

AREAS OF DIFFICULTY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ASD

SOCIAL



COMMUNICATION



BEHAVIOUR



BODY



THINKING



“With early intervention and support, young people with ASD can begin to understand how their experience of the world is different from others.”

INTERESTS AND BEHAVIOURS

Young people with ASD often develop special interests that are unusual in their intensity and focus. Public transport, maps, physics and computers are all examples of the wide and varied special interests of people with ASD. Young people with ASD prefer situations to be consistent and may have special preferences with respect to routine and consistency. As a result, young people with ASD might experience difficulties managing change and transition. Activity participation, diet and clothing might be areas in which young people with ASD express unusual rigidity.

THINKING

Young people with ASD are often logical thinkers and can be good with facts, figures and details. This logical thinking may mean that they can have difficulty understanding non-concrete ideas.

ASD AND THE BODY

Young people with ASD might experience clumsiness and problems with body awareness that can lead to difficulties with sports, handwriting and other physical skills. People with ASD frequently have problems with sleep and can be very sensitive to different sensations – finding a particular noise disturbing, or a particular item of clothing very uncomfortable.

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WHAT MIGHT NOT BE SO BAD ABOUT IT?

Whilst people with ASD might have difficulties in a range of areas, they might also present with admirable differences in perception, attention, memory and intelligence.

ASD, YOUTH AND MENTAL ILL-HEALTH

Youth is a tricky time. For young people with ASD, things like progressively more complex social demands, increasingly difficult skills to be learned at school or home and transitions, such as graduating, might all be stressful. It's often at this time that young people with ASD and others around them might become more alert to their social differences. Young people with ASD might feel excluded, bullied and frustrated by

their differences. These negative experiences can leave young people with ASD at risk of low self-esteem and at increased risk of developing mental ill-health, such as depression and anxiety.

When young people with ASD develop mental ill-health, diagnosis and treatment need to be tailored to account for the young person's different personality style and their differences in the areas of socialising, communication and interests.

For some young people, it's only during their treatment for mental health difficulties that they or their family may raise suspicions about ASD. Diagnosis of ASD is a reasonably lengthy process involving multiple health professionals. Diagnosis is important for young people because it provides effective treatment options and helps to better address their needs.

TREATMENT

Effective treatment will target any mental health difficulty, support the young person to adjust to the changes they have as a result of ASD and make use of the skills that they have. Many people with ASD might still find social situations, personal relationships and major life changes challenging, but with support and encouragement, many people go on to undertake further education, develop their interests through hobbies and membership of clubs, work successfully in jobs that interest them and find fulfilling friendships.

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SUPPORTING SOMEONE WHO LIVES WITH ASD

Here are some ways you can help someone you know who lives with ASD.

- Any approach to support someone with ASD needs to be unique and individualised.
- Encourage the person to talk about what's going on for them, and any troubles or worries they have. It might be hard for them to find the right words or to express themselves, so be patient and try other preferred routes for communication (e.g. stories/drawings).
- Help them build confidence through doing things that use their strengths.
- Some people with ASD can find being around other young people who feel 'different' supportive. Groups at schools, local councils and health services might be options, and internet forums and chat rooms can also be helpful and accessible.
- Have a routine and try to be consistent. It doesn't need to be too rigid, but might mean that a young person with ASD can begin to take advantage of planned opportunities to talk to you about their worries or hopes.
- Be patient. It takes a lot longer for people with ASD to get used to things and make changes in their lives.

Some useful websites

WWW.AUTISM-HELP.ORG
WWW.AMAZE.ORG.AU
WWW.AUTISMSPECTRUM.ORG.AU
WWW.AUTISM.ORG.AU

Related factsheets

[Depression and young people](#)
[Anxiety and young people](#)

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Orygen acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands we are on and pays respect to their Elders past and present. Orygen recognises and respects their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationships to Country, which continue to be important to First Nations people living today.

GET IN TOUCH

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