



Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders: Journey through the lifespan



Pathfinders for Autism

A parent sponsored, Maryland nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with autism and their families.



Why Should You Care?

- About **1 in 59** children has been identified with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) according to estimates from the CDC.
 - **1 in 38** boys
 - **1 in 50** children in Maryland
 - **1 in 31** boys in Maryland
 - **About 4 times** more common in boys



Please put your right hand in the air

What is Autism?

Autism is a neurological development disorder affecting multiple areas of the brain and body.

It is NOT a mental or psychological disorder.

No known cause.

No known cure.



Treating Autism

- Early Intervention
- Therapies
 - Physical
 - Occupational
 - Speech
 - Behavioral interventions
 - Medications
 - Biomedical
 - Special diets
- Some people may need services and supports their entire lives



VitaminD



This is Dev

This is Grant

Autism Spectrum Disorder

- **CLASSIC AUTISM**

PDD-NOS

- **ASPERGER'S SYNDROME**



- Severe
- More supports needed

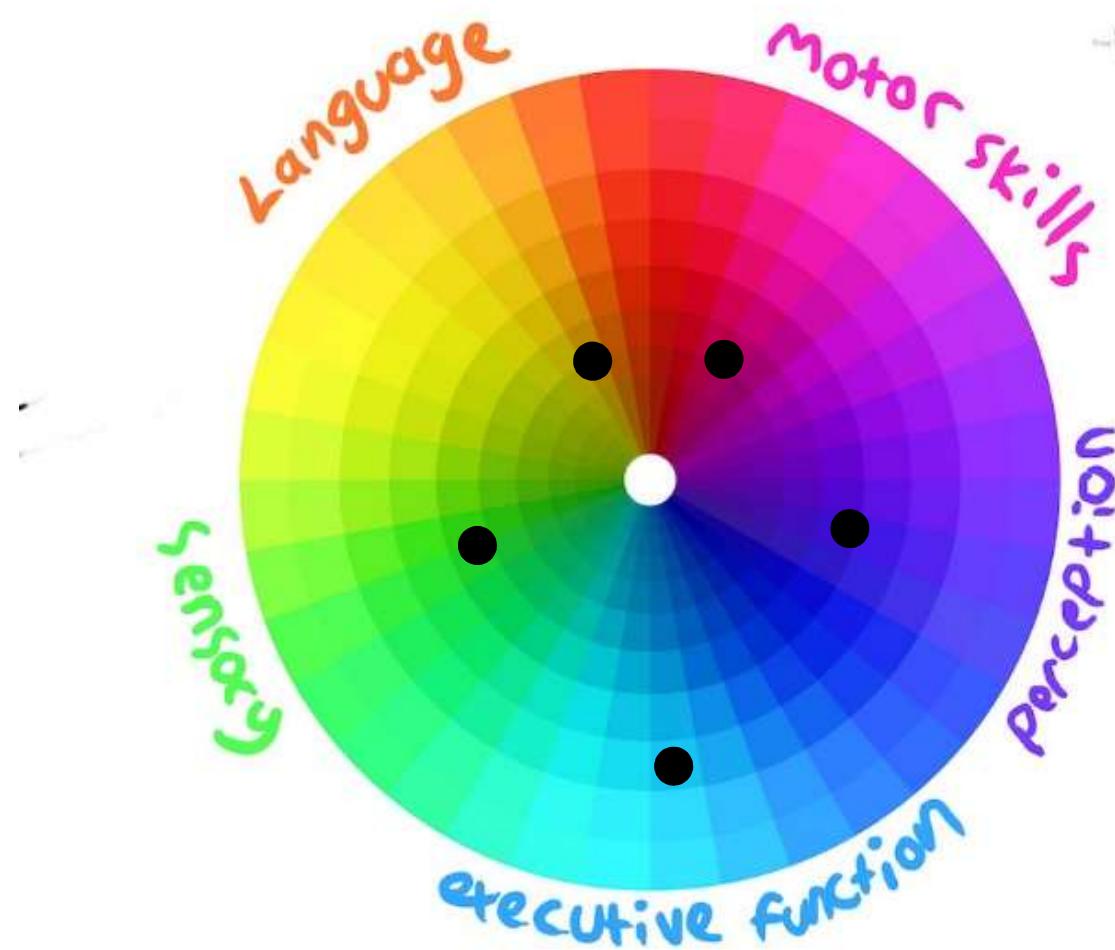
- Mild
- High IQ
- Fewer supports needed

