

# Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders

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*for communication, behavior, and development*

# Training Goals



At the end of this training you should be able to...

1. Define Autism Spectrum Disorders.
2. Give 3 examples of behavioral challenges for people with ASD.
3. Take away many tips to be accessible and welcoming to all, especially those people on the autism spectrum.

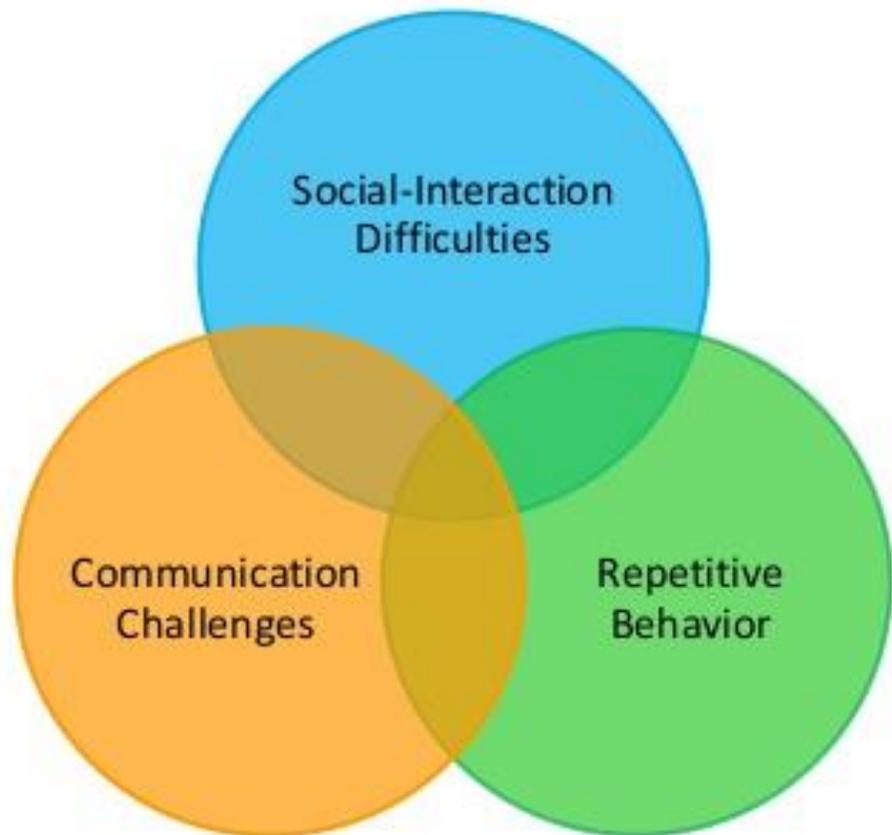
# What is an autism spectrum disorder?



- An autism spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulty with
  - socialization,
  - communication, and
  - restrictive and repetitive behaviors.
- Autism occurs across race and socio-economic class.

# What are the Symptoms?

## 3 Core Symptom Interactions



| Early Signs of Autism                      |  |
|--|--|
| <u>Before 12 Months</u>                    | <u>After 12 Months</u>                     |
| No joyful expressions                      | No words (16 months)                       |
| No sharing of sounds or facial expressions | No meaningful two-word phrases (24 months) |
| No babbling                                | Lack of social interaction                 |
| No gestures such as waving or pointing     | Prevalence of behavioral issues            |

# ASD is a Spectrum in Many Domains

## Measurable Intelligence

Severely impaired-----Gifted

## Social integration

Aloof-----Passive-----Active but odd

## Communication

Nonverbal-----Verbal

## Behavior

Intense-----Mild

## Sensory

Sensory seeking-----Sensory aversive

## Motor

Uncoordinated-----Coordinated



# How many people have autism?

- 2018 statistic: 1:59 children in the United States has ASD
- Nearly 5x more common in boys
  - Boys (1:42)
  - Girls (1:189)
- Why the increase?
  - An actual increase in cases
  - Increases in requests for service
  - Increased assessment opportunities
  - Changes in diagnostic criteria
  - Better awareness by pediatricians, teachers, parents



# What causes Autism Spectrum Disorders?



There is **no known single cause** for ASD

- Genetic influences are likely most important risk factor
  - But not only (MZ twin concordance < 100%)
- Cause is likely multifactorial
  - Good agreement in general that autism is caused by abnormalities in brain development, neurochemistry, and genetic factors

# Treatment Options

- **There is no cure for autism**, but there are several hundred proposed “treatments” for autism which vary significantly in research to support their effectiveness.



