



## Understanding The Traits of ASD By Kerri Stocks...

I am writing this article to give you an insight into individuals who have ASD and how these traits can cause great negative impacts on these peoples lives if they are not treated with compassion, decency and as the unique individual that we all are – we all deserve respect no matter what label a person has been given.

I pray that by writing this that you read through these, embrace them and realise that while society wants and expects individuals with ASD to change and adapt to meet “normal” expectations and ways, it is also up to society to be willing to change their expectations and demands of others as well.

Individuals with ASD experience extreme tiredness and exhaustion by having to manage these traits in a world that is far from kind, but this job would be made so much easier if others in society would also keep check of themselves and would meet them half way by at least trying to understand the difficulties that are presented to them on a daily basis. And yes, while everyone in society have difficulties and pressures, individuals with ASD are less equipped to cope as well as their more “normal” peers.

Therefore, please understand that individuals with ASD:

- Rely on visuals / pictures more then being able to understand words, and may have reading difficulties as well as struggles with comprehension - so help them visualize concepts and make it easier for them
- May give the impression that they understand what you are talking about, when in actual fact they may be parroting what they have heard or read
- They may have poor auditory processing

- Tend to be very literal
- Images can be concrete and abstraction can be poor
- May be verbal, non verbal, behind in communication, and in contrast, they can also be very advanced – like a walking dictionary
- Sensory issues and poor communication skills
- Poor motor coordination
- Talk ‘at’ people instead of ‘to’ them
- Lacks understanding of jokes, irony, or metaphors
- Can become off task and are easily distracted by internal or external stimuli or sensory issues
- Struggle with knowing where to start and where to end a task
- Monotone or overformal tone of voice
- Inappropriate gaze and body language
- Restricted range of interests
- Misinterpret social cues, and struggles to understand facial expression and body language
- May dislike physical contact

- May appear insensitive and lack tact – I rather prefer to see it as not meeting others unspoken expectations. If you are after sympathy just ask them for it and tell them what face and body action you feel you need from them. Basically they can appear 'cold' because needs of others are not being met
- Can have intense fixations – can be shown in ways of collecting unusual things. They can relentlessly "lecture" on areas of interest, ask repetitive questions about interests, and have trouble letting go of ideas, preferring to follow their own preference regardless of external demands, and sometimes refuse to learn about anything outside their limited field of interest
- Individuals with ASD can have exaggerated reactions to different stimulus
- Can be naive, unaware of "the ways of the world" - this unfortunately leads to them being taken advantage of or even 'ripped off', 'conned' or 'used'
- Can be physically clumsy and awkward. Some individuals can come across to others as accident-prone and have a hard time playing games involving motor skills. They often have fine motor deficits that can cause penmanship problems that affect their ability to form letters or write clearly, so if the child actually does not write, or breaks the pencils or pens, they may be communicating to you that their muscles are sore
- Can have language difficulties
- A social interaction struggles
- Overwhelmed by change, even slight changes
- Highly sensitive to environmental influences, and sometimes engage in rituals to detach from the discomfort – can become very anxious and tend to worry obsessively when they do not know what to expect

- Fatigue and sensory overload easily throw them off balance – and who would not be after trying to navigate this society
- Transitions are difficult
- Can have difficulty in interacting with others
- Insists on 'sameness' – this is due to such flippancy of society they need to keep their inner being at a level of comfortableness and predictability to save their emotions overwhelming them
- Spins objects or self etc
- May avoid eye contact
- Can possess uneven physical or verbal skills
- Can echo words or phrases
- Inappropriate laughing or giggling – on saying this, it is only considered inappropriate to others and so that is why it is considered an 'odd' trait
- No real fear of dangers – again this can cause them to be easily led by other more sinister individuals
- Continual unusual or repetitive play
- May prefer to be alone – and can you really blame them when they tend to be constantly reminded of their errors, impairments and anything else others prefer to focus on instead of turning the mirror on themselves and seeing what their 'unusual' traits are.

- Individuals with ASD try very hard to just function within this flippant society and still they get analysed like rats and reminded of their daily mistakes and so who would not want to be alone, at least then you can't be wrong
- Difficulty in expressing needs, and so they may use gestures. Frustration may also be evident due to not being understood or dismissed or spoken down to
- Inappropriate attachments to objects – usually considered inappropriate due to others not understanding why someone could be so intensely attached to an object and not expect something new all the time - monotony does not bother individuals with ASD
- Exaggerated or inappropriate response, or no response to sound. Some sounds can genuinely physically hurt their ears and disturb their process of maintaining calmness
- Noticeable insensitivity to pain, yet I will say this - it depends on the individual, and ALL individuals regardless of labels are unique and different to each other
- May not want cuddling due to causing them actual discomfort and or pain. On the flip side some individuals with ASD may hug too forcefully and not know nor understand people's spaces
- Egocentric – I left this one till last. This drives me crazy since it makes all individuals with ASD appear as cold hearted, self-centred and basically, an ice berg, so I will say this regardless of any back lash. I do not believe individuals with ASD are 'egocentric' - they are simply trying to protect their well being. Let me explain ...

In a lot of cases, individuals with ASD are so hyper-sensitive that they not only *feel* their emotions, but they feel them so strongly that their internal being is wildly disrupted. For this reason, their main coping mechanism is to try to

maintain a predictable and comfortable calmness around them - and if this means to block out or detach from others, then for them, that is the way it has to be.

I believe that it would help society in general if everyone were to check their own behaviour in terms of their flippant reactions, opinions, judgments and attitudes, and become more conscious about how their behaviours impact and affect others around them, including individuals with ASD. If this were to happen, it would help everyone avoid uncomfortable, difficult and unpredictable situations from occurring.

As parents, this is where I can see that we can have the greatest impact with our children by leading from the head in this journey with ASD.

I hope this has been helpful for you.

And don't forget you can get my comprehensive parenting resource "A Parent's Guide To Living With ASD" (at a significant discount) by clicking the web link here => <http://autismspectrumwotsnormal.com/thankyou.html>

Thanks,

Kerri