Providing Assistance to a Person
with Autism

PRESUME
INTELLECT



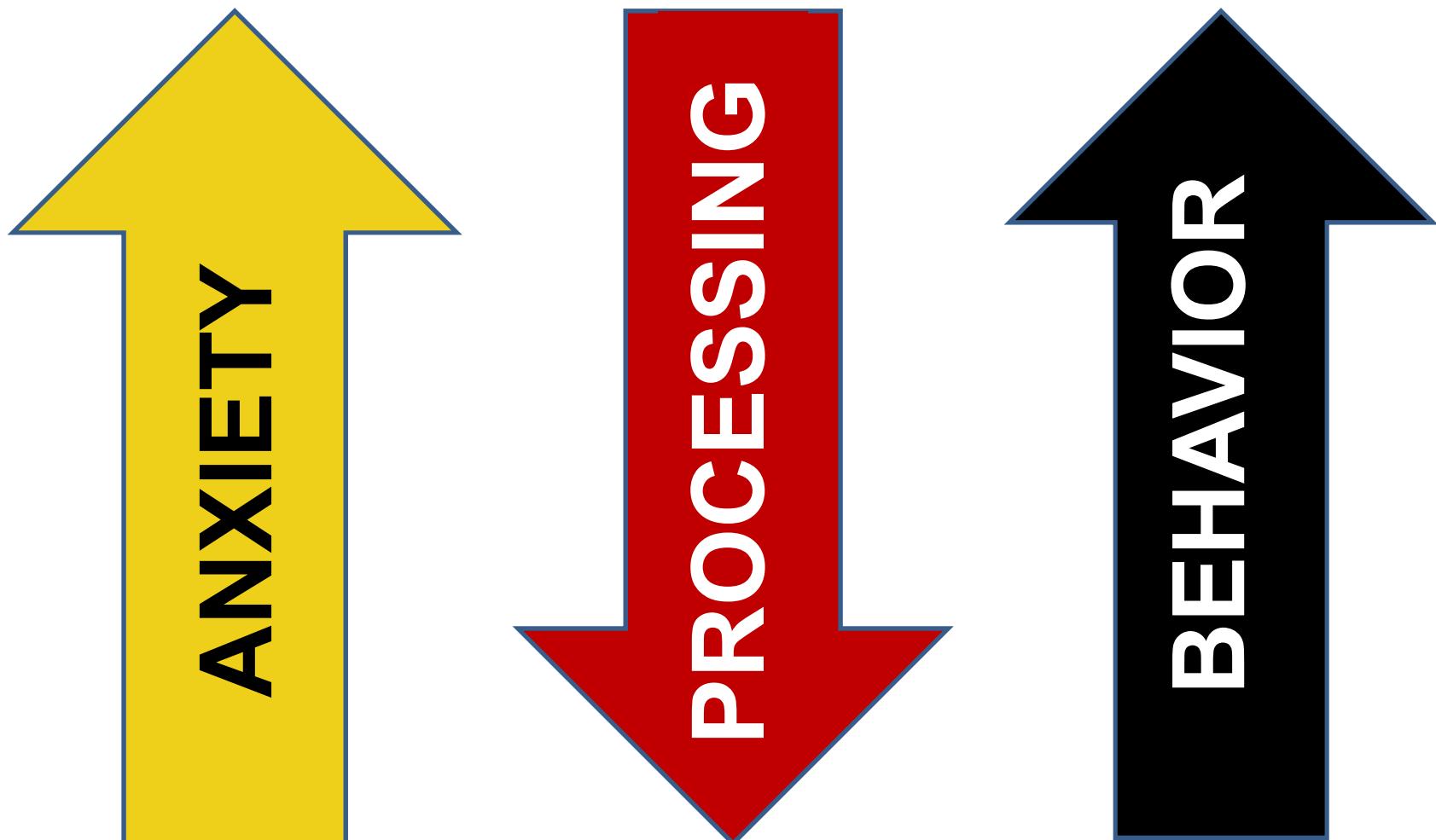
The Autism Spectrum Looks More Like This



Spectrum design by Rebecca Burgess

5 PATHFINDERS
FOR AUTISM

When Interacting with a Person with Autism. . .



