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AUTISM

SPECTRUM DISORDER

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WOLTZ JOSEPHINE

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Introduction

My name is Santos José. I'm 14 years old and I am going to write my term paper about Autism Spectrum Disorder. I'm will be explaining what it is, present to you the symptoms of Autism, the diagnosis and many behaviours people on the Spectrum might have during their life. I'm also going to write about the different types of Autism: Asperger's Syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorder. I will be explaining why there are different types of autism. The biggest part of my work is going to be about the feelings while being on the spectrum. I'm going to categorise them in three parts: feelings in the mind of a child, feelings in the mind of a teenager and feelings in the mind of an adult. Because of the hormones on a teenager and the fully development on an adult, their feelings are all different from each other. Lastly, I'm going to describe about the day in a life of a person with Autism. I'm going to write about some obstacles they might have during that day and compare the reactions form neurotypicals to the reaction from people diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Chapter 1 — What is autism?

1.1 — Explanation

Autism Spectrum Disorder (also known as ASD) is a range of neurodevelopment disorder. It is a lifelong disability that can impact a person’s social skills, communication, relationships and self-regulation. The way they think, learn and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some of them may need support in their daily life, while others may live independently. There is not only one type of Autism, that’s why it is such a complicated condition. It’s hard for them to express themselves in social interactions across different environments, either with words or through gestures. They also have trouble understanding how people feel or think.

In 2004, there was a study that published an article showing that only 1 in 125 children got diagnosed with Autism. Today, in the United States, 1 in 54 children get diagnosed with Autism. (1 in 37 boys — 1 in 151 girls) Boys are 4.5 times more likely to be diagnosed with ASD than girls, because girls do not show autism at the same age and they might go undiagnosed because of that. More “white” children are identified with ASD than “black” or Hispanic children, because for Example, in North America, there is more money for research and diagnosis than in South America.

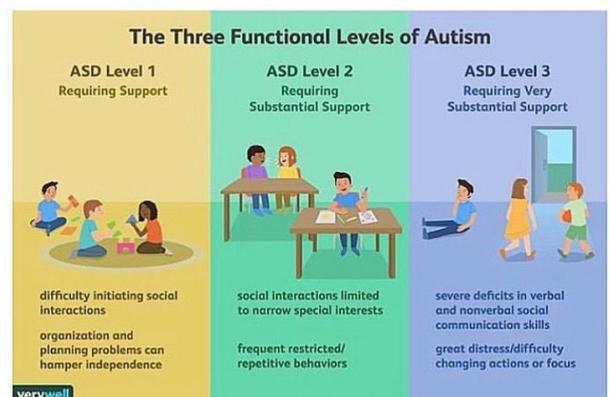
1.2 — Symptoms

Having Autism isn’t easy and many of the children do not get diagnosed from the beginning with autism. That’s why it is important to pay attention and see if the child has early symptoms. Early treatment can be very beneficial for the future of that child. Early symptoms and signs in babies may vary, but can include:

- lack of eye contact
- being overly focused on one thing
- lack of back-and-fourth play

The exact cause of Autism is not known but it is believed that genetic and environmental factors are involved. Symptoms and signs may include:

- Behavioural disturbances



Autism Spectrum Disorder — Santos J.

- Deficits in language comprehension
- Flat or monotonous speech
- Lack of empathy
- Lack of understanding social cues
- Not engaging in play with peers
- Repeating words or phrases
- Repetitive movements
- Self-abusive behaviours

It isn't guaranteed that by having some of these symptoms, that it is Autism. But if there are any doubts, it is recommended to go see a doctor.

1.3 — Explanation of the symptoms

Lack of eye contact

- Someone that can't look at you directly in the eyes.

Being overly focused on one thing

- He/She might talk a lot about that object.

Lack of back-and-fourth play

- Not being capable of doing multiple tasks.

Behavioural disturbances

- They may burst out do to small things, because they're not able to express their emotions or ask for help.

Deficits in language comprehension

- For example: not understanding teenage slang.

Flat or monotonous speech

- Because of their social skills being low, they end up having a monotonous voice.

Lack of empathy

- If someone may be feeling down, they may not recognise it or not even feel empathy for that person.

Lack of Understanding Social Cues

- As well as having a lack of empathy, they do not recognise if someone is mad, happy etc.

Not engaging in play with peers

- They prefer to play or work alone and they prefer to do their things on their own.

Repeating words or phrases

- Some of them will most likely use the same words. Those words tend to relate to the object they like or hobby they have.

Repetitive movements

- As well as repeating words or phrases, they also maybe will repeat some movements. They also may occur in the moment where they feel anxious.

Self-abusive behaviours

- When they feel anxious, they might hurt themselves. In the first place, because they didn't know how to ask for help. That's why they might bang their hand against the door or maybe throw themselves to the floor. This is because they don't know how to react when something isn't part of a routine.

1.4 — Diagnosis

Signs of Autism in boys usually appear by the age of 2-3 years. Some of them appear even earlier. They may appear as early as 18 months. Research shows that early intervention benefits people later in life.

If the parent has diabetes, is obese or is considered an older parent, it might put the risks higher for the child to have Autism. Another cause of getting ASD can be because the mother gains a lot of weight during pregnancy or if she consumes drugs or chemicals (alcohol, anti-seizure medications...) during pregnancy. Another risk factor may be if the child has chromosomal diseases such as Down syndrome or if he has allergic diseases such as asthma or eczema.

There is NO evidence that vaccines cause Autism.

