

Detecting Autism Spectrum Disorder, High Functioning Autism or Asperger Syndrome in your Child

As verbal individuals with autism are frequently misdiagnosed, I'd like to take this opportunity to alert you to their display of symptoms. Your child may have received a diagnosis of:

- ADD or ADHD
- Intellectual Disability, Mental Retardation or Learning Disability
- Adjustment Disorder
- Conduct Disorder
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder, Affective Disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Auditory or Sensory Processing Disorder, Dyspraxia

In the early years:

- Development of language and communication is atypical
- Delayed speech or repetitive use of phrases
- Shrink from social contact with peers
- May not have pretend play with toys or imaginative play

By school age:

- Usually talking well and can enter school
- May have stopped avoiding social contact and is at least tolerant of it
- May be socially awkward and socially immature

Over the next few years:

- "Eccentricities" dominate his social interactions
- A "little professor" on topics of special interest to him
- When not talking about his interests, his social interactions are immature or stilted
- The child may interact with peers, although others may perceive him as different

As time passes and social demands increase:

- May become anxious in social situations
- Peers may reject him and he may become depressed
- In school, he may be placed in learning support classes because of social, behavioral or language comprehension problems
- He may be considered to have an attention problem or obsessive compulsive behaviors

My great interest with Asperger's started after I developed the ability to diagnose children affected by the syndrome from their unique handshake – limp, like a “dead fish”. This unique handshake has proven to be a key factor in the understanding of their social anxiety, difficulty with body language, gestures, etc. that children with various forms of Autism display. The mother of a boy I diagnosed in this way, who we shall call “JC” tells his story:

“Ours is a remarkable example of diagnosing Asperger’s Syndrome and what one doctor is able to detect just by a handshake. JC has always been a very loving child. Though he behaved well in class, all of his teachers agreed that he just did not understand the work. Unfortunately, he was labeled with mild mental retardation with an IQ of 78 over six years ago. Luckily, this proved to not be the case. He was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome and subsequently retested for a proper school placement. He was also eligible for McKay Scholarship for full tuition coverage since the public school system could not meet his needs at the time. He was then placed in a small private school special learning track program. His self-esteem was totally rebuilt and finally JC started experiencing SUCCESS! He has learned how to play the guitar and is currently teaching himself the piano. He has written several songs and he is an avid reader. His academic strengths are definitely in English with a few struggles in Math. He has been on the medicine Luvox and Zoloft and has been able to focus and continue to keep the GPA at 3.86!”

JC's experience is a success story about a 15 year-old boy who received the necessary intervention in order to jump start what was already there. What the researchers are now calling neuronal synapses problems could be the cause of the Autistic Spectrum Disorders. I call this kind of intervention a **NEURONAL JUMP START**. Asperger Syndrome children often need social skills training, early school intervention and sometimes medications. For more information on the syndrome please link to the web site www.autismgateway.com.