



Signs of Autism: a guide for justice system professionals

Repetitive Behaviors

- Flapping, flicking, spinning, rocking
- Focuses on one topic/detail that is unrelated to the conversation
- Scripting or repeating sounds
 - o (e.g. repeat lines of a television show or movie)

Social Communication

- Flat vocal affect
 - o (e.g. voice stays at one tone with little to no inflection)
- Unusual facial grimaces
- Avoidance of eye contact or blank stare throughout conversation
- Individual has no friends or is socially isolated
- May appear stubborn, defiant, or non-compliant with requests
- Atypical or stiff body language flat facial expressions.
- Overly literal interpretation of questions
- Increased aggravation/anxiety during interview
- Overly agreeable
- Appears to have a lack of sympathy or empathy

Individual History

- Reported history of other developmental delays/diagnoses
- History/current substance use/abuse
 - o due to social desirability, self-medicating
- Other concerns about individual's development
- Does not display age-appropriate knowledge of sex and sexual boundaries

Mental Processes

- Displays poor impulse control
 - o (e.g. constantly touching an object despite being told/given consequences)
- Processing delay/Unable to follow a chain of commands
 - o (e.g. put your coat on the chair, sit down, and put your phone on the table)

Sensory Behaviors

- May be sensitive to touch
 - o especially if unexpected
- Overwhelmed by sensory environment
 - o (e.g. covers ears, eyes, nose)

Key Signs

Have a question about autism? Contact the ASERT Resource Center at 877-231-4244

 Lack of Eye Contact

 Flapping, Flicking, Spinning

 Sensitive to Touch

 May Appear Stubborn/Resistant

 Scripting Words, Phrases, Noises

 Processing Delays