

AUTISM SIGNS IN ADULTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN MISSED AS KIDS

SOCIAL SIGNS

- **MAY FEEL LIKE YOU BECOME WHOEVER YOU'RE AROUND MOST.
- **MAY CONSTANTLY REHEARSE CONVERSATIONS OR INTERACTIONS.
- **MAY FEEL AS THOUGH YOU ARE ALWAYS ON A STAGE.
- **MAY HAVE A FEW CLOSE FRIENDS NOT MANY ACQUAINTANCES.
- **MAY SEE THE WORLD LITERALLY AND IN BLACK AND WHITE.
- **MAY STRUGGLE WITH OTHER PEOPLE BREAKING RULES.

SENSORY SIGNS

- **MAY BE A VERY PICKY EATER WITH FEW PREFERRED FOODS.
- **MAY STRUGGLE WITH NOISES, TOUCHING, OR SENSORY INPUT.
- **MAY SEEK OUT SQUEEZING HUGS WHEN OVERWHELMED OR UPSET.
- **MAY CHEW, RUB, OR TAP CERTAIN MATERIALS OBSESSIVELY.
- **MAY STRUGGLE TO PROCESS VISUAL OR AUDITORY INFORMATION.
- **MAY STRUGGLE TO SETTLE BODY DOWN ENOUGH FOR RESTFUL SLEEP.

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS

- **MAY OFTEN FIDGET, CHEW, TAP, OR OTHER REPETITIVE BEHAVIORS.
- **MAY GET MORE OR LESS UPSET AT SOMETHING THAN IS "APPROPRIATE"
- **MAY BE VERY INVOLVED IN SPECIFIC HOBBIES OR INTERESTS.
- **MAY STRUGGLE TO ADJUST WHEN PLANS CHANGE WITHOUT WARNING.
- **MAY HAVE ROUTINES THAT DON'T SEEM TO HAVE A REAL PURPOSE.
- **MAY STRUGGLE IN SITUATIONS THAT ARE UNFAMILIAR.

COMMUNICATION SIGNS

- **MAY EXPERIENCE PAIN OR DISCOMFORT DURING EYE CONTACT.
- **MAY STRUGGLE TO KEEP TRACK OF A FAST CONVERSATION.
- **MAY TAKE JOKES VERY LITERALLY, AND NOT UNDERSTAND TEASING.
- **MAY MISS SARCASM OR SUBTLETIES WHILE OTHERS ARE SPEAKING.
- **MAY PREFER TO COMMUNICATE OVER TEXT OR EMAIL.
- **MAY NOT UNDERSTAND WHY BLUNT HONESTY IS SEEN AS RUDE.

GUIDE BROUGHT TO YOU BY 

Physical Traits of Autism

- There are the stereotypical perceptions of what an autistic person looks like but autism is on a spectrum and you may not look autistic even if you are.
- Some of the frequent facial features of autism are a broader upper face, shorter middle face, wider eyes, bigger mouth, and the philtrum. This also includes potential broad forehead, wide set eyes, and a small chin.

Traits of Autism include anything in extremes - (emotionless or overly emotional, flat affect or overly expressive, obsessive or not interest in anything, preferring to be alone or being overbearing and obsessive about trying to talk to people/friends all the time, etc.)

Flat affect is common in people with an autism spectrum disorder. Some people with autism appear to have little emotional reaction to activities. If you have flat affect, you may have:

- Lack of body language and gestures
- Minimalized or absent facial expressions
- Lack of shifts in speech tone

Flat affect is when you feel emotions but show practically nothing visually.

Blunted affect refers to feeling emotions but only showing some of what you're feeling. (It's a less intense form of the flat affect because you still show some response.)

There's another degree of flat affect, which is a lesser degree of the two above. **Constricted (or restricted)** affect is when you feel emotions but have some degree of showing it.

There are other types of affect related to **flat affect**:

Labile affect refers to sudden shifts in how you express emotion.

Inappropriate affect is when an emotional reaction doesn't seem to fit the situation (smiling when you hear someone died).