Once you get diagnosed with Autism, a developmental screening will tell your doctor if the child is on track with basic skills (social skills, logic skills, motor skills). They will have regular checkups at 9, 18, 24 and 30 months of age. If the child shows symptoms, he or she will need to do a more complete evaluation. It might include a hearing and vision or genetic tests. Maybe the doctor might want to bring a specialist in. Psychologists can give a test called the (ADOS) Autism Diagnosis Observation Schedule.

Behavioural and communication therapy:

Behavioural and communication therapy helps with structure and organisation. It also helps to get a positive behaviour and discourages negative behaviour

Occupational therapy:

It helps the patient with life skills like dressing, eating etc.

Sensory integration therapy:

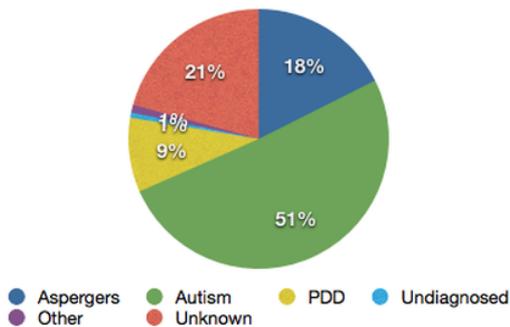
Sensory integration therapy helps someone who has problems with being touched or with sights or sounds

Speech therapy:

Speech therapy helps someone who might, have communication difficulties.

There is no cure for Autism, but there are medications to help with attention problems, hyperactivity or anxiety.

Number of children by primary diagnosis

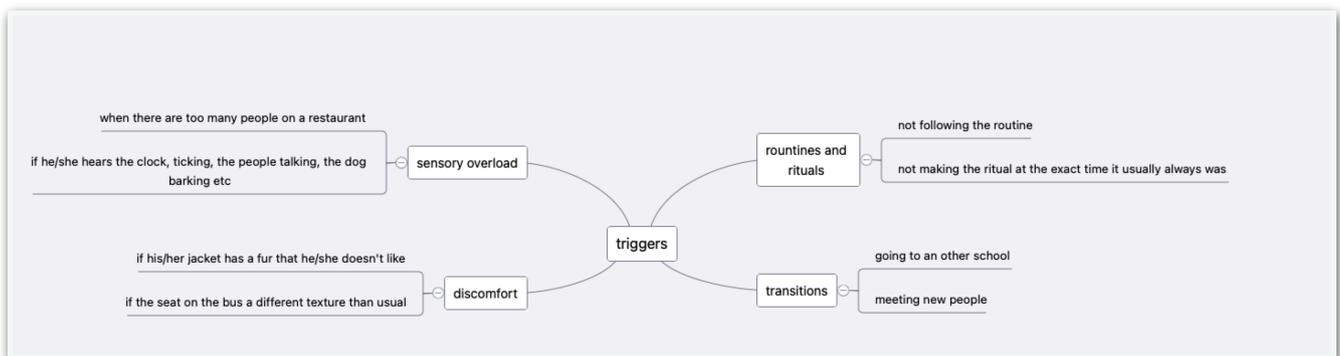


On this statistic made by a primary diagnosis, it shows us that out of 100 children that would show symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder, that 51 children would have Autism, 18 children would have Asperger's Syndrome and that 9 out of the 100 children would have Pervasive Developmental Disorder. Then there are 28 out of 100 would have an unknown diagnosis. The last 2 children or have a different

diagnosis or get undiagnosed.

1.5 — Behaviours

Everyone has a different way of Autism which means that no one has the same triggers. Some have these triggers, some have more, some have less.

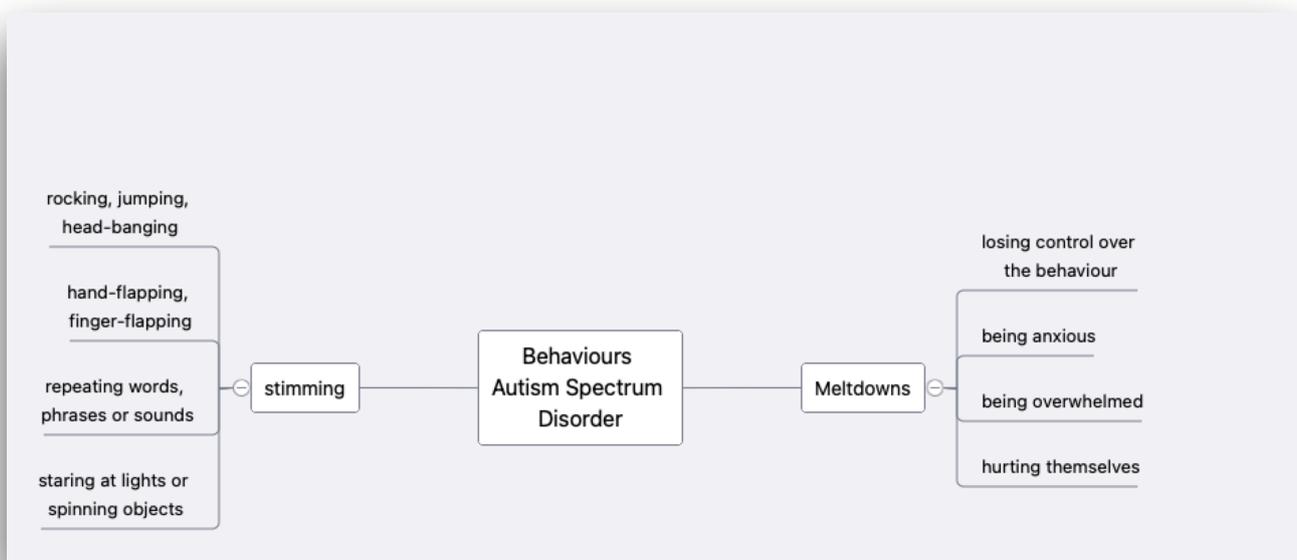


“A trigger, from the Dutch trekken, meaning to pull, releases the hammer on a firearm. In a database, a trigger is a set of Structured Query Language statements that automatically "fires off" an action when a specific operation, such as changing data in a table, occurs. A trigger consists of an event and an action. Triggers are used to preserve data integrity by checking on or changing data in a consistent manner.”

When someone is having a meltdown, it is because they were feeling overwhelmed over something. It usually happens because they do not know how to react or what to do. They also have a lot of difficulties in asking for help/ask someone for help.

A tip for anyone that has a child with Autism and he/she is having a meltdown, it would help if they hug the child very tight. Studies have shown that when someone does that to them, they will feel more secure and will start to calm down because when they are having a meltdown, it is because they're feeling lost and do not know what to do.

In the Netflix-Series "Atypical", the boy named Sam had two techniques that he could to when he was feeling stressed or overwhelmed. Either he said this to calm down: "Adeline, Chinstrap, Emperor, Gentoo" (these are penguin races) or he hand-flapped. And it helped him in moments he was about to have a meltdown because he felt safe doing that. Kids in the beginning may still not have a trick to calm them down on their own, but usually with time they learn a technique to relax again.



1.6 — Autism Awareness Month

Every year in April is Autism Awareness Month. The goal of Autism Awareness Month is to increase understanding and acceptance of people with Autism. Next year, the Autism Awareness Day will take place on the 2nd of April 2022. It is supposed to encourage people all over the world to take measures to raise awareness about people with ASD.



Chapter 2 — The different types of Autism

2.1 — Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a lifelong disability which happens to 1 in 54 children on the United States. They usually get diagnosed in the first years of life and it can impact on a person's social skills. They will have difficulty being verbal: ask for help, show their feelings, etc. They will most likely also be very literal in which they will have trouble understanding a joke someone made.

2.11 — Difference between ASD and the others

The National Center for Biotechnology Information (also known as NCBI) made a study with their objective to be: *“To describe the clinical characteristics of children given a diagnosis of pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) by expert clinicians and to compare these to the clinical characteristics of children given a diagnosis of autism and Asperger syndrome (AS).”*

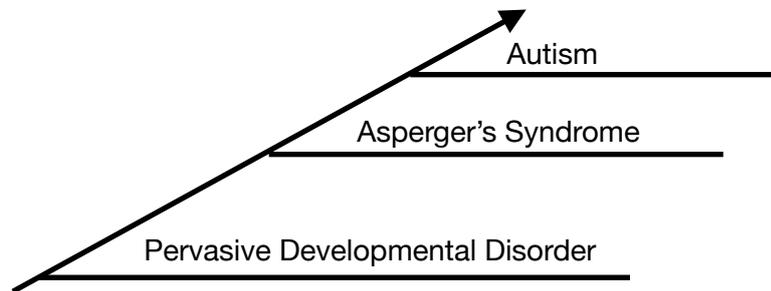
Their method was to compare 216 children with Autism, within 33 children with Asperger's Syndrome and 21 children with Pervasive Developmental Disorder. They compared their level of functioning like communication, daily living and social skills, IQ and age of acquisition of language.

On their results it turned out that children with PDD-NOS had scores that were between of those children with Autism and those with Asperger's Syndrome. On the other hand, then PDD-NOS group had less autistic symptoms like in repetitive stereotyped behaviours that the others. At the end their conclusion was that children with PDD-NOS could be placed in one group out of three:

- a high functioning group who would resemble Asperger's Syndrome but that had language delay or mild cognitive impairment
- a subgroup resembling Autism but who had late age of onset or too severe cognitive delays or were too young to potentially meet the full diagnostic criteria
- a group not fulfilling the criteria for Autism because of fewer stereotyped and repetitive behaviours

It also does depend a lot of the doctor that diagnoses the patient because some of them give more attention to the more severe symptoms they have, instead of every

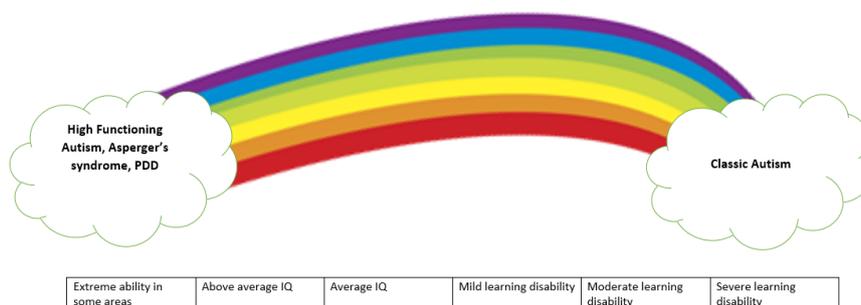
symptom they have. At the end of the day, the most important thing for the patient is that they know their weaknesses and that they will be able to start working on them to become either more independent or more mentally stable.



This diagram shows the three most known types of Autism Spectrum Disorder. It is meant to explain the different stages that ASD can have, there are milder stages as well as worse stages.

2.12 — Spectrum Part in Autism Spectrum Disorder

The Spectrum Part in Autism Spectrum Disorder triggers a lot of people but it only is characterised as a Spectrum because in ASD there is a wide range, type and severity of symptoms people experience. It also can happen to any ethnicity, race and economic groups. Although ASD is a lifelong disability and that for now there is still no cure, there are medication and treatment to improve the person's ability to function. There are medications that help for depression, anxiety.... There are also treatments like a wide range of therapies that can improve a person's skills and to learn to become independent.



In this picture below, there is a rainbow to show what the Spectrum really means. It is trying to show that there are different types of Autism and that there isn't only one type. It can range from being high-functioning to having severe learning disabilities.

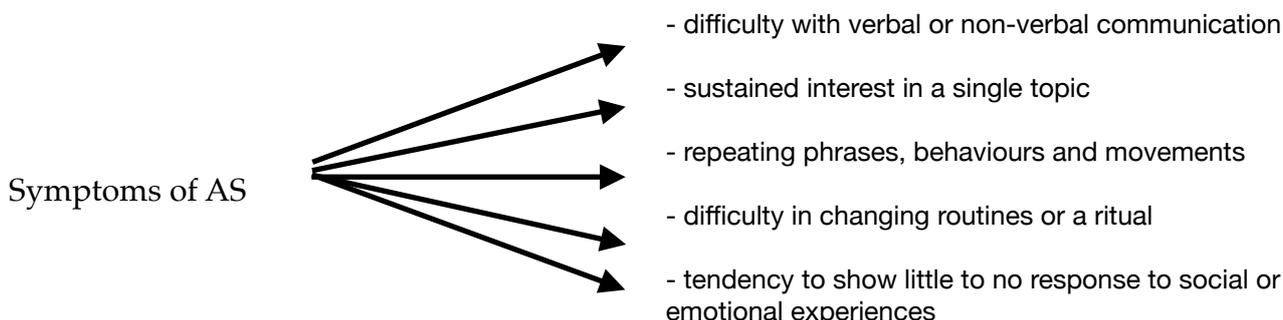
On the left, there are the other types of Autism Spectrum Disorder written: High functioning Autism, Asperger's Syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorder. That's why not everyone with some of the symptoms, ends up with getting diagnosed with autism, because it is a wide range of symptoms and there are different groups for it.

2.2 — Asperger's Syndrome

Asperger's syndrome is known as a "mild" or "high-functioning" form of Autism. People who get diagnosed with Asperger's instead of Autism are considered of having minimal symptoms. They are as smart as other folks, but they may have more trouble with social skills. They also tend to have an intense interest in a single object.

Asperger's syndrome first got introduced in 1994 in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). It happened because Lorna Wing (an English psychiatrist) translated the works of Hans Asperger. She realised his research found individual characteristics in autistic children from those with milder symptoms.

Here is the list of the previous version of the DSM. A lot of them seem similar.



People diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome have difficulty with verbal or nonverbal communication, such as eye contact or sarcasm. They usually have a sustained interest in a single special topic or very few topics. It can vary from aspects of objects. That's why they repeat a lot of phrases, behaviours and movements. For them it is very difficult to change a routine or a ritual. People with Asperger's Syndrome have the tendency to show little to no response to social or emotional experiences. They have a lack of interest in taking part in activities or interests with others. By having a lot of those symptoms, they have difficulty maintaining jobs or relationships.

Symptoms start early in life (like ASD). The most common symptom for babies is not making eye contact and the child seeming awkward in social situations and he or her not knowing what to say or how to respond when someone talks to them. A child with Asperger's Syndrome may talk about themselves most of the time and show little interest in knowing about other people.

The process of getting diagnosed is very similar to the way of getting diagnosed with Autism. It usually starts by going to the paediatrician. After that, the team (psychologists, paediatric neurologist, developmental paediatrician...) might see together with how to move forward from that moment. Then the treatment starts. The same process happens with the treatment of when someone is diagnosed with autism. There is never a one-size-fits-all approach, that means that it might take some time to find the best cure possible for the patient.

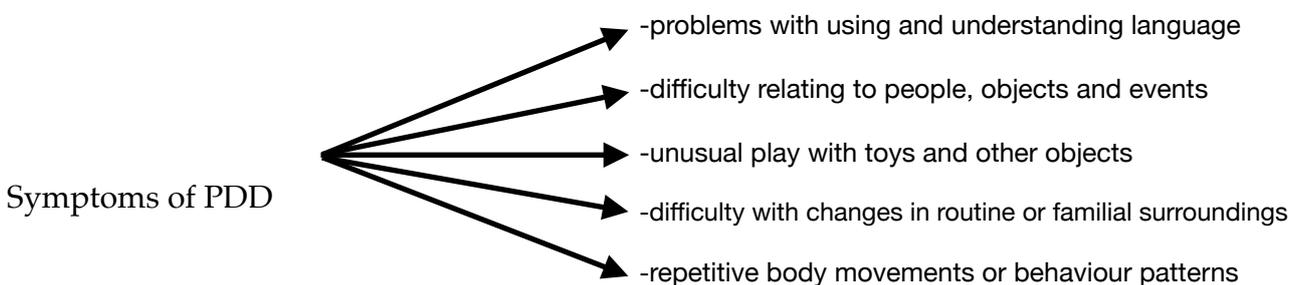
At the end with the right treatment, the child will learn to control some of the social and communication challenges.

2.3 — Pervasive Developmental disorder - Not Otherwise Specified

Pervasive Developmental Disorder is considered the mildest form on the Spectrum. This diagnosis became the go-to answer for patients who can be classified on the Spectrum but only have mild symptoms and do not have all of the characteristics. It is also the go-to answer for those who only meet the basic requirements and do not exhibit the more severe characteristics (extreme repetitive behaviours, intellectual limitations). A person usually gets diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder if the person only shows social challenges but do not exhibit any other symptoms of Asperger's Syndrome.

