

Customer Service to Adults with Autism



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“The word “autism” still conveys a fixed and dreadful meaning to most people—they visualize a child mute, rocking, screaming, inaccessible, cut off from human contact. And we almost always speak of autistic children, never of autistic adults, as if such children never grew up, or were somehow mysteriously spirited off the planet, out of society.”

--Temple Grandin





What is Autism?

- Autism is a “complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. It affects a person’s ability to communicate and interact with others.”

--Autism Society of America



Characteristics of Autism

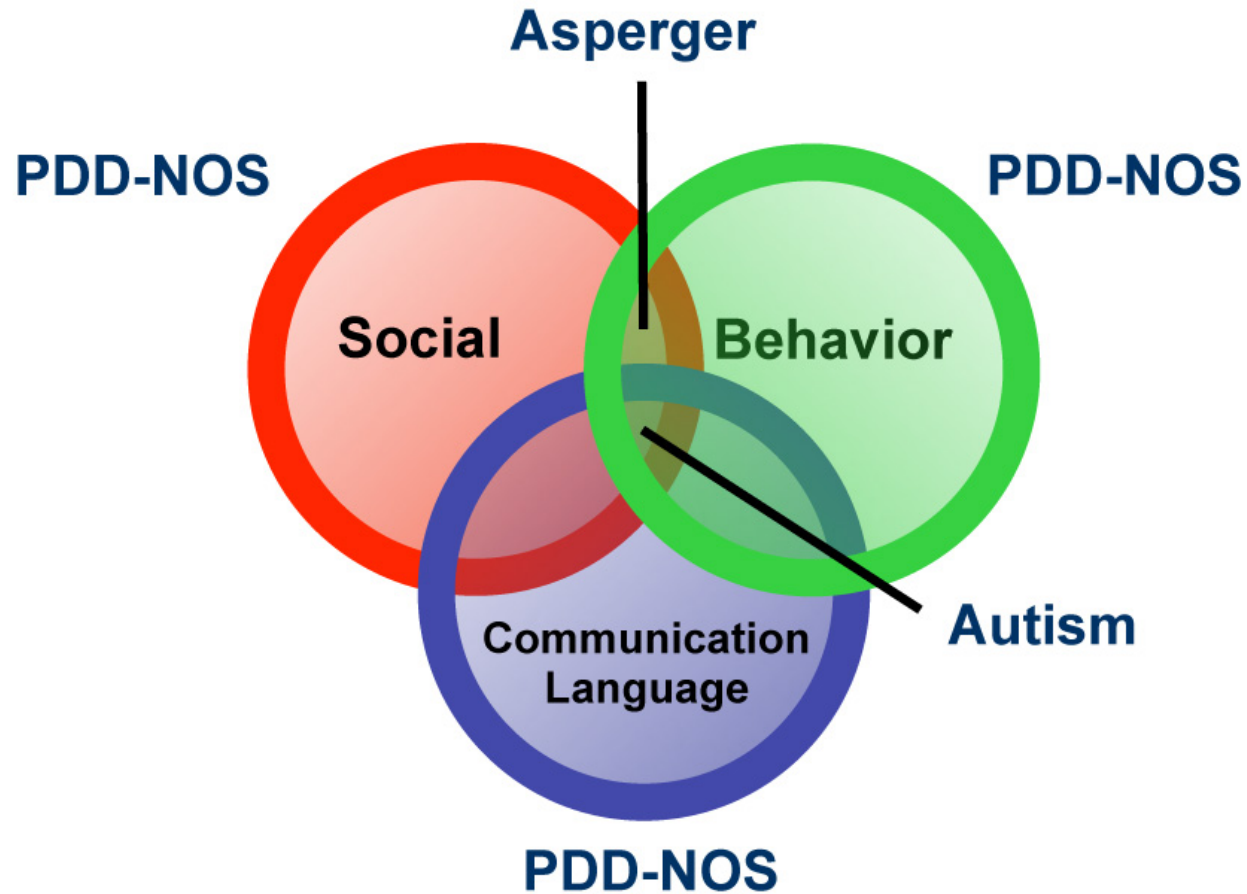
- Persistent deficits in communication (ability to speak, ability to understand, ability to carry out a conversation appropriately)
- Persistent deficits in social interaction (seek out others for social interactions, carry out appropriate social interactions)

