



Chapter of the Autism Society of America

MYTHS ABOUT AUTISM

Myth #1: Children with autism never make eye contact.

Many children with autism establish eye contact. It may be less than or different from the typical child, but they do look at people, and smile, and express many other wonderful non-verbal communications.

Myth #2: Inside a child with autism is a genius.

The myth that a genius is hidden in a child with autism may exist because of the uneven nature of the skills that many children exhibit. Children with autism may have wonderful physical skills and have no speech. A child may remember the birthday of every child in his class at school, yet be unable to determine when to use the pronouns "you" or "me" appropriately. A child may read with perfect articulation and not understand the meaning of what he has read. Children with autism exhibit a full range of IQ scores. Most children with autism exhibit significant delays in some areas of mental processing. A very small percentage exhibit above normal intelligence; an equally small percentage of children exhibit very low intellectual functioning.

Myth #3: Children with autism do not speak.

Many children with autism develop good functional language. Most other children can develop some communication skills, such as sign language, use of pictures, computers, or electronic devices.

Myth #4: Children with autism cannot show affection.

Probably one of the most devastating myths for families is the misconception that children with autism cannot give and receive affection and love. We know that sensory stimulation is processed differently by some children with autism, causing them to have difficulty expressing affection in conventional ways. However, children with autism can and do give affection. Giving and receiving love from a child with autism may require a willingness to accept and give love in the child's terms. Sometimes the challenge for parents is waiting until the child can risk a greater connection. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends may not understand a child's aloofness, but can learn to appreciate and respect his/her capacity for connection with others.

Additional Myths:

- Progress means that the child doesn't have autism.
- Children with autism do not smile at you.
- Children with autism do not participate in physical affection.
- Children with autism do not want friends.
- Children with autism could talk if they wanted to.
- Autism is an emotional disability.
- Children with autism do not relate to peers/adults.

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