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AUTISM SPECTRUM

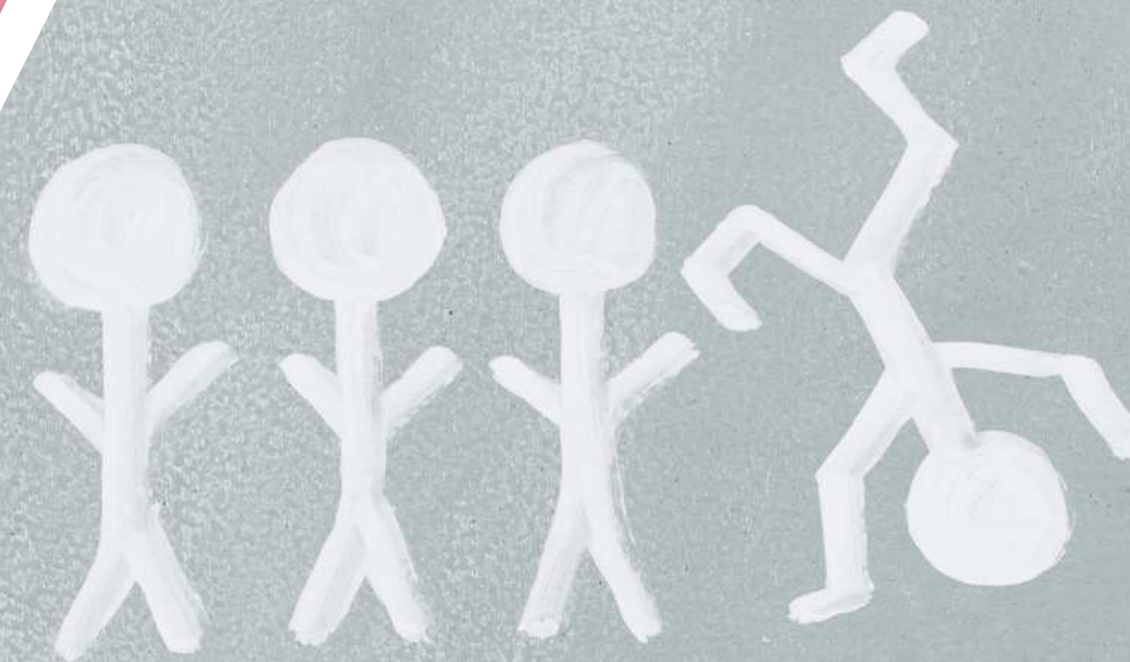


AUTISM

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder, which means that autistic people develop differently to typical children. The brain of autistic people works in a different way from the very beginning of life. This is why the development of people with autism is unique. It is not a disease and cannot be cured, but it can be worked on so that children with autism can develop and adapt to a group as well as possible.

Autism is different for each person

Autism is not the same in every person, but is a spectrum of different characteristics. People on the autism spectrum have very different behaviours and their severity.



CHARACTERISTICS OF AUTISM



Autism affects several key areas of a child's functioning, including:

01

Communication

03

Behaviour and interests

02

Social interaction

04

Hypersensitivity or sensory under-responsiveness



COMMUNICATION

► Symptoms of autism in communication include

- facial expressions not matching the statements
- difficulty interpreting facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures of others
- unusual tone of voice or speech rhythm, e.g. pronouncing every sentence as a question
- repeating words or sentences, so-called echolalia, e.g. repeating a question instead of answering it
- difficulty in communicating needs or desires
- taking statements too literally - not understanding a sense of humour, irony, metaphors



SOCIAL INTERACTION

► Symptoms of autism in terms of social interaction include

- young children do not try to interest their parents in what is interesting to them, e.g. they do not point at things that are interesting.
- little interest in people or lack of awareness of their presence.
- avoidance of eye contact.
- difficulty initiating contact, engaging in group activities, making friends.
- lack of role-playing and pretending when playing
- difficulty in understanding or talking about feelings



