



autism south africa

brochure for teachers

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS – a Guide for Teachers

The detection of learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), in their formative years is vital. As a teacher you are an important role player in this essential early detection.

Autism Spectrum Disorders are **not** the result of bad parenting and these children do not choose to misbehave.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong, complex, pervasive developmental disability, which appears to have a genetic predisposition and stems from a multi-faceted origin, causing disturbances in brain development and functioning.

The incidence of ASD seems to be on the increase with the latest research implying that this disability now affects approximately 1 per 168 births and is found to occur in 4 times as many boys as girls.

The onset of ASD is from birth or before the age of 3 years. Various subgroups are referred to within the Autism Spectrum. The ICD 10 system (International Classification of Diseases, 10th edition, World Health Organisation, 1992) and the DSM IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 4th edition, American Psychiatric Association, 1994) suggests some subgroups, the best known of which are "childhood autism / early infantile autism" and "Asperger Syndrome". There is a fair amount of academic argument concerning the criteria differentiating these subgroups. However, in clinical practice, the most helpful approach to diagnosis is to establish if the child concerned, has an Autism Spectrum Disorder and then to provide information concerning their present level of varying abilities. This type of detail is far more useful for identifying a person's needs, rather than just putting him or her in a diagnostic subgroup.

As yet the exact causes of ASD are unknown, but intensive research is being implemented on an ongoing basis. With the appropriate intervention, learners on the Autism Spectrum can be helped to improve their quality of life.

Although learners with ASD present with many different levels of severity and also display a wide range of individual characteristics, they are all affected by the "Triad of Impairments". This triad is typically associated with a narrow, repetitive pattern of activities and resistance to change in things that directly affect the individual concerned and manifests with an impairment in the quality of development in the following areas:-

1. SOCIAL INTERACTION

- Little awareness of the existence of others, or of their feelings;
- Poor or absent ability to make appropriate social contact;
- The most severe form is aloofness and indifference to others, although most people with autism show an attachment on a simple level to parents or carers;
- Indifference to or dislike of being held, cuddled or touched;
- Difficulty in forming appropriate relationships with peers or others;
- In less severe forms, the individual passively accepts social contact, even showing some pleasure in this, though he or she may not make spontaneous approaches;
- Prefers to play alone.

2. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

- The development of speech and language may be abnormal, delayed or absent;
- Minimal reaction to verbal input and sometimes acts as though deaf;
- The presence of, or understanding of facial expressions and / or gestures may be unusual or absent;
- Repetition of words, questions, phrases and/or sentences over and over again;
- Endless monologues about their special interest, without adapting to the needs of the listener;
- Words and phrases may be used incorrectly;
- Production of speech may be unusual. A flat monotonous tone or inappropriate variations in tone are often noted;
- Those who are verbal, may be fascinated with words and word games, but do not use their vocabulary as a tool for social interaction and reciprocal communication;
- Difficulties in initiating and or taking part in conversations.

3. BEHAVIOUR AND IMAGINATION

- Imaginative play may be limited or poor, e.g. cannot play with a wooden block, as if it is a toy car;
- A tendency to focus on minor or trivial aspects of things in the environment, instead of an imaginative understanding of the meaning of the whole scene;
- May display a limited range of imaginative activities, which you may well find have actually been copied off the TV etc.;
- Pursues activities repetitively and cannot be influenced by suggestions of change;
- Play may appear complex, but close observation, shows its rigidity and stereotyped pattern;
- Unusual habits such as rocking, spinning, finger-flicking, continual fiddling with objects, spinning objects, tapping and scratching on surfaces, or arranging objects in lines or patterns etc;
- Inappropriate use of toys in play;
- Holding onto objects, e.g. carrying a piece of wool for the whole day;
- Noticeable physical over-activity or extreme under-activity;
- Tantrums may occur for no apparent reason;
- Changes in routine or environment, e.g. a change of route to school or altering the placement of equipment in the classroom, may cause distress;
- Interests and range of activities may be limited, e.g. only interested in puzzles;
- A small percentage of learners have abilities that are outstanding in relation to their overall functioning, e.g. exceptional memory in a specific field of interest;

