



UNDERSTANDING AUTISM



WHAT IS AUTISM? AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

- **ASD** is a **neurodevelopmental** condition that affects the way individuals communicate and perceive the world around them.
- It is called a spectrum because it varies widely in how it affects individuals.
- Each person with ASD is **unique**, and their experiences can be different.

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STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES:

Strengths:

Many individuals with ASD have unique strengths, such as exceptional **attention to detail**, **creativity**, and a **deep focus** on specific topics.

Challenges:

Some individuals may face difficulties in **social situations**, **making friends**, or adapting to **changes in routine**.

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COMMUNICATION STYLES:

Communication can vary among individuals with ASD. Some may use **verbal communication**, while others may prefer **alternative** forms, such as **sign language**, **pictures**, or **assistive communication devices**.

Patience and **understanding** are essential when interacting with someone who communicates differently.

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INCLUSIVITY & ACCEPTANCE:

It's important for neurotypical teenagers to be **inclusive**, **understanding**, and **accepting** of their peers with ASD.

Embracing diversity and recognizing the unique strengths of individuals with ASD contribute to **creating a more inclusive and supportive community**.

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RESOURCES FOR FURTHER UNDERSTANDING:

Encourage further learning about ASD through **reliable sources**, **books**, and **documentaries**.

Suggest websites, organizations, or **support groups** that provide **information** and **resources**.

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COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

Sensory Sensitivities: Sensitive to certain sounds, textures, or lights.

Communication Differences: Challenges in verbal and nonverbal communication and difficulty understanding social cues.

Repetitive Behaviors: Engaging in repetitive movements such as hand-flapping or repeating phrases.

Unique Interests: Developing intense and specific interests in particular subjects.

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SENSORY EXPERIENCES:

People with ASD may experience the world differently due to sensory sensitivities. For example, **certain sounds** may be overwhelming, or **certain textures** may be uncomfortable.

It's crucial to be **understanding** and **supportive**, creating **environments** that **accommodate sensory needs**.

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SOCIAL INTERACTIONS:

Socializing can be **challenging** for some individuals with ASD. They may find it **difficult to understand social cues**, make **eye contact**, or **engage** in typical **back-and-forth conversations**.

Building friendships may take time, but **genuine connections** are often **rewarding**.

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HOW TO SUPPORT FRIENDS WITH ASD:

- Be **patient** and **understanding**.
- **Respect differences** and avoid judgment.
- **Include them** in activities and conversations.
- Learn about their interests and **engage in shared activities**.

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BE AN ALLY:

Actively **promote inclusion** and **stand up** against **stereotypes** and **misconceptions**.

Educate others about **ASD**, fostering a more **accepting** and **understanding community**.

By fostering awareness and understanding, teenagers can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive environment for their peers with Autism Spectrum Disorder.