

THE
3 MINUTE
GUIDE TO
AUTISM

WELCOME TO THE 3 MINUTE GUIDE TO AUTISM

**Mark Goldsborough, Chief Operating Officer,
Brookdale Care**

We support a range of individuals living with mental health and learning disabilities who also have an Autistic Spectrum Condition.

This small and concise handbook is designed to give you key information and advice from expert professionals and people who live with Autism.

It's a privilege for me to head an amazing team of Autism professionals and support staff who thrive on enabling people to find their way.

I want to take this opportunity to highlight some of the strengths that people living with Autism can have.

Strengths and Abilities of those living with Autism:

- A different perspective
- Good memory
- In depth knowledge on specialist subjects
- Determination
- Structured and well organized

Remember; if you meet one person living with Autism, you have only met one person.

WHAT IS AUTISM?

**Tiago Pinto, Head of Therapeutic Services,
Brookdale Care**

Autism is a lifelong developmental condition.

Autism affects how you relate and communicate with other people and make sense of the world you live in.

Each person is affected by their Autism in a unique way, but underlying are 2 core impairments. The 2 domains where people must show deficient deficits (DSM-5) are:

- 1) Difficulties in your social interaction and Social communication.
- 2) Restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour.

You may also be hyper or hypo sensitive to sound, light, touch or pain etc. You could often live with significant co-morbidities in addition to your diagnosis of Autism such as:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1) Learning Disability | 5) Attention Deficit + Hyperactivity |
| 2) Depression | 6) Epilepsy |
| 3) Anxiety | 7) Addiction |
| 4) Obsessive Compulsive Disorder | 8) Eating Disorders |

Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) describes the range of abilities people with Autism have, depending on the presence of an additional Learning Disability.

DO YOU LIVE WITH AUTISM?

Dr Walter Owino, Medical Director, Brookdale Care

Autism can affect males and females from all social economic and racial backgrounds

Do you live with the following traits?

- Do you have difficulties making/keeping social relationships?
- Are you unaware of the results of your behaviour – poor understanding of cause & effect?
- Are you naive/vulnerable – out of keeping with your age?
- Do you have rigid routine/rituals - and get upset when you're unable to complete them?
- Are you unable to hold down education/employment?
- Do you have unusual eye contact, body language, vocal communication?
- Are you egocentric, with little empathy/sympathy for others - feelings out of keeping with what others would be expect?
- Do you often have misunderstandings with other people?
- Do you seem to not understand the 'rules of society'?
- Are you a victim of bullying or exploitation?

TOP TIPS - WHEN TO CONSIDER A REFERRAL FOR DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

Sandra Stamos, Forensic & Counselling Psychologist,
Brookdale Care

- At patient/family request.
- When the person is demonstrating autistic traits.
- When the person is just not coping with world around them.
- They are having difficulties at school/college/employment.
- There is significant impact socially/psychologically/medically on themselves and/or others.
- If impending crisis can be averted.
- If medically and socially difficult to manage.
- Extreme vulnerability/naivety which puts them/others at risk.

People with Autism can present with radically different behaviours, from being non-verbal, agoraphobic who refuses to leave their bedroom to socially outgoing but having multiple misunderstandings/warnings due inappropriate behaviour.

HOW TO SUPPORT US

Josie & William, Brookdale Care residents who live with Autism

- You may need to explain **all the stages** of what you are about to do and what will happen next.
- It is helpful if you can **write down** all the information – using pictures if appropriate.
- You may need to give me time to **understand** what you are saying.
- Use **simple language** to describe what you are saying as I may not understand your facial expressions and body language.
- I may take things that you say **literally** and some humour may be misunderstood (e.g. 1 minute, raining cats and dogs – **say it, mean it**).
- I like **routine and familiarity** – don't suddenly change agreed plans.
- Understand that I may find it **hard to build relationships** – give me time.
- People with autism may **seem self-obsessed** but this might be because they find it hard to understand what other people are thinking.
- I might have **difficulty making eye contact or use unusual body language**; however this is not on purpose.
- I might talk at **inappropriate moments or about inappropriate topics** – this is not me being rude.
- I might do **repetitive things**, it might look odd but it is my way of coping with situations.
- I like my environment to be **calm**.
- Please **ask me** if you have any questions.
- People with autism have **acute senses** e.g. touch, sight, hearing etc, this might mean that they find loud noises unsettling, have **trouble focusing** on the important elements or **become overwhelmed** by too many stimulants.
- People with Autism have **special interests** and may spend a lot of time on these.
- **I need support that is specific to me.**

SKILLS IN MEETING US

Josie & William, Brookdale Care residents who live with Autism

- Give people **time** to talk, assimilate information and respond.
- Valuable information can be **gained from family**/carer/friend, if permission is given.
- Use clear, closed and **simple questions**.
- Avoid ambiguity, sarcasm, cynicism and other idioms etc. **Keep language concrete**.
- Check on **shared understanding** of history, assessment and management.
- **Don't assume** "I understand" means they do.
- **Give written information** and feedback wherever possible.
- Poor eye contact does not mean they are not listening to you.
- Try to keep meeting room's tidy, **low arousal environment** for any sensory issues.
- Don't use lots of body / hand movements when talking. **Limit non-verbal communication**.
- Give **advance warning** of what is going to happen.
- Empathise with their point of view. **You may not understand it but you should respect it**.
- Offer **few and simple options**.
- **Use special interests** if known to help communication and motivation.
- **Treat the person not the disorder**.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- Award winning Autism services www.brookdalecare.co.uk
- List of local services www.autism.org.uk/autismdirectory
- Research Autism www.researchautism.net
- National Autistic Society www.autism.org.uk
- NICE Guidelines and tools for implementation
www.nice.org.uk/CG142 (adults)
www.nice.org.uk/CG128 (children)
- Jessica Kingsley Publishing for books www.jkp.com
- E Learning via RCGP <http://elearning.rcgo.org.uk/login/index.php>
- Community of professionals working with autism
www.networkautism.org.uk

To learn more **01707 646 646** brookdalecare.co.uk

REAL CARE PATHWAYS; REAL OUTCOMES