In addition to this Triad of Impairments, you may well observe the following additional features:-

- Little or no eye contact;
- No real fear of dangers;
- Abnormalities in the development of cognitive skills, e.g. poor learning skills or resistance to normal teaching methods;
- Abnormalities of posture and motor behaviour, e.g. poor balance;
- Poor gross and fine motor skills in some learners;
- Odd responses to sensory input, e.g. covering of ears;
- Sense of touch, taste, sight, hearing and/or smell may be heightened or diminished;
- Bizarre eating patterns - food fads;
- High pain threshold;
- Crying or laughing for no apparent reason;
- Self-injurious behaviour, e.g. head banging, scratching, biting;
- Abnormal sleep patterns.

Children with ASD often have accompanying learning difficulties. The range of intellectual abilities amongst children with ASD is vast. The presence of additional Disorders such as epilepsy, sensory and intellectual impairments can co-exist with ASD.

Remember that ASD can vary widely and there is no single feature that, if not present, excludes the possibility of Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Guidelines for teaching a child with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

If you have a child in your class who has been diagnosed with ASD, there are certain guidelines that may assist you with that child's individual educational plan.

Essential areas need to be addressed. The teaching methods should focus on the child's strengths and compensate for their weaknesses. The strengths usually are visual skills and rote learning. The weaknesses are usually the ability to process language and the ability to provide their own structure and organisation.

The two most frequent causes of stress and behavioural difficulties are first lack of a simple, clear, understandable, predictable structure to each day and second, pressure to perform above the child's level of ability.

Children and adults with ASD, whatever their level of ability, find it hard to comprehend time and space and how they fit into the world. Their impairment of imagination prevents them from building up an inner story about themselves. It is difficult for people who are not familiar with ASD to understand the nature of such problems. For example, some of the more disabled individuals become distressed if taken for a walk away

from their familiar environment, because no-one realised the necessity of explaining to them that, at the end of the walk, they will be returning to the place they know.

One important way to help a person with ASD is to provide external structure to make up for the lack of a coherent inner world. They need to know where they are in time and space. They need to be given simple concrete guides to the world, such as picture timetables. They can manage change as long as it is not unexpected and they are carefully prepared in ways that they can understand.

The below list covers strategies that maybe beneficial when teaching a child with ASD:-

- Avoid verbal overload, irrespective of the person's apparent level of language ability;
- Use visual cues and prompts;
- Prepare the child for changes in routine;
- Provide structure, using a visual schedule of daily activities, such as photos, pictograms, representational objects;
- Give the child individualised instruction, do not rely on their comprehension of directions which are aimed at the class as a whole;
- Minimise visual and auditory distractions;
- Be aware that an increase in inappropriate behaviour may be an indicator of stress or frustration;
- A child with ASD may take longer to learn new skills and you may feel you are not getting anywhere and that you are wasting your time. Do not give up, please be patient and persevere and you will be rewarded!

Toys and activities that may be beneficial for the child with ASD.

Children with ASD seem to prefer toys that involve visual/spatial aspects, such as jigsaw puzzles, construction toys, shape and colour matching etc. Computer games may also be very beneficial to a child with ASD.

Children's videos with a definite visual story, as opposed to reliance on the verbal aspect may be thoroughly enjoyed by children with ASD.

Physical activity is important for the child with ASD, but these activities must not rely on verbal input or the use of imagination. Physical activity has been found to diminish inappropriate behaviours and has the added benefit of improving motor co-ordination. Supervision of a child with ASD in the playground is essential, as the child with ASD often has no real sense of danger.

