

Individuals with asperger syndrome



Asperger Syndrome (AS) or (Asperger's Disorder) is a neurobiological disorder named for a Viennese physician, Hans Asperger, who in 1944 published a paper which described a pattern of behaviors in several young boys who had normal intelligence and language development, but who also exhibited autistic-like behaviors and marked deficiencies in social and communication skills. In spite of the publication of his paper in the 1940's, it wasn't until 1994 that Asperger Syndrome was added to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th. Edition (DSM IV) and only in the past few years has AS been recognized by professionals and parents.

Individuals with AS can exhibit a variety of characteristics and the disorder can range from mild to severe. Persons with AS show marked deficiencies in social skills, have difficulties with transitions or changes and prefer sameness. They often have obsessive routines and may be preoccupied with a particular subject of interest. They have a great deal of difficulty reading nonverbal cues (body language) and very often the individual with AS has difficulty determining proper body space. Often overly sensitive to sounds, tastes, smells, and sights, the person with AS may prefer soft clothing, certain foods, and be bothered by sounds or lights no one else seems to hear or see. It's important to remember that the person with AS perceives the world very differently. Therefore, many behaviors that seem odd or unusual are due to those neurological differences and not the result of intentional rudeness or bad behavior, and most certainly not the result of "improper parenting".

By definition, those with AS have a normal IQ and many individuals (although not all), exhibit exceptional skill or talent in a specific area. Because of their

high degree of functionality and their naiveté, those with AS are often viewed as eccentric or odd and can easily become victims of teasing and bullying. While language development seems, on the surface, normal, individuals with AS often have deficits in pragmatics and prosody.

Vocabularies may be extraordinarily rich and some children sound like “ little professors.” However, persons with AS can be extremely literal and have difficulty using language in a social context.

While specific Asperger syndrome causes are not known, research is being conducted to understand Asperger syndrome and how it can be effectively treated.

One study is using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to show how abnormalities in particular areas of the brain cause changes in brain function that result in the symptoms of Asperger syndrome and other autism spectrum disorders.

Other research includes testing the effectiveness of an antidepressant in individuals with Asperger syndrome who exhibit high levels of obsessive/ritualistic behavior.

Another Asperger syndrome research study is collecting and analyzing DNA samples from a large group of children with Asperger syndrome and their families to identify genes and genetic interactions that are linked to Asperger syndrome.

Although there are many possible symptoms of Asperger’s syndrome, the main symptom is severe trouble with social situations. Your child may have

mild to severe symptoms or have a few or many of these symptoms.

Because of the wide variety of symptoms, no two children with Asperger's are alike. Parents often first notice the symptoms of Asperger's syndrome when their child starts preschool and begins to interact with other children. Children with Asperger's syndrome may. Not pick up on social cues and may lack inborn social skills, such as being able to read others' body language, start or maintain a conversation, and take turns talking. Dislike any changes in routines. Appear to lack empathy.

Be unable to recognize subtle differences in speech tone, pitch, and accent that alter the meaning of others' speech. Thus, your child may not understand a joke or may take a sarcastic comment literally. Likewise, his or her speech may be flat and difficult to understand because it lacks tone, pitch, and accent.

Have a formal style of speaking that is advanced for his or her age. For example, the child may use the word " beckon" instead of " call" or the word " return" instead of " come back."

Avoid eye contact or stare at others. Have unusual facial expressions or postures.

Be preoccupied with only one or few interests, which he or she may be very knowledgeable about. Many children with Asperger's syndrome are overly interested in parts of a whole or in unusual activities, such as designing houses, drawing highly detailed scenes, or studying astronomy. They may show an unusual interest in certain topics such as snakes, names of stars, or dinosaurs.

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Talk a lot, usually about a favorite subject. One-sided conversations are common. Internal thoughts are often verbalized.

Have delayed motor development. Your child may be late in learning to use a fork or spoon, ride a bike, or catch a ball. He or she may have an awkward walk. Handwriting is often poor.

Have heightened sensitivity and become over stimulated by loud noises, lights, or strong tastes or textures. For more information about these symptoms, see sensory integration dysfunction.

A child with one or two of these symptoms does not necessarily have Asperger's syndrome. To be diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, a child must have a combination of these symptoms and severe trouble with social situations.

Although the condition is in some ways similar to autism, a child with Asperger's syndrome typically has normal language and intellectual development. Also, those with Asperger's syndrome typically make more of an effort than those with autism to make friends and engage in activities with others.