
Autism and Asperger's Syndrome

Early Warning Signs!

(Includes Mini Quiz)

Discovering the truth early will provide the best outcome for a child on the autism spectrum as well as the people that surround them.

Learn to see through the camouflage of this “invisible disability”.

by

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Bringing Autism Solutions Right To You!

“Little Rainman shows that autism can be seen and understood by everyone. After reading this book full of miraculous pictures, I feel greater love, compassion and understanding of a situation that somehow touches us all sooner or later.”

Mark Victor Hansen,
Co-creator, #1 New York Times best-selling series Chicken Soup for the Soul

We are all too familiar with children that display characteristics at an early age which seem odd or peculiar but can't quite put our finger on exactly what is wrong, if anything. Since Autism Spectrum Disorders also known as Pervasive Developmental Disorders are diagnosed by specialists through the observation of certain behaviors over time. This makes it entirely possible for the general public to at least learn what characteristics to watch for if they are suspicious that a child may have this disability. This way, if they have an idea that the child has autism, they can seek the proper channels for an accurate and early diagnosis by a professional in order to get the proper strategies and systems in place soon in the child's life. In this day of inclusion, learning styles and techniques must be taught and understood by everyone so the school experience for all will be as effective as possible.

This is in no way meant to replace a proper diagnosis, rather to explore the possibility of autism in order to help get the children who need it the most to the right doctors. As a result of early and proper intervention, proper strategies, techniques and supports can be put into place. The awareness of these symptoms, early diagnosis and support will result in taking years off the diagnosis cycle in the long-run. The child will ultimately be able to learn much more, have greater self-esteem and a much better chance at being successful in their lives due to addressing the right teaching and learning styles and strategies. The other lives these children touch such as their peers and siblings will also be enriched by their presence and will gain a deeper, much greater understanding of autism and special needs. With proper and early diagnosis, it will also enable parents, extended family and educators to move people through their "denial phase" more quickly and offer the best possible solutions for the child if they, in fact, have a disorder on the autism spectrum.

It is my belief that the main reason children are missed in the recognition phase of the diagnosis often times is that these children are generally very normal in appearance hence the name for this condition "the invisible disability" so are therefore overlooked. Seeing a child spinning around in circles or waving their hands in the air seems like typical child's play to everyone with an untrained eye. What is it that separates this behavior from regular play? It can be truly hard to tell, especially to the person who is not knowledgeable or aware of what to look for.

Another reason it is often overlooked, though it's tough for me to mention, is the parent's very own denial of something being wrong with *their* child. After all, didn't they receive a clean "bill of health" at the hospital when the child was born? Ten toes, ten fingers, the doctor announced "a fine healthy baby boy" to mom and dad! How can something so real change? Besides, it is incredibly hard on the mother or father's own ego at a personal level to discover or even suspect that their child may in fact have autism. Certain cultures in particular have a very difficult time accepting this special needs diagnosis as it has been negatively ingrained deep within their belief structure for hundreds of years.

When my son was 2 ½ it was my sister in law who challenged me to have him checked out by a doctor after she had listened to a radio talk show. I only did so for the purpose of proving her wrong as I was so defensive that she would even suggest such a preposterous idea and thought she was just comparing her daughter to my son who happened to be the same age. I'm

glad I was so stubborn that I had to prove her wrong rather than just sit back and wait to see. I sure had to eat my words and humble myself when I finally learned the truth and am glad I did. though I didn't feel that way at the time. She was the catalyst for me and thank God she was. I was able to get out of my own way and move on to what was most important, Jonathan and his early intervention. On the other hand, my Italian husband, after years of saying "there's nothing wrong with Jonny" finally recognizes and accepts Jonathan's autism though is very reluctant to admit it in social situations.

Extended family can also be difficult in relating to this condition, as many of the autism characteristics that seem to display themselves in our children are the very traits often times hidden in our family trees through the behaviors and tendencies in our aunts, uncles, grandparents and so on. Of course, we couldn't ever say that to them and nor should we. Instead we should seek to understand this factor and let it help us so that we do not take misunderstanding and criticism personally. Their comments are not an attack upon us as parents in general or as something against our child with autism, rather an inner fear having something to do with their own agendas. Having said this, many times it is this very group of extended family that actually notice and point out the differences in behavior to the parents as parents can be blinded to these traits as they are the ones continually around their children day in and day out and many times have grown to believe they are perfectly normal.

In summary, I cannot over emphasized the importance of having everyone on the face of this earth familiar with the early warning signs of autism spectrum disorders so that proper interventions can take place as early and as is feasibly possible. The longer the typical autism communication, behavior, sensory and social skills styles are not addressed, the more ingrained these traits become and the more difficult it is to change them. This is especially true in this type of individual who's major characteristic is that of practicing and practicing whatever it is they enjoy until they perfect it. Even if it is something negative as in the case of their stimulatory behavior.

Attached to this article is a Mini Autism Quiz to help ALL people at least begin to recognize signs to watch for in pre-school children. Hopefully this will help the process along and encourage people to get out of their own way to help their very own children. Others can also carefully suggest that a parent seek proper intervention with the many books and resources available

that haven't been available in the past. With the tools available in this day and age, there is no excuse for these children to fall through the cracks of the system.

About the Author

Karen Simmons Sicoli is a mother of six and the author of Little Rainman, a story of autism told through the eyes of her son. A gemologist by trade, Karen shifted gears to work full time in the autism community after a near-death experience. She is the founder of AutismToday.com and is active worldwide in promoting a deeper and more personal understanding of autism and Asperger's Syndrome. She makes her home in Edmonton, Alberta Canada. "

MINI AUTISM SPECTRUM QUIZ

Are you wondering whether a pre-school aged child you know may have an Autism Spectrum Disorder such as a type of Autism or Asperger's (pronounced Ass-burgers) Syndrome?

Take this simple little quiz.

1. Do they spin objects around and around?
2. Is their speech repetitive, like an echo?
3. Are they attracted to shows like Wheel of Fortune or Jeopardy?
4. Do they like to watch the same movie over and over again?
5. Are they fascinated with numbers and letters?
6. Do they seem unafraid of things that they should be afraid of?
7. Is it hard for them to make eye contact or they simply don't?
8. Do they shun away from being touched or arch their back when held?
9. Do they like to line objects up in rows?
10. Do they lack the ability to play "with" other children interactively?
11. Do they walk up or down stairs always leading with the same foot?

If you answer yes to three or more of these questions, have them checked out by a professional who is recommended by your local Autism Society.

To find more information and resources on Autism and Asperger's, please visit <http://www.autismtoday.com/>