Should you think that a child in your class may displaying an Autism Spectrum Disorders, we advise you to contact the centre for learners with ASD which is closest to you. Contact details for further information and facilities available in South Africa and Namibia:-

AUTISM SOUTH AFRICA

P.O. Box 84209
Greenside. 2034
Children's Memorial Institute. Gate 13.
Cnr Joubert Street Ext and Empire Road. Braamfontein
Tel: 011 484 9909
Fax: 011 484 3171
admin@autismsouthafrica.org
www.autismsouthafrica.org

AUTISM WESTERN CAPE

P.O. Box 60375
Table View. 7439
47 Nottingham Close, Parklands. CT
Tel: 021 557 3573
Fax: 086 671 9120
ceo@autismwesterncape.org.za
www.autismwesterncape.org.za

ALPHA SCHOOL

Cape Town

P.O. Box 48
Woodstock.7915
Cnr Roodebloem and Palmerston
Roads. Woodstock
Tel: 021 447 1212/3
Fax: 021 448 0405
E-mail: info@alphaschool.co.za

VERA SCHOOL

Cape Town

Private Bag X 4
Clareinch. 7440
20 Anglesey Road. Rondebosch East
Tel: 021 696 2844
Fax: 021 696 4877
E-mail: info@vera.co.za

HURDY GURDY HOUSE

Cape Town

70 de Hulk Road
Penhill, Eersterivier. 7100
Tel: 021 904 2312
E-mail: enaldrett@mweb.co.za

ASSOCIATION FOR AUTISM (PRETORIA)

P.O. Box 35833. Menlo Park. 0102
Tel: 012 993 4628
Fax: 012 993 4675
E-mail: afautism@iafrica.com

UNICA SCHOOL

Pretoria

P.O. Box 35182. Menlo Park. 0102
Tel: 012 460 6539.
Fax: 012 460 6324
E-mail: principal@unicaschool.co.za

LETHABO LE KHUTSO

ABRINA HOUSE

Pretoria

210 18th Avenue. Rietondale. Pretoria
P.O. Box 35833. Menlo Park. 0102
Tel: 012 329 3627.
Fax: 012 329 1899
E-mail: afautism@iafrica.com

THE KEY SCHOOL

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 84611
Greenside. 2034
Tel: 011 726 2445
Fax: 011 726 7901
E-mail: keyschool@iafrica.com

**JOHANNESBURG HOSPITAL SCHOOL
AUTISM UNIT**

Postnet Suite 268
Private Bag 30500
Houghton. 2041
Tel: 011 643 3050 / 011 484 1908
Fax: 011 484 5553
info@cdcjhs.co.za

ACTION IN AUTISM (KwaZulu-Natal)

P.O. Box 30210. Mayville. 4058
Tel: 031 261 1154
Fax: 031 261 9169
lisa@fineline.co.za

BROWNS SCHOOL
KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X 04
Ashwood. 3605
Tel: 031 700 3535
Fax: 031 700 3117
E-mail: browns@brownsschool.co.za

AUTISM EASTERN CAPE

P.O. Box 13276
Humewood. 6013
Tel: 079 2677 22
Fax: 086 511 4841
E-mail: info@autismec.org

QUEST SCHOOL
(Port Elizabeth)

P.O. Box 13276
Humewood. 6013
2 Hoy Street. South End. PE
Tel: 041 581 0964
Fax: 041 581 0488
E-mail: quest3@absamail.co.za

EAST LONDON

Antionette Bruce-Alexander
C/O P.O. Box 1493. East London. 5200
10 Fairview Place. Beacon Bay. 5241
Tel and Fax: 043 748 3992

AUTISM NAMIBIA

P.O. Box 5043
WINDHOEK. NAMIBIA
Tel: 002 6461 22 4561/2
Fax: 002 6461 22 8255
E-mail: petrad@iway.na

A FEW INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS TO GET YOU STARTED.

It is worthwhile joining various international associations and thus obtaining their regular publications. Many organisations provide additional excellent resource centres.

