



*Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism*

*Oregon*

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[www.oregonautism.com](http://www.oregonautism.com)



- **Our Mission:** *To empower individuals with Autism, their families and their service providers to improve the quality of their lives through support and information.*
- **Our Goals:** *To increase awareness of needs, interests, problems and solutions for people living with autism across a lifespan.*
- **6 core competencies areas are the means to implement the mission and goals:**
  - Education
  - Support
  - Services
  - Advocacy
  - Awareness
  - Policy

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# AUTISM SOCIETY

*Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism*  
*Oregon*

- **Established in 1981, state-wide, grass roots non-profit started by parents.**
- **State Chapter of the national organization, the Autism Society. ASO operates 8 regional chapters throughout Oregon**
- **ASO has 5 parents who have children with Aspergers Syndrome on the Board and 1 Self Advocate**
- ***More on our programs for adults later...***

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# What is Autism?

- **1940's: Leo Kanner, American Child Psychiatrist and Hans Asperger, Austrian Pediatrician, were the first to give a name of autism for children experiencing social impairments and other cognitive issues**
- **“Spectrum” Disorder: severe challenges to High Functioning Autism (HFA) and/or Asperger’s Syndrome.**
  - Asperger’s Syndrome or HFA getting most diagnosis than other cases of autism on the spectrum
- **PDD-NOS: Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified. Catch all-has some autistic like symptoms/behaviors**
- **Diagnosis under the Autism Arch: Asperger’s Syndrome, HFA & PDD-NOS (Pervasive Developmental Disability-Not Otherwise Specified)- DSM-5, May 2013, removing terms Aspergers & PDD-NOS**
- **Getting rid of myths:**
  - Autism is not caused by the way parents raise their children
  - Autism occurs in all ethnic, racial and economic groups
  - There is no cure for Autism but autism is treatable if captured early and the child gets the support they need. Early diagnosis is critical. It is a lifetime disability.

# Diagnosis Criteria

- Communication issues
- Social impairment/repetitive behaviors
- Fine & gross motor skills issue
- Sensory issues
- Seizures

# Why the increase?

- Autism is a genetic disorder: Genetic predisposition, genes identified
- People with autism have a compromised immune system/metabolic impairment that cannot repel environmental triggers.
- Identified environmental triggers which may be contributing to Autism Spectrum Disorder:
  - World pollution:
    - Upsurge in invention & production of new chemicals-nearly 100,000 chemicals that did not exist 100 years ago like:
      - Heavy metals-Methylmercury, arsenic, lead, cadmium, enter human bodies thru air, food, water
      - Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers (PBDEs): flame retardants found in furniture foam, computers, TV's
      - Perfluorinated Chemicals (PFC's): active ingredients in Teflon, Scotchgard, other fabric/carpet protectors
      - Pesticides: huge increase in use over past 85 years
      - Household products known to be toxic to developing nervous systems
      - Cosmetics-acetone in nail polish remover

## ***AT THE SAME TIME THAT WE HAVE SEEN A RISE IN AUTISM, WE ARE FACING AN UPSURGE IN MANY HUMAN & ANIMAL ILLNESSES***

- Increase in # of vaccinations since late 1980's-a few to about 29 in first 2 years of life
- Mercury laden preservative, thimerosal, in vaccinations. Voluntary recall in 2000
- Powerful combo vaccine like MMR also started in the late 1980's
- Flu shot has thimerosal in it

### **Changing prevalence over time:**

- 1 in 2500 in 1970's
- 1 in 166 in 1990's
- 1 in 150 in early 2000's
- 1 in 110, 10/5/09 data from Department of Health & Human Services.

# And Oregon?

– All of the above with emphasis on....

- Vitamin D deficiency due to lack of sun, Vitamin D bolsters immune system
- Pollution Cloud from SE Asia
- High manufacturing: pulp mills
- Large agricultural region using pesticides

➤ ***Statistical Result: Oregon has one of the highest rates of autism in the country, ranking about 3<sup>rd</sup> highest (Oregon Dept of Education, 2007)***

# More Statistics

- **Boys are 4 times more likely to have autism than girls**
- **It cost a family more than \$3 million dollars to care for a child with autism through the lifespan. The cost to raise a neuron-typical child through state college: approximately \$500,000 (Harvard Study, 2007)**

# Workplace Challenges

## For moderate to HFA and/or Aspergers

***Unemployment rate much higher than neurotypical people. 70% to 80% of adults with ASD unemployed***

***May not be good for generalist employment but good for specialist employment***

***Very good with numbers***

***Love animals***

***Intelligent people but need supported employment!***

# The interview

- Disability not obvious-disclosure hard for people with HF-ASD
- Speech delays and/or processing delays
- May have little eye contact
- Stress may create repetitive movements-styming
- Job Coach-practice, practice, practice!