As well as those with Asperger's Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorder, those with PDD tend to have difficulties in social withdrawals.

Parents may note their child's symptoms as early as infancy, though the typical age of showing symptoms is before having 3 years of age. Here are the symptoms:



The children with PDD vary a lot in abilities, intelligence and behaviours. There are types of kids with Pervasive Developmental Disorder that may be the best in class, while there are others that aren't able to speak or only speak in limited phrases or conversations.

For now, there is also not known cure for Pervasive Developmental Disorder. As well as in Autism Spectrum Disorder and Asperger's Syndrome, it is beneficial for the person to go to therapy because it helps them in two ways: It helps them to be more mentally stable (learn ways to not get meltdowns, ask for help when they need to, express their emotions...) and to be more independent (they're learning how to eat independently, how to do basic things alone, like brushing their teeth...)

There are 5 DSM -> (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)

- Autistic Disorder
- Asperger's Disorder
- Rett's Disorder
- Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)



Chapter 3 — Feelings on the Spectrum

3.1 — Feelings on the mind of a child

How does a child deal with a meltdown?

The child in the beginning still hasn't the tools (hand-flapping, finger-flapping, repeating a word, a phrase, a sound, etc.) to be able to control himself, that's why he might have more easily a meltdown or anxiety. In addition, the child, because he's still a toddler, he could have his crises because he's still figuring out the world.

The child alone will have difficulties in trying to calm down but usually with the help of the parent, after a couple of minutes, he will get himself under control again.

The parent will have to follow some steps, to be able to help his/her child.

Step 1. They will have to identify what is actually overwhelming to the child.

(Helpful advice: Keep always a diary near you, in that form, you'll be able to check if the meltdowns occur at particular times or places.)

Step 2. Creating a calming routine which will help the child to calm down even further. The calming routine could include a certain type of music the child likes or a weighted blanket to put over the kid.

Step 3. Having a safety plan, in case the child tries to hurt himself or others unintentionally like hit their heads or bite someone.

(Helpful advice: Hug the kid really tight to make the child feel like he is in safety and to calm him down. Another helpful advice would also be to whisper to him, saying "everything is okay", "I'm here", "nothing is going to happen" etc.)

Step 4. The most important rule of them all is the parent always stays calm and patient. It is important that the parent isn't adding stress or making the meltdown of the child worse. The meltdowns are tough for the parents but they are also hard for the child.

Step 5. Try to incorporate items that will relax the child. Fidget spinners or a rubik's cube might be a good option.

Step 6. Try to always be near the child in case something would happen, you are within reach to try to get everything as fast as possible under control again.

Here are some of the necessary tools to always have in case the child has a meltdown:



- noise-cancelling headphones -> in case the child feels overwhelmed because it's too loud
- Sunglasses -> in case the child has light sensitivity
- weighted blanket -> pressure helps the child to calm down
- snacks that are chewy / crunchy -> they get cranky when they're hungry. Crunchy ones can help with oral proprioceptive input as a calming effect.
- fidget toy -> repetitive and simple tools that calm the child when he's agitated
- Scented hand lotion -> in case the odours in the environment are too much, the child can use the lotion with a scent that he likes
- Hand wipes -> in case he touches something with a strange texture. So that he doesn't get irritated, he can use the hand wipes to clean his hands.

How does a child behave in an event (birthday, dinner etc)

Events, like birthdays can be really hard for children with Autism, because there will be a certain number of people, which means it will be loud. In addition, there could be a strange odour in the environment, which might disturb him. The child would also have to communicate a lot with strangers, which is not his skill. The child could also have difficulties waiting for guests to come or to play a game. In conclusion, things neurotypical people think it's easy, are very difficult for any person with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Here are some easy tips, that make it easier for the child with Autism to host a party (these skills are not only useful to know in parties but also in a playground or a classroom):

Before hosting a party, it's important to help the child to build some skills in order to manage social events, like taking turns, sharing, joining in and calming down.

In order for the child to learn and understand that it's ok to lose, you can practice losing at games of chance like

- « snap »



-« snakes and ladders ».



Something that is also very important to teach is, to say « Well done, you win ». It's important that the child knows how to show respect to the other person and to not be mad to lose.

Lastly, it's important to reward the child once he starts to use his scripts and loses gracefully with a reward of a favourite activity. That way, he sees that if he works hard for something, he gets rewarded.

Here are some helpful ideas in order to be sure that the child feels comfortable in the party (in case you are in charge of hosting it)

-Plan for a short party with a clear structure.

- Give the party a theme based on the child's special interests.
- Hold the party in a familiar and contained environment like in a house or in a local play centre.
- Keep unstructured playtime to a minimum.
- Leave out things that could distress the child. For example, you might serve the cake without singing 'Happy birthday' if the child is sensitive to noise.
- Always have an adult near the child who can help him out if he gets confused or upset. Make sure all the adults know what they can do to help the child cope.
-

How does a child react with someone breaking a routine?

First of all, a routine is important for an autistic child, because children with Autism Spectrum Disorder appreciate predictability and patterns. Starting routines can ease the unpredictability of everyday life for children. In addition, it can also improve positive bonds between the children and the parents. Some households like a more flexible lifestyle, in which they do not have a strict bedtime or a strict mealtime, while there are others that prefer to have a clear idea of when they have to wait.

