

# Character analysis essay

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After thoroughly engaging with someone who has autism, one will learn that in fact it is their social and behavioral functioning that is abnormal. When this counselor in training watched the movie “ Rain Man”, it was known that the main character Raymond has autism. However, this author took a further look into why autism was the appropriate diagnosis for this character.

Individuals with autistic disorder have significant impairment in social interactions, communications, and show restricted patterns of behavior, interest, and activities (Duran & Barlow, 2013). Raymond presented each of these symptoms throughout the movie, making the diagnosis of autistic disorder accurate.

Evidence of Symptoms According to the AD/SM- V, persons with Autistic disorder will have persistent effects in social communications across multiple context manifesting in the following; deficits in social-emotional reciprocity, in non-verbal communication, and in maintaining, developing, and understanding relationships (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This counselor in training found that Raymond lacked the ability of having a normal back and forth conversation, at times not responding or only saying “ yea”, even when not meaning yes. Another example of Raymond deficits in social-emotional reciprocity was when the woman was hitting on him, gave him a kiss, and Raymond showed a lack of response or emotion. Raymond also demonstrated lack of normal non-verbal communications often gazing up and to the left when in conversation with someone. When it came to understanding and maintaining normal relationships, it was evident Raymond was not capable of doing so.

When Raymond learned his father had passed, there was no expression on his face. Furthermore at the end of the movie the doctor stated to his brother that although he bonded with Raymond, Raymond was not capable of having a relationship with someone. In addition to social communication deficits, when diagnosing Autism, one must consider the behavioral patterns of the individual.

According to the ADOS-V, the individual must show restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interest, or activities (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Furthermore these restrictions must be present in at least two areas to qualify for an autism diagnosis. Immediately this counselor in training observed abnormal behavioral patterns such as Raymond obsessions with Abbott and Costello jokes and his abilities to count.

Another area this counselor in training observed was repetitive motor movement. Raymond would frequently have his head tilted to the side, regardless of what he was doing. This author also noted Raymond strict adherence to a schedule.

When first taken away from his schedule he would repeat every day the time he was supposed to eat and what exactly he ate that day. One specific scene was when his brother stopped at a stranger's house to allow Raymond to watch his scheduled television programs. He stated that if he did not watch the show that Raymond would throw a tantrum. Lastly, Raymond demonstrated hyper sensitivity to sound and visual fascinations with lights or movement. During an accident scene, Raymond got out of the car and was pre occupied with all the lights and noise going on. To demonstrate his

sensitivity to noise, in another scene the fire alarm went off in the house and Raymond became scared, resulting in a tantrum and him becoming self-injurious.

As the ADOS-V states, Raymond deficits were clinically significant impairments in his social, occupational, and other important areas of functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Raymond was not able to take care of himself on a daily basis, was a harm to himself and possibly others, resulting in his father placing him in the home for disabled individuals. Treatment When it comes to treatment of autism, similar to other nonrepresentational capabilities, it is not “curable” and chronic management is required (Eschewing, 2009) Like presented in Rain Man, the character required constant and lifelong management of his maladaptive behaviors and daily living activities. Incorporation of a high degree of structure such as a predictable routine and schedules will minimize distractions (Myers & Johnson, 2007). Continuing his life in a controlled environment or setting, like the facility he lived in, would be highly recommended.

Unfortunately published research is lacking for programs that are effective for adults with autism (Myers & Johnson, 2007). However this counselor in training can suggest some treatment plans based on the research that has been published for younger ages. Overall the goals of treatment should ultimately help the individual to minimize their deficits, maximize their independence and quality of life, alleviate family distress, and focus on their

interest, possibly allowing them to eventually be employable (Myers & Johnson, 2007).

One method of treatment should be ABA. According to published research Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) has the most experimental support (Eschewing, 2013). ABA has been documented in numerous studies to help with diminishing or eliminating problematic behaviors (Maine Department of Health and Human Services & Maine Board of Education, 2009). Using ABA with Raymond will help with his behavioral deficits, making them more manageable and increasing his independence. ABA can also increase understanding in facial expressions and other non-verbal social cues (Maine Department of Health and Human Services & Maine Board of Education, 2009).

By applying ABA treatment Raymond can work on his eye contact, and understanding non-verbal communication. ABA is also used to help increase and maintain desirable behaviors (Myers & Johnson, 2007). Because this treatment has experimental evidence supporting social and behavioral improvements, using it on Raymond is suggested. In addition to keeping him in the facility for stability and using ABA therapy, Raymond will also benefit from occupational therapies.

Traditional occupational therapies is often provided to promote development of self-care (Myers & Johnson, 2007). This therapy will help him gain more independence in his daily life. In addition to these suggestions for treatment, including Raymond in social skills groups and allowing him to interact with others will help improve his social skills and immunization. Lastly, focusing

on Raymond strengths such as counting should be incorporated into his treatment.

Lastly this counselor would suggest counseling for the family members as well. Parents also need support because of the great demands and stresses involved in living and/or caring for family members who have autism (Duran & Barlow, 2013). In the movie, Raymond brother often became frustrated with his behaviors, degrading him, and not understanding why he reacts the way he does. Educating his brother on autism and how to appropriately react in such situations will only benefit both Raymond and himself. Conclusion Autism is not only a disorder that effects the individual, but the entire family. After watching Rain Man, it was clear that autistic individuals are uniquely intelligent people. At times Raymond my not have understood a kiss from a women, but could magically count or multiple things that the average person would not.

He was an autistic savant. If not understood properly, one could miss out on Raymond talents knowledge. This author feels that autism was accurately displayed throughout the movie, and gave good examples of what it would be like having the disorder and living with someone with the disorder.

Understanding the autistic individual is just as important as treating them the disorder.. Although they have social and behavioral deficits they are intelligent people like any other human being. It is unfortunate that some autistic individuals with talent such as Raymond, will be confined to a facility because that is where they function best. If Raymond had received early intervention, the outcome of this individual could have been different.