Autism spectrum disorders are conditions that affect thousands of children and families. Currently there are no known cures for autism spectrum disorders, and while research is making marked progress in determining the causes of these disorders, there is not enough empirical data to generate a list of preventive measures.

The area in which research on the causes of autism spectrum disorders is in agreement with the fact that the childhood vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella is not the cause and the CDC and the medical community strongly encourage parents to have their children vaccinated according to the requisite schedule. The areas that concerns most parents of children with autism is their education and prospects for academic and career success. Some researchers agree that when it comes to autism spectrum disorders, parents should not focus so much on solutions or cures for their children, but should help them to build their innate talents.

Throughout history some of the world’s greatest minds are now believed to have been on the autism spectrum, many with mild to even severe Asperger’s syndrome. Perhaps, rather than looking for cures for children who present features compatible with autism spectrum disorders, researchers should be looking into ways in which those who may just be lesser mortals can better communicate to teach, and help these incredible children “to develop their genius” as quoted by Emily Dickinson.

Autistic: Not Who, or What Most Think

Some of the characteristics of individuals who fall in the autism spectrum disorder cluster are those that laypeople might call "weird" or "eccentric." Persons with an autism disorder certainly do march to the beat of a different drummer, and most have well above average intelligence, if not of extreme genius level. Based upon what is known of the famous classical composer Mozart, suggest that he may have had Asperger’s syndrome. From early childhood, he was obsessed with symbols, and had an innate ability to bring them together to create something. He was a child prodigy and savant. Others such as Emily Dickinson who is known for her eccentricity, her social phobias, and her ability to express her fears of death and the afterlife in the abstract was also suspected to have the disorder. In her poems, there is too a pattern. Persons with autism disorders are able to identify and make sense of patterns, shapes, numbers, symbols. Their minds are quick to recognize and coordinate meaning from these patterns. This is the reason that when things are out of order, the autistic child or adult will become extremely upset.
Obsessive compulsiveness is a key characteristic of individuals with autism. The least amount of discord can send the individual with autism into a rage that disrupts an entire day. They find it difficult to relax until what has been disordered has been reordered. Due to their inability to understand themselves, or to articulate to others how or why these things are upsetting, children will throw things, cry, or beat the floor.

They seem to delve deep within their primal selves to cry out to a world that does not see itself as they do. Often these children and adults are seen as dangerous, as mentally disturbed. This is not the case, they are misunderstood and frustrated. This is the reason why many functioning individuals with autism live solitary lifestyles and choose to remain alone in isolation.

Andy Warhol may have had Asperger's syndrome. He was considered weird, eccentric, and was often reclusive. Several well-known figures in the arts and sciences were and are. It is possible that Galileo could have been autistic, he was obsessed with the pattern of the stars and planets that form the constellations. Writers who use allegory do so because of the patterns. Lewis Carrol of the Narnia series, for example. He wrote these books to help him make sense of the Christian religion. So, he recreated biblical tales in the form of allegory, Carrol was also a bit of a recluse.

Recently deceased Harper Lee may also have been on the autism spectrum. She was reclusive, and wrote her only published work (until the prequel was discovered), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), which was an allegory to the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. This book was Lee's way of making sense of her life, and reconciling her place in privileged society as a White woman in the rural South. Lee also used symbols in the form of metaphor and allegory to express herself. Note: Boo Radley the eccentric recluse is an allegory of Harper Lee.

Modern celebrities today who are known to have brilliant minds are either confirmed or believed to have one of the autism spectrum disorders. These are individuals who are, again - eccentric, dressing, speaking, and acting outside societal norms - and often reclusive. Of these to note are: Darryl Hannah, Dan Akroid, and Courtney Love. How many musicians, actors, or artists who have come and gone through either death or seclusion were or are autistic? What separates these autistic individuals from those who are lost in the shuffle of special education and social services? With these and those of the past - they had an identifiable talent that was allowed to develop.
No Cure for the Brilliant

Doctors, teachers, and parents may be robbing children with autism of their genius by trying to force them into mainstream classes and society. There needs to be an increased research into education for doctors, teachers, and parents so that they can work together to help these incredible children reach their potential. The mind of an individual with autism is like a work of abstract art. No two people will see it the same way, only the individual with autism knows, but cannot relay it because no one else seems to speak his or her language. Autism spectrum disorders vary in range, and some may have co-morbidity factors with other disorders or mental retardation.

Regarding the mental retardation, this is a murky territory for what has been identified as a form of mental retardation but may simply be a feature of the autism that is not understood.

