

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

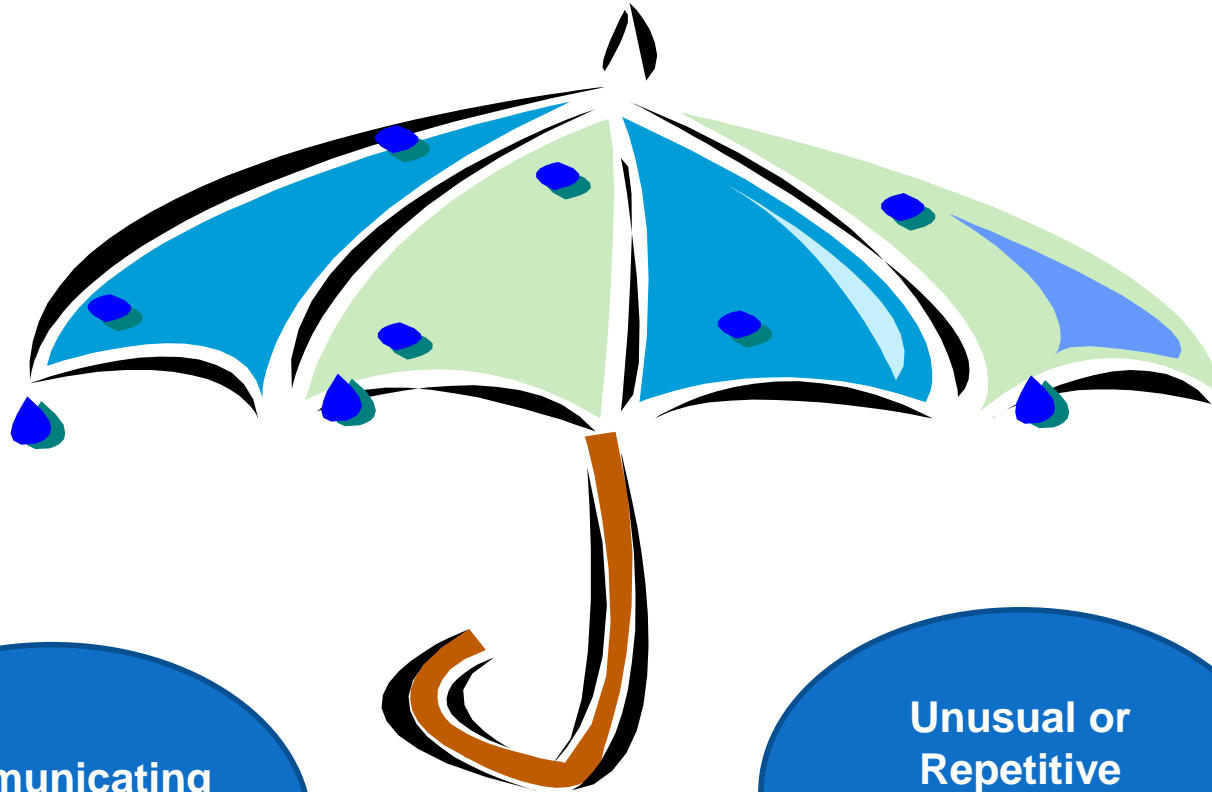
Canitano, R. (2007). Epilepsy in autism spectrum disorders. European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 16(1), 61-66.

- 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



**Communicating
& Interacting
with others**

**Unusual or
Repetitive
Interests
& Behaviors**

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



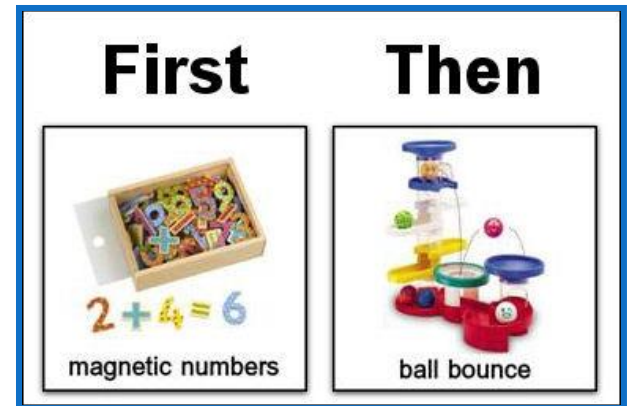
Reducing Stress & Anxiety = A Positive Experience

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



Benefits of Visual Supports

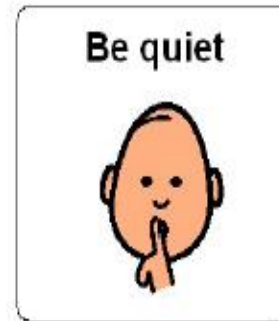
- Increases vocabulary
- Increases spontaneous communication
- Allows for choice-making
- Helps explain rules and expectations
- Increases predictability
- Helps with independence
- Decreases challenging behaviors/frustration



Social & Behavioral Cues

- Helps child understand rules and directions

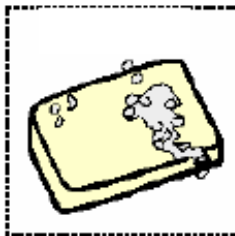
Rules



Washing Hands



turn water on



get soap



wash hands



turn water off



dry 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>