

# Discovering the Unique Strengths and Needs of Children Living with Autism

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## DESCRIPTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), commonly known as autism, is a complex neurodevelopmental condition that affects how a child understands the world, communicates, and interacts with others. It is called a "spectrum" because the characteristics and intensity of symptoms can vary widely from one child to another. Some children may face significant challenges in speech and behavior, while others may show average or above-average intelligence but struggle with social interactions. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to autism, and effective support requires an awareness of its wide variation.

Although some children may exhibit symptoms earlier, early indicators of autism usually manifest within the first three years of life. These signs may include limited eye contact, delayed speech development, a lack of interest in playing with peers, or engaging in repetitive behaviors like rocking, spinning objects, or flapping hands. Some children may have unusual responses to sensory experiences, such as being overwhelmed by loud noises or certain textures. It is crucial to remember that a child does not definitely have autism if they exhibit one or two behaviors. A full developmental evaluation is needed to make an accurate diagnosis.

The causes of autism are not yet fully understood. However, research points to a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Certain genes are believed to increase the likelihood of developing autism, and some environmental influences during pregnancy or early infancy may also contribute. It is important to clarify that vaccines do not cause autism, a myth that has been widely disproven by medical research. Believing in such myths can delay important treatments and create unnecessary fear among parents.

Diagnosing autism involves a detailed process that usually includes observations by specialists, developmental history, and interviews with caregivers. Pediatricians may refer children to psychologists, neurologists, or speech and occupational therapists for further assessment. Early diagnosis is crucial because it allows interventions to begin at a young age when the

brain is most adaptable. Children can develop critical abilities in communication, learning, and everyday living with the support of therapies like occupational therapy, speech therapy, and Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Support in school is also vital for children with autism. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) can be developed to tailor the learning environment to each child's needs. Teachers, counselors, and parents work together to ensure that the child is supported academically and socially. Peer awareness programs and inclusive teaching strategies can help classmates better understand autism and promote a more accepting environment. The role of the family is equally important, as raising a child with autism can be emotionally and physically demanding. Parents often benefit from community support groups and professional guidance.

As awareness of autism grows, so does the understanding that children with autism have unique perspectives and abilities. Many individuals on the autism spectrum possess remarkable attention to detail, strong memory skills, or creativity in specific areas. Recognizing and nurturing these strengths is just as important as addressing their challenges. However, access to resources is still uneven across different communities, and more work is needed to ensure that all children with autism receive the help they need, regardless of their background.

## CONCLUSION

Child autism is a lifelong condition that presents both challenges and possibilities. Children with autism can lead happy, purposeful lives with early intervention, educational assistance, and community understanding. By moving away from stereotypes and embracing diversity, society can help create a world where every child, regardless of how they think or communicate, has the opportunity to succeed. Acknowledging each child's individual strengths is the first step towards empowerment and inclusion. Through compassion and informed action, we can build a future that values every voice on the spectrum.

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