

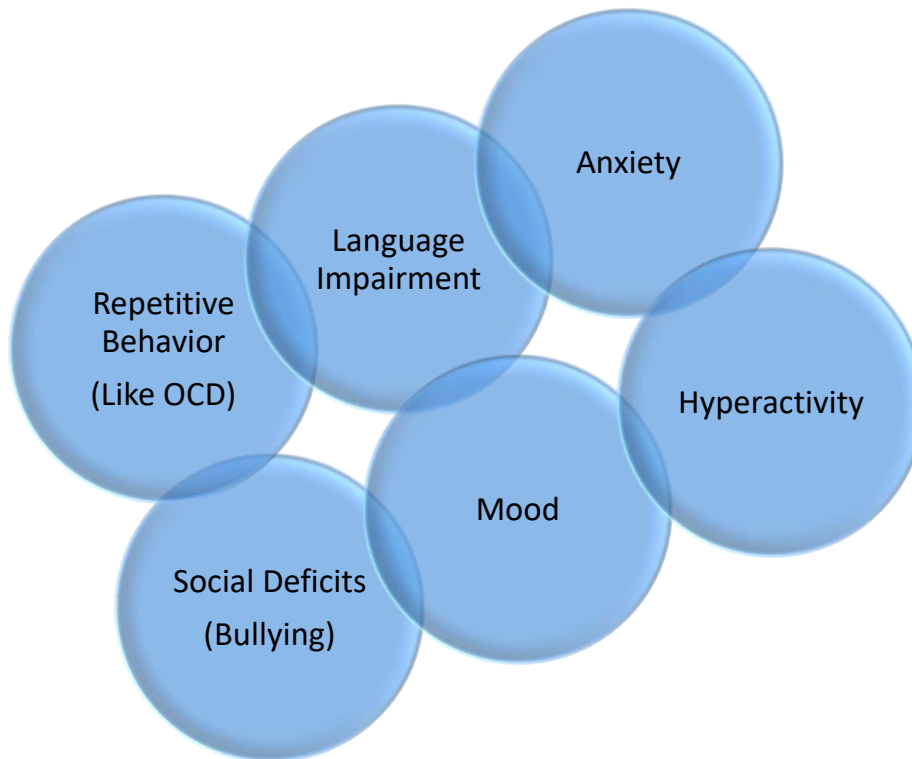
### **A Brief Overview of Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that may lead to significant social, behavioral, and communication challenges. Although people with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people, the physical appearance of individuals with autism do not set them apart from others. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD typically range from gifted to severely impaired. Some people with ASD need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017).

### **Common Signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder May Include:**

- ❖ Trouble interacting, playing with, or relating to others (often play by themselves)
- ❖ Little or brief eye contact with others
- ❖ Unusual or repetitive movements, such as hand flapping, spinning, or tapping
- ❖ Difficulties learning in school
- ❖ Playing with toys in ways that seem odd or repetitive
- ❖ Poor spatial awareness

## An Illustration of the Symptoms of ASD



### **Students with ASD may:**

- ❖ Become easily frustrated
- ❖ Act out in certain situations
- ❖ Experience sensory overload
- ❖ Seem insensitive or unemotional
- ❖ Struggle with verbal and non-verbal communication (aren't able to understand other people's feelings easily)
- ❖ Need extra time for crafts, assignments, or transitions
- ❖ Fail to understand abstract concepts, metaphors, humor, and idioms
- ❖ Perform better with limited choices instead of open ended questions (Gavin, 2013).
- ❖ Be your most rewarding students as you see their amazing progress

## Classroom Strategies

- ❖ Many students with autism can thrive in a structured environment, so establish a routine and keep it as consistent as possible. Adhering to daily schedules and warning students before transitions can help with many students' behavioral issues and frustrations. A visual timer would be good to help make transitions easier.
- ❖ Instructional support is often needed within the classroom setting. Students with autism learn better with pictures, hand gestures, and demonstrations. Limit long verbal instructions and provide visual cues and written instructions, when possible. Also, limit distractions and use positive rewards for positive behaviors, and ignore more of the negative behavior if it isn't disrupting others.
- ❖ If your student with ASD appears to be overwhelmed, they often benefit from being allowed to have quiet moment alone.
- ❖ Ensure students are evaluated for occupational therapy and speech therapy because many will benefit from these services.
- ❖ Utilize the behavior analyst employed by your school system if you are struggling with a specific behavior.

## Free Resources on Autism Spectrum Disorder

- ❖ Brief factsheet: <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/autism-factsheet.html>
- ❖ Free book from NEA on teaching kids with ASD: <http://www.nea.org/home/18459.htm>
- ❖ Free downloadable book for teachers on teaching kids with ASD in a regular classroom setting: <http://researchautism.org/resources/an-educators-guide-to-autism/>
- ❖ Creating motivation for kids with autism: <http://nspt4kids.com/therapy/how-to-motivate-children-with-autism-using-reinforcers/>

## References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2017). Autism spectrum disorder (ASD): Facts about ASD. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html>

Gavin, M. L.(2013). Special needs factsheet: Autism. Retrieved from <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/autism-factsheet.html>

Parents, teachers or caregivers can use this form to share helpful tips.

Your student \_\_\_\_\_, has Autism Spectrum Disorder. The information below has been provided by someone who knows this student. Please share this information with this student's other teachers including PE, art and music, and bus driver.

Meltdowns are often triggered by: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Differences in sensory perception: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Experiences that may be difficult to tolerate: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Difficulties in peer relationships often start with: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Passions include: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Special talents include: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ways to reduce anxiety: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

General tips: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Don't Give This Page to Your Child's Teacher**

Fill out the form to help your child's teacher better understand your child's Autism Spectrum Disorder. It is important that you give all 4 pages (the autism information sheets and the form you complete) to your child's teacher.

Examples are provided below to make the form easier to complete.

Meltdowns are often triggered by: rapid transition from one activity to another, sensory overload, perception of unfairness or injustice, sense of failure

Differences in sensory perception: seems to not react to pain, unable to tolerate dirty or sticky hands, hates skin to feel wet, noises seem extra loud to child

Experiences that may be difficult to tolerate: loud places, crowds (cafeteria, assemblies, pep rallies), large group work, talking in front of the class, changes in the schedule, substitute teacher

Difficulties in peer relationships often start with: interpersonal space, failure to recognize peers are uninterested, failure to understand body language, sharing

Passions include: Paw Patrol, dinosaurs, trains, etc.

Special talents include: computers, math, reading, repeating what was said, problem-solving, willingness to do repetitive tasks

Ways to reduce anxiety: provide a written or picture schedule, provide a safe place for student to escape to when overwhelmed, give student a way to signal the teacher that they feel overwhelmed (removing a shoe, placing a colored card on desk)

General tips: ask this student to be last in line and give an associated task (to reduce issues with interpersonal space), use role play to teach social skills, ask student to monitor peers and report who has best behavior, offer the student the option to eat alone or in a quieter setting, notify parents of special days (field day, field trip, etc.) so parents can discuss it in advance with student