If there would be a sudden change in routine, it could have a very negative effect on the child's behaviour. At that moment, the child will feel very lost, anxious, fearful and stressed and he will most likely express these emotions by screaming, having tantrums, pushing, and occasionally have violent behaviours. A lot of changes happen because they have to happen, like changing schools year, or being on vacation etc. That's when the parents should have a plan of how to control and make their child feel secure, while a small, or big change is happening.

Here are some tips for planning expected changes:

- create a social story in which you're going to explain to the child with pictures, words, sounds. Finish the story on a positive note, a reward, like after the doctor, you can go to the park. That way, the child knows that after going to the doctor's appointment, he's going to get rewarded with going to the park



- create a timetable. That way, the child will know what to expect. You can use pictures and words etc.
- Visiting new places before going there for a birthday party is a very good strategy because that way, the child can get familiar with the environment without feeling overwhelmed by the loud noise. If there isn't time to go there before that day, you can search on the internet pictures of the place and show it to the child.
- Making small changes. « For example, your child might insist on eating breakfast first and then getting dressed, but you want your child to get dressed before breakfast. You could start by just putting your child's socks on before breakfast. Once your child is comfortable with that, you could try doing socks and pants before breakfast, and so on. »

Here are some tips for managing unexpected changes:

- Adding a question mark to the child's schedule. In case there is a time in the day that still is uncertain of what is going to happen, put a question mark there. That way, the child will be prepared and will know that something might happen during that time of the day.
- Rewarding flexibility. Every time the child copes with a change or an unexpected event, tell him how wonderful it is that he's flexible. After that, you can reward him by giving him the attention he likes.

3.2 — Feelings on the mind of a teen

How does a teen deal with a meltdown?

Meltdowns are already very common and hard for children, as well as for adults with Autism, but for teens with ASD, it's even harder. Because of their hormones, teens will have more frequent or more severe mood changes than neurotypical teenagers. And for the parents, it's also hard to identify whether if the behaviour the teen is having is because of the adolescence or because of the Autism. Teen's with ASD meltdowns can be a little more aggressive in contrast to a child's with ASD meltdown. Here are some examples: emotional upsets, violence, aggression, crying, screaming etc.

What to do, when a teen is melting down;

- Be empathetic. Listen and try to understand why he is struggling. Don't judge him for having a meltdown.
- Make the teen feel safe and loved. Stay for some time with them, hug them, tell them you are there for them.
- Don't punish the teen. Punishing them can make the teen feel shame, fear and resentment. It's not the teen's fault. He can't control his meltdowns. Instead of punishing him, try to comfort him, so that he doesn't feel scared or ashamed for having a meltdown?
- Having a sensory toolkit is a smart idea, if you either have a child with Autism or also a teen with Autism. Having a fidget toy, or noise-cancelling headphones, or a weighted blanket is a good idea to always have near you, in case the teen is feeling upset, anxious or starting to have a meltdown.
- If you are in a public space and the teen is starting to have a meltdown, bring him to a calmer spot with less people and less noise.
- Once they are in a peaceful frame in mind, you can start teaching him coping strategies. Coping strategies can be nature walks, practicing yoga daily, and deep breathing.

How does a teen behave in high school?

For teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder it can be hard for them to achieve the demands of high schools, like changing classes hourly, keep track of books and assignments for each class, follow complex directions, complete multi-



phase projects, and turn in homework on time. If teens with ASD would go to a « normal » high school, they would need to get help from the family, as well as help from the school. Not just in the beginning, but throughout the teen's school career.

The « first » challenge that the teen will face is the transition from middle school to high school. Probably the distance between the house and the high school will be farther away. The high school will probably have a lot more students than in middle school. In the beginning, it will be more challenging to process all of the new changes, but with time, everything will fall into place.

Amy Keefer, Ph. D., a clinical psychologist at the Kennedy Krieger Institute, said this: "Teens on the spectrum will require a greater level of external supports from family and the school. Those supports may take the form of frequent parent-school communication, teachers checking assignment books to make sure they're filled out correctly, and teachers helping students break down projects into smaller steps with due dates for each step. "

At a certain age, even teens with Autism would like to get a little more independent, but for a couple of teens, they may still need continued in getting help with homework and daily activities. It's just for their best and it will benefit them for later.

How does a teen with ASD socialise?

Making friends isn't easy and for teens with Autism it can be even more challenging. For teens with Autism, it's hard to get friends because they have trouble reading social cues like body language, facial expressions and tones of voice. A study showed that 52% of kids with Autism don't have many friends at school.

Here are simple steps to support the child in making a new friend

- Help the child understanding what a friend is. Explaining to the child the benefits of having a friend, makes the child more excited and with a wanting to have a friend. "Friends are nice to you and say things that make you feel better when you have a bad day."
- Visual models like social stories. Using social stories will probably guide the child through a specific situation. That way, the child will know and understand the basics of how to talk to a friend.

- Practicing is the best solution. Usually, to learn a new skill, children with Autism Spectrum Disorder need a little more time. Practicing different aspects of making a friend, like asking questions, answering questions, sharing toys or suggesting an activity can be very helpful. Another tip is that the teen practices not only with one person, but with different people. That way, the teen will be prepared and will know that there's not only one type of person or one personality.
- Surround the teen kids who share the same interests. If the teen likes art, enrol him in an art class, if the teen loves science, find a young scientists' group. Make sure that everyone at the similar age as the teen.
- Making friends can sometimes feel like work. That's why supporting the teen is very important. That way, the teen will feel loved and motivated, instead of helpless and stressed.

