

The Invisible©

They walk beside you
They may pass unnoticed
You may see them
Once they stand away
Seem different
Off on the side
In their own space
In their own movements
In their own world
They may make you laugh
Maybe you will get angry
Or, you may just shake your head
Walk away in disgust
They do not wish to harm anyone
They are just different than most
They are the invisible
They want to fit in with you
They may want to be your friend
There is a part of them that tries so hard
But they cannot change who they are
They cannot change what is real and true
So they will forever walk alone among you
They are the invisible
They are autistic

Nancy Getty

Since 2008, A.S.P.I.E.S. with presenter Nancy Getty, has advocated and spoken internationally with audiences about Asperger Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Differences and the diversity of ASD. Nancy's papers have been published with the Italian Gov't, the Child and Youth Practice Magazine and Autism Matters Magazine.

Nancy is an individual diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome and is a single parent who has raised twins that have both been diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome.

Nancy translates the Autism Spectrum with an uplifting motivational attitude and unique insight into the mysteries, struggles and capabilities of ASD individuals .

Nancy brings an understanding and awareness of Asperger Syndrome and Autism. She presents on the issues and strategies that ASD individuals, families, educators, community and service workers may be seeking the answers to.

Nancy is an Autism Canada Advisory Committee Member and It's Our Home Project Board Member

A.S.P.I.E.S.

Presenter: Nancy Getty
Consultant: Betsy Ingram
P.O. Box 514 Princeton, Ontario
Canada N0J 1V0
Phone: 519-532-8469
Fax: 519-454-4672
Email: aspergerrus@hotmail.com



**“Differences are Meant to be Discovered and Understood
Once Understood, they are No Longer Just Differences.”**

<http://www.aspergerrus.com>

simplifying Differences





Recognizing and Understanding the Diversities of Asperger Syndrome and the Autism Spectrum

Birth to Infant

Although there will be very few obvious signs in babies, some do raise RED FLAGS (children as young as 12 months of age can usually follow simple commands; such as wave bye-bye, give kisses, pointing to body parts, and respond to questions to identify familiar people/objects in their environment. ("Where's _____.")

An ASD child will not! Here are a few more signs:

- less babbling when with others (more when alone)
- no back and forth exchange (peek-a-boo)
- does not initiate gestures or responses (mimics only)
- deficit in understanding non-verbal gestures/emotions
- may appear deaf or slow in responding
- avoids affection

(or may need to be held tightly)



The Toddler

The signs will become more apparent and due to increased sensory stimulation, behaviors will escalate.

- loss of speech/ doesn't use words to express needs or thoughts
 - or lack of fluctuation in voice, blunt tone
 - lack of eye contact or intense as if studying
 - lack of body awareness
- (may appear clumsy, walks on toes, or uneven gait)

Toddler...continued

- repetitive movements (spinning, rocking, flapping hands, finger flicking)
- can't time motion of what is seen (timing cars to cross road, catching a ball)
- responds and communicates literally
- may not make needs apparent
- intense focus on objects (spinning objects, truck wheels, fans)
- obsessive interest in certain objects
- lines up toys (precise play not imaginative)
- may have hypo/hyper reactions to pain
- may not communicate hunger, anger or pain
- exceptional memory for facts and details
- exaggerated response to environmental stimuli (crowds, smells, noises, sights, etc.)
- disturbed by routine/environment changes
- mimics lines from movies/tv or repeats phrases
- lack of showing or sharing of interests (pointing things out)
- may show a lack of desire to partake socially
- sleep problems (insomnia/or very deep sleep)
- intestinal problems: diarrhea, constipation, gas, bloating (not aware of toileting needs)
- selective diet (sameness, textures, appearance, smells may create repulsiveness/dislike to certain foods)

The Voice of an Aspie

Asperger Syndrome is an Autism Spectrum "Difference" that creates problems for the individual in being instinctively aware and understanding the societal rules and expectations as well as a communication deficit.

Syndrome is defined as a group of symptoms which consistently occur together, a characteristic combination of behaviors. ASD individuals will have different learning requirements and styles of learning than the typical individual. Having a social and communication difference will create unique challenges for the individual and for those that are part of their lives.

Spectrum means that no one individual has the same levels of challenges or strengths and must be evaluated and guided according to their individuality.

AUTISTIC CHILDREN GROW UP TO BE AUTISTIC ADULTS

Adults with Asperger Syndrome/Autism face unique challenges socially, with employment issues and life skill deficits. Many adults are undiagnosed and have struggled since childhood with no understanding, supports or answers as to what their differences are.

