

EACH PERSON ON THE SPECTRUM IS UNIQUE AND HAS BOTH STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES. HELPING SOMEONE WITH AUTISM BEGINS WITH ACCEPTANCE, KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING THE SPECTRUM AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

PLEASE REFER TO OUR OTHER BROCHURES FOR SPECIFIC SERVICES AVAILABLE:

- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Pathology
- Psychological Services
- Group Programs
- Assessments and Plans
- Information and Support Services

Further information and publications are available from autismsa.org.au

WHAT IS THE AUTISM SPECTRUM?

FREQUENCY

1 in 100 individuals (Fernell and Gillberg, 2010) in Australia and more males than females are diagnosed. The male to female ratio is approximately 4:1 (Freitag, 2007, Abrahams and Geschwind, 2008).

EVIDENCE BASED

Using evidence based interventions and supports are important to ensure the success of the programs as these interventions have been researched and have shown positive outcomes. Fact sheet: Autism and Evidence Based Practice www.autismsa.org.au/factsheets explains the evidence based approach.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

You can:

- Use clear and simple language;
- List events sequentially;
- Give one instruction at a time;
- Take time to listen and communicate;
- Warn of changes or transitions;
- Simplify the environment where possible;
- Offer a quiet space; and
- Provide access to sensory activities.



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FACTS AND MYTHS

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe a lifelong condition that affects the way an individual communicates with others around them and how they relate to others.
- ASD is not a mental health condition: it is a neurological disorder.
- People on the autism spectrum often find the condition is misunderstood, as it is not a physical impairment that is visible to others.
- The term 'spectrum' is used to indicate that no two people are the same. The differences depend on a combination of social ability, communication level, cognitive ability, age, personality and many other factors. You may also hear the terms, Asperger Syndrome, autism, the autism spectrum, high functioning autism, autistic and many other variations. How an individual defines their diagnosis is their choice. However, all these terms reflect current diagnostic criteria.
- Being on the spectrum doesn't mean a lack of intelligence nor does it mean the individual has an intellectual disability.
- Individuals on the spectrum are sometimes viewed as having extraordinary capabilities. However, the occurrence of 'geniuses' with AS is the same as in the general population.
- Autism is used interchangeably with the words autism spectrum, AS, on the spectrum, Autism Spectrum Disorder and ASD.



- Just like people without a diagnosis, everyone on the spectrum is different. Each individual will have different strengths and abilities, however people on the autism spectrum can experience challenges in recurring areas such as:
 - Communication and language - It can be difficult for people with autism to process long and unclear instructions. It is best to use visuals where possible and speak in short, clear sentences when communicating to someone on the spectrum.
 - Sensory issues - Individuals may be 'sensory seekers', 'sensory avoiders', or a combination of both. They may have strong reactions to smells, textures or lights.
 - Coping with change - Sticking to a routine can make people on the autism spectrum more comfortable, while anything out of the ordinary can cause anxiety, frustration and stress. Planning ahead can reduce the risk of stress and increase an individual's ability to self regulate emotions.
 - Social issues - Making friends can be difficult, as can understanding how others feel. There are also many social rules that individuals find difficult to understand, such as the appropriate personal space to give someone, or how to initiate appropriate conversation.
 - Special interests - Individuals on the autism spectrum may have special interests that occupy their time and thoughts. Sometimes, they may need assistance to direct their attention to other things.