# Communication Issues

## Challenges:

- Difficulty starting & ending a conversation
- Receptive and/or expressive speech issues
- Body language: may not understand how to use their own nor to read others
- Auditory processing issues: the inability or delay in processing and/or responding
- Literal thinkers

## Accommodations:

- May need prompting/word questions precisely
- Codes like “cliff notes”, “I need to get back to my work.”
- Repeat or rephrase questions
- Use simple/direct instructions
- Allow time for processing of information
- Be very clear in directions. Don't do good with generalities/nuances

# Social Impairment

## Challenges:

- Unusual behavior
- Rigid behavior
- Personal space issues
- Difficulty making eye contact
- Doesn't get jokes or abstract thoughts
- May make inappropriate comments
- Laugh or giggle at inappropriate times

## Accommodations:

- Disclosure to employer
- Employee training
- Avoid slang/jokes
- Train person with ASD about appropriate comments, arms length rule for personal space. Circle program

# Sensory Challenges

## Challenges:

- Avoidance of sensory triggers
- Can bring on repetitive or odd behavior
- Lights, sound, touch
  - Office lights, fluorescent bulbs
  - Cubicles, lots of chatter, white noise
  - Western society is very touch-feely
  - Hand shakes can be difficult

## Accommodations:

- Lower lighting/special lights/lamps
- Locate office in quieter space
- Provide breaks
- Provide “Quiet Room”, “Safe Place”
- Employer/employee training

# Medical

- Seizures-40% of people with autism have a seizure disorder
- Other co-morbid conditions like depression, anxiety, ADHD, OCD, Tourettes may exist
- Many people with autism are on special diets like the Gluten Free/Casein Free diet
- Supplements & other meds

# Self Advocacy

- Hard time asking for help:
  - Not sure how to do it
  - Afraid of repercussions
- Higher functioning the person, harder time they have disclosing their disability

# More helpful accommodations

- Give very clear direction. Avoid generalities
- Write out detailed schedule (include breaks and lunch in schedule)
- Visuals assignments/supports
- Give priority list at beginning of week
- Make accommodations even if seem odd
- Calm demeanor creates calm demeanor

# Disclosure

- Recommended because get more accommodations & understanding
- Employee training-reduces resentment
- People with high functioning ASD don't want to use it as an excuse

# Demonstrates Good Employee Characteristics

- Attention to detail
- Fixation on one or few things: specialist employment
- Proud of work, accomplishments
- Job market more difficult leads to dedication & stability
- Not big chit chatters
- People with ASD are truth tellers-very difficult to lie or be dishonest

# People with moderate to HF-ASD

- Need supported employment team
- High unemployment rate not for lack of desire but lack of support
- Finding the RIGHT employment opportunity
- Good *community* awareness for all employees

Win-win for all-  
society & let's not forget the parents!

# ASO Programs for Adults

- Support Groups:
  - In Portland: Young adults with ASD (20's and 30's) and support group for parents of adult children. Held at the PSU campus
  - In Eugene: Social Skills Class & Social Activities for adults. Takes place on alternating months. Visit ASO's website for more details, [www.oregonautism.com](http://www.oregonautism.com).
- ASO's new & improved on-line resource guide: Under "More Resources". Resources for Adult Day Care, Diagnosis, Counseling, Employment, Housing
- Other Support Groups: ASAN, Portland Aspergers Network, Roger Meyers group. All listed on ASO's website at [www.oregonautism.com](http://www.oregonautism.com).
- ASO Volunteer opportunities: Autism Walk-a-thon, joining the ASO Adult Subcommittee

# Helpful Websites

- Autism Society of Oregon: [www.oregonautism.com](http://www.oregonautism.com)
- Autism Society (formerly known as Autism Society of America): <http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer>
- [www.aspie.com](http://www.aspie.com), website celebrating individual differences
- [www.auties.org](http://www.auties.org), developed by Donna Williams, suggested employment, chat room for autism friendly pals
- Book by Temple Grandin, “Developing Talents”
- Coulter Video: <http://www.coultervideo.com/>