree relatives with more extensive mental health issues, like major depression, and 39% had other social phobias (Smalley, et al, 1995).

That being said, one can conclude that unlike other studies, ASD maybe a genetic disease mutated from other mental illness issues. This would also help the justice system that was once scandalized by improprieties of inmates due to a lack of knowledge. By understanding what type of ASD and the severity one can simply argue mental illness? Now I am not condoning

every run out on the crazy defense, but if the shoe fits, why would we just put someone who is innocent into the system as done years ago.

Think of the good old days when one could be simply thrown in jail for no id or not talking but if you have a mentally ill or developmentally disabled individual, and you put them in an environment that is rough, harsh, and not anything like their routine, it is no wonder why we had so many inmate suicides and still do inmates slip through the cracks continuously. But we may never see that happen due to public opinion. We as a society look at children with developmental delays or ASD as animals. I find it sickening. Or we think the parent does not discipline the child.

Yet, due to lack of cognitive understanding, it would gain to reason why one does not benefit from punishing this type of child; they simply do not understand and are eager to please. Some may disagree but my son's doctor actually explained to us that anything more than timeout/cool down period would be over his head. Even taking away toys would be ineffective. So the next time you are at a store take that into consideration. Now that I am off of my soapbox consider this: The acceptance of inadequacies in the empathizing process of individuals with Autism can offer more tolerance of the behaviors they display.

Thus, they are not capable enough to calculate the conduct of others readily and we would expect an avoidance of impulsive situations. This is apparent in the outbursts and obsessive behaviors these individuals show in an effort to control and maintain routines in their environments (Dodge, 1980). Now some can point to sensory issues, needing to feel secure through various methods close to the five senses. A lot of the Autism community says that <https://assignbuster.com/autism-and-psychology/>

therapies for these aversions and how to cope will cause the ASD patient to understand, control, and manipulate to achieve a normal life.

Nevertheless, the sensory struggles coincide with socio-emotional issues and are noted as early as infancy. Hence, the various longitudinal studies of infants later diagnosed with autism show empty eye gaze, poor response to name, aloofness, reduced looking-at-faces, and deficits in directing attention (Mottron & Burack, 2001). And while it appears that these skills, as well as impairments in early social-communicationskills and joint attention are present long before speech and mind blindness develop (Koegel & Mentis, 1985; Shanker, 2004; Wing & Gould, 1979).

Additionally, developmental theories on attachment and affective responsiveness have suggested that children with impaired social emotional relating in infancy will not develop appropriate social understanding and as a result social interaction and communication skills will suffer (Kennedy & Shukla, 1995). In spite of that, Supporters of the theory of mind suggest that people with Autism lack the ability to comprehend thoughts and experiences that occur outside of themselves (Happe, 1991).

While I can see that, since my son gets stuck on one thing that happened and will talk about it for months as though it happened yesterday, the difficulty in understanding the mental thoughts of others often results in bizarre communication patterns (Happe, 1999). Thus, blindness and a clear lack of meeting of the minds, also appears to interfere with the ability to identify with others or to understand another person's point of view (Shanker, 2004). So do we really know what people with Autism need, or are we just grabbing air in a world full of marshmallows? Bibliography

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