
Here's a detailed summary of "Autism 101" from your file. (Produced by AI)

Overview

Autism is a spectrum condition that affects how people think, feel, interact, and experience their environment. Every autistic person is unique, with varying support needs that can change depending on context, environment, and stress levels. Autism is classified into three levels:

- **Level 1:** Requiring support
 - **Level 2:** Requiring substantial support
 - **Level 3:** Requiring very substantial support
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Autistic Traits

Cognitive Processing

1. **Black-and-white thinking** – Seeing things as right/wrong with little tolerance for ambiguity.
 - *Strengths:* Strong opinions, sense of justice.
 2. **Literal thinking** – Interpreting language concretely; metaphors and indirect language can be confusing.
 - *Strengths:* Honesty, logical thinking.
 3. **Routine and structure** – Stability reduces anxiety; disruptions can be distressing.
 4. **Theory of mind** – Challenges in recognising others' perspectives.
 5. **Imagination differences** – May struggle with open-ended creative tasks but excel at pattern recognition and scripted play.
 6. **Special interests** – Deep focus on preferred topics, sometimes "info dumping."
 - *Strengths:* Expert knowledge, strong memory, intense focus.
 7. **Executive functioning differences** – Challenges with organisation, time management, task initiation, and flexibility.
 - *Strengths:* Thrive in structured environments, strong visual processing.
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Communication Styles

- **Echolalia** – Repeating phrases heard before, either immediately or later.
 - **Gestalt Language Processing** – Learning in "chunks" before breaking down meanings; common in autistic children.
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- Differences in non-verbal cues (eye contact, facial expressions, body language).
 - Sarcasm is often difficult to interpret.
 - Communication often flows better between autistic individuals.
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Social Interaction

- Social approaches may differ; connection often easier with similar “brain types.”
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Sensory Processing

- **Hypersensitive** – Overly affected by sensory input (e.g., bright lights, strong smells).
 - **Hyposensitive** – Require stronger sensory input (e.g., loud music, movement).
 - Individuals may be hyper- in some senses and hypo- in others.
 - **Sensory overload** – Overwhelm from excessