

NCFE Level 2

Certificate in Understanding Autism

ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

TRIAD OF IMPAIRMENTS

UNDERSTANDING

AUTISM SPECTRUM CONDITION

PERSON-CENTRED

DIAGNOSIS

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Workbook 1

Section 1: Introduction to autism

Autism spectrum disorder

Autism is not a single condition, rather a spectrum of closely related disorders with shared symptoms. Each individual on the spectrum disorder has some degree of problems with:

- communication
- social skills
- empathy
- flexible behaviour

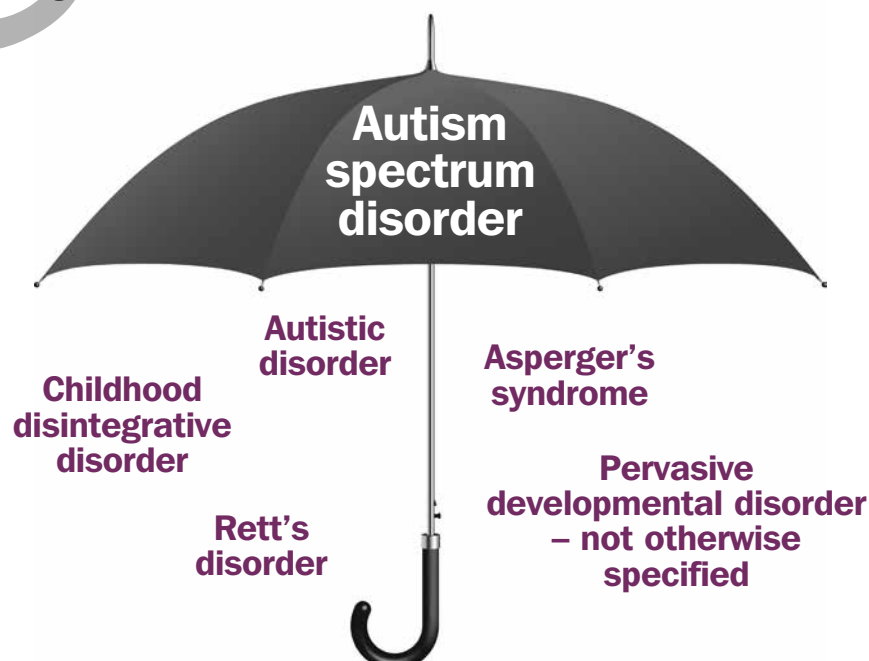
The level of disability and the combination of symptoms will vary greatly between individuals. There are three autism spectrum disorders that are commonly referred to:

- autism
- Asperger's syndrome
- Pervasive Development Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)

There are also two other conditions but as they are very rare genetic diseases they are usually considered to be separate medical conditions.

- childhood disintegrative disorder
- rett syndrome

Autism spectrum disorders is an 'umbrella' term, as it covers a number of conditions under one heading.



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'High-functioning' autism

High-functioning autism (HFA) is at one end of the autism spectrum. This means that the signs and symptoms are less severe than other individuals with autism. An individual with HFA usually has average or above average intelligence. Usually, an individual with HFA will have early language delays, unlike a child with Asperger's.

One major difference to other individuals with autism, is that those with HFA and Asperger's usually want to be involved with other people, they just don't know how to go about it. They may have problems understanding the emotions of others and struggle to understand facial expressions or non-verbal communication. This can lead to them being teased and they can often feel like social outcasts; which in turn can lead to depression and anxiety.

Typical symptoms include:

- a delay in early language development
- a delay in motor skills
- inability to react with others
- strong reactions to textures, odours, sounds and sights
- difficulties with sarcasm or non-literal use of language

Knowledge Activity 1:



Describe one difference between autism and high-functioning autism.

Describe one difference between HFA and Asperger's syndrome.

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Autism fact



The word 'autism' has been used for about 100 years and comes from the Greek word 'autos' meaning 'self'. This describes the condition of autism as the individual is removed from social interaction, and therefore an isolated self. Eugen Bleuler, a Swiss psychiatrist, was one of the first people to use this term in 1911, initially using it to describe one group of symptoms of schizophrenia.

Autism and schizophrenia were linked by many researchers until the 1960s when it was realised that autism was a separate condition.

How autism can be considered a spectrum condition

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 2.

Autism is a spectrum condition. This means that although all individuals with autism will face certain difficulties, the condition will affect them in different ways. It also refers to the differences in how severe a condition an individual has. There are some individuals with autism who can manage to live independent lives whilst others may have accompanying learning disabilities and may need specialist support throughout their lifetime. Every individual on the autism spectrum has different challenges, abilities and symptoms.

Some of the traits within the spectrum include:

- delayed speech development in children
- frequently repeating set words and phrases
- speaking with a very flat or monotonous tone
- communicating in single words, rather than in sentences
- not responding to their name being called
- reacting negatively when asked to do something
- being unaware of other people's personal space
- avoiding eye contact
- not using facial expressions when communicating
- repetitive movements, such as rocking back and forth
- preferring to have a familiar routine and being upset if things change
- having a strong like or dislike of certain foods, due to the texture or colour, rather than the taste

AUTiSM



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Knowledge Activity 2: Fill in the spider diagram below to show six traits that an individual with ASD may display.

