

Autism: Communication and Managing Behavior

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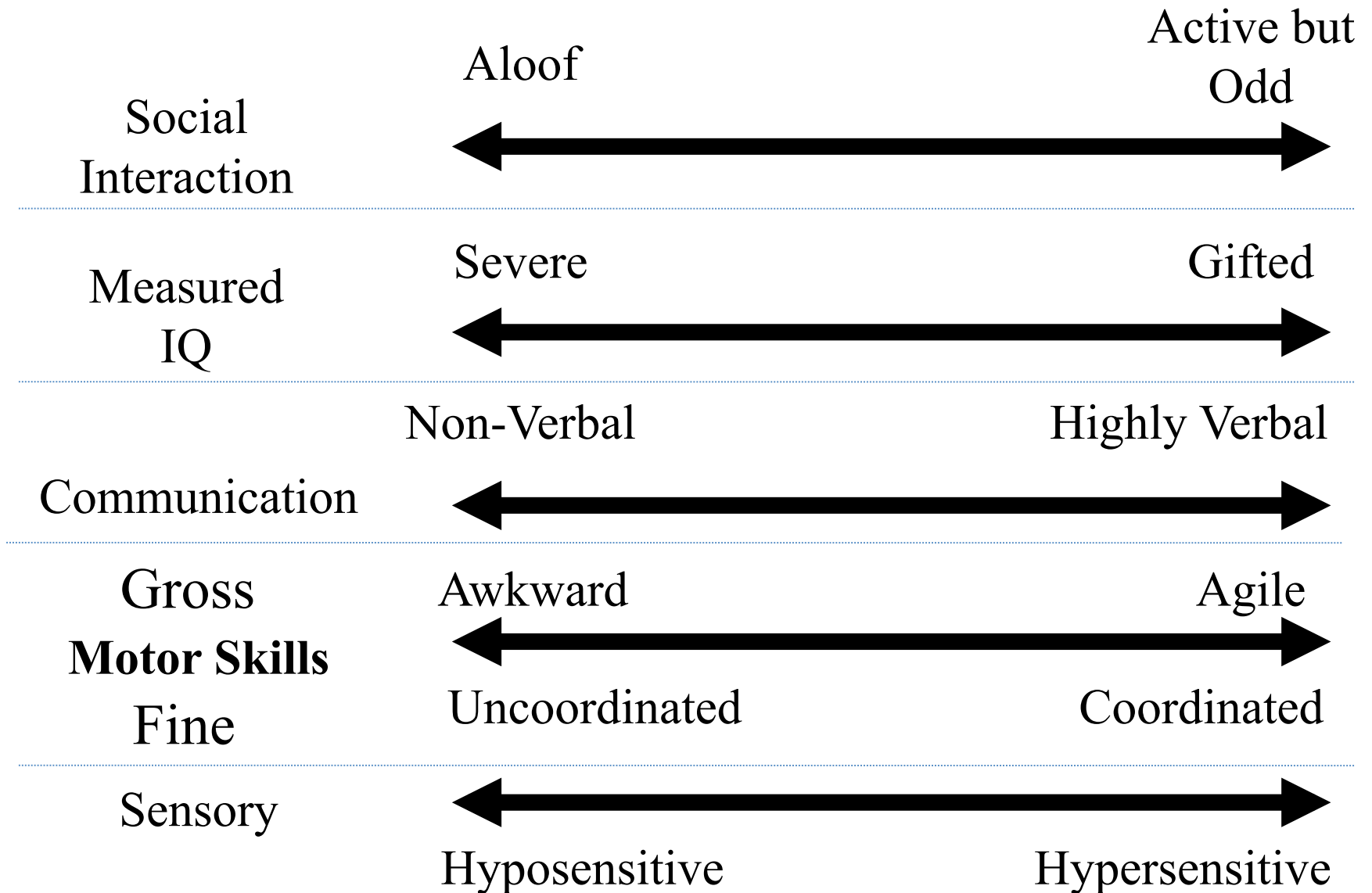
Why are people with Autism or Asperger's Disorder different?

- Brain is wired differently
- Object area of brain is more developed than people area
- Not wired to be social

How?

