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THINK BIG 2017

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Disability Overview

What is autism?

Autism is a developmental disability that usually appears during the first three years of life. The cause is unknown. It affects how a person's brain works, but not all people with autism are affected the same way.

When a person has autism, they may have problems: letting you know what they want; thinking; understanding what other people say or want; ignoring sounds; ignoring things or people that are moving; ignoring lights; being touched; understanding social rules; showing affection; controlling their feelings; knowing

how to play with other kids; and dealing with changes.

Autism is a "spectrum disorder." That means that not everyone with autism has all the problems.

One person may have three of the problems listed while another person has only one. Some people with autism struggle to learn. Other people with autism are very smart and can do complicated math when they are 3 years old. Some people with autism have trouble being touched while others like to hug.

Many people with autism like to do things in the same order all the time and have

things arranged the same way. This helps them stay calm. Other people with autism have a very hard time ignoring noises, especially if they are upset or in a new situation. They may try to calm themselves by rocking, moaning, talking loudly or even screaming. The moaning, talking or screaming helps them drown out the other noises so they can calm down. They may also try to go under a desk or in a small, dark place where they feel safer.

Vocational Challenges

1. Using or understanding nonverbal means of communication e.g. eye contact, facial expressions, body language, gestures.
2. Communicating with peers
3. Difficulties in planning and organizing activities
4. Unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel
5. Self-image
6. School problems
7. Indulging in repetitive and stereotypical behavior
8. Problems with personal care

Considerations for Successfully Working Together

- Be positive, calm and unhurried.
- Take your cues from the person you are supporting. For example, if a person on the autism spectrum seems sensitive to touch, take their lead during the greeting
- Use direct, simple language and allow time for a response. Don't present too much information at once and avoid the use of idioms; such as "A penny for your thoughts." Too much extraneous chat may be confusing.
- Outline expectations. Clearly articulate what needs to be done and approximately how long it will take. Indicate when each step is completed. For example: "To apply to this program, I need you to do two things," or "This will take about 10 minutes. Is that okay?" or "Read this paper, and then sign here."
- If possible, provide visuals or written materials. If only verbal directions are provided, find a way to ensure the person you are serving understands each step.
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- Break tasks into smaller components and set a timeline for completion. When setting goals, be realistic and specific about the steps that will be needed to realize that goal.
- The use of a calendar is ideal to support people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Providing organizational support to assist with planning and prioritization whenever possible is encouraged.
- Learn what an individual's triggers may be and work to ensure that those triggers are minimized in your working relationship and in employment.

Resources

Autism Society of Colorado

550 S Wadsworth Blvd Suite 100
Lakewood, CO 80226
(720) 214-0794

info@autismcolorado.org

Our vision is for ALL Coloradans affected by autism have ready access to services and supports needed to be safe, educated, healthy, productive, and lead fulfilling lives. We serve individuals with autism, families, providers, and educators throughout the state of Colorado.

CDE—Resources Autism Spectrum Disorder

https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-autism_resources

Autism Speaks— Colorado

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/>