

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by persistent challenges in social interaction, communication, and restricted or repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities. It encompasses a wide range of symptoms and severity levels, hence the term "**spectrum**." Some common characteristics of ASD include **difficulties in understanding and expressing emotions, challenges in interpreting social cues, repetitive behaviours** (such as hand-flapping or rocking), **adherence to routines, and sensory sensitivities**. ASD typically emerges in early childhood and lasts throughout a person's lifetime, although symptoms and severity can vary greatly among individuals. People with ASD go on to live successful, fulfilling lives.

Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) require a tailored approach to meet their unique needs. Here's a list of strategies that people might find helpful to know.

- **Visual Supports:** Visual aids such as schedules, charts, and diagrams help clarify and facilitate communication.
- **Structured Environment:** A predictable environment with clear routines and consistent rules help reduce anxiety.
- **Clear and Concrete Instructions:** Clear, concise, and concrete instructions, breaking down tasks into manageable steps helps facilitate understanding.
- **Sensory Considerations:** People with ASD are particularly sensitive to sensation. Sensory breaks away from sensory stimulation can be helpful.
- **Social Skills Instruction:** Teach explicit social skills through direct instruction, role-playing, and **modelling** to help people with ASD navigate social interactions and develop friendships.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** A variety of positive reinforcement strategies such as praise, rewards, and preferred activities help to motivate and encourage desired behaviours.
- **Self-Regulation Techniques:** Self-regulation strategies such as deep breathing, mindfulness, and self-monitoring help to manage emotions and behaviour.