



WHEN YOU WONDER IF YOUR PATIENT HAS AUTISM

Answering that question in a timely manner can save heartache and resources

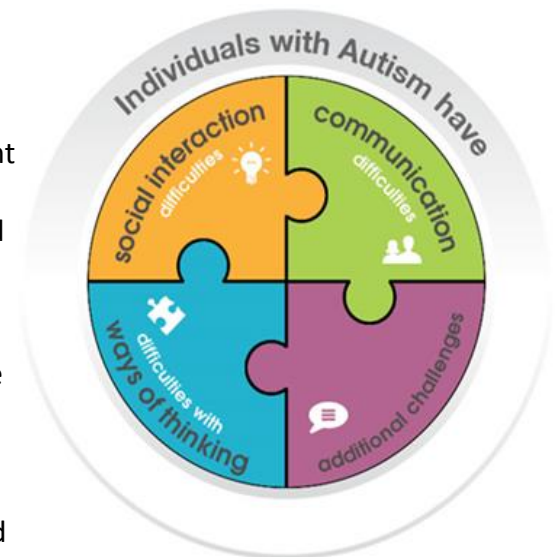
ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) is a neurodevelopmental condition with wide-ranging symptomsⁱ which can include:

- Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction
- Restricted patterns of behavior, interests, or activities
- Other comorbid problems, such as emotional symptoms (anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder), general cognitive or executive functioning difficulties, seizures, and/or gastro-intestinal symptoms.

Neuropsychologists are uniquely qualified to assess and quantify the severity level of ASD characteristics as well as comorbid symptoms which might otherwise go undetected.

Best treatment outcomes for children and their families depend on accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment provided *at earlier ages and continuing throughout their lives.*

- ASD is a lifelong condition for most. Yet, researchers find that up to 25% of those diagnosed may achieve “very positive”ⁱⁱ or “optimal outcomes”^{iii iv} marked by significant symptom reduction with early, intensive services and if they possess certain characteristics, such as higher IQ and less severe social deficits (even with severe problems in communication and repetitive behaviors).^v
- Early intervention may significantly improve quality of life for individuals and their familiesⁱⁱ and may alter brain pathways that underlie cognitive and social functions.^{ii iii}
- Most people with ASD and their families continue to need services throughout the lifespan. These may include clinical, educational, transition, social, vocational, residential and life skill supports.



Not receiving an early evaluation and an accurate diagnosis may result in missing the critical window for optimal outcomes! Early interventionists and treatment providers often rely on the diagnosis and treatment plan that is commonly provided by neuropsychologists.

Neuropsychologists provide the team and family with a holistic, integrated, and accurate understanding of the complex bio-psycho-social needs and strengths that are seen in people with ASD or suspected ASD. This understanding directs the most effective treatment.

INVOLVE A NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST FOR PEOPLE AGES ONE THROUGH ADULTHOOD WHEN:

- ✚ screening for ASD is positive
- ✚ question of ASD, but cannot be determined without further or more comprehensive assessment
- ✚ there are comorbid cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and/or educational concerns
- ✚ assistance is needed in communicating diagnostic information to the family and/or assisting with treatment planning
- ✚ response to treatment after diagnosis is not typical, such as symptoms do not improve or worsen, or new symptoms emerge

A NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST CAN OFFER:

- ✚ consultation, when next steps or need for further evaluation is not clear
- ✚ diagnosis and treatment planning
- ✚ comprehensive evaluation of cognition, behavior, mood, social interactions, academics, and family coping skills to direct treatment appropriately
- ✚ treatment: education and guidance to families in using strategies that promote optimal development for their child
- ✚ coordination and collaborative planning with schools, therapists and other service providers
- ✚ monitoring of progress with objective measures and identification of need for change in treatment or educational plan

How to FIND A NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST: Neuropsychologists are licensed psychologists who have completed one-year or two-year post-doctoral, clinical fellowships in neuropsychology, which is the study of brain-behavior relationships. If you don't have a neuropsychologist on your team yet, the Massachusetts Neuropsychological Society (MNS) can help you find one: www.massneuropsych.org/find.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- www.aane.org (The Asperger/ Autism Network)
- www.autismspeaks.org
- A review of books on autism: the New Yorker, *Seeing the Spectrum* by Steven Shapin, January 25, 2016 issue.
- *The World of the Autistic Child: Understanding and Treating Autistic Disorders* by Bryna Siegal
- *Reweaving the Autistic Tapestry: Autism, Asperger Syndrome, and ADHD* by L. Blakemore- Brown

(This page and references/research citations are available at www.massneuropsych.org/facts)



REFERENCES for

WHEN YOU WONDER IF YOUR PATIENT HAS AUTISM Fact Sheet

- ⁱ Volkmar, F, Siegel, M, Woodbury-Smith, M. (2014) Practice parameter for the assessment and treatment of children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 53(2): 237–257.
- ⁱⁱ Anderson DK, Liang JW, and Lord C (2014). Predicting young adult outcome among more and less cognitively able individuals with autism spectrum disorders. *J Child Psychol Psychiatry*. 2014 May; 55(5):485-94. doi: 10.1111/jcpp.12178. Epub 2013 Dec 9.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Fein D, Barton M, Eigsti IM, Kelley E, Naigles L, Schultz RT, Stevens M, Helt M, Orinstein A, Rosenthal M, Troyb E, Tyson K. (2013). Optimal outcome in individuals with a history of autism. *J Child Psychol Psychiatry* Feb; 54(2):195-205
- ^{iv} Orinstein AJ, Helt M, Troyb E, Tyson KE, Barton ML, Eigsti IM, Naigles L, Fein DA. (2014) Intervention for optimal outcome in children and adolescents with a history of autism. *J Dev Behav Pediatr*. 2014 May; 35 (4):247-56. doi: 10.1097/DBP.0000000000000037.
- ^v Troyb E, Ornstein A, Tyson, K, Eigsti I-M, Naigles, L, Fein, D (2014) Restricted and Repetitive Behaviors in Individuals with a History of ASDs Who Have Achieved Optimal Outcomes. *J Autism Dev Disord* 2014 44:3168-3184 DOI 10.1007/s10803-014-2182-y
- ^{vi} Fernell, E, Mats E, Gillberg C. (2013). Early diagnosis of autism and impact on prognosis: A narrative review. *Clinical epidemiology*. 5. 33-43. 10.2147/CLEP.S41714.
- ^{vii} Wan CY, Schlang GS (2010) Neural pathways for language in autism: the potential for music-based treatments *Future Neurology*, 2010 Vol. 5, No. 6 | Special Report. Published Online: 7 Dec 2010 <https://doi.org/10.2217/fnl.10.55> impact on prognosis: A narrative review. *Clinical epidemiology*. 5. 33-43. 10.2147/CLEP.S41714.
- ^{viii} “Individuals with Autism have” disc: Autism NI: Northern Ireland’s Autism Charity