

Educational Implications

Many children with Asperger's have difficulty understanding social interactions, including nonverbal gestures. They may fail to develop age-appropriate peer relationships or be unable to share interests or show empathy. When confronted by changes in school routine, they may show visible anxiety, withdraw into silence, or burst into a fit of rage. Although students with Asperger's may often appear to have a large vocabulary, sometimes sounding like "little professors," they can be very literal and have great difficulty using language in a social context. They may like school, but wish the other children weren't there.

Resources

Autism Society of America

7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 300

Bethesda, MD, 20814

301-657-0881 • 1-800-3AUTISM

www.autism-society.org

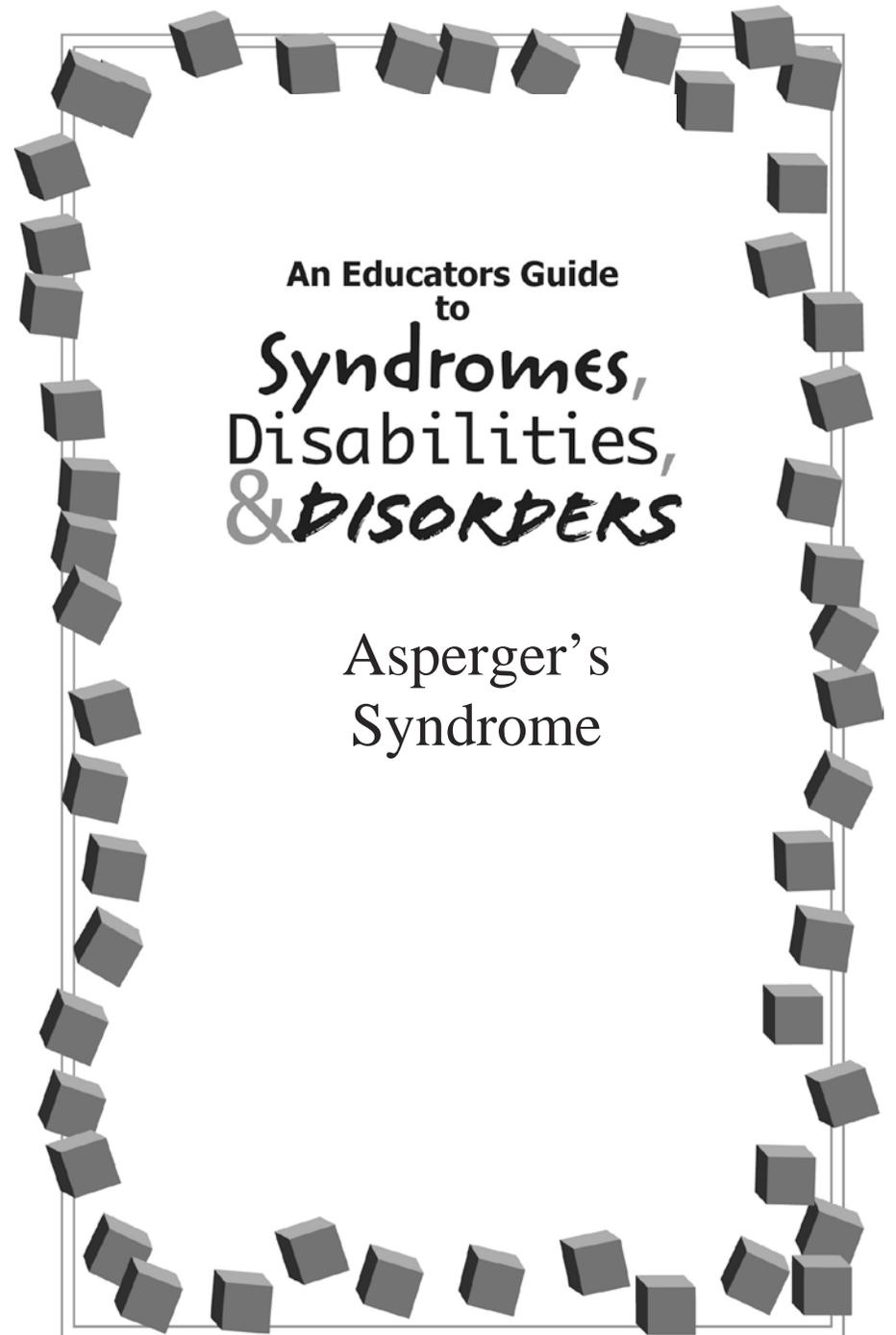
Advocacy, educational information, referrals

The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding

4123 Embassy Drive SE

Kentwood, MI 49546

616-954-9747



Symptoms or Behaviors

- Adult-like pattern of intellectual functioning and interests, combined with social and communication deficits
- Isolated from their peers
- Other students consider them odd
- Rote memory is usually quite good; they may excel at math and science
- Clumsy or awkward gait
- Difficulty with physical activities and sports
- Repetitive pattern of behavior
- Preoccupations with 1 or 2 subjects or activities
- Under or over sensitivity to stimuli such as noise, light, or unexpected touch
- Victims of teasing and bullying

Instructional Strategies and Classroom Accommodations

- Create a structured, predictable, and calming environment. Consult an occupational therapist for suggestions on handling sensory needs for your students.
- Foster a climate of tolerance and understanding in the classroom. Consider assigning a peer helper to assist the student in joining group activities and socializing. Make it clear to the class that teasing and harassment of any student is not allowed.
- Enjoy and make use of your student's verbal and intellectual skills. Fixations can be used by making the chosen subject the center of teaching and using the student's expertise to raise peer interest and respect (i.e.,

have him give a report or make a model of his favorite subject to share with the class).

- Use direct teaching to increase socially acceptable behaviors, expected greetings and responses, and group interaction skills. Demonstrate the impact of words and actions on other people during real-life interactions and increase awareness of emotions, body language, and other social cues.
- Create a standard way of presenting change in advance of the event. A key phrase like “Today will be different” may be helpful if used consistently. You may also want to mention changes—for example, “tomorrow we’ll have a substitute teacher”—both privately to the student and to the class as a whole.
- Learn the usual triggers and the warning signs of a rage attack or “meltdown” and intervene before control is lost. Help your student learn self-calming and self-management skills. Remain calm and non-judgmental to reduce stress—remind yourself that your student “can’t” rather than “won’t” react as others do.
- Provide whatever support and information you can to the parents. Children with Asperger’s Syndrome often have sleep disorders, and the family may be sleep-deprived. Other parents show frustration due to the long search for a diagnosis and services. They may also face disbelieving professionals or family members who erroneously blame poor parenting for the behaviors they see.