3.3 Feelings on the mind of an adult

How does an adult with ASD deal with a meltdown?

Even if adults with Autism might already have had Autism for a couple of years, it doesn't mean that their meltdowns get easier. It just means that they will be more prepared for them. They will know what calms them down again, but that doesn't happen every time. If they are in a very uncomfortable environment, then they will not know what to do and how to react.

That's when other people can help. Here is how:

- First of all, don't judge them. It's not their fault that they're having a meltdown.
- Give them some time for them to process what is happening currently. It can take a time to recover from information or sensory overload.
- Try calmly asking them of their feeling ok, but understand that it takes more time for them to respond back than you might expect.
- Try to go with the person to a quiet, safe space. It would be a good idea to ask to turn off the loud music, to dim the lights and especially for the other people to not stare. That makes the person with Autism even more overwhelmed.

How does an adult with ASD go to work?

More than two-thirds of people with Autism are underemployed or unemployed. Dave Kaeron, the director of adult services, Autism Speaks, said that most people with Autism are capable of working. With the right supports everyone can work. It's important that people stop assuming that people on the spectrum are only useful in technology-oriented jobs. Curiously, adults with Autism are more likely to work in other places. Here are the top 5 Industries where adults with Autism are employed:

- administrative and support services —> office administration, debt collection, call centres etc.
- education and training —> classroom teacher, librarian, counsellor etc.
- health care and social assistance —> community workers, nursing homes etc.
- retail —> cashier, sales associate, store manager, advertising and marketing manager etc.
- scientific and technical services —> scientists, accountants, vets, photographers etc.

Here are 5 tips for working with Adults with ASD

- don't force communication
- respect their desire for personal space
- stay calm
- be prepared
- keep things consistent

How does an adult with Autism react to a bereavement

For now, there isn't much research, information or guidance about how it is like for autistic people to feel when they're experiencing grief and bereavement. A lot of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder will probably feel the typical grief responses, like these:

- anger
- increased restlessness
- changes to their sleeping and eating patterns
- dependance on others
- loss of previously displayed skills and confidence

Because autistic people already have a hard time in processing hard /normal moments and difficulty in having social encounters, this will be a hard and sensible time for them. They may struggle to understand and also be overwhelmed over the loss and the death of someone that was close to them. These are some of the emotions people with ASD said they had:

- difficulty in being able to connect with others
- may or may not cry or show emotions
- show a delayed or extreme emotional response
- experiencing an increase in their autistic traits, like more meltdowns and shutdowns
- having difficulty in understanding what to do in social situations, like saying goodbye in the hospital and taking part in the funeral

Here is what other people can do to help the person with ASD

- supporting the autistic person
- understand, express and cope their pain
- going to therapy
- talk to the person with ASD about how they are feeling and what can get done so that the person feels a little better
- talk about the situation, instead of avoiding it
- prepare them, when you realise that someone they know starts to get terminally ill
- use direct language and avoid using words that the person with ASD might take literally (don't say they went to a better place, or gone to sleep, rather than telling them they died.)
- explain that family members may act unusually (crying, not in a good mood etc)
- « Provide as much information about what to expect when attending hospitals, funerals and wakes. Suggest to the autistic person or their family, that an advance visit to the place where the funeral or wake will take place might be helpful. They could visit the venues' websites and look at pictures of them. »



Chapter 4 — Day in a life

4.1 — Day in a life

In this Chapter, I am going to describe my day in a life. My goal is to describe how a person with ASD could be feeling. The interesting part is, that a lot of things that do not disturb me, could make a person with ASD feel stressed and overwhelmed. (Example : sitting on a train and feeling the texture of the seat on the back.)

getting ready

Usually I wake up around 6:10am. I eat breakfast, I make my bed, I brush my teeth and I prepare my backpack. *I feel so grumpy. I don't want to get out of bed, it's just hard. Oh ok, mom is coming into the room. She usually helps me doing my morning tasks, because it's still too hard for me to do them on my own. In my room, I have a poster. It's written step by step what I need to do. It really helps me.*

On the way to the train station

Then, at 6:35, I get out of the house and go by foot to the train station. *To avoid any incidents that could occur on my way to the train station, my mom or my dad brings me there.*

On the train station

Once I arrive at the train station, I usually search a place to sit, therefor I am able to wait while sitting on a bench. *The clock ticking, the noise here, the people passing by, the sound of the birds flying... it's making me so nervous! Thankfully, I have my noise-cancelling earphones with me. I'll just put them on and every noise will go away.*

Entering the train

I enter the train, and if there are any seats available, I sit in them. If not, I just stay next to the doors stood up. *There is too much noise, I'm probably going to keep my headphones on. Dang it! Someone is sitting on the seat I always sit in! I don't want to ask him because it is weird, but I feel so uncomfortable... Hopefully, I'll feel less stressed if I tell myself the calming phrase I learned in therapy.*

Entering the school

After an hour of being on the train, I arrive at school. *There's not a lot of noise, which is good. I'm just still a little overwhelmed because of earlier... The doorknob is the only thing that makes me also a little nervous. Just the texture and thinking about how many people already touched it...*

In the classroom

When I enter the classroom, I still have about 30 minutes until class starts. I just chill a little before starting to work. *Before class starts it's ok, it's not a lot of noise and everything is fine but when the class starts I can't take the pressure: I have to take notes while the professor talks, my seat is uncomfortable, the clock is ticking, the stress of not succeeding... I will burst out because it's just too much for me to take.*

Etude

On an étude, I like to work on either a homework or an engagement. *Finally a more chill moment. I'm able to focus on what I have to do and no one really bothers me.*

Eat time

After class or after an etude, I go with some of my friends downstairs and we have lunch. *Everyone is pushing everyone! Why can't they stay in line?! Hearing so many people talking stresses me a lot! And the food has a strange texture, I'm not going to eat it.*

Getting home and spending time with my family

When I get home, I like to spend a little time with my family, because I haven't seen them all day. We usually talk while playing cards. *I really don't feel today like spending time with my family. I'm just tired of the day. I just need to be alone. I like spending some time alone.*

4.2 — Questions

1. What is autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder is an illness that makes communication a hard job for the person. In the USA, 1 in 54 children get diagnosed with Autism.

