

What is....

# ASPERGER SYNDROME?

A developmental disorder which falls within the Autism Spectrum. Asperger Syndrome, referred to by many as "High Functioning Autism," is a developmental disorder that is not widely understood. Main features of this disorder become obvious during early childhood and remain constant throughout life, although the common features and degree of actual impairment can vary. Rarely recognised before the age of three, it is more common in boys than girls. Core features of the syndrome are lack of social skills, limited ability to have a two way conversation and an intense interest in a particular subject. Most of these children attend normal primary schools.

## COMMUNICATION



Poor conversation skills



Talks incessantly about one topic



Rarely makes eye contact



Concrete pedantic interpretation of language

Although these children are often highly articulate, content of speech may be abnormal, tending to be pedantic and often centering on one or two favourite topics. Sometimes a word or phrase is repeated over and over in stereotyped fashion. Usually, there is a comprehension deficit despite apparent superior verbal skills. Non verbal communication, both expressive and receptive is often impaired.

## SOCIAL INTERACTION



Often teased and bullied by other children



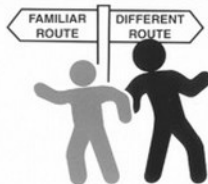
The odd one out



Indifferent to physical contact

There tends to be impairment in two way social interaction due to an inability to understand the rules governing social behaviour. A lack of empathy with others and little or no eye contact may be evident. Can appear to be stuck at the egocentric stage of social and emotional development. They tend to perceive the world exclusively from their own point of view. Although interested in social relationships often social contact is made inappropriately.

## SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR



Familiar routine very important



Eccentric, unusual behaviour



Inappropriate laughing or giggling



Solitary repetitive play

Social behaviour is often naive and peculiar. Can tend to become intensely attached to particular possessions often engaging in repetitive activities. Resistant to change, coping best when life is predictable. They prefer structure and may concentrate exclusively on matters in which they are interested. Are often known as loners who never quite fit in because of eccentric behaviour, peculiar ways of speaking and a lack of social skills.

## COMMON FEATURES:

- Excellent rote memory, absorbs facts easily.
- Generally performs well with maths, science and reading.
- May be anxious and unable to cope with criticism or imperfection.
- Often victims of teasing and bullying leading to withdrawal into isolated activities.
- Can appear clumsy and have an unusual gait or stance.
- Often seen as odd or eccentric.
- Language often appears good but may have limited content and poor social understanding.
- Self interested and lacks empathy.

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