National Autism Society - United Kingdom

393 City Road. London EC1V 1NG. England. Tel: 0944 20 7903 3563 Fax: 0944 20 7833 9666
Website: www.nas.org.uk/ E-mail: nas@nas.org.uk

World Autism Organisation

<https://worldautism.org>

Autism Research Institute (USA)

This institute is headed by Dr. Bernard Rimland, Ph.D. and is a most interesting resource centre. Dr Rimland focuses on a wide variety of treatment methods and is a great believer in dietary and vitamin therapy. The Institute's monthly journal "Autism Research International" makes for most thought provoking reading. 4182 Adams Avenue. SAN DIEGO CA 92116. USA. Tel: 091 619 281 7165 Fax: 091 619 563 6840
Web site: <http://www.autism.com/ari>

The Autism File

P.O. Box 144. Hampton. Middlesex. TW12 2FF. England
Tel: 0944 20 8979 2525. Fax: 0944 20 8979 9665 www.autismfile.com

Autism Europe

Avenue E. Van Becelaere 26b. Bte 21. B-1170. Bruxelles Belgique.
Tel: 0932 2 675 75 05 Fax: 0932 2 675 72 70
E-mail: autisme.europe@arcadis.be. Website: <http://www.autismeurope.arc.be>

Autism Society of America

7910 Woodmont Avenue. Suite 650. BETHESDA. MD 20814 USA
Tel: 091 800 328 8476. Fax: 091 301 657 0869 Website: <http://www.autism-society.org/>

Autism Society of North Carolina

This organisation has an extensive list of publications.
505 Oberlin Road, Suite 230. Raleigh. NC 27605-1345. USA
Tel: 091 919 743 0204. Fax: 091 919 743 0208. Web Page: www.autismsociety-nc.org

1. Access and inclusion: for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Matthew Hesmondhalgh and Christine Breakey

The authors set up and run The Resource in Sheffield, UK – a pioneering unit offering education for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in mainstream secondary school. This book explores the realities of access and inclusion in employment and education.

Published by Souvenir Press. (Code NAS 438) ISBN 1 85302 986 6

2. Approach to autism

The National Autism Society

A good starting point for anyone who wishes to gain insight into the host of strategies, forms of interventions and therapies etc.

Published by National Autism Society. (Code NAS 401) ISBN 1 899280 56 1

3. Asperger's Syndrome. A Guide for Parents and Professionals.

Tony Attwood

Excellent book written to assist parents and professionals in the identification and treatment of children and adults with Asperger Syndrome.

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1998. ISBN 1 853025 77 1

4. Asperger Syndrome - practical strategies for the classroom: a teacher's guide

Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council

Published by the National Autism Society. UK. ISBN 1 899280 01 4

5. Asperger syndrome: a Practical Guide for teachers

Val Cumine, Julia Leach and Gill Stevenson

A clear and concise guide to effective classroom practice for teachers and support assistants working with children with Asperger Syndrome. Provides effective educational and behavioural intervention strategies.

Published by David Fulton Publishers. London. ISBN 1-853464 99 6

6. Asperger syndrome and difficult moments: practical solutions for tantrums, rage and meltdown.

Brenda Smith Myles & Jack Southwick

Offers reasons why and how people with Asperger Syndrome get upset or wound up by those around them, as well as advice as to how to possibly diffuse the emotions.

Published Autism Asperger Publishing Company ISBN 0 96725 143 5

7. Autism and Asperger Syndrome

Edited by Uta Frith

A clear presentation of the important finding relating to Asperger Syndrome as a distinct variant of autism. Highly recommended for the medical profession and psychologists.

Published by Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0 521 38608 X

8. Autism – an introduction to psychological theory

Francesca Happé

Readable introduction to research and theory in the field of autism.

Published by Psychology Press Ltd (Code NAS 105) ISBN 1 85728 230 2

9. Autism focus

T McKernan & J Matlock

Designed as a personal training workbook for professionals. Explains in a clear and simple way what is different about with people with autism. Full of ideas, information and practical suggestions. Available with audio cassettes of the workbook to help you assimilate the information easily.

