

Understanding Autism: General Awareness

Fact Sheet

What is Autism?

- Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a neurodevelopmental difference that affects how a person communicates, interacts, and experiences the world.
- Autism is a spectrum, meaning each autistic person is unique and may have different strengths and challenges.

Key Characteristics

- Differences in social communication and interaction (e.g., understanding social cues, making eye contact, starting conversations)
- Repetitive behaviors or routines (e.g., lining up objects, repeating phrases)
- Intense interests in specific topics or activities
- Sensory sensitivities (e.g., to sounds, lights, textures, tastes, or smells)

Strengths Often Seen in Autistic Individuals

- Strong attention to detail
- Excellent memory for facts or routines
- Unique problem-solving skills
- Creativity and original thinking
- Honesty and reliability

Common Challenges

- Difficulty understanding social rules or nonverbal cues
- Anxiety in unfamiliar or unpredictable situations
- Sensory overload from bright lights, loud noises, or crowded spaces
- Challenges with changes in routine

Communication Styles

- Some autistic people use spoken language, while others may use sign language, communication devices, or picture cards.
- Direct, clear, and concrete communication is often most effective.

How to Support Autistic Individuals

- Be patient and give extra time for responses
- Use clear, simple language and visual supports
- Respect sensory needs and offer quiet spaces if needed
- Accept and include autistic people in all activities

- Avoid making assumptions—ask about preferences and needs

Myths and Facts

- **Myth:** All autistic people are the same
Fact: Autism is different for everyone.
- **Myth:** Autistic people don't want friends
Fact: Many autistic people want friends but may need support with social skills.
- **Myth:** Autism is caused by parenting or vaccines
Fact: Autism is not caused by parenting or vaccines.

Prevalence

- Autism affects about 1 in 100 people worldwide.
- It occurs in all cultures, races, and economic backgrounds.

Acceptance and Inclusion

- Understanding and accepting differences helps create supportive communities.
- Small adjustments and kindness can make a big difference.

For more information, visit [canva.com](https://www.canva.com) or contact local autism organizations.