

# WHAT DOES AUTISM LOOK LIKE?

## DOES AUTISM LOOK THE SAME IN EVERYONE?

- Short answer- no!
- There are two core symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): social communication challenges and restricted, repetitive behaviors. Each individual diagnosed with ASD has a unique display of those symptoms, and each can range in severity.
- In the words of Dr. Stephen Shore:

“If you’ve met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism.”
- The range of variation can be a major difficulty in diagnosis. In fact, many milder forms of autism go undiagnosed until adulthood.
- According to Autism Speaks website, “Not all children with autism show all the signs. Many children who don’t have autism show a few. **That’s why professional evaluation is crucial.**”<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT EXACTLY DOES ASD LOOK LIKE?

Individuals with ASD may display few, some, or many of the following:<sup>1,3</sup>

### Behavior:

- Repetitive physical behavior such as spinning, rocking, flapping hands
- Avoiding eye contact
- Preference for solitude
- Restricted interests
- Sensory challenges: being over- or under-sensitive to temperature, light, sound, textures, etc.
- Resistance to minor changes in routine or surroundings
- Adverse reaction to physical contact (hug, pat on the back, handshake)
- Young children may wander. This wandering, or leaving the safe area of a responsible caregiver, was shown in a 2012 study to occur in nearly half of children with autism, and generally increased with autism severity<sup>2</sup>

## Communication:

- Language or phrases may seem “scripted”
- Repetition of words
- Difficulty in initiating conversation
- Difficulty in understanding nonverbal communication (eye-rolling, body-language)
- Difficulty in interpreting verbal language, especially sarcasm, idioms and figurative language
- Delayed language development
- Individuals with ASD may also be altogether nonverbal in their communication and may have to rely on alternative modes of communication such as a communication device, or pictures.

## FURTHER RESOURCES:

For more resources regarding the characteristics of ASD, and how they may manifest, these are recommended:

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/signs-autism>

<https://www.nationalautismcenter.org/autism/what-does-autism-look-like/>

## CITATIONS:

(1)Autism Speaks. (n.d.) Learn the signs of Autism. <https://www.autismspeaks.org/signs-autism>

(2)Acraman, Emily. (n.d.) *Wandering Behavior and Autism*. Altogether Autism. Retrieved April 20 2020 from: <https://www.altogetherautism.org.nz/wandering-behaviour-and-autism/>

(3)National Autism Center. (n.d.) *What does Autism look like?*<https://www.nationalautismcenter.org/autism/what-does-autism-look-like/>