8 Signs of Autism

1. Difficulty maintaining eye contact
2. Difficulty picking up on small social cues
3. Struggle to empathize
4. Struggle to hold back and forth conversation
5. Repeated physical behaviors/tapping/superstitious behaviors
6. Strict adherence to routine (and outbursts when routines are disrupted)
7. Laser focus on details and facts
8. Sensitivity (or lack thereof) to sounds, textures, light

High Functioning Autism Symptoms

- Emotional sensitivity/easily dysregulated
- Difficulty with coordination and motor control (sports, etc)
- Fixation on particular subjects or ideas
- Linguistic oddities/pronunciation (fixation on how words are spoken, memorizing last names, etc.)
- Social difficulties/Difficulty maintaining relationships and friendships

- Problems processing physical sensations
- Devotion to routines/upset if they are disturbed
- Development of repetitive habits
- Dislike of change
- Focus on self
- Unusual movement patterns
- Driving challenges
- Difficulty predicting and assessing danger
- Difficulty assessing other people's intentions and motivations
- Gullible
- Difficulty understanding other people's perspectives (very self focused)
- Intellectual disability (such as issues with abstract thinking, academic learning, problem-solving, planning, and so on)
- Difficulties with social interaction
- Difficulty communicating (some autistic individuals may be non-verbal altogether)
- Obsession with particular interests
- Great attention to detail
- Easily overstimulated (from light, sounds, crowds, etc.)
- Inconsistent or minimal eye contact
- Language regression (children under 3)
- Repetitive motor movements (sometimes referred to as "stimming")
- Self harm (helps them focus) (biting around nails, biting lips, overheating/scalding themselves in the shower/tub/jacuzzi for extended periods of time, picking scabs, cutting, hitting themselves, painful masturbation techniques or sexual behaviors, etc.) Autistic people can also either be highly sensitive to pain or the complete opposite of feeling numb and dissociated from their body which would lead to a desire to "feel" connected to their body. There are lots of reasons why someone might self-harm, and the reasons given by autistic people are similar to the reasons given by the general public: to regulate depression or numbness, to express or cope with emotional distress, to feel a sense of control, to punish themselves, to relieve unbearable tension, to cry for help (this is not the same as attention seeking), to distract from intrusive thoughts. Many autistic people find it difficult to recognise, manage and express their emotions. This is known as [alexithymia](#). It can mean that autistic people who experience alexithymia are more likely to feel frustrated, anxious and depressed, and less able to effectively cope with these emotions. Higher levels of alexithymia are linked to higher levels of self-harm in autistic people.

Social communication and interaction symptoms:

- Difficulty with verbal and nonverbal communication
- Difficulty making eye contact
- Trouble understanding social cues
- Difficulty developing and maintaining relationships
- Lack of interest in sharing activities with others

Repetitive or restrictive behavior symptoms:

- Repetitive movements such as rocking or hand-flapping
- Rigid routines or rituals
- Fixation on specific interests or topics
- Sensory sensitivities such as being bothered by certain sounds or textures
- Resistance to change

Signs of adult autism you might not expect

- Unstable relationships
- Hyperfixations
- Difficulty with rules/boundary violating
- Lost in fantasy worlds
- Sensory differences (aversion to sights, sounds, or feel of things), mesmerized by bright lights, music, certain textures, smells and taste
- Infodumping/Difficulty not talking or sharing/the reverse, being quiet, is also a sign of Autism
- Masking/parroting (mimicking the behaviors of others in an attempt to be accepted and liked), feeling like they are different people in different environments
- Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD) which is hypersensitivity to perceived rejection (commonly they will want to hurt someone else before they get hurt because they perceive rejection), which leads to Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) which leads to avoiding activities where they feel pressured or there is perceived fear of rejection
- Lack of understanding boundaries and personal space of others, but very controlling and sensitive about their own boundaries
- Separation anxiety from their "comfort blanket" person - gets angry, grumpy, anxious when separate
- Obsessive Interests
- Increased need for sensory stimulation (video games, TV, screen time)
- Difficulty with identifying emotions
- Difficulty understanding others' perspectives
- Repetitive motor movements or sounds (echolalia)
- Problems with verbal reasoning
- Sensory overload
- Difficulty learning from past mistakes and consequences
- Learning to cheat in school and different settings to overcome learning disabilities
- Learning to compensate for lack of social awareness by trying to memorize certain topics, dominate conversations, talk less. Feels very anxious in social settings because they don't know what to say or do.
- Trouble keeping up in conversations

Sexual symptoms

Individuals with ASD seem to have more hypersexual and paraphilic fantasies and behaviors than general-population studies suggest.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5789215/#:~:text=Individuals%20with%20ASD%20see%20to,for%20male%20participants%20with%20ASD.>

