

“Why doesn’t he fit in? He looks so normal!”

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Pervasive Developmental Disorders*

- Autistic Disorder
- Asperger’s Disorder
- Rett’s Syndrome
- Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder: Not Otherwise Specified (PDD:NOS)

*AKA – Autism Spectrum Disorders

PDD actually refers to a category of disorders and is not a diagnostic label.

Symptoms of Asperger’s include:

- Difficulty using and understanding language.
- Difficulty relating to people, objects, and events.
- Unusual play with toys and other objects.
- Difficulty with changes in routine or familiar surroundings.
- Repetitive body movements or behavior patterns.

People with Asperger’s have certain characteristics that impact learning in the middle and high school years. They include:

- Average to above average IQ.
- Immaturity
- Excellent rote memory – but not comprehension of the concept.
- “Theory-of-Mind” deficits. (defined by Cumine, Leach and Stevenson, 1998, as “the ability to think about other people’s thinking – and further, to think about what they think about our thinking – and even further to think about what they think we think about their thinking and so on..”)
- Difficulty organizing, planning, multitasking, & shifting attention.

Continuations of Asperger Characteristics

- Erratic problem solving skills. (often unable to know to ask for help.)
- Difficulty generalizing skills across settings and people.
- Obsessive interests (MB story)
- Good structural language skills, but poor pragmatic communication abilities. Often sets them apart from others.
- Social deficits – nonverbal cues, facial expressions, gestures, proximity, eye contact, etc.
- Sensory over-load/under-load. Demonstrate with Wright Family and sensory experiment.
- Behavior problems related to anxiety and stress which leads to MELTDOWNS.

Sensory Areas

- Tactile (touch)
- Vestibular (balance) – where our body is in space.
- Proprioception (body awareness) muscles and joints and how they move.
- Visual – (sight) retina – boundaries
- Auditory (hearing) inner ear – sounds in environment.
- Gustatory (taste) – tongue
- Olfactory (smell)

Resources

- Winter, M.(2003) *What Teachers Need to Know*. Jessica Kingsley Publishing.
- Myles, B., Adreon, D. (2001) *Asperger Syndrome and Adolescence*. Autism Asperger Publishing Co.
- Stuart-Hamilton, I. (2004) *An Asperger Dictionary of Everyday Expressions*. Jessica Kingsley Publishing.
- Hoopman, K. (2007) *All Cats Have Asperger's*. Jessica Kingsley Publishing.
- Haddon, M. (2004) *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night*. Vintage Publishing.