Routine and predictability are sources of comfort to the child or adult with an autism spectrum disorder. They respond to patterns, sequential events, and logic. They are not mentally retarded, in fact most are intellectually advanced. It is the parents and teachers of the child with autism who are lacking, and because of this, the child suffers and is left unable and unencouraged to develop his or her genius.

What Parents and Teachers Can Do

Some ways in which parents and teachers can help the child with autism are to pay attention to the activities that the child find most interesting. In younger children, the parent may notice that the child will stand still and listen intently when the court house or church bell sounds. This child has noticed two things: the bell sounds at the same time every day and there is a pattern. Buy the child an instrument - something where he or she can create musical patterns.

Provide lessons, but be advised that they must be structured and at the same time each day. If the child is interested in shapes and patterns, buy paint by number, water color books or canvases, then encourage the child to create his or her own paint by number art work. Same rule applies when buying legos, blocks, anything with colors, patterns, and sequence.

When a child with autism demonstrates interest in an activity, this is not random. There is nothing about the child or individual with autism that invites randomness. The interest is there because it connects with an innate ability of the child. By helping the child tap into that ability, and providing encouragement and opportunity to expand upon it, the parent is providing the child more than just an activity, the parent is providing the child a path to reach his or her potential.

Much of the frustration portrayed by individuals with autism is when they face impediments to their interests. Some individuals with autism find it hard to articulate in words what they need or want. In these cases, it is up to observant parents and teachers to recognize that thing that captures the attention of the child with autism and recognize that the interest is deliberate, not random, and not fleeting. Everything the individual with autism does is with deliberation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Source: london.anglican.org

Parents of children identified as having one of the autism spectrum disorders need support from family and professionals who are associated with the child. At times, being the parent of a child with autism might be a situation of “the forest for the trees.” A teacher might be the one to notice that the child with autism stand and study a painting or a poster for a prolonged period of time. It could be a family member or friend who recognizes that when a certain song is played on the radio that the child stands still, or moves a body part to the beat. These nuances can be lost on parents who are simply trying to get through the daily activities of living.

An avenue of support for parents of children with autism is therapy, not for the child, but for the parents. A therapist who understands and works with children with autism can help parents work through their own frustrations so they can become tuned in to their child in an effort to better meet his or her needs. It may also be helpful for parents of children with autism to find an online network of other parents who share the same frustrations, as well as joys.
These parents can become a valuable support system as well as vehicle for educational resources. Parents might also consider finding an online therapist for their own individual support. Online therapists are more available to clients than therapist found in a regular therapy. There is the ability to communicate by email, chat, and sometimes even group sessions as often as necessary and generally at a single monthly fee.

The most important thing for the parents of children who have one of the autism spectrum disorders is to understand is that their child is not broken and in need of repair. Their child is intricate, unique, and often highly intelligent.

References
Amend, Edward R.1, info@amendpsych.com, Patricia Schuler gpjs@berk.com, Kathleen Beaver-Gavin kbgavin@gmail.com, and Rebecca2 Heightsbecca@auburn.edu. "A Unique Challenge: Sorting Out the Differences Between Giftedness and Asperger’s Disorder.” Gifted Child Today 32, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 57-63.


Relationships
Resilience
Self Esteem
Sleep
Sociopathy
Stage Fright
Stereotypes
Stress
Success Stories
Synesthesia
Teamwork
Teenagers
Temperament
Tests
Therapy
Time Management
Trauma
Visualization
Willpower
Wisdom
Worry

Get The Support You Need From One Of Our Counselors

Get Started

Related Articles

How Autism Research Benefits Everyone
Does My Child Have Autism Spectrum Disorder?
12 Autism Facts To Be Aware Of
A Closer Look At Low-Functioning Autism
20 Famous People With Autism
Atypical Autism: Traits And Symptoms
An autistic savant is someone with autism who also has a single extraordinary area of knowledge or ability. According to Treffert, "As many as one in ten persons with autistic disorder have such remarkable abilities in varying degrees, although savant syndrome occurs in other developmental disabilities or in other types of central nervous system injury or disease as well. Whatever the particular savant skill, it is always linked to massive memory." It's important to note that "savants" and "talented autistic people" are not the same thing. There are many autistic people with ordinary talents. Wiltshire is an autistic savant: an individual with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who also has extraordinary talents of mind and coordination, naturally exceeding the abilities of professionals who may have practiced similar skills for a lifetime. For Wiltshire, however, recalling and drawing the cityscapes in the utmost detail is as easy and unremarkable as making a random doodle.