We fear when we don't understand, so learn!

- courage is to step outside of your comfort zone and make changes.
- motivate you
- change your attitude and be positive
- create your own circumstances
- laugh harder at yourself
- set your own example
- hard work and believing you can.

Heart Song ©

Who you are changes from moment to moment
 Feelings and emotions disappear if you do not act on them
 Choose wisely those that you wish to experience
 If you are always trying to discipline yourself
 You will never be free to know the joy of happiness
 Fix your mind nowhere and towards nothing
 Then you will better hear your heart
 To better understand your emotions is to be taught
 Emotions are learning the meaning of your thoughts
 Rediscover childhood curiosity, creativity and freedom
 Childhood lacks seriousness
 The pure innocence of a child is a gift to all
 There is a wonderful voice that comes from a child's heart
 It is the voice of honesty and truth
 It is the true symphony of the song each child sings
 Listen closely to each note that you play
 For each note transforms into an action, a tune
 Each word that you speak becomes lyrics
 Know who you are and then sing loudly
 Sing for all to hear
 For this is your heart song

The Importance of Sensory Issues

STOP IT!!!! SLOW IT DOWN!!!! DON'T TOUCH ME!!!! Hearing, touch, feel, taste, sight, smell, these are the senses that are considered when the topic of sensory dysfunction is discussed but there are many other areas of sensory input that we experience daily. Perceiving temperature, vibration, pain or position of your limbs, awareness of physical boundaries and also sensing emotions. Now factor in a combination of exaggerated or lack of capability to express emotions and the literal reality of the environment for the autistic person this may create the exaggerated confusion and escalated behaviors. The messages to the brain from each of the senses are distorted, scrambled or skipping information causing a veil over the messages that are being transmitted. The sensory overload that is felt each day does create an inability to filter, process and understanding the multitude of information that they are attempting to receive and decipher.

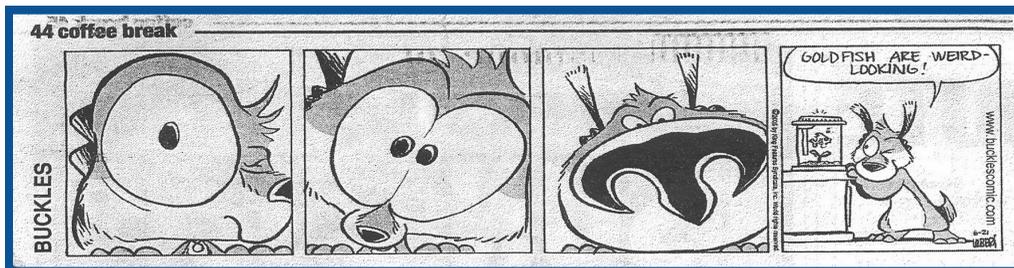
An autistic sensory world is a chaotic relay of fragmented information from the senses. They tend to take in only pieces of the information, attempt to connect the information and then make sense of it; all the while when the individual is still in the middle of the very things that are causing the overload. For the ASD person, when too much information needs to be processed simultaneously, it becomes difficult to process the entire information so they will process the information in bits. This creates a delay in processing and interpreting the sensory information or the information becomes scrambled.

Sensory Dysfunction in Autism/ Asperger Syndrome

Hypersensitivity/Hyposensitivity To Touch
 Poor Tactile Perception And Discrimination
 Vestibular Dysfunction
 Hyposensitivity To Movement
 Poor Muscle Tone and/or Coordination
 Sensory Seeking Behaviors
 Hypersensitivity/ Hyposensitivity To Sounds

Hypersensitivity/Hyposensitivity To Oral Input
 Hypersensitivity/Hyposensitivity To Smells
 Hypersensitivity/Hyposensitivity To Visual Input
 Language Processing Dysfunction
 Social, Emotional, Play, And Self-Regulation Dysfunction
 Interceptive Sense/Internal Regulation
 Difficulty in perceiving foreground from background sensory stimuli

The view may be different depending on personal perception



The Teen Years

- the person may actively seek and enjoy solitude
- often miss social cues like body language and facial expressions
- changes in routine can cause great anxiety
- difficulty with managing and expressing emotions.
- sensory input can be overwhelming
- literal thinking
- priority may be to solve a problem rather than satisfy the social or emotional needs of others.
- have a 'one-track mind' and a fear of failure
- painful hyper sensory experience
- difficulty understanding others' feelings
- may avoid social gatherings
- problems with organizational abilities
- shuts down in social situations
- social withdrawal lack social maturity
- speech impediments/strengths-stutter or hyperlexia
- eccentric personality

