# UNDERSTANDING AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS



www.umcard.org

1-800-9-AUTISM

## Autism Spectrum Disorders: What We Know

- Complex developmental brain disorder
- Thought of as a spectrum of disorders
- Significantly impacts social skills & communication
- All racial, ethnic, and social classes are affected

- No known cause
- No medical test for diagnosis
- Diagnosis is based on observed behavior and social history
- No known "cure," but evidence-based approaches can improve outcome

## Autism Spectrum Disorders: What We Know

 Occur in approximately 1 in 88 children; it is around 4 times as common in boys as it is in girls

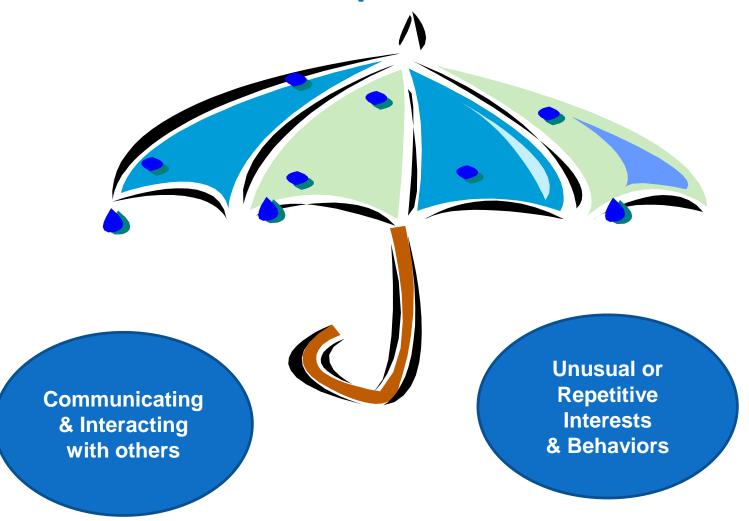
Centers for Disease Control – Prevalence of the ASDs in Multiple Areas of the U.S., Surveillance Years 2000 & 2002 http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dd/addmprevalence.htm

Approximately 20-25% develop seizures

Canitano, R. (2007). Epilepsy in autism spectrum disorders. European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 16(1), 61-66.

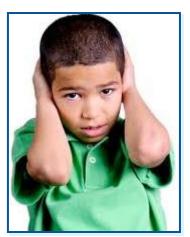
- Often occurs along with other disabilities
- Autism & IQ:
  - A wide range of IQ scores are reported (Chakrabarti, 2001)
  - Uneven development in skills/abilities

## The Autism Spectrum "Umbrella": Pervasive Developmental Disorders



## Other Challenges & Characteristics That May Be Seen

- Sensory processing & response to sensory input
- Fine and/or gross motor skills
- Attention & organization
- Motivation
- Uneven learning profile
- Anxiety or depression
- Problems eating or sleeping
- Challenging behavior









# Reducing Stress & Anxiety = A Positive Experience

- 1. Keep Language Simple
- 2. Use Visual Supports
- 3. Increase Predictability
- 4. Keep a Positive Attitude

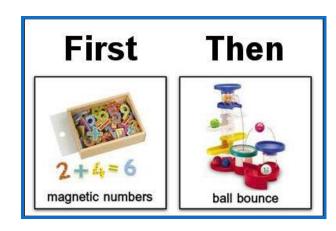






### **Benefits of Visual Supports**

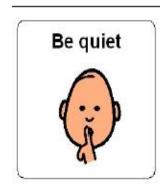
- Increases vocabulary
- Increases spontaneous communication
- Allows for choice-making
- Helps explain rules and expectations
- Increases predictability
- Helps with independence
- Decreases challenging behaviors/frustration



#### **Social & Behavioral Cues**

#### **Rules**

Helps childunderstand rulesand directions







### **Washing Hands**











### **Attitude**

- -Remember Three C's:
  - -Calm
  - -Consistent
  - -Compassionate
- -Be flexible and POSITIVE
  - -Avoid words like "stop" or "no";
  - -Tell the child what you WANT them to do
- -Most of all, have FUN!





#### Additional Resources

#### Facts about Autism

http://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/facts-about-autism

#### What is Autism

http://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism

#### **FAQs**

http://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/faq