

1st Meeting: “what is autism” ?

Lecture 2:

What do we mean by Spectrum and Types Of Functionality

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the concept of the word “**spectrum**” and what does that mean in understanding ASD
- Understanding about the **types of functioning** and levels of support needs
- Get a glimpse on how the “**autistic**” brain works

THE CONCEPT OF “SPECTRUM” IN ASD

What about ASD?

The word “Spectrum” is used in Autism to pinpoint, that although the core and universal manifestations of the disorder **are *the difficulties in social communication and interaction*** and ***the repetitive behaviors and restricted interests***, there is a vast difference among people with the same diagnosis, in terms of:

- The type of symptoms.
- How the symptoms are manifested.
- The severity of the symptoms themselves.
- The overall ability of the individual to cope with everyday life



THE CONCEPT OF “SPECTRUM” IN ASD

correlation between functionality and levels of support

- An idea of function is central to the public understanding of the ways in which **autism is thought to operate in the world**
- Functioning is, it **appears**, what people with autism do, and they do it to **different levels**.
- Each person with ASD is further “**diagnosed**” depending on how severe their **disorder** is and how much **support they need in their daily life**.
- The **three levels** of ASD help to prescribe appropriate therapies for the **unique needs of their patients**. These therapies can help the person with ASD make the most of their strengths and improve their **social, language, and behavior skills**.

Levels of functioning or High, Medium and Low-Functioning Autism

Talking about people in the Spectrum and their functionality/or support needs

It has been long since the terms **High and Low-functioning autism** have been **massively** used to help us understand the needs and abilities one person has, however:

These terms are arbitrary and used in the diagnostic classifications

- Can be overly misleading about the abilities one has (i.e. prioritizes some skills such as language skills as more critical over other for a persons life)
- It is ableist and making discriminations over the people labelled as low-functioning
- Can create prejudice over a child's or a person's abilities (i.e people considered as low-functioning will be excluded from typical education, Temple Grandin)
- Can lead to misleading that people characterized as high-functioning do not need any support



Levels of Functioning

Levels of Functioning

In 2013 DSM-V, apart from integrating autism entities in a unified diagnosis called from then on ASD, also introduced 3 levels of functioning based both on the core symptoms of social communication and restrictive repetitive behaviors.

The following levels range from least to most severe:

- **Level 1 :Requiring support**
- **Level 2: Requiring substantial support**
- **Level 3: Requiring very substantial support**



Levels of Functioning/support needs



Level 1: Requiring Support

1. **Social communication:**

Without supports in place, deficits in social communication cause noticeable impairments. Has difficulty initiating social interactions, and demonstrates clear examples of atypical or unsuccessful response to social overtures of others. May appear to have decreased interest in social interactions.

2. **Restricted, repetitive behaviors:**

Rituals and repetitive behaviors (RRB's) cause significant interference with functioning in one or more contexts. Resists attempts by others to interrupt RRB's or to be redirected from fixated interest



Level 2: Requiring Substantial Support

1. **Social communication:**

Marked deficits in verbal and nonverbal communication skills; social impairments apparent even with supports in place; limited initiation of social interactions and reduced or abnormal response to social overtures from others.

2. **Restricted, repetitive behaviors:**

RRB's and/or fixated interests appear frequently enough to be obvious to the casual observer and interfere with functioning in a variety of contexts. Distress or frustration is apparent when RRB's are interrupted; difficult to redirect from fixated interest.



Level 3: Requiring Very Substantial Support

1. Social communication

Severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills cause severe impairments in functioning, very limited initiation of social interactions, and minimal response to social overtures from others

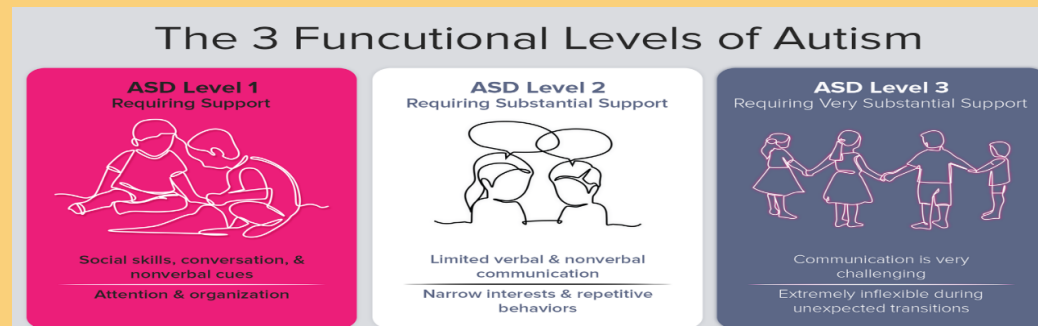
2. Restricted, repetitive behaviors:

Preoccupations, fixated rituals and/or repetitive behaviors markedly interfere with functioning in all spheres. Marked distress when rituals or routines are interrupted; very difficult to redirect from fixated interest or returns to it quickly.

Levels of Functioning

Why prefer using the 3 levels of functioning/ support needs

- It is a part of a diagnosis
- It is used to guide of how much assistance a person needs throughout his/ hers daily life
- It does not take in mind the estimated IQ but the actual needs
- It can be very exact on what a person will need and how to provide
- It is also a very useful and irrefutable tool for parents to claim their children's right from social services
- It is not ableist



How does the autistic brain think

Cognitive profile:

It is because of the afore mentioned differences in those brain areas, that people diagnosed with ASD tend:

- To think and learn in a visual way
- To be precise or detail oriented
- To have excellent memory abilities
- To engage in routines or have special interests
- To like order
- To respond better to rules
- To thrive in unambiguous environment



How does the autistic brain think



It is also because of all these that:

- One may have islets of abilities
- One may excel in tasks where there are crystal clear rules and info
- One may have a hard time to understand verbal communication
- One may have a hard time to understand other people's feelings

Crucial Considerations to always keep in mind

ASD is:

- Considered to be a lifelong impairment.
- A neurodevelopmental disorder that affects how people process stimuli from their environment and respond to them.
- A condition that will require for the person diagnosed different levels of support throughout their life.

Crucial Considerations to always keep in mind



ASD isn't:

- The end of world.
- Necessarily a crippling impairment. It can be **if we choose** to see it in that way.
- Something static, the support needed by a person can vary throughout different life stages.
- Something that will go away, you need to adhere time and effort.

- **Does NOT define personality, but rather the way one perceives their environment. With the necessary support people with ASD can live, happy and fulfilling lives**

We don't need to change the person with ASD

We only need to help them cope with a world that is built for neurotypicals

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