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| **What is Autism?** (AET 2023)  Autism is a processing difference that can have an impact on many areas of a person’s  life. Autistic people often experience differences in how they process information, their  sensory environment and how they interact with other people. It is estimated that one in  100 children, teenagers and adults in the UK are autistic.  While autistic people share some similar characteristics, they are also all different from  each other. This is because autism is considered a spectrum. The autism spectrum is not  linear from high to low but varies in every way that one person might vary from another.  There is no ‘typical’ autistic person. Every autistic individual has their own strengths,  differences and needs, their own life journey and their own unique story.  The AET approaches autism as a different way of being rather than as a ‘deficient’ or  ‘disordered’ way of being.  'Autistic people are not neurotypical people with something missing or something extra  added on. They are different. If we are serious about equality and inclusion within any  area, then we must first of all understand that difference.’ Christine Breakey, The Autism Spectrum: A Guide to Good Practice | |
| ***Outdated/Negative*** | ***Neuro-affirming/Positive*** |
| **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** | Autistic  Autism  Neurodivergent (*Please note- an individual cannot be ‘neurodiverse’. ‘Neurodiverse’ is a term we use to describe a group of people with different neurotypes).* |
| **Diagnosed autistic** | Identified as autistic |
| **Co-morbidity** | Co-occurring conditions |
| **Special needs** | Individual needs |
| **Person-first language e.g., ‘CYP with autism’** | Identity-first language e.g., ‘autistic CYP’ |
| **Non-verbal** | Nonspeaking  Pre-verbal (by describing a CYP as pre verbal we do not presume that speech is an end goal for all) |
| **High/low functioning** | Describe specific strengths and acknowledge support needs are likely to vary (i.e., spiky profile) |
| **Triad of impairment** | Three areas of difference  Core areas of difference |
| **Difficulties** | Differences, areas of challenge  Describe barriers in the environment & link to areas of difference |
| **‘Struggles to…’** | Requires support with… |
| **Intervention** | Support  Accommodations  Reasonable adjustments/adaptations  Provision |
| **Social skills intervention**  **‘They need to learn social rules’**  **‘They need to develop social skills’** | Opportunities for autistic and non-autistic cyp to learn that there are many different forms of communication and interaction, and that all are valid and valued. |
| **Poor reciprocity**  **Monologues**  **‘Goes off on tangents’** | Uses longer conversational turns  Has a passion for information sharing  Characteristic of autistic communication style for sharing information and connecting with others |
| **Blunt**  **Rude**  **Abrupt**  **‘No filter’** | A direct communicator  Honest  Uses language efficiently  Assertive |
| **Selective mutism** | Experiences situational mutism (an involuntary reaction caused by the overwhelming stress of the situation) |
| **Special interest**  **Restricted interest** | Focused, intense, passionate interests  Specific interest  Areas of interest/expertise |
| **Flat affect** | Uses neutral facial expressions |
| **Dramatic**  **Easily upset** | Expressive, passionate, animated facial expressions to communicate emotions  Sensitive  Hyper-empathetic |
| **Disorganised**  **Messy** | Requires support with executive functioning |
| **Meaningless play**  **Stereotypical and repetitive play**  **Aloof**  **Disinterested in others**  **‘In their own world’** | Preference for parallel play  Preference of independent play  Differences in levels of social motivation  Hyper focused on interests  Preference for sameness and routine  Intrigued by the objects around them. |
| **Following their own agenda** | Autonomous, Self-directed |
| **Rigid**  **Inflexible** | Preference for sameness and routine  Demonstrates a monotropic thinking style characteristic of neurodivergent individuals  Craves predictability and patterns |
| **Fixated** | Deeply focused  Ability to focus intensely |
| **Impulsive** | Spontaneous, instinctive  Hypervigilant |
| **Hyperactive** | Energetic  Enthusiastic  Has a need for movement which may relate to sensory differences |
| **Picky/fussy** | Has strong preferences  Attention to detail  Has strong preferences which may relate to sensory differences |
| **Challenging behaviour** | Communicative of needs  Distressed communication  Self – advocating  Dysregulated |
| **Attention seeking** | Seeking connection  Seeking a familiar response  Communicating need |
| **Defiant** | Anxiety driven demand avoidance  Dysregulated  Anxious  Holds strong beliefs  Determined  Advocates for a different perspective |
| **Stubborn** | Persistent |
| **Demanding** | Demonstrates self-advocacy  Communicating need |
| **‘They are just choosing to…’** | Overwhelmed  Unmet needs  Demonstrates a need for autonomy  Choosing the more bearable option.  They have a different agenda |
| **Needy**  **Reliant on adult support** | Seeks reassurance and validation |
| **Bossy** | Natural leader  Has strong opinions |
| **Unfocused** | Appears to be attending to different stimuli /agenda  Finds different stimuli delightful  Show’s focus differently |
| **‘Zones Out’** | Attention appears to flitter i.e., gazing across the room  Attention varies depending on context  Processing difference |
| **Chatty**  **Talkative** | Enjoys communicating  Seeks social interaction with others regardless of context  Has differences in impulse control  Differences in working memory (if I don’t say this right now, I might not remember) |
| **‘Doesn’t listen’** | Visual learner  Processing differences/needs  Mono-processing  May appear not to be listening |
| **Touches everything** | Kinaesthetic learner  Appears to be seeking additional sensory information  Uses touch to understand their environment  Uses touch as a means of interaction  Enjoys exploring their environment through touch. |