Published by Sussex Autism Community Trust. ISBN 1 872889 80 8

1. Workbook with audio cassettes (Code NAS 215)

2. Workbook only (Code NAS 415)

10. Autism: how to help your young child

Leicestershire County Council & Fosse Health Trust

Practical guidelines for parents and teachers.

Published the National Autism Society (Code NAS 247) ISBN 1 899280 65 0

11. Autism in the early years

Val Cumine, Julia Leach and Gill Stevenson

Practical strategies for effective and realistic early intervention.

Published by David Fulton Publishers. (Code NAS 393) ISBN 1 85346 599 2

12. Autism with severe learning difficulties

Rita Jordan

Offers practical guidelines for children and adults lower on the spectrum. Shows how to build on the strengths and reduce the problems and anxieties.

Published by Souvenir Press (Code NAS 435) ISBN 0 285 63599 9

13. Autism thinking – this is the title

Peter Vermeulen

Humorous portrayal of how a person with autism thinks. Interesting reading.
Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers (Code NAS 439) ISBN 1 85302 995 5

14. Behavioural concerns and Autism Spectrum Disorders

John Clements and Ewa Zarkowska

Provides useful information for people working or living with people with autism whose behaviour is causing concern.

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. (Code NAS 403) ISBN 1 85302 742 1

15. Beyond the silence. My life, the world and autism

Tito Rajarshi Mukhopadhyay

Tito is an 11 year old boy from South India with a special talent. Although almost completely non-verbal, he can communicate his thoughts and feelings through remarkable prose and poetry, written in fluent English. Tito also has autism. Through his writing he explains how he deals with this disability and how it affects his view of the world. Tito gives us a unique insight into the mind of someone with autism, as well as a fascinating account of growing up with a disability in modern India.

Published by The National Autism Society. (Code NAS 113) ISBN 1 899280 31 6

16. Blue Bottle mystery: an Asperger adventure

Kathy Hoopmann

Aimed at 8-13 year olds. Warm, fun-filled fantasy story for children - the hero is a person with Asperger Syndrome! Wonderful to read and a valuable teaching tool. Great book to have in the library.

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. (Code NAS 397) ISBN 1 85302 978 5

17. Challenging behaviour and autism: making sense – making progress

Philip Whitaker

Practical Strategies for preventing or managing common challenging behaviors.

Published National Autism Society. (Code NAS 391) ISBN 1 899 280 51 0

18. Children with autism and Asperger syndrome: a guide for practitioners and carers

Patricia Howlin

Looks at research into the nature, causes and treatment of autism. Different therapies are explored and evaluated and advice is offered. Good reference book.

Published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd (Code NAS) 070) ISBN 0471983 28 4

19. Developing pupils' social communication skills

Penny Barratt, Julie Border, Helen Joy, Alison Parkinson, Mo Potter and George Thomas

Simple but effective strategies for developing communication and social skills.

Published by David Fulton (Code NAS 434) ISBN 1 85346 728 6

20. Enabling communication in children with autism

Carol Potter & Chris Whittaker

How to enhance environments to promote language development.

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ((Code NAS 416) ISBN 1 85302 956 4

21. Everybody is different

Fiona Bleach

For siblings and schools friends etc of children with autism.

Published by The National Autism Society (Code NAS 414) ISBN 1 899280 332.

22. Helping children with autism to learn

Edited by Stuart Powell

Offers specific approaches to teaching which draws together understandings of how people with autism think and learn and implications for those who aim to teach them. Offers insights into reasons behind Autism ways of behaving and guidance about ways of responding.

Published by David Fulton Publishers (Code NAS 395) ISBN 1 85346 637 9

23. It can get better ... dealing with common behaviour problems in young Autism children

Paul Dickinson & Liz Hannah

Practical A to Z handbook of intervention methods etc

Published by the National Autism Society. (Code NAS 284) ISBN 1 899 280 03 0

24. Making visual supports work in the home and community. Strategies for individuals with autism and Asperger Syndrome

Jennifer L.Savner and Brenda Smith Myles

Richly illustrated book provides parents and carers etc with all the information they need to make effective visual supports with a variety of ordinary material.