Characteristics of Autism

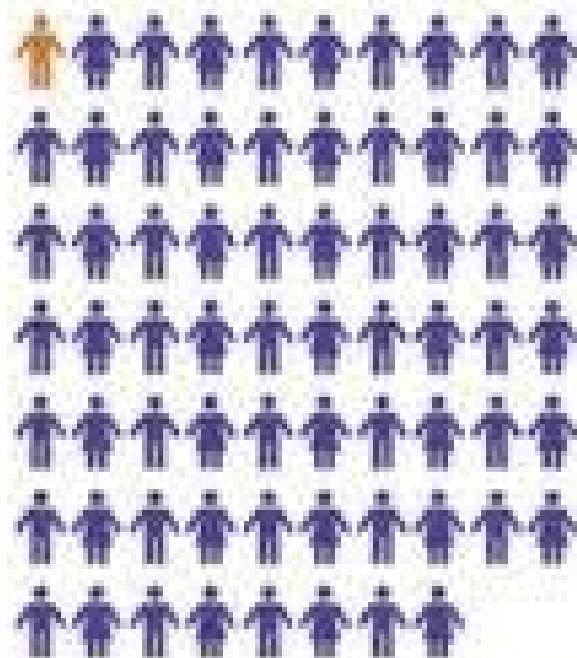
Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities, as manifested by at least two of the following:

- Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech
- Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns
- Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
- Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interests in sensory aspects of the environment

Autism Spectrum Disorders



NUMBER OF CHILDREN IDENTIFIED WITH ASD



1 in 68

Autism in the Library

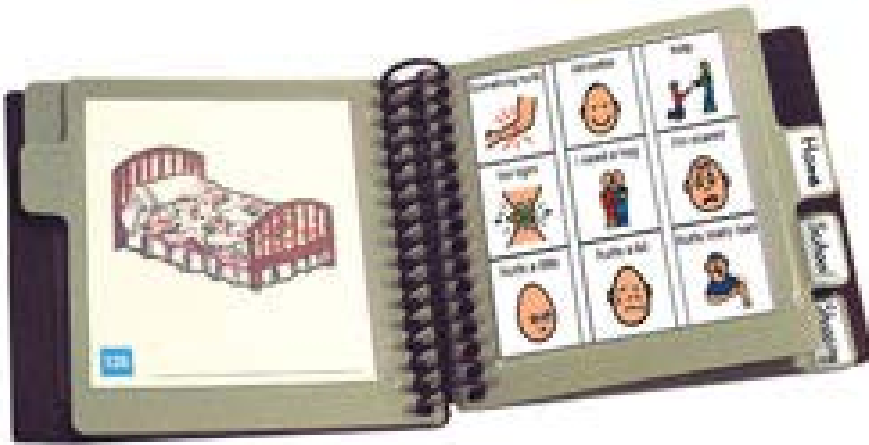


Autism in the Library

Communication: Persistent deficits in communication (ability to speak, ability to understand, ability to carry out a conversation appropriately)



