



A Brief Introduction to Autism

- Autism is one of five disorders grouped under the heading of Pervasive Development Disorder, a category of neurological disorders.
 - This grouping also includes Asperger's Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Rett's Disorder and PDD-Not Otherwise Specified
 - The overall incidence of autism is consistent around the world, though it is four times more prevalent in boys than in girls.
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- Although defined by a certain set of behaviors, children and adults with autism can exhibit any combination of these behaviors in any degree of severity. Two individuals with autism can act completely differently from one another and have varying capabilities.
 - Every person with autism is an individual and as such has a unique personality, and processes and responds to information in unique ways.
 - Some common behaviors associated with autism are: resistance to change/desire for rhythm and routine, repeating words or phrases in place of usual, responsive speech, laughing or crying for no overtly apparent reason or for seemingly inappropriate reasons, attachment to objects, uneven gross/fine motor skills, apparent under or over sensitivity to pain, difficulty in mixing with others...
 - Sensory integration is a challenge. Sensory perception may be heightened or underactive.
 - Contrary to popular belief, autistic individuals can and do make eye contact, can develop good functional language and can develop relationships and show affection. However, the manner and degree to which this happens may vary from the general population and between autistic individuals.