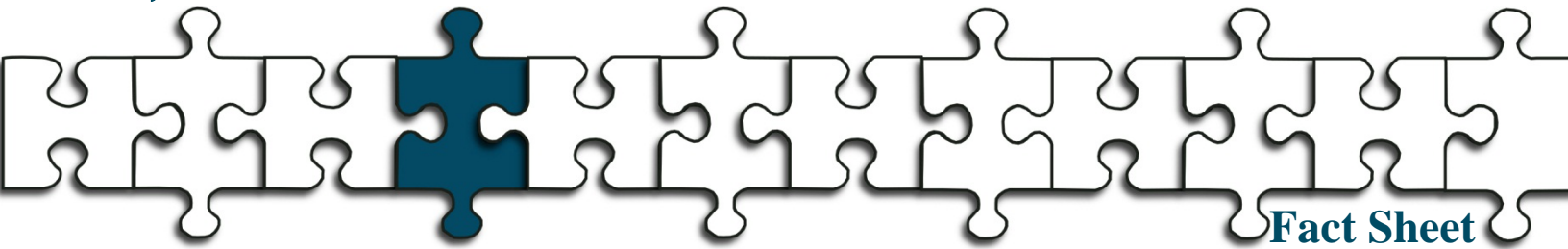


Asperger's Disorder



What is Asperger's Disorder?

Asperger's Disorder is a developmental disorder on the Pervasive Developmental Disorders spectrum. Children diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder have difficulty with social interactions and understanding unspoken social cues

What are Some Characteristics of Asperger's Disorder?

An individual with Asperger's Disorder may be characterized by social isolation and sometimes relatively eccentric behavior. For example, he or she may have a circumscribed area of interest which usually leaves no space for more age appropriate, typically developing interests. Some examples of interests include trains, electricity, and weather, a web-site devoted to dead malls, door knobs, chili peppers, meteorology, astronomy or history. In addition, the individual may have impairments in two-sided social interaction and non-verbal communication. Individuals with Asperger's are often highly intelligent and highly verbal and although their speech may be grammatically correct, their speech may sound peculiar due to abnormalities of inflection or fluency. Often times, individuals with Asperger's Disorder get into more trouble in school, exasperate teachers and are the subject of bullying. Boys are four times as likely as girls to be diagnosed with Asperger's.

How is Asperger's Disorder Diagnosed?

According to the DSM IV, in order to obtain a diagnosis of Asperger's Disorder individuals must exhibit severe and sustained impairment in social interaction; the development of restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, and activities. The disturbance must also cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. In contrast to Autistic Disorder, there are no clinically significant delays in language (e.g.: single words are used by age 2 years, communicative phrases are used by age 3 years). There are no clinically significant delays in cognitive development or in the development of age-appropriate self-help skills, adaptive behavior (other than in social interaction), and curiosity about the environment in childhood. The diagnosis is not given if the criteria are met for any other specific Pervasive Developmental Disorder or for Schizophrenia. It is not uncommon for a child to receive multiple diagnoses including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Emotional Disturbance (ED), or Nonverbal Language Disorder (NLD) prior to an official diagnosis of Asperger's Disorder.

Is There Treatment?

While there is also no known “cure” for Asperger’s Disorder there **is** help. As with autism, it is believed that early, intensive intervention can significantly improve the outcomes of individuals with Asperger’s Disorder. Most of these interventions fall under the category of special education as opposed to medical services such as prescriptions. Some of the more common therapies include:

- Visual and Environmental Supports, visual schedules (Hodgdon, 2002)
- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Discrete Trial Instruction
- Social Stories and Comic Strip Conversations (Gray, 2000)
- Speech and Language Services
- Physical and Occupational Therapy

Additional Resources

Books

- Bolick, T. (2001). *Asperger’s Syndrome and Adolescence: Helping Pre-Teens and Teens Get Ready for the Real World*. Fair Winds Press: MA
- Faherty, C. (2000). *Asperger’s: What Does It Mean to Me?* Future Horizons: Arlington, TX
- Freeman, S., & Dake, L. (1996). *Teach me language: A language manual for children with autism, Asperger’s syndrome, and related developmental disorders*. Langley, BC: SKF Books.

Websites

- www.illinoisautismproject.org : Illinois Autism/PDD Training and Technical Assistance Project
- www.cdc.gov/actearly : Center For Disease Control and Prevention
- www.aspergers.com : Asperger’s Disorder Homepage
- <http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/>: Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support



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