

## **ASPERGER'S SYNDROME CLARIFIED!**

*AS can feel like being a drop of oil trying to blend in with the vast ocean, never going to quite happen!... Alyson Bradley*

### **WHAT TO KNOW!**

- ❖ Asperger's Syndrome is an Autism Spectrum Disorder characterized by difficulties in social interactions and restrictive and repetitive patterns of interests and activities
- ❖ AS was named after Austrian pediatrician Hans Asperger who in 1944 studied children who lacked nonverbal communication skills and demonstrated limited empathy
- ❖ It is estimated that 2 out of every 10,000 children have AS and boys are 3 to 4 times more likely than girls to have AS
- ❖ Current research suggests brain abnormalities as the cause of AS and there is a genetic component to AS because of a tendency to run in families
- ❖ In AS, there can be an intense, focused preoccupation with a subject, such as baseball facts, but there is no significant delay in cognitive development or delay in language
- ❖ There are peculiarities in speech and language such as a very formal tone, misusing words, taking figures of speech literally, or sounding like a "little professor"
- ❖ Physical clumsiness and uncoordinated movements can also be present
- ❖ People with AS have difficulties with basic social interactions as they lack empathy, do not comprehend social cues, and do not develop friendships
- ❖ They tend to have impaired eye contact, facial expressions, and social gestures
- ❖ People with AS do not tend to socially withdraw, rather, they can interact but do not comprehend the other person's feelings or reactions
- ❖ They tend to have difficulties with change and prefer sameness and routines
- ❖ People with AS may have difficulty determining proper body space and can be sensitive to tastes, smells, sounds, lights, certain foods, and clothing textures
- ❖ AS is a lifelong condition but does tend to stabilize in adulthood as people get a better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses and also learn social skills
- ❖ Some traits such as a focus on detail and very specific interests, especially in technology, have led to discoveries, prestigious awards, and career success
- ❖ Famous people who have or are speculated to have AS include Wolfgang Mozart, Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, Thomas Jefferson, Bill Gates, and Vincent Van Gogh
- ❖ There is no cure for AS but effective treatment focuses on therapies that address the symptoms of poor communication skills, repetitive routines, and physical clumsiness

### **WHAT TO DO!**

- ❖ Have understanding and recognize that AS is a neurobehavioral disorder
- ❖ Provide social skills training, occupational or physical therapy, and speech therapy
- ❖ Medications may be helpful in treating possible depression and anxiety
- ❖ Cognitive behavioral therapy can be helpful in teaching how to manage emotions and decrease repetitive behavior patterns
- ❖ Become knowledgeable and educated about AS and consider a support group
- ❖ Seek professional help for a diagnosis of AS, to gain an understanding of how AS may affect you, or to learn how to effectively live with AS

## **WE CAN HELP!**

Call us at **954 755-2885** or email us at **DrKimmel@aol.com**.

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