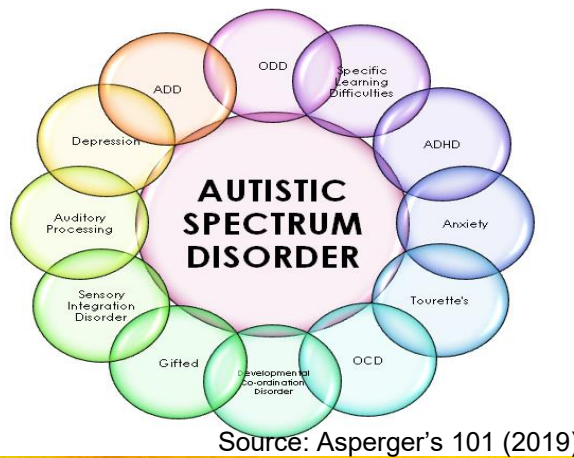
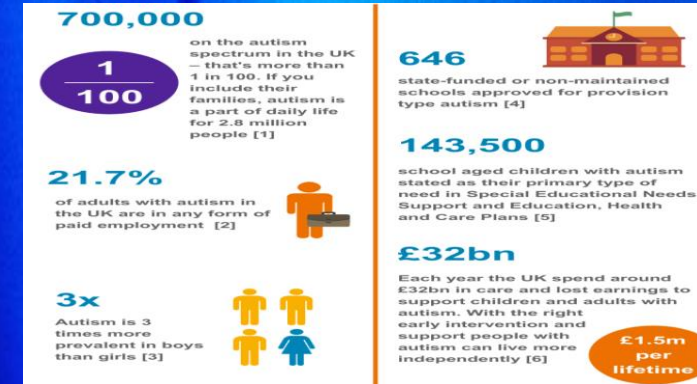




Asperger's Syndrome (Asperger's) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that is related to Autism. Tazari et al., 2015). Asperger's was first recognised in 1994 but is no longer diagnosed, since 2013 Asperger's has come under the umbrella diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). People with Asperger's typically have restricted interests, strict routines, and difficulty with social interactions. However, Asperger's differentiates from other type of Autism with people having average to strong verbal language skills as well as average to high intellectual ability. (Autism Speaks, 2022). Learning disabilities are not usually associated with Asperger's, although many people will experience other challenges, have anxiety and maybe specific learning difficulties (Mencap, no date). According to National Autistic Society (2022) there are around 700, 000 people with Autism including Asperger's Syndrome in the UK and it is much more common than people often think.



Source: Beyond Autism (2022).

Identification and Diagnosis

According to National Autistic Society (2022) How we define Autism (ASD) has changed a lot over time as we have gained increased understanding. Severe impairments in social communications and repetitive behaviours are characteristics of ASD. For Asperger's to be diagnosed there needs to be no delay in cognitive development or acquisition of language. From 2013 Asperger's was no longer recognised as an explicit category in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-V* (Hoffman, 2012). According to Child Autism UK (no date) Many parents report seeing signs of autism from a very young age. However, one large UK study found the average age of diagnosis to be over 5 years, with it being very unusual for health professionals to diagnose before the age of 2 years. van 't Hof, M. et al. (2021) found there are many factors that may have an influence on the age someone is diagnosed, factors such as gender, additional diagnosis and type of ASD diagnosis all influenced how early in life diagnosis happened. Clinical partners (2021) suggest that it is shown by studies that an autism diagnosis is about three times more common for boys than girls. . van 't Hof, M. et al. (2021) state that early detection of ASD is important as it leads to early intervention which is shown to improve the core symptoms and increase cognitive and language abilities

Barriers – to diagnosis/support

Unfortunately there are many barriers for people with Asperger's. Masking symptoms is common, especially in girls. Most teachers are only aware of the classic symptoms of ASD, making it more difficult to spot the signs. Thus becoming a barrier to diagnosis and to gaining support. Masking is a social survival strategy used by many people with ASD or Asperger's for many reasons. Such as, to fit in, to make friends, to succeed at work or to avoid being judged and mistreated. Masking can have serious health consequences.(Stanborough, R, J. 2021). People who mask regularly often feel exhausted and drained by the emotional and cognitive effort it takes (Stanborough, R, J. 2021, Hull et al., 2017). According to Nicole (2021) Autistic women typically show more subtle characteristics that are not stereotypical, they are understood to be better at masking in comparison to men. This makes it harder to notice the signs and can be a barrier to diagnosis. Although masking or camouflaging is recognised as a fundamental part of autism in females, this does not mean that it is not present in males. Gender stereotypes are not consistently conformed to by either male or females (Gould, 2017).

Strategies and support

Peer Mediated Intervention (PMI)

Odom 2019 describes PMI as teaching typically developing peers how to support and interact with classmates with ASD. They learn to support peers with ASD to acquire new behaviours and social skills through increasing the opportunity for social interaction within natural environments.

Kitz and Girolametto (2013) noted that children with ASD have considerably less reciprocal relationships than their typically developing classmates.

PMII focuses on the key deficits associated with autism, such as social skills, communication abilities, and rigid or repetitive behaviour.

ABA Program Guide .2020Odom 2019 there are different types of PMI, such as peer initiated intervention which may be used to promote acquisition of social communication skills, or peer-mediation social network intervention to promote friendships, as well as other PMI's to suit differing needs.

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