Individuals with Autism MAY Demonstrate Difficulty with:

- Communication
- Sensory processing
- Social interaction
- Behavior



Exercise Time



Communication

- Both verbal and non verbal
- May be verbal, but unable to sustain a conversation
- May only cite scripts or use echolalia
- May use repetitive or idiosyncratic language
- May use alternative mode of communication – iPad or other assistive technology, gestures, sign language, PECS

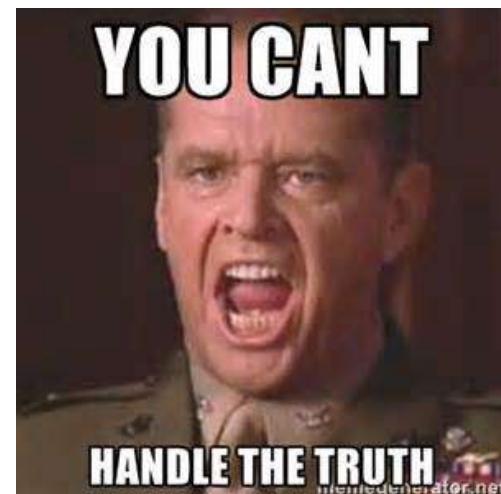
PECS Symbols

Picture Exchange Communication Symbols



Communication

- May only understand direct language
 - May be able to speak but answers may seem blunt or tactless
 - Unable to understand sarcasm, metaphors



Communication/Language Processing Disorder



Communication/Language Processing Disorder

- May appear deaf and may not respond to verbal cues
- Receptive and Expressive Language may require additional processing time

Communication/Language Processing Disorder





Sensory Processing

- ▶ sensitivity to sound, light and touch
- ▶ easily over-stimulated
- ▶ under-stimulated
- ▶ difficulty with body awareness and balance



When Interacting with a Person with a Developmental Disability . . .

- Be patient and give the person space
- Be alert to signs of increased frustration and try to eliminate the source if possible as behavior may escalate
- Avoid quick movements and loud noises
- Do not touch the person unless absolutely necessary



Social Interaction

- May not make eye contact
- May not pick up on social cues or body language
- May not understand personal space
- May be huggers or kissers

Social Interaction

- May lack social or emotional reciprocity
- May not respond “appropriately” – may laugh or giggle at inappropriate times
- May not develop peer relationships

“Bad Behaviors”

- All behaviors should be seen as communication
 - RULE OUT PAIN
- Obsessive tendencies and impulsive acts
 - REDEFINED

Behavioral Effects

- May have obsessive tendencies
- May act impulsively
- Anxiety creates repetition
- Medication effects

Lifespan Considerations

- Puberty/Sexuality
- Seizures
- Healthcare Transition
- DDA/SSI
- Safety/Wandering and Elopement



Things to Remember

- Remember the “20 second rule”
- Sit Down; Not take your seat
- Anxiety UP; Processing DOWN; Behavior UP
- More than one way to present information
- Minimize sensory distractions
- Behavior is communication
- Be flexible

What Does Autism Look Like?



Providing Assistance to a Person
with Autism

PRESUME
INTELLECT



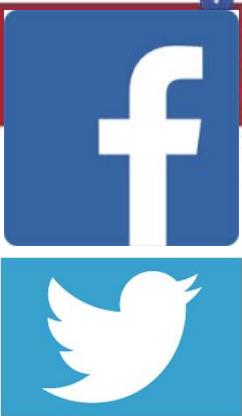
HELPLINE NUMBER: (443) 330-5341

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

DONATE



HOME ABOUT RESOURCES PROVIDERS & SERVICES SUPPORT EVENTS CONTACT



www.pathfindersforautism.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION



Neal Lichter, Program Director
Pathfinders for Autism
303 International Circle, #110
Cockeysville, MD 21030
443-330-5341
nlichter@pfamd.org
www.pathfindersforautism.org