

Common Behavior Characteristics of Different Disabilities

Autism Spectrum Disorder/Asberger Syndrome

- Issues appear very clear – black or white, easy or hard, good or bad – no gray areas
- Easiest learning style is often visual
- Social awkwardness and lack of social skills prevalent
 - may miss social cues & have difficulty imitating others' appropriate behavior
 - may be challenged initiating or engaging in conversation
 - can often appear to register very little emotion on their face
- Have strong desire to complete or finish a task so transitions to other activities or subjects can be difficult
- May be preoccupied with a narrow range of interest (ie., a hobby or certain subject)
- Can insist on sameness or be resistant to change

Down Syndrome

- A student with Down syndrome may not be able to tell you how they feel or may be unable to readily change mental gears when offered new information or direction.
- Lack caution so safety is an issue
- Can tend to wander or run off
- Want to finish a task & can get frustrated if they can't
- Have a hard time transitioning from one task to another, especially if they are moving from a preferred activity
- Are often visual learners
- Are not always happy – have same emotions and moods as they rest of us – they simply often find joy and excitement in a lot of things that the rest of us have forgotten are fun!
- Often have more receptive language (words they know but can't express) than expressive language (spoken words).

Sensory Processing Disorder

- Be uncoordinated
- Bump into things
- Be unable to tell where their limbs are in space
- Be hard to engage in conversation or play
- Be oversensitive to things in their environment
- Common sounds may be painful or overwhelming
- Even light touches (shirt tags, shoelaces, etc.) can cause distraction or distress

Sensory Integration Disorder

- Oversensitivity to touch, movement, sights, or sounds
- Under-reactivity to touch, movement, sights, or sounds
- Tendency to be easily distracted
- Social and/or emotional problems
- Activity level that is unusually high or unusually low
- Physical clumsiness or apparent carelessness
- Impulsive, lacking in self-control
- Difficulty in making transitions from one situation to another
- Inability to unwind or calm self
- Poor self concept
- Delays in speech, language, or motor skills
- Delays in academic achievement

Sensory Seeking Disorder

- Constantly in search of ways to arouse their starved nervous systems
- Often hyperactive and impulsive, they are frequently labeled, either correctly or falsely, with ADHD

There are different types of sensory input that these students seek:

Tactile Seeking

- Love touching and being touched
- May become even physically violent in search of touch
- Feel the need to touch everything or everyone, craving certain textures
- Often try to balance out touch sensations on either side of the body (i.e. touching something with your left hand and then **NEEDING** to touch it with your right hand)

Oral Seeking

- Crave certain textures and flavors excessively
- Frequently overstuff mouth when eating, even to the point of gagging
- Will put *anything* in mouth in search of oral input, such as chewing or crunchy sensations
- May have a diagnosed eating disorder for overeating
- Will chew or suck on things excessively and may be a smoker

Olfactory Seeking

- Crave certain smells excessively
- Need to smell everything and everybody

Auditory Seeking

- Love loud noises, often watch TV and listen to music very loudly
- Will often speak louder than is necessary
- May frequently make noises just to hear them
- Need to listen to music to concentrate

Visual Seeking

- May love or crave bright lights
- May frequently stare at bright or spinning lights
- Need a lot of light in a room to concentrate or focus

Vestibular Seeking

- Crave movements in head or body position
- May love to spin in circles
- Love being upside down or sideways
- Love going on roller coasters and other amusement park rides
- May frequently jump from high heights
- May repeat certain movements almost endlessly just for the sensation

Proprioceptive Seeking

- Love to crash or bump into things
- Frequently crack knuckles or stretch limb
- Crave highly physical activities and love to play contact sports
- Often bump into or jump onto furniture
- High levels of energy and arousal

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

- Difficulty focusing on any one task for long
- Boredom, distractibility and inability to finish activities
- Sloppy mistakes
- Poor listening skills
- Losing or forgetting things like books needed for homework
- Failure to follow instructions accurately and completely

Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)

In addition to the characteristics for ADD described above, students with ADHD also display:

- Often blurts or shouts out answers before hearing the entire question
- Interrupts others
- Has trouble waiting turns while playing games or waiting in line
- Fidgeting, wiggling hands and feet
- Does not stay seated in class, at the dinner table or in other settings where it is normally expected
- Runs or climbs in inappropriate situations
- Noisy, does not play quietly
- Consistently “on the go”
- “Motor-mouth”