

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF SPEECH AND HEARING



AIISH speaks for Autism

Every day as I walk to work, I see a child with special needs walking home with his grandmother. Her face has always been tensed, looking down with a tight grip on the boy's hand. I remember them as I had worked with the child a few years ago. A little six year old boy who never said anything and was happily lost in his own world solving puzzles and doing mathematical calculations too advanced for his age. His grandmother looked at him with marvel in her eyes, raving about his intelligence. She could see how capable he is, but the world around him could not. So



when she walks out on the street with her grandson who flaps his hands and would never look you in the face when you talk to him, she feels out of place. The people on the streets who stare at the boy and walk at a distance from his grandmother make them feel like they do not belong out in the world.

This little boy of ours has Autism...

Defining Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a condition related to brain development that causes problems in social interaction and communication. Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are classified as pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) among Axis I disorders in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM- IV), which are relatively common social communication disorders. Autism spectrum disorder includes conditions that were previously considered separate, autism, Asperger's syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder and an unspecified form of pervasive developmental disorder.

Characteristics of Autism

Autism differs from person to person in severity and combinations of symptoms. Children with ASD often have problems with social, emotional, and communication skills. They might repeat certain behaviors and might not want change in their daily activities. Many people with ASD also have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things.

Some children show signs of autism spectrum disorder in early infancy, such as reduced eye contact, lack of response to their name or indifference to caregivers. Other children may develop normally for the first few months or years of life, but then suddenly become withdrawn or aggressive or lose language skills they've already acquired. Signs usually are seen by age 2 years.

Prevalence of Autism

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) worldwide one in 160 children has an ASD. Autism is four times more common in boys than in girls. This estimate represents an average figure, and reported prevalence varies substantially across studies. Based on epidemiological studies conducted over the past 50 years, the prevalence of ASD appears to be increasing globally. There are many possible explanations for this apparent increase, including improved awareness, expansion of diagnostic criteria, availability of diagnostic tools and improved reporting.

Causes of Autism

What causes Autism isn't clear. In case autism runs in families, then its certain combinations of genes that may increase a child's risk of inheriting the disorder. A child with an older parent can be at a higher risk of autism. Pregnant women who are exposed to certain drugs or chemicals, like alcohol or anti-seizure medications, are more likely to have autistic children. Other risk factors include maternal metabolic conditions such as diabetes and obesity. Some research links autism occurrence to untreated phenylketonuria, and rubella.

AIISH is the answer

To promote awareness and render need based to services to children with ASD, the ASD Unit at the All India Institute of Speech & Hearing (AIISH), Mysuru, India has put forth its constant support in terms of providing appropriate team based approach in the identification, diagnosis and management of children with ASD. AIISH is working to create a kinder, more inclusive world for people with autism.

Conclusion

There are many things one can do to help a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) overcome their challenges. Apart from the medical care and therapies, what we need for them right now is 'Awareness'. Meeting the high care demands of affected children requires much time, effort and patience. You being aware and accepting autism as a way of life is what is going to make all the difference for a lot many other people as their life unfolds.

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