Published by Autism Asperger Publishing Company (Code NAS 442) ISBN 0 967 2514 X

25. Meeting the needs of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Rita Jordan and Glenys Jones

This book is ideal for anyone teaching children with ASD for the first time or trainee teachers.

Published by David Fulton Publishers (Code NAS 298) ISBN 1 853465 82 8

26. Of mice and aliens

Kathy Hoopmann

A sequel to *Blue Bottle Mystery*, this is a science fiction novel. Ben, who has just learnt he has Asperger Syndrome has aliens landing in his back garden and thus follows a most humorous account of his explanations of life on earth as seen by a person with Asperger Syndrome.

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers (Code NAS 436) ISBN 1 84310 007 x

27. Small steps forward

Sarah Newman

Ideas for games etc, behaviour management, toileting etc. Written by a parent of a child with autism.

Good book and reference list included.

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers (Code NAS 428) ISBN 185302 643 3

28. Teaching children with autism to mindread: a practical guide

Patricia Howlin, Simon Baron-Cohen & Julie Hadwin

Offers practical guidelines for children with ASD to improve their understanding of beliefs and emotions and pretence.

Published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd ISBN 0 471976 23 7

29. Teaching young children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: a practical guide for parents and staff in main stream schools and nurseries.

Liz Hannah, illustrated by Steve Lockett

Offers tried and tested strategies. Practical guide.

Published by National Autism Society (Code NAS 392) ISBN 1 899280 32 4

30. The Autism Spectrum: a guide for parents and professionals

Lorna Wing

Useful, practical and easy to read.

Published by Constable. 9COE NAS 216) ISBN 0 094751 60 9.

31. Toilet training for individuals with autism and related Disorders: a comprehensive A Guide for parents and teachers.

Maria Wheeler

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers (Code NAS 398) ISBN 1 88547 745 7

32. Understanding and working with the spectrum of autism: an insider's view.

Wendy Lawson

Humorous and written by someone with autism. Good insights.

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers (Code NAS 425) ISBN 1 85302 971 8

33. Words will really hurt me: how to protect your child from bullying

NAS Autism Helpline

Published by The National Autism Society. ISBN 1 899280 16 2

34. Why does Chris do that? Tony Attwood

A book that offers a vast amount of practical advice as regards problems relating to high-functioning autism and Asperger Syndrome.

Published National Autism Society. (Code NAS 066) ISBN 1 899280 10 3

35. What is Asperger syndrome and how will it affect me?

NAS Autism Helpline

Simple jargon-free language for children with Asperger Syndrome from approx 8 – 13 years.

Published by the NAS Code NAS 078 ISBN 1 899289 14 6

Please note that we have listed popular books for your reference, but this does not necessarily mean that the views expressed in these books represent the policy or views of the National Executive Committee of Autism South Africa.

A certain amount of material included in the brochure is chiefly taken from a paper written by Dr Lorna Wing, Consultant at the Centre for Social and Communication Disorders. It has been reproduced with the kind permission of Dr Lorna Wing and the National Autism Society, United Kingdom, who published this paper in their quarterly magazine, "Communication", edition Winter 1998.

On behalf of the children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in South Africa, we sincerely thank you for your interest and concern.

References

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Dr Lorna Wing.
2. "Communication" Winter 1998.
The National Autism Society, England.
3. The Autism Spectrum - a parent's guide
The National Autism Society, England.
4. Autism: Bibliography. A guide to books and videos
The National Autism Society, England.

5. The Autism Spectrum. A guide for Parents and Professionals.
Dr Lorna Wing.
6. Developing a Broad and Balanced Curriculum.
Mrs Margaret M Golding. Autism The Way Forwards RSA. September 1998.
7. Autism: How to help your young child
Leicestershire County Council and Fosse Health Trust. ISBN 1 899280 65 0
8. The National Autism Society (UK) Publication's Catalogue 2002.