**What is ASD?**

ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) is also called autism. ASD is a disability that affects how people see the world and interact with other people. You can’t tell that someone has ASD just by looking at them. ASD lasts for all of a person’s life but they can still do a lot of things and learn a lot of skills.

**What causes ASD?**

People have ASD because something in their brain has grown differently. Nobody knows what makes this happen. People are born with it, though it may not be noticed while they are very young. You cannot catch it like a cold or flu.

**What does it mean?**

If someone has ASD, their brain finds it much harder to make sense of the world around them. They may not understand what is happening, or why. They often prefer to be on their own. They may react in unusual ways to what is going on around them.

People with ASD are usually affected in four main ways:

• ***Social skills -*** They may have problems with social skills. They may find making friends and getting on with people more difficult. They may find it difficult to join in with groups and to make new friends or find it hard to understand what other people are thinking or feeling. They often do not understand body language. They don’t realise that a smile means you are pleased, or a hug means you like them. They may not understand how to behave, when to be quiet, when to wear clothes, what things are private. They find it very hard when there are lots of people around or lots of things happening at the same time.

• ***Imagination and routines* -** They may find it difficult to use their imagination. This may mean they can’t join in ‘make-believe’ games. They may like doing the same things at the same times every day and get very upset when these routines are broken. They may like to have things always in the same place. They may be very good at concentrating on one activity at a time, and they may be really good at something like maths, art or music.

• ***Talking and listening -*** They find talking and listening much more difficult. They may find it hard to link words with their meanings and because of this they may find it difficult to understand what other people say. They may not be able to speak, or when they do speak, they find it hard to say what they mean. They may copy what people say, or only talk about their favourite subject and they may ask the same question lots of times.

• ***Having sensitive senses*** *-* Some people with ASD are also affected through their senses. Their hearing may be very sensitive and they may not like loud noises. They may have a very strong sense of taste and find some foods really horrible. They may also dislike being touched or hugged. Some people with ASD may also have epilepsy. Some people with ASD may also have difficult behaviour.

**What help is there?**

There is no cure for ASD but people who have it can be helped and can help themselves to make the most of their abilities. With lots of help, people with autism can improve all the time.

*Taken from* [*https://www.youngsibs.org.uk/info-and-advice/learn-about-conditions/autism/*](https://www.youngsibs.org.uk/info-and-advice/learn-about-conditions/autism/)