

Most Important Things to Know and Understand about Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

1. **Autism is a SPECTRUM disorder.** Every individual is different!
2. To truly understand the student you work with, **you must understand and identify the characteristics of autism he exhibits.**
3. **Behavior is Communication!!** When a behavior occurs, try to figure out what the student is trying to tell you. Imagine what it would be like to have difficulty communicating basic wants and needs.
4. **Autism is a SOCIAL disorder!!** Every aspect of social interaction is going to be more challenging for an individual with autism. They may easily misinterpret social situations or even overreact in certain situations. Social skills that will be compromised include having conversations, play skills, leisure skills, initiating to adults and peers, perspective taking skills, etc.
5. **Almost ALL individuals with ASD are VISUAL LEARNERS.** When the student you work with is struggling, ask yourself if the expectations and directions are clear enough or if they can be clarified through visual means.
6. **Even the smartest, most verbal students often have deficits in or difficulties with receptive language.** This means that the student you work with might have trouble following directions, listening to stories, understanding rules, etc.
7. **Providing information and making events predictable** might be the best preventative strategy for an individual with ASD.
8. **Behavior is impacted by both student and environmental challenges.** This means that although we always look at the environment to see what can be changed to better support the student, the behavior is also a result of the autism.
9. **Students with ASD are typically not internally motivated.** Because of this, many external rewards are necessary. If the student you are working with is struggling, ask yourself what their motivation is to complete their work or follow the rules.
10. **Do not take misbehavior personally!** Students with ASD can have unpredictable behavior and it is not always easy to identify the cause of the behavior. Please do not think that the student is "out to get you" or does not like you.