



# Autism

## General Description of the Population

Autism is a neurological disorder that interferes with the development of reasoning, social interaction and communication. It is a lifelong disability that makes learning difficult and can lead to serious behavior problems.

Children and adults with autism have substantial problems in the area of communication. About one-half are non verbal. Others use language very concretely with a limited ability to understand or express abstract ideas. Persons with autism may not attach appropriate meanings to words or may not understand the multiple meanings of some words. They may employ immature rhythms of speech. Echolalia, the repetition of words or phrases heard earlier, is common.

## Common Characteristics

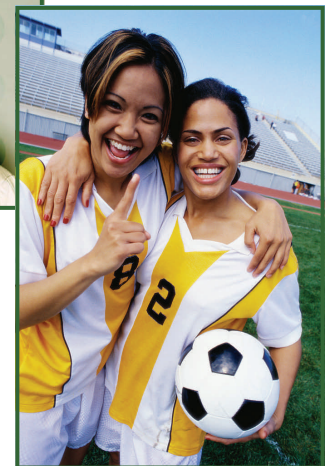
- Uneven patterns of intellectual functioning
- Difficulty in understanding and expressing emotions
- Behavior problems are often a result of lack of communication skills
- May repeat statements without understanding what they have said
- Tend to be visual learners versus auditory
- Have no fear of real danger
- Difficulty generalizing, following directions, sequencing, and staying on task outside of their area of interest
- Disturbance in the capacity to relate appropriately to people, events and objects
- Significant difficulty in understanding social relationships, language or communication, and social behavior
- Absence, disorder, or delay of language, speech, or meaningful communication
- Unusual or inconsistent response to sensory stimuli in one or more of the following areas: sight, hearing, touch, pain, balance
- Excessive attachment to objects
- Can have aloof, standoffish manner
- Resists change in routines

## Instructional Strategies

- Maintain instruction at concrete level
- Use visual/picture cues and/or sign language
- Be concise with verbal directions
- Be consistent
- Incorporate communication/language instruction with all areas of learning, especially with younger children
- Use many hearing-impaired techniques

## Autism

- Keep instruction routine and predictable
- Expose students to general education peers so that they model appropriate social behaviors
- Seat student in front of class for better concentration on the visual presentations of material
- Teach time and space concepts
- Use pictures or words to reflect daily routines or instruction
- Use a multi-sensory approach



Information taken from the  
Diagnostic and Statistical  
Manual of Mental Disorders

## Behavioral Strategies

- Keep consistent and routine
- Specify consequences for inappropriate behavior
- Use visual cues for both appropriate and inappropriate behavior
- Be firm and clarify expected behavior
- Remember the child is literal
- Constantly check to see if the student has verbally comprehended what is said
- Assist student in communicating their needs and wants
- Allow the student to be as independent as possible
- Constantly reinforce appropriate behavior

## THE PATH PROJECT



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