



Other related characteristics

Sensory sensitivity

People with autism may experience some form of sensory sensitivity. This can occur in one or more of the seven senses – sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, balance and body awareness. A person's senses can be intensified (hypersensitive) or under-sensitive (hyposensitive). The degree of difficulty varies from one individual to another and according to other factors such as mood and levels of stress and stimuli.

For example, a person with autism may find certain background sounds, which other people ignore or block out, unbearably loud or distracting. This can cause stress and anxiety or even physical pain. People who are hyposensitive may not feel pain or extremes of temperature. Some may rock, spin or flap their hands to stimulate sensation, to help with balance and posture or to deal with stress. Some people may have a hyposensitive body awareness system, making it harder for them to navigate rooms and avoid obstructions, stand at an appropriate distance from other people and carry out 'fine motor' tasks such as tying shoelaces.



Other related characteristics

Love of routines

The world can seem a very unpredictable and confusing place to people with autism, who often prefer to have their own fixed, daily routine so that they know what is going to happen every day. It may be more helpful for someone with autism to use a routine they've created themselves or which has been mutually agreed, rather than one which has been imposed on them. Rules and rituals can also be important: it may be difficult for a person with autism to take a different approach to something once they have been taught the 'right' way to do it. People with autism may not be comfortable with the idea of change, but can cope better if they are prepared for it in advance.

Highly-focused interests

Many people with autism have intense interests, often from a fairly young age. These can change over time or be life-long, and can be anything from art or music to trains or computers. Some people with autism may eventually be able to work or study in related areas. For others, it may remain a hobby. A special interest may sometimes be unusual. One person with autism loved collecting rubbish, for example. With encouragement, this was channelled into an interest in recycling and the environment.