



Rifka Schonfeld **STRATEGIES**

THE NEWSLETTER FOR OPTIMUM SUCCESS

TIPS ON SOCIAL SKILLS FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN

Autism vs. Asperger's Syndrome

Dear Readers,

This week's newsletter will discuss the difference between autism and Asperger's syndrome.

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QUESTION:

What is the difference between autism and Asperger's Syndrome?



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ANSWER:

Lately, the medical community has begun to change the labels that are associated with

autism. Children who have trouble communicating, have severely limited interests, and exhibit repetitive behaviors are determined to be on the *autistic spectrum*. There are many different categories that fall under the umbrella of the autistic spectrum. Some include: Autism, Aspergers Syndrome, and Pervasive Personality Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PPD – NOS). Here are the ways to recognize the differences between the three:

Autism

The New York Times explains that most parents suspect something is wrong by the time the child is 18 months old. Children with autism generally have difficulties in:

- *Pretend play*: Because children with autism think very concretely, they have trouble using their imaginations to create make-believe situations. This also leads to unusual distress when routines are changed.
- *Social interactions*: Children with autism often have trouble starting and maintaining a conversation. Perhaps because of this, children with autism prefer to play alone rather than interact with others.
- *Verbal and non-verbal communication*: Those with autism usually develop language more slowly and communicate with gestures instead of words. They also refer to themselves incorrectly (for example, he might say “you want food” when he means “I want water”).

Aspergers Syndrome

Aspergers Syndrome was first described in the 1940s by an Austrian pediatrician, Hans Asperger, who noticed that he had many patients with deficient social and communicative skills even though they had normal language development and cognitive abilities. Here are some areas that Aspergers Syndrome differs from autism:

- *Language Skills*: Though people with Aspergers have trouble with communicating and creating real relationships, their language development is on par with others their age. Regardless, their speech patterns might be unusual or their inflections inconsistent.
- *Intelligence Quota*: While children with autism may have high or low intelligence quotas (IQ), children with Aspergers almost always have high IQs. Their high aptitudes do not always translate to intelligent performance, as those with Aspergers often get caught up in irrelevant details and ideas.

Pervasive Personality Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PPD- NOS)

PPD-NOS is actually a catch-all term for any disorder that is similar to autism or Aspergers Syndrome, but does not share all of the characteristics of either. Those with PPD generally have milder symptoms than those with autism and Aspergers.

Diagnosis

The first step towards diagnosis is an assessment along with a developmental history and observation. Once the diagnosis has been established by a professional, different forms of treatment are available. As with most disorders that manifest themselves in childhood, studies show that autistic spectrum disorders are best when diagnosed and treated early.

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