

Autistic Spectrum Disorders

What is Autism/Aspergers?

(1) Qualitative impairment in social interaction, as manifested by at least two of the following:

- (a) Impairment in the use of multiple nonverbal behaviors, such as eye-to-eye gaze, facial expression, body postures, and gestures to regulate social interaction
- (b) Failure to develop peer relationships appropriate to developmental level
- (c) A lack of seeking to share enjoyment, interests or achievements with other people
- (d) Lack of social or emotional reciprocity

(2) Qualitative impairments in communication as manifested by at least one of the following:

- (a) Delay in, or total lack of, the development of spoken language (not accompanied by an attempt to compensate through other modes of communication such as gesture or mime)
- (b) In individuals with adequate speech, marked impairment in the ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others

- (c) Stereotyped and repetitive use of language or idiosyncratic language
- (d) Lack of varied, spontaneous make-believe play or social imitative play appropriate to developmental level

(3) Restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities, as manifested by at least one of the following:

- (a) Preoccupation with one or more restricted patterns of interest that is abnormal either in intensity or focus
- (b) Inflexible adherence to specific, nonfunctional routines or rituals
- (c) Stereotyped and repetitive mannerisms
- (d) Preoccupation with parts of objects

Problems these children may experience in your unit:

- Difficulty using the right tone and volume of speech.
- Not recognizing personal space; poor eye contact
- Trouble understanding age-appropriate humor and slang expressions.
- Many are clumsy and have visual-perceptual difficulties.
- They may have sensory integration issues.
- Learning difficulties are common.
- Difficulties tolerating changes in their daily routine.
- In adolescence, social demands become more complex. Subtle social nuances become important. The camper with Aspergers may not accurately "read" those social nuances, and therefore may respond inappropriately.
- Individuals with Asperger's have difficulty understanding which of their peers might want to be a friend.
- Because of their social naiveté, the campers may not realize when someone is trying to take advantage of them.
- They Can be especially vulnerable to manipulation and peer pressure.
- Interest in playing with dolls and having imaginary friends may continue into the teen years.
- They may come across as aloof or unfriendly.
- They often memorize scripts when they have to interact with others
- They often prefer to be by themselves, or to stick to the adults or elves.

How to help (This is beneficial for ALL)

- Post the day's schedule. Review it in the morning, and refer to it as the day goes on.
- Provide a quiet spot in the unit where one can go to regroup if they feel overwhelmed.
- Make sure the other campers include them in games, lunch, as a buddy, etc.
- Make sure they sits with the campers(not the adults or elves only) at lunch, during activities.
- Allow them to sit out an activity (water play, archery) but insist that the camper accompany the group to the activity. They May be willing to join in after having a chance to size up the situation.
- Don't let the other campers tease or make fun . Remember the older campers can be very subtle about this! It's entirely possible that a couple of the campers may know her from their schools.
- Elves with Asperger's would do best working with much younger girls (Tags, Daisy/Brownie Units) or in a core area, but make sure they can be a good role model.