- Sexual engagement is not about connection but objectification and obtaining release due to lack of oxytocin in their system (lack of ability to connect with others or feeling bonding)
- PGAD (Persistent Genital Arousal Disorder) constant “arousal”(pressure, pain) in genitals and pelvis due to stress and anxiety being held there by autistic individuals. Sex is not about pleasure, sexual arousal, or connection but relief from the pain and pressure that continued to build. The desire to obtain release is there without any sexual arousal and this can lead to objectification and hyperfocus on obtaining orgasm rather than sexual arousal. They may want release so they try to arouse themselves sexually but the need and desire to obtain release from the pressure and pain was already there beforehand. This can lead to paraphilic behaviors, sexual coercion, chronic masturbation, anger and frustration without release, and other inappropriate or harmful behaviors do to their “need” for release from the tension, pressure, and pain and it not being about connection, intimacy, arousal, or love.
- Need for chronic masturbation to relieve stress and the “relief/release” from the pressure/pain
- Paraphilias (frotteuristic behaviors, masturbation, sexual disorders, sexual coercion, sexually deviant behaviors, etc) due to needing sexual release to offset anxiety and stress.
- Paraphilias—Pedophilia, Transvestic fetishism, Exhibitionism, Fetishism, Voyeurism, Sexual masochism, Sexual sadism, Frotteurism, Telephone scatologia (obscene phone calls), necrophilia (sexual attraction to corpses), partialism (exclusive focus on part of body), zoophilia (sexual attraction to animals), coprophilia (erotic attraction to feces), klismaphilia (erotic attraction to enemas), and urophilia (erotic attraction to urine)—are grouped in the category “Paraphilia not otherwise specified.” It is specifically stated that these are examples, but this category is not limited to these.
<https://nursekey.com/41-sexual-deviant-behavior-and-crimes/>
- Stalking behaviors

Interpreting social cues and anticipating consequences

By definition, kids and adults on the ASD spectrum have difficulty understanding social norms, social cues and the point of view of others. Without these skills, they may not know to avoid behavior interpreted as harassment.

One problem is that harassment is vague; it can be *any repeated behavior* that makes someone feel stressed or threatened. It's in the experience of the accuser. Kids or adults on the spectrum can miss other people's subtle or **nonverbal signals** that they are not interested in a friendly—or intimate—relationship. Even when someone says “No” or “Please stop,” people on the spectrum might continue because they don't understand the “why” behind it. The request seems illogical, and people with ASD best understand and respond to logic. They certainly don't foresee the potentially serious outcome... Sometimes, people on the spectrum want a relationship and lack the necessary skills. They can misinterpret someone who is kind or friendly as wanting a close friendship or intimate relationship. Their efforts to respond or initiate a friendship can be perceived as stalking. A second reason for stalking behavior is when people on the spectrum are obsessed with a person, even with no romantic intent. Another motivator for stalking behavior is seeking revenge for rejection or jealousy. Repeated texting or advances can be an attempt to get an apology or the original desired response. A child or adult with ASD might not understand rules for touching, hugging, or other violations of personal space.”

<https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/harassment-reduce-situations-people-autism/#:~:text=Sometimes%2C%20people%20on%20the%20spectrum,can%20be%20perceived%20as%20stalking.>

Autism has been described as a disorder of empathy, with difficulties in identifying and responding to others' emotional states considered a dominant feature (Baron-Cohen, 2009; Frith, 2004; Tantam, 2012; Wing, 1981).

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S089142220301517>

Can autism stem from trauma?

A study published in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders found that children who experienced physical abuse or neglect were more likely to have autism than those who did not experience abuse or neglect...The study also found that children who experienced emotional abuse or neglect were more likely to have autism than those who did not experience emotional abuse or neglect.

Another study published in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry found that children who experienced trauma before the age of 3 were more likely to have autism than those who did not experience trauma before the age of 3. The study also found that children who experienced trauma before the age of 3 were more likely to have severe autism symptoms.

<https://www.discoveryaba.com/aba-therapy/can-childhood-trauma-cause-autism>

This is a result of lack of oxytocin and having a connected, loving and safe connection with someone at early ages. This often is the product of neglect and/or physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, lack of eye contact, etc.