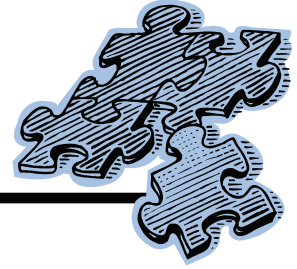


Autism Spectrum Disorders: Overview



Objectives:

- The reader will learn the names and basic characteristics of each of the Autism Spectrum Disorders
- The reader will learn how Autism Spectrum Disorders are diagnosed

Definitions:

DSM-IV-TR: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—Fourth Edition—Text Revision

A published manual that outlines the specific characteristics required for all psychiatric disorders

PDD: Pervasive Developmental Disorder

The clinical or medical term for a constellation of 5 diagnoses listed in the DSM-IV-TR with core difficulties in social communication

ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorders

A layperson term for one of five diagnoses listed in the DSM-IV-TR as a Pervasive Developmental Disorder

Facts

- There are 5 disorders under the label Pervasive Developmental Disorders:
 - 1) Autistic Disorder
 - 2) Asperger's Disorder
 - 3) Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not otherwise specified (PDDNOS)
 - 4) Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
 - 5) Rett's Disorder
- Individuals with Autistic Disorder meet criteria in 3 main areas:
 - 1) Social Interaction - e.g., limited eye contact and gestures, difficulty making friends, difficulty understanding common social rules
 - 2) Communication - e.g., late development or regression, unusual use of language (e.g., not conversant), limited or no creative play
 - 3) Repetitive/Restricted Interests - e.g., excessive interest in unusual objects, limited use of objects and interests or intense interest in limited topic areas; repetitive motor mannerisms; excessive need for routine.
- Individuals with Asperger's Disorder meet criteria in 2 main areas:
 - 1) Social Interaction
 - 2) Repetitive/Restricted Interests
 - * Additionally, individuals have no significant delay in language or cognitive skills though they often have unusual and pressured language and have difficulty maintaining conversations not about an area of interest.
- Individuals with PDDNOS show similar patterns of symptoms:
 - 1) Social Interaction impairments
 - * Additionally, impairments exist in either of the following two areas
 - a) Communication
 - b) Repetitive/Restricted Interests
- Individuals with Rett's Disorder develop appropriately for the first 5 months and then experience:
 - 1) Loss of hand skills and development of classic repetitive hand movements (i.e., hand wringing)
 - 2) Loss of social interaction at onset of disorder
 - 3) Communication difficulties (both with expression and understanding of language)
- Individuals with Childhood Disintegrative Disorder develop appropriately for at least 2 years and then experience:
 - 1) Loss of skills (communication, bladder control, play skills, motor skills)
 - 2) Abnormalities in at least 2 of the following 3 areas:
 - a) Social Interaction
 - b) Communication
 - c) Repetitive/Restricted Interests

Autism Spectrum Disorders: Overview Continued

Facts Continued

- Diagnosing a PDD
 - 1) Done by one of a few types of professionals
 - Clinical Psychologists
 - Psychiatrists
 - Neurologists
 - 2) A variety of methods are used
 - Behavioral observations
 - Standardized testing
 - Clinical impressions focused on criteria in the DSM-IV-TR

Recommended Actions

- When working with individuals with PDDs, try to capitalize on their strengths
 - 1) Present information visually, whenever possible
 - 2) Establish consistent routines to help individuals know what to expect
 - 3) Break complex routines into simple steps when teaching new routines

Learning Assessment

- What are the 5 Pervasive Developmental Disorders?
- What are the three main characteristics in Autism?
- Who can diagnose a PDD?
- What types of systems work well for individuals with a PDD?

References

- American Psychiatric Association (2000). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (4th ed. – text revision). Washington DC: Author.
- Pozdol, S.L. & Korzekwa, P.A. (January, 2006). Autism 101. Talk presented at OASIS: Indianapolis, IN.

Additional Related Resources

- Autism Society of America: <http://www.autism-society.org/>
- Autism Society of Indiana: <http://www.autismindiana.org>
- Christian Sarkine Autism Treatment Center: <http://www.iupui.edu/~psycdept/autism/>
- HANDS in Autism: <http://www.HANDSinAutism.org>
- Indiana Resource Center for Autism: <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca>
- National Institute of Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/autism.cfm>
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – Division TEACCH – Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children: <http://www.teacch.com>
- National Alliance for Autism Research: <http://www.naar.org>