

## OVERVIEW OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Level One

1

## Learning Objectives

- ▣ Be able to define an ASD
- ▣ Gain a better understanding of the core and related features of ASD
- ▣ Learn about how the different stages of life influence the way an ASD presents in affected individuals

2

## Defining Autism Spectrum Disorders

- ▣ ASD refers to a group of neurodevelopmental disorders whose symptoms change over time as the person develops.

3

## Diagnostic Disorders within the Autism Spectrum

- ▣ Autistic Disorder
- ▣ Asperger's Disorder
- ▣ Rett's Disorder
- ▣ Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
- ▣ Pervasive Developmental Disorder, not otherwise specified

4

## Demographics

- ▣ Gender differences: M>F
- ▣ Prevalence 1 in 88
- ▣ No socioeconomic differences
- ▣ Cause

5

## CORE DIAGNOSTIC FEATURES

6

## Social Interaction

- ☐ Deficits in nonverbal behavior
  - eye contact and gaze
  - facial expression
  - body posture and gestures to regulate social interaction
  - does not develop relationships at their developmental levels
- ☐ Lack of empathy and concern for others
- ☐ Lack of Sharing
- ☐ Lack of social and emotional reciprocity

7

## Communication

- ☐ Delay in, or lack of development of spoken language
- ☐ In individuals with adequate speech, marked impairment in the ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others
- ☐ Lack of varied, spontaneous make believe play or social imitative play appropriate to the developmental level.

8

## Repetitive Stereotyped Behavior and Circumscribed Interests

- ☐ Unusual or restricted areas of interest
- ☐ Inflexible adherence to specific, nonfunctional routines or rituals.
- ☐ Stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms
- ☐ Persistent preoccupation with parts of objects

9

## RELATED FEATURES

10

## Low Adaptive Skills

- Personal care
- Domestic
- Social
- Community Integration

11

- ☐ Sensory Issues
  - Hyper: overly sensitive to certain internal and environmental stimuli
    - Examples: flickering lights, white noise of fans, perfumes, body odors, spices, food textures, clothing tolerance.
  - Hypo: under responsive or under stimulated by internal and environmental stimuli
    - Examples: high tolerance for pain, unaware of bodily needs, sensory seekers, or those that require deep pressure to help self regulate.

12

## Cognitive Variability

- ☐ Intellectual Impairments
- ☐ Splinter Skills

13

## Psychiatric Issues

- ☐ Disorders
- ☐ Depression / mood instability
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- ☐ ADHD
- ☐ Tic Disorders

14

## Medical Concerns

- ☐ People with ASD are more likely to have co-occurring medical and health related issues. These include:
  - Sleep and Feeding issues
  - Seizures
  - Down syndrome
  - Fragile X
  - Gastro intestinal

15

## LIFESPAN

Understanding ASD through the Lifespan

16

## Birth through age 3

- ☐ Typical Development
- ☐ Lack of Progression through the developmental milestones

17

## 3 -5 years

- ☐ Typical Developmental Expectations
- ☐ ASD symptoms gradually increase during this age range and can include: speech delays, lack of imitative play, difficulty with reciprocal play and lack of functional use of objects
- ☐ Emotional and behavioral concerns may emerge such as low tolerance for frustration, repetitive behaviors, Hypo or Hypersensitivity to overstimulation and temper outbursts

18

## Ages 6 through 12

- ❑ Diagnosis and Treatment is more likely.
- ❑ Social symptoms may include: immaturity, naivete, targeting by bullies and bizarre interests.
- ❑ Communication skills generally improve
- ❑ School functioning may be problematic due to adherence to routines and rituals and difficulty with transitions.

19

## Ages 6 -12, continued

- ❑ Anxiety and Mood issues can emerge and /or become more apparent.
- ❑ Poor Adaptive skills
- ❑ Limited coping skills
- ❑ Splinter skills
- ❑ Associated Cognitive Disabilities

20

## Typical Adolescence

- ❑ Typical Developmental expectations
- ❑ Self awareness may or may not develop
- ❑ Lack of awareness of social nuances of the peer group
- ❑ Concrete interpretation of complex social experiences such as dating, social networking, and sexuality
- ❑ Delay in the development of self determination
- ❑ Anxiety or mood issues can emerge or become more apparent

21

## Additional Resources:

1. Youtube clip  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-liQ3n6LE0>
2. 10 things every child with autism wishes you knew  
<http://www.parkerautismfoundation.org/pdf/child-autism-wishes-you-knew.pdf>
3. Reinforcing positive behavior  
<http://www.janebluestein.com/handouts/reinforce.html>
4. Supporting Learning in the Student with Autism  
[http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/sctk\\_supporting\\_learning.pdf](http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/sctk_supporting_learning.pdf)

22