- Genetic/starts in utero before born
- Likely to be a genetic/environment interaction
- NOT caused by bad parenting

Autism Defies Generalization



The Iceberg

Behavior - Tip

Below the water line:

Difficulties with Reciprocal Social Interactions,

Communication and Play

Restricted Repetitive Behaviors/

Need for Sameness

Sensory Processing Differences

Learning Style

www.teacch.com

Difficulties in Social Interactions

- Joint attention (early sign) – foundation skill
- Weaknesses in social reciprocity: initiation (lack), social response (limited), and awareness of the perspective of others
- Possible lack of interest in making friends
- Less responsive to social cues
- Lack of spontaneous seeking to **share** enjoyment, interest, or achievements

Social Pitfalls

- Social misperceptions
- Not knowing social norms or the “hidden curriculum”
 - How to act in different social situations
 - Which way do you stand when you ride an elevator? Why?
- Not knowing what is “cool”
- They do not know how to play – at recess

Pitfalls

- Asking inappropriate questions
 - Why do you color your hair?
- Making inappropriate comments
 - It smells in here!
- Speaking their minds or not knowing about little white lies
 - You smell...well, then, your cologne smells.
- Teasing and Bullying – your friends do NOT bully you

Impairments in Communication

- Language develops slowly or no delay
 - Use of words without attaching the usual meaning to them
 - Gestures not used to compensate
- Conversation Difficulties
- Repetitive use of unknown phrases/Echolalia
- Odd ways of using words or making up their own language

Play Challenges

- Lack of spontaneous or imaginative play
- Difficulty with imitation
- Rigid and/or odd play

Restricted, Repetitive Behaviors

- Unusually resistant to change/need for sameness
 - Often have difficulty with changes in routine and transitions
- Develop nonfunctional routines quickly
- Get mentally “stuck” on an idea or strategy
- Narrow, focused interests & circumscribed interests
- Preoccupation with parts of objects and/or unusual responses to sensory experiences
- Repetitive motor mannerisms

Sensory

- Affects all 5 senses and kinesthetic
- Hypersensitivity
- Visual often strongest channel for attention and learning
- Pain
- Cannot look and listen

Learning Style

- Literal/Concrete
- Receptive language weakness (Asperger's: in groups larger than 3 individuals)
- Visual learners
- Organization weakness
- Process the world in a narrow, intense, detailed manner
- Slow/Long response time
- Prompt “dependence”
- Generalization
- Special Skills
- Motivation

Changing Behavior

Rules of thumb:

- We will all do what is easier.
- Discussion: Hitting vs. speaking
- Safety first

ALWAYS!!!

Understand the function of the behavior

Teach a new/replacement behavior before decreasing a behavior

Determine Function

Possible functions:

- Tangible
- Escape
- Automatic reinforcement – Pleasure to Self
- Attention

Select Alternative Behavior

TEACH:

- Social skills
- Communication
- Relaxation
- A more acceptable behavior

Consequences alone do not teach the student

State/Teach the Behavior You Want

- Tell your child what you want him/her to do:
 - Sit down
 - Walk with me
 - Open the door
 - Hold the door
 - Hands on knees
 - Hands on desk/table

Avoid Power Struggles

**DO NOT ARGUE and
DO NOT GET INTO
POWER STRUGGLES**

- Bargain/Bribe
- Offer choices
- Divert attention – try visuals

Meltdowns

- Reactive strategies must be individualized
- Keep everyone involved safe
- Do NOT talk – the child thinks you are saying, “Throw a bigger tantrum.”
- Use visuals – show the one used for relaxation
- Marty Murphy tells us that she cannot find her words when she is stressed

Teaching how to use a relaxation system:

- Select a picture cue
- Teach and Practice while calm
and with the picture present
 - Practice in one setting
- Generalize to other settings

This becomes a new routine

Relaxation visual system
www.littlefriendsinc.org

Try using visuals

- Written words
 - Write what your child needs to say or do
 - Photographs
 - Boardmaker drawings
 - Draw
-
- Next slide: Stop/Think/Make a choice

Resources

- *The TEACCH Approach to Autism Spectrum Disorders* (www.autismsociety-nc.org)
- *Teach Me Language* (www.autismbooks.com)
- *Social Skills Solutions* (www.difflearn.com and www.asperger.net)
- *Social Thinking* by Michelle Winner Garcia (www.socialthinking.com)
- *Peer play and the autism spectrum: The art of guiding children's socialization and imagination* (Integrated Play Groups Field Manual) by Pamela Wolfberg (www.asperger.net)

Wolfberg website:

<http://coe.sfsu.edu/coe/faculty/moreinfo/wolfberg.php>

Resources

From www.asperger.net :

Super Skills: A Social Skills Group Program for Children with Asperger Syndrome, High-Functioning Autism and Related Challenges

The Hidden Curriculum by Brenda Smith Myles

Power Cards, Incredible 5 point Scale

Navigating the Social World by Jeanette McAfee

Social Skills Training; Social Skills Picture Book by Jed Baker

Exploring Feelings: Cognitive Behavior Therapy to Manage Anger by Tony Attwood

Exploring Feelings: Cognitive Behavior Therapy to Manage Anxiety by Tony Attwood

Resources

Highlighting tape: www.crystalspringsbooks.com

Bookstores

www.autismsociety-nc.org

www.autismbooks.com

www.difflearn.com

www.asperger.net

Information:

<http://www.autismcommunityconnection.com/>

<http://www.maapservices.org/>