Some Asperger Syndrome Assets

- dependable, honest, trustworthy, literal humor
- values not shaped by social, financial or political influences (strong sense of social justice)
- highly original thinkers and very intelligent in distinct areas
- retains knowledge in encyclopedia like fashion (impressive long term memory of facts)
- problem solvers (seek solutions minus emotional upset)
- notice details
- perfectionists in areas of focus
- strict adherence to rules
- may be gifted in certain areas (arts, music, literary, math, etc)

Primary



Note: Not all children on the spectrum are with drawn and subdued; many are very extroverted in their personalities although their social understanding will still be distorted. Female traits may differ from males.

- fine motor skill issues -holding a pencil, tying shoes
- messy writing
- dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia
- (important) sensory processing deficit
- slow processing information
- understanding undetermined time frames (e.g. later)
- reading an analogue clock
- understanding sarcasm, idioms, metaphors
- exaggerated behavioral responses (many due to sensory over stimulation)
- loss of focus/over focus on interests
- catatonic behaviors
- questioning rules/ do not understand unwritten rules
- seek facts and play is geared towards actual events/realism
- less social integration (seeks isolation)
- unsure what to do in free time/ recess
- difficulty understanding personal space (awareness of self)

Not all of those suspected or diagnosed as ASD individuals will show all of these traits. Many Asperger children show low grade skills in social and communication abilities; their perceptions and understanding of the socially accepted rules of communication and social belonging will be distorted.

Implementing Strategies

Babies to Toddlers

- sensory friendly environment (not over stimulating)
- create a structured environment with predictable routines
- give fewer choices (more choices, the more confused the child will become)
- keep voice low and quiet (confusing if a speaking voice is too loud)
- limit physical contact (can't properly interpret body language and touch)
- allow to stand instead of sit may rock back and forth (calming of inner rhythm)
- opportunities for structured social interaction
- eliminate stress (Autistic children pick up on others emotions very easily)
- for visual learners, be sure to use signs and pictures

Primary aged children

- work on touch, noise and sight sensory
- create routines that work for everyone
- prepare for changes in routines (start with minor changes, work to spontaneous acts)
- use visual aides (dry erase boards– make lists, schedules)
- set rules and do not fluctuate
- highlight key words in instructions or use point form instruction
- develop strategies for meltdowns
- introduce social situations (different types of people in different situations)
- do not ask how people feel or think...explain this
- allow for "down time"

Primary...continued

- personal hygiene (understand social/health purposes)
- learn and understand appropriate issues to talk about and with whom
- learn to filter honesty by being more aware of the reactions of others
- eye contact (important social skill to learn, start with looking over a person's shoulder)
- who, what and when to ask for help and guidance
- use technology to assist with social skills (texting is back and forth conversation)

A child is a special gift that will help you see the world differently. You have a chance to grow, learn together and to teach others.



*To pause is to doubt
To doubt is to question
To question is to seek answers
Answers are found when we journey
To journey is to awaken
To awaken is to begin.*

N. Getty

Strategies for Pre-teen to Teenager

- research prospective education and job skills training (practice interview skills and writing resumes)
- money management of finances
- basic living and home responsibilities (security, paying bills, laundry, putting out garbage, cooking etc.)
- paying bills on time (rent, hydro, phone)
- time management (appointments and scheduled meetings)
- traveling and travel options (transportation)
- scheduling appointments
- problem solving strategies
- purchasing and taking prescribed medications
- keeping track of own belongings
- being responsible for expectations of work completion schedules
- monitoring own speech style and body language
- adapting and learning self-assessment skills
- learning how to pre-plan and rehearse steps
- understanding how to implement social connections
- understanding and recognizing own emotions and own behaviors
- understanding and monitoring anxiety and stress (learn coping strategies)

Relationships: Sexuality and Behaviors

- ASD individuals are more apt to be attracted to a person's spirit (not looks, gender, race, or status)
- assist them to learn "age appropriate" behavior
- will copy context of behaviors or conversation and use inappropriately
- honesty and dependability are the basis for all relationships with an ASD individual
- teach how and who to ask for clarification of social misunderstandings (***this is important so that circumstances do not escalate**)
- understand personal strengths and weaknesses and find the balance
- guide them to celebrate their differences and advocate