



Understanding Autism

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Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorders and Pervasive Development Disorders



Developmental disorders can be pervasive or specific, an Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD, comes under the category of 'pervasive'. The term Pervasive Development Disorder, or PDD, refers to a category of behavioural and psychological development disorders which affect a wide range of mental and physical functions and are not restricted to one specific area of development. The sufferer will likely exhibit a range of disabilities affecting a variety of their natural functions.

In contrast, a Specific Developmental Disorder, or SDD, will have a specific area of effect: Examples include dyslexia (inability to learn reading or writing skills), dyspraxia (inability to perform certain movements), dyscalculia (difficulty in learning or understanding mathematics) and dysgraphia (inability to write, whilst able to read). So PDDs and SDDs are often presented in contrast to each other to highlight their area of affect.

Within the category of Pervasive Development Disorders (PDDs) is the Autism Spectrum. Since each case of Autism is unique, and every individual sufferer will experience it in a unique way the term Autism can be conceived of as referring to a scale of measurement, or spectrum, where severe cases are at one end and milder cases the other. The type, severity and quantity of Autism traits exhibited by an individual will determine the level of their case of Autism.