2. Is that a physical illness or a mental illness?

Autism Spectrum disorder is a mental illness.

3. Can autism be dangerous?

No, it isn't dangerous. With the right treatment which could be therapy and medications, the person is able to be in control of themselves.

4. When does someone get diagnosed with autism?

Usually people get diagnosed in the early phases of lives (18-24 months). Of course there are exceptions. Some children get diagnosed sooner, some later.

5. Do you have to take medication when you have autism?

There are doctors that suggest the child take medication for depression and anxiety, but there are also different ways to deal with them.

6. Can someone be born with autism?

Yes, someone that gets diagnosed with Autism has Autism since it was born. They might just not see it in the beginning

7. Can Autism get cured?

For now, there aren't any cures yet but as I already said, there are different forms of treatment.

8. When did autism first got diagnosed?

In 1943, Autism was used as a diagnostic term. Before it was used, they said the symptoms would be associated with Schizophrenia.

9. How does someone live with Autism?

It depends on the degree of the patient. Some people with Autism are actually really independent and can almost do everything independently while there are some people diagnosed with Autism that need assistance 24/7.

10. Is it hard to live with Autism?

When someone has Autism Spectrum Disorder their whole life, it isn't hard to live with it because they don't know another way to live than the way they live and if they get the right support from their family and doctors, I do think that it doesn't get hard for them to live with Autism

11. Do you look different because you have Autism?

No, you do not look different because you have Autism. Autism is a mental illness, not a physical illness.

12. Do you go to a « normal » school when you have Autism?

It depends on the person. There are also different types of Autism. Some of the people diagnosed with Autism have high-functioning Autism, which means that those are more independent and are also able to go to a « normal » school but there are also people with a lot of difficulty learning or difficulty staying concentrated, that means that some will go to a normal school, some will go to a special school where they get the help they might need.

13. Do you have symptoms of potentially having autism?

Yes, usually people diagnosed with autism have symptoms since the beginning, but for some people it is a little bit more difficult to identify if someone has autism. It is a lot harder for doctors to diagnose girls, because they may show symptoms, but a lot of times it is just showing light symptoms.

14. Are there different ways of Autism?

There are different types of autism: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorder. Each of these types has similarities but the behaviours change a little.

15. Can autism get better throughout the years?

Yes, Autism can get better throughout the years. With the right treatment, the support of the family and the right help of the doctors, they will feel a lot better and it will be every time more and more easy to deal with everything.

16. Does a person with Autism have feelings?

Of course they have, they're still humans. They just have a little bit more difficulty expressing them.

17. Does a person with Autism have anxiety?

Everyone sometimes has anxiety and of course they will sometimes feel anxious.

18. What can make someone feel anxious?

It can be because they feel uncomfortable about feeling a texture they do not like or feeling overwhelmed by a lot of people talking at the same time etc.

19. Is it good for a person with Autism to go to therapy?

Yes, it is a very good form of treatment because while going to therapy, they will learn how to deal with anxiety, they will learn simple hints to deal in case they lose control of themselves. They will also learn to become independent

20. Is it hard for people with Autism to communicate/express themselves?

They have difficulty in communicating and expressing themselves but with time as they go to therapy, they get more used to express themselves and communicate.

21. What do people with Autism have to do when they are out of control of themselves?

If they haven't already learned how to control themselves, they will most likely burst out. If they have trained to control themselves, they will try to either say a phrase that will calm them down or they will hand-flap etc.

22. Can someone get Autism because of a vaccine?

No. That is a lie. There hasn't been any evidence that a vaccine can cause someone to get Autism.

23. Can autism be generic?

Autism usually is generic, but it could be hard to know from whom it was.

4.3 — Conclusion

After finishing my term paper, I learned a lot about Autism. By reading some interesting articles and watching different series like “Atypical” or “Love on the Spectrum”, I felt that I was able to relate more and even understand why people on the Spectrum act the way they act. It made me reflect on how a person on the Spectrum may feel and react to certain things. In addition to that, I have gained a lot of knowledge and respect for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The part that interested me the most about writing about Autism, was when I wrote about the different types of Autism. I found it interesting to learn about the different types of Autism, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Aspergers Syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorder. Additionally, I learned a lot about Psychology. Psychology isn’t just about understanding a person’s mind and way of thinking, it is also about being able to listen and just make the person feel comfortable enough to talk about themselves.

While learning about the different triggers, this made me feel more able to act correctly and in a loving manner when dealing with a person on the Spectrum.

Autism can be different for each and every one, but at the end, it’s for everyone hard to deal with the condition, the person with Autism, the family and the friends. Everyone goes through a hard time, because they have to figure it out and understand how to deal with it, but I think one of the most important things to have is patience, acceptance and love for the person with Autism.

By writing my term paper about Autism, it has given me the motivation of wanting to pursue with my desire of becoming a Psychologist.

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