

## **List of Possible Characteristics of a Person with Asperger's Syndrome (AS), High Functioning Autism (HFA) or Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)**

NO ONE WILL HAVE ALL THESE CHARACTERISTICS! These are POSSIBLE characteristics!  
Some of the characteristics may also be seen in conjunction with other diagnoses such as Noonan Syndrome, Tourette Syndrome, OCD, etc.

### **1. Cognitive Learning**

- A. Excellent rote memory in certain areas
- B. Unregulated fears; difficulty judging situations that create fear - may be overly fearful in safe situations, yet fearless in dangerous situations
- C. Very detail-oriented
  - 1. difficulty seeing overall picture or situation
  - 2. applies same level of detail to every situation whether appropriate or not
- D. May have exceptionally high skills in some areas, but very low skills in others, i.e., splinter skills, savant skills, or special talents
- E. Prefers concrete, rather than abstract, concepts

### **2. Language**

- A. Pronoun reversal
- B. Excellent vocabulary; may sound like "The Little Professor"
- C. Conversational language may appear stilted
- D. Speaks with stock phrases or phrases borrowed from other situations or people
- E. Makes honest, but often inappropriate observations
- F. Has difficulties adjusting volume and speed in speech
- G. Problems with prosody; irregular accenting and inflection used in conversation
- H. Literal language: difficulty understanding figures of speech, similes, parodies, allegories, etc.
- I. Speech may have started very early in development or may have started then stopped for a period of time
- J. Repeats last word or phrases several times (echolalia)
- K. Difficulty understanding some language, i.e., directional terms easily confused

### **3. Emotions**

- A. Rage/anger/hurt may all be expressed in unexpected ways
- B. Perfectionism
- C. Easily overstimulated by sound, crowds, lights, smells
- D. Inside feeling not matching outside behavior

### **4. Motor Skills**

- A. Difficulty with some skills requiring motor skill development
  - 1. Gross motor skills - riding bike, swimming, crawling
  - 2. Fine motor skills - handwriting, tying shoes
- B. May have some advanced, age-appropriate skills while other age-appropriate skills are delayed, i.e., tying shoes before climbing stairs
- C. Unusual walking gait or clumsiness
- D. Difficulty with motor skills that require visual perception accuracy, i.e., walking through a parking lot, revolving door or turnstiles, participating in sports, guiding a shopping cart

5. **Perseveration** - "The tendency of an idea, experience, or response to persist in an individual."  
 Webster's New World Dictionary  
 "per sev er a tion ( ... ) n. Psychology. Continued or repetitive activity or actions: 1. the uncontrollable repetition of a word, phrase, or gesture. 2. The spontaneous recurrence of a thought, image, phrase, or tune in the mind"  
 American Heritage Dictionary
- A. Obsession - the fact or state of being obsessed with an idea, desire, emotion, etc.
  - B. Compulsions - an irresistible, repeated, irrational impulse to perform some act
  - C. Fascination with rotation
  - D. Many and varied collections
  - E. Redirection very difficult (changing focus or thinking from one activity or idea to another)
  - F. One emotional incident can determine the mood for the rest of the day; can't let emotions pass quickly
6. **Social Cues**
- A. Difficulty reading facial expression and emotion in another person
  - B. Difficulty understanding body language
  - C. Difficulty understanding the rules of conversation
  - D. Difficulty understanding group interactions
  - E. Too much or too little eye contact
  - F. Difficulty understanding others' humor
  - G. Problems recognizing faces out of the usual setting or known context (face-blindness or prosopagnosia)
  - H. Stand-offish or overly friendly
  - I. May adopt others' behaviors, speech or dress habits to aid in more fluid communication and social adaptation
7. **Senses**
- A. Very sensitive or undersensitive to light, pain, taste, touch, sound, smell
    - 1. May have injuries of which they are not aware
    - 2. May experience physical pain from oversensitivity to light, sound, touch
    - 3. Very picky eater, both in selections of foods and in the way they are presented on the plate
    - 4. May crave specific touch, taste, smell, sight, sound, lights
  - B. Over-sensitive to change in surroundings, people, places
  - C. Over stimulation may result from too many verbal directions or instructions
8. **Comfort Skills**
- A. Desires comfort items to produce calming effect - blankets, stuffed animals
  - B. May need external (outside) stimulation for calming - brushing, soothing sound, rotating object
  - C. Comforted by minor motor stimulations - rocking, humming, tapping fingers, toes, sucking, rubbing fingertips in circles or on seams of clothing
  - D. May need separate space or area to decompress
  - E. Unusual attachment to object
  - F. Self-stimulation i.e., rocking, tapping, humming, etc., to increase concentration and attention or to calm down and relax
9. **Neurological Function**
- A. Erratic neurological function
    - 1. Attention difficulties
    - 2. Irregular sleep patterns

- B. Understanding and working with time concepts difficult
- C. Sensory processing disorders (how the brain processes information it receives from the sensory organs)
  - 1. Visual processing disorders
  - 2. Auditory processing disorders
  - 3. Sensory integration disorders

**10. New Situations, Patterns, People**

- A. Rule-oriented
- B. Prefers known patterns with little unexpected surprises
- C. Prefers familiar places, clothing, people
- D. Difficulty with transitions when changing activities
- E. Difficulty making and maintaining friendships (especially peer friendships); more successful with adults than other children or young people

NO ONE WILL HAVE ALL THESE CHARACTERISTICS! These are POSSIBLE characteristics! It is suggested that this document be used as a check list to mark the past and present characteristics.

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