BEHAVIOUR AND INTERESTS

► Symptoms of autism in terms of rigid behaviour include

- attachment to routine, e.g. a child insists on walking exactly the same route to school or eating from the same plate.
- difficulty adapting to changes in schedule or environment, e.g. rearranging furniture, changing the time of leaving for school.
- atypical attachment to toys or objects, e.g. keys, light switches, threads.
- interest in a narrow field of knowledge, e.g. tram timetables, dinosaurs, numbers, specific brands of vacuum cleaners
- spending a lot of time arranging toys in a specific way, observing moving objects (e.g. fan, washing machine), concentrating on a specific part of an object (e.g. car wheel)



HYPERSENSITIVITY OR SENSORY UNDER- RESPONSIVENESS

► What can sensory difficulties indicate?

- covering the ears when certain sounds are heard
- aversion to being hugged or touched or, conversely, seeking affection by hugging, e.g. covering oneself with heavy duvets, hugging tightly, sitting in confined spaces
- search for sensory experiences, e.g. bouncing up and down vigorously, staring at light
- strong reactions to stimuli, e.g. crying when touched specific texture of an object, e.g. loose things - sand, groats, rice



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WAYS OF IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING THESE STUDENTS



To diagnose autism it is necessary to take into account the various behaviours of the child. The first step is, of course, observation, taking notes and then interviewing the parents and taking psychological tests with a specialist. It is very important that the intervention and diagnosis is made as soon as possible, because this is the crucial step from which everything starts and it is of great importance for the child's development, enabling the implementation and tailoring of therapy to their individual needs.

SUPPORT



Supporting pupils with autism requires, above all, an individual approach and the adaptation of teaching methods to the specific child. It is crucial to observe the child constantly and to adapt the learning pace flexibly. It is useful to use a variety of learning materials and visual aids. This makes it much easier for children with autism to acquire knowledge, concentrate their attention and engage more willingly in activities.



The most important skills to be developed are communication and social skills. Teachers should use different forms of communication, such as speech, gestures or images, to reach such a student and check what is easiest for them to read and what needs to be reinforced.

INTRODUCTION OF ADDITIONAL FORMS OF SUPPORT

Depending on the needs of the autistic child, it may be necessary to use additional forms of support, e.g. individual classes or therapies.

A support teacher can also be an invaluable support for the student. Such a person can help to adapt teaching materials and methods, monitor the student's progress, support their social and emotional development, and react in situations of conflict with peers.



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STRATEGIES FOR CREATING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



**Adaptation of the
learning
environment**

Peer support

**Extending the time
to process
information**



ADAPTATION OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



The appropriate space

The appropriate space is very important for the well-being of children with autism. It must be a room that they already know well, which is clearly arranged and marked for them, and it is important to remember not to introduce changes in them, and if it is necessary, to prepare the child well in advance, explaining exactly what will be changed and when. It is a good idea for lessons to be conducted by the same teachers and that children do not change their desks. It can be helpful to present daily or lesson plans verbally and support them with written or pictorial form. The child can have such a plan on their desk and tick off the activities they have completed.

PEER SUPPORT

- ▶ Children on the autism spectrum have difficulty making friends with their peers. Unfortunately, most children with autism experience rejection at school. Children want to establish good relationships with their peers, but they need help to do so. This is why the role of the teacher is crucial. The teacher will not only prepare the other children to behave appropriately and understand their autistic classmate, but will also support and guide the autistic child so that they can express their thoughts and intentions in the best possible way and participate fully in school life. It is important to keep building acceptance and empathy among peers, as this is crucial for the proper development of children with autism.



EXTENDING THE TIME TO PROCESS INFORMATION



Children with autism process information that enters the brain in a different way. Therefore, they may need a little more time to react to a command or answer a question. Asking too many questions or rushing to answer them can make them feel lost, overwhelmed or anxious to escape the conversation. Allowing more time for autistic children is key to creating inclusive conditions.

TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT WORK

**Expanding
knowledge and
improving skills**

**Work on
appropriate
communication**



**Dealing with
problematic
behaviour**

**Practice and
failure analysis**



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