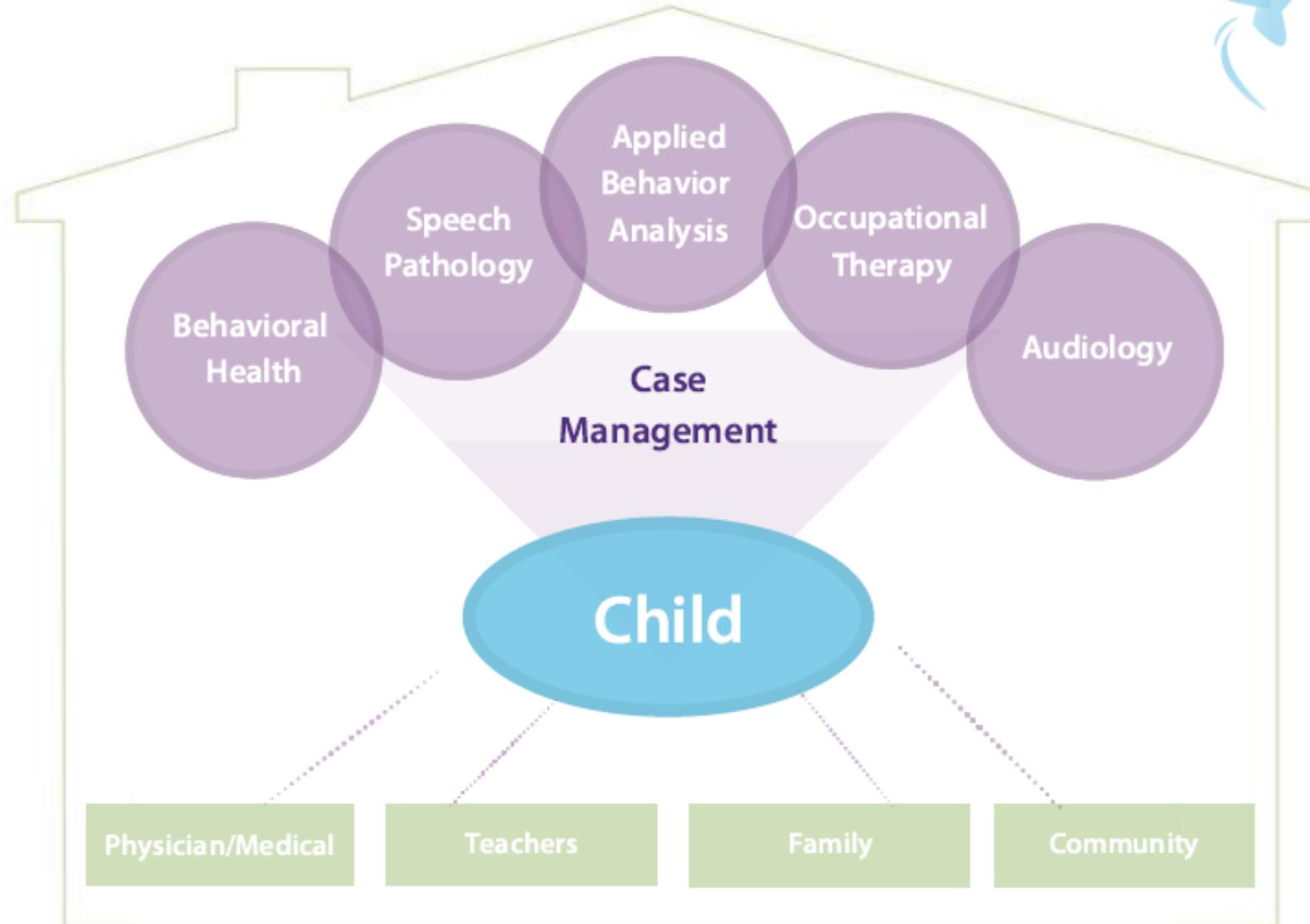
# Characteristics of Treatment of Autism

- Focus on Early Intervention
- Intensive therapies
- Individualized for each person with autism
- Will focus on functional language development early on in treatment if language is delayed.
- A team approach to treatment is best!
- Treatment should also include the family!



# The Emerge Difference

Collaborative. Interdisciplinary. Under One Roof.



# What is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)?



# A Primary Goal of Therapies: Functional Communication

- Vocal communication
  - Requesting
  - Labeling
  - Answering and asking questions
  - Following instructions.
  - Imitation





# Functional Communication: Sign Language



# ASD and the Family

1. Emotional Impact
  - a. Overwhelmed
  - b. Isolated
  - c. Frustration
  - d. Guilt
  - e. Resentment
  - f. Anger
  - g. Relief
2. Marital Impact
3. Sibling Impact
4. Financial Impact



# Common Social and Behavioral Challenges for People with Autism and Sensory Challenges

- Not motivated by social praise or social interaction.
- Preference to be alone during play.
- Poor eye contact
- Many skills have to be taught directly instead of be picked up from the natural environment.
- Limited range of interests
- Self-stimulatory behaviors and negative behaviors
- Poor adaptability to change
- Higher risk of depression.
- May have a co-occurring diagnosis of intellectual disability, ADHD, seizure disorder, feeding disorder, sleep disorder, etc...



# Tips on how to help

## Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew Ellen Notbohm

1. I am a child.
2. My senses are out of sync.
3. Distinguish between won't (I choose not to) and can't (I am not able to).
4. I'm a concrete thinker. I interpret language literally.
5. Listen to all the ways I'm trying to communicate.
6. Picture this! I'm visually oriented.
7. Focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can't do.
8. Help with social interactions.
9. Identify what triggers my meltdowns.
10. Love me unconditionally.

Thank you!

Questions and General Discussion