

FACT SHEET

Different Aspects of Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental neurological condition that is characterised by difficulties in communication, social interaction and restricted or repetitive behaviours.

Full diagnostic criteria can be found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th Edition).

Individuals with ASD can experience issues with the following:

- *Sensory Processing* including: sensory aversions, sensory seeking and stimming.
- *Sensation and Emotion* including: interoception, proprioception, empathy and reading others.
- *Communication and Socialising* including: social awkwardness, special interests, autistic inertia, social cues, facial expressions, masking, aversion to socialising, making sense of miscommunications, dislike of small talk, blunt manner/directness, selective mutism or being non-verbal.
- *Processing* including: auditory input, verbal/language input, comprehension, literal understanding, confusion, distress at the unexpected and scripting.
- *Executive Function*: various issues with cognitive processes like planning, problem solving, working memory, attention, reasoning, initiation, inhibition, cognitive flexibility and monitoring.
- *Demand Avoidance*
- *Meltdowns or Shutdowns*

What is?

Sensory Processing: how the nervous system receives information from the senses and converts them into responses within the body.

Sensory Aversion: an aversive sensory response to a certain trigger. (e.g. anger at certain noises).

Sensory Seeking: a sensory response whereby you are attracted to or calmed by certain sensory input (e.g. soothed by music).

Stimming: an action or behaviour (can be repetitive or habitual) that serves as a calming mechanism (e.g. chewing when anxious or flapping hands when excited).

Interoception: the ability to ascertain what is going on for you inside your body. If you have issues with interoception you may be over-responsive or under-responsive to your internal cues (e.g. may not notice hunger or alternatively you may overeat, exhaustion, emotions).

Proprioception: the body's ability to receive input through skin, muscles and joints and transfer that info via the nervous system to the brain so that the body can sense itself.

Masking: is a covering over or a camouflaging of difficult or problematic aspects of ASD.

Autistic Inertia: trouble beginning a task but also trouble stopping once you get started.

Demand Avoidance: is an overwhelming need to avoid or resist demands or feeling like you cannot do certain things at certain times.

Meltdown: an intense reaction to sensory overwhelm, a loss of behavioural control appearing as outward distress (crying, screaming, stomping).

Shutdown: similar to a meltdown but shows as withdrawal (zoning out, rocking back and forth).