

# AUTISM 101

## WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism is a complex, lifelong developmental disability that affects essential human behaviors such as social interaction, the ability to communicate ideas and feelings, imagination, self-regulation, and the ability to establish relationships with others.



RELATIONSHIPS



SELF-REGULATION



COMMUNICATION



SOCIAL SKILLS

Autism is characterized in the DSM-IV by:

- Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction
- Restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities

1 Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges.

2 Often times, there are no differences in how people with ASD look, that would set them apart from others, but people with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, learn, and experience the world in ways that are different from most.

3 The learning and cognitive abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to significantly impacted.

4 A diagnosis of ASD now includes several conditions that used to be diagnosed separately: autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), and Asperger syndrome. These conditions are now all called autism spectrum disorder.

## THE STATS

The symptoms and characteristics of autism can present themselves in a wide variety of combinations, from mild to severe.

**1 in 54 children are diagnosed with autism.**

—> This is up from 1 in 88, six years ago, and 1 in 125, just eleven years ago.

**85% of autistic adults** with a college education are unemployed.

**3.5M+ individuals**

in the United States are on the autism spectrum; autism is the fastest-growing developmental disability in the U.S.



**The diagnosis rate for autism** is rising by 10-17% each year.

**500,000 individuals**

with autism spectrum disorder are transitioning to adulthood in the United States.

**Males are 4 times more likely** than females to be diagnosed with autism.

**88,000 individuals**

are on state waiting lists hoping to receive adult housing services; the rate continues to grow exponentially.



## GETTING THE HELP YOU NEED



**While no single specific cause of autism is known,** current research links autism to biological or neurological differences in the brain. The characteristic behaviors of ASD may or may not be apparent in infancy (18 to 24 months), but usually become obvious during early childhood (24 months to 6 years).

**Currently, there is no cure for autism.** However, continued research has provided a clearer understanding of the disorder and has led to better treatments and therapies that can positively change the associated behaviors.



**The Autism Society is the largest and oldest grassroots autism organization in the nation,** working hard every day to measurably improve the lives of all affected by autism throughout the lifespan. Our network provides advocacy, education, information and referrals, support, and the community at the local, state and national levels.

Our National Helpline offers our trained Information & Referral (I&R) Specialists to provide resources to services and supports across the country. To speak to an I&R Specialist directly, call **800-3-AUTISM (800-328-8476)**, or email [info@autism-society.org](mailto:info@autism-society.org).

Visit [www.Autism-Society.org](http://www.Autism-Society.org) to learn more.