

## **Common Traits of People with Asperger Syndrome**

### **Social/Communication Traits**

- Despite a desire for friends, difficulty in initiating or maintaining close relationships
- Problems reading non-verbal or social cues or understanding/using social rules
- Very socially naïve and as a result are often taken advantage of, rejected, or bullied
- Social contact may be directed by them (e.g. play is "on their terms" or not at all)
- Poor or intense eye contact, atypical use of gestures and flat or inappropriate facial expressions
- One-sided conversations, and little ability for "small talk"
- May appear overly shy or overly extroverted, but inappropriately so
- Unaware of others' thoughts, feelings or perceptions resulting in inadvertently appearing rude or inconsiderate
- Literal interpretation of communication from others
- Avoidant of social contact or events, and may experience heightened anxiety in social situations
- Language is learned and used in "chunks" (e.g., phrases, dialogue from TV shows, etc.)
- Communication is used for delivering information or requesting, not as a way of interacting socially

### **Behavioural Traits**

- May respond poorly to changes, sensory stimuli, transitions, lack of structure, and restrictions
- Repetitive movements (e.g., jumping, rocking, pacing) and speech (i.e., talking about favourite topics, interest)
- Rigid, inflexible and rule-bound behaviour
- Inappropriate behaviour given the social situation (e.g., speaking too loud in place of worship)
- Exaggerated emotional response to situations (e.g., tantrums when asked to do something that they don't want to do)
- Superior ability to focus on favourite activity or area of interest (e.g., spends hours mastering video game to the exclusion of other pastimes)

### **Cognitive Traits**

- Average to superior intelligence
- Detail oriented approach to tasks which may result in missing the "bigger picture"
- May have associated learning disabilities (e.g., non-verbal learning disability)
- Often have high verbal scores in a cognitive assessment, and low performance scores
- Difficulty seeing "parts-to-whole" and "whole-to-parts" relationships
- Prefer technical/factual information over abstract

## **Associated Challenges**

- Anxiety and depression
- Attention difficulties (e.g., shifting attention; attending to unimportant stimuli)
- Tics or Tourette Syndrome
- Gross and fine motor deficits
- Poor organizational skills (e.g., time management and planning tasks)