

What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition that affects the way that people communicate and interact with others. Autistic people may display some of the characteristics in the two main areas below:

Social Communication and Social Interaction

Finds two-way conversations difficult



- May find it difficult to start, maintain, or end a conversation
- May find it hard to stay on topic

Needs help to interact with others



- May prefer to be alone
- May want to join in but not know how
- May find it difficult to form and maintain social relationships

Seems uninterested



- May avoid eye contact
- May not respond to name
- May appear to be in their own world

Needs help with communication



- May have delayed or limited speech
- Tends to interpret language literally
- May have a large vocabulary but struggle with social use of language

Difficulty reading social cues or situations



- May find it hard to read body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice
- May need help to understand what behaviour is appropriate in different environments

Behaviour, Interests and Activities

Repetitive behaviours



- May repeat the same action over and over e.g. lining up objects or watching the same movie repeatedly

Restrictive interests



- May have an intense interest in one topic (e.g. trains)
- May have an interest that is unusual (e.g. gluesticks)
- May have an unusual level of interest in a topic

Repetitive body movements



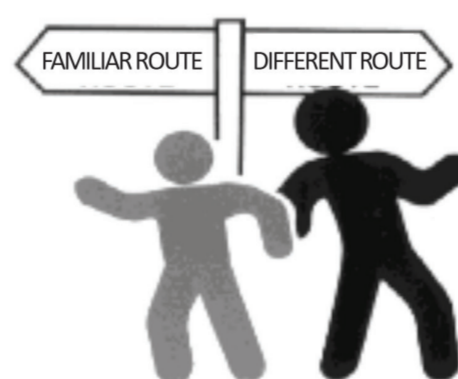
- May display echolalia (repeating words or phrases)
- May display hand-flapping, spinning, rocking etc

Under- or over-responsive senses



- May have unusual reactions to what they see, hear, smell, touch or taste etc

Prefers structure and routine



- May not like surprises or change
- Needs to be prepared and supported to try new things