

## ***Positive interactions in the learning environment***

The student may benefit from:

- reduced visual and noise distractions
- awareness of major need for personal space and privacy of thoughts
- appreciation that verbal communication is difficult
- little or no group work
- explicit, written expectations of outcomes and clear timelines for work completion and assessment
- appreciation of the difficulties of working to timelines, and assistance with this
- clear, small work goals rather than one big project or goal
- assistance in sequencing activities
- abstract thoughts presented in a more concrete manner
- memory aid and study strategies e.g. notebook, calendar and audio equipment
- appreciation of special talents and an opportunity to showcase them
- appreciation of difficulties in tolerating quickly paced changes.

**Adjustments** may need to be provided to enable a person with a disability to gain equitable access to education. Reasonable adjustments may include:

- modifying or providing equipment
- modifying assessment procedures
- changing course delivery
- modifying educational premises.

Adjustments must be determined in consultation with the student concerned.

For further advice contact your  
***TAFE NSW Teacher/Consultant***

### ***Other sources of support***

#### **Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)**

*www.autismnsw.com.au*

#### **Choosing Your Path—**

#### **Disclosure: It's a Personal Decision**

*http://pubsites.uws.edu.au/rdlo/disclosure/*

#### **Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission**

*www.hreoc.gov.au*

#### **Disability Discrimination Act 1992**

#### **Disability Standards for Education 2005**

NEW SOUTH WALES  
DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING



**TAFE**  
NSW

# **Autism Awareness**

***Some advice and strategies  
for teachers***

TAFE NSW

TAFE NSW

## What are Autism Spectrum Disorders?

Autism Spectrum Disorders (commonly referred to as 'Autism') include:

- Autistic Disorder (also known as infantile or childhood autism)
- Asperger's Disorder
- Atypical Autism.

Autism Spectrum Disorders are lifelong disabilities affecting 1 in 100 Australians. People with Autism (80% of whom are male) typically display significant impairments in three areas:

- social interaction
- communication
- behaviour (limited interests and repetitive behaviours).

Many people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder also have under- or over-sensitivity to sound, sight, taste, touch, smell, temperature and/or pain.

People with Autism Spectrum Disorder may feel anxiety, confusion or frustration in dealing with the challenges of everyday life.

## The Effects of an Autism Spectrum Disorder

There is no known cause of Autism Spectrum Disorders. People with Autism Spectrum Disorder may exhibit some of the following characteristics:

- impaired social skills, such as difficulties with eye contact, trouble initiating or maintaining conversation
- communication difficulties in receptive and expressive language and non-verbal cues, such as social cues and body language (may have extensive vocabulary)
- some people have an unresponsive facial expression and vocal tone
- may appear to have impaired comprehension or poor listening skills, especially when there are other distractions
- repetition of heard words and phrases
- preference for routines
- highly specific and unusual preoccupations and attachments.

### **Learning**

The majority of people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder also have an intellectual disability. However, people with Asperger's Disorder typically have above average intelligence, relatively intact communication skills, and a specific learning disability. These students are often creative, lateral thinkers and may have leadership skills.

Many people with Autism Spectrum Disorders have been bullied at school and have difficulty resolving conflict, preferring to withdraw. Some get angry in conflict situations and appear to be unable to appreciate the other person's point of view.

### **Learning strengths**

Learning strengths for many people with Autism Spectrum Disorder include:

- quickly learning routines and repeating them
- taking in whole chunks of information quickly
- remembering information for a long time
- using visual information in a meaningful way
- concentrating on narrow topics of interest
- understanding and using concrete information.

Teachers are advised to avoid metaphorical explanations and irony. Assessment requirements need to be very specifically spelled out, and the non-negotiable aspect emphasised. Requirements should be dealt with in a direct way, logically and simply.