Ability to Speak



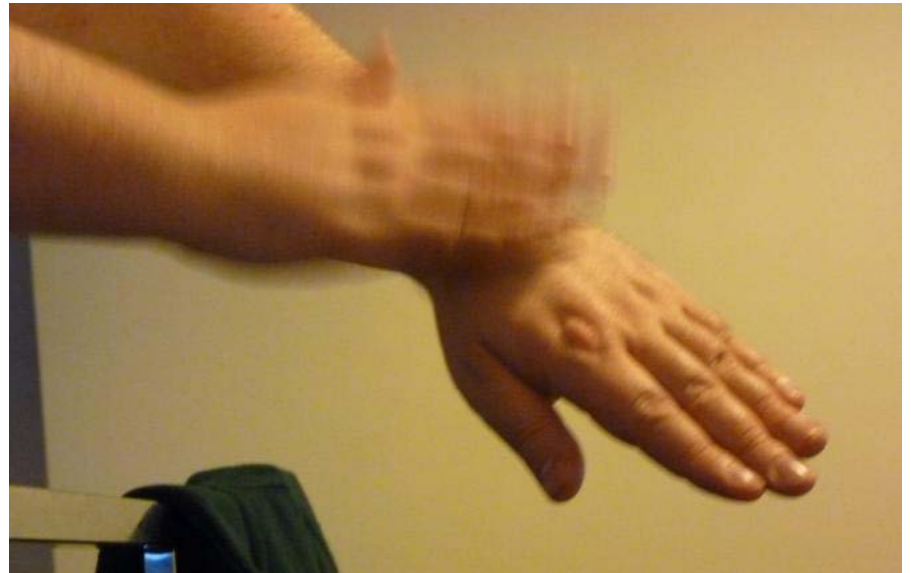
Echolalia



Ability to Understand



Ability to Understand



Ability to Understand



Carrying out a Conversation



Dissociated Speech



Strategies

- Acknowledge what they said and keep redirecting.
- Let them take the lead, but place a limit on how long you can talk about their topic.
- Signal to them clearly that this is not the appropriate time or place for that conversation.



Unflinching Honesty



Autism in the Library

Deficits in social interaction (seek out others for social interactions, carry out appropriate social interactions)



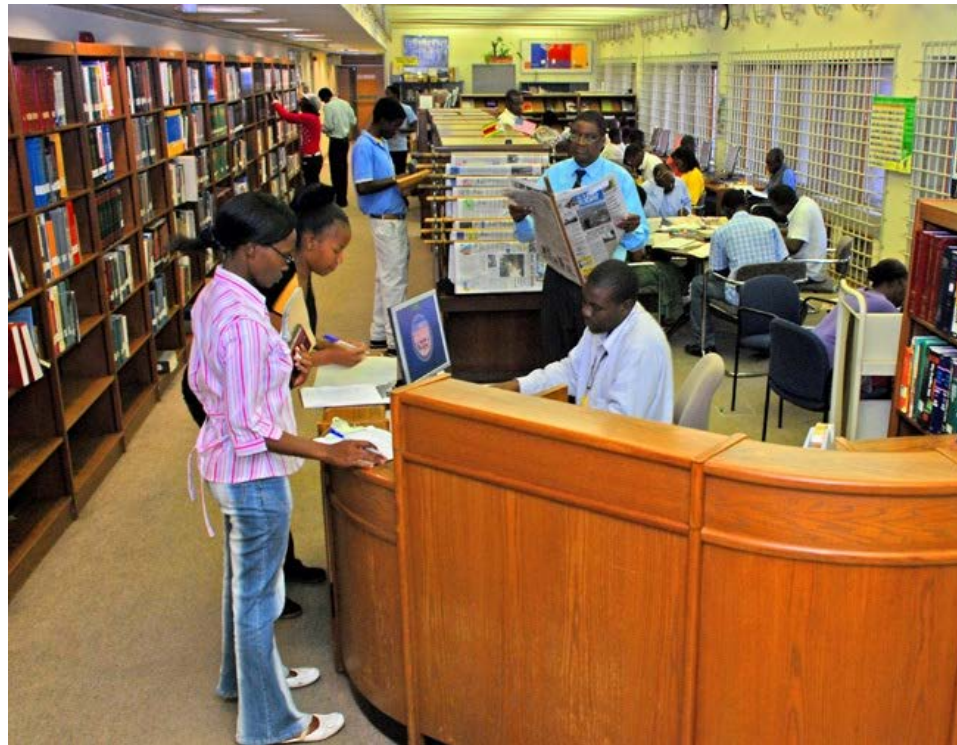
Autism in the Library

Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech



Autism in the Library

Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns



Autism in the Library

Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus.



Autism in the Library

- Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interests in sensory aspects of the environment



Dealing with a Meltdown

Avoiding a Meltdown:

- Let them know what to expect
- Give them warnings
- Give them choices:
- Positive behavior supports
- Tell them the “rules.”

During a Meltdown

- Trust the caregiver and follow their lead.
- Give them time to deescalate.
- Don't interfere with their environment.
- State the obvious.
- Keep your language brief, clear, and literal.
- Model the behaviors you want to see.

Resources

- Libraries and Autism: We're Connected
 - Training Video for staff, communication guide, social stories

<http://www.librariesandautism.org/>
- The Way I See It by Temple Grandin, Future Horizons 2011
- Look Me in the Eye by John Elder Robison, Crown 2007
- Programming for Children and Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder by Barbara Klipper, ALA Editions 2014
- Autistic Self Advocacy Network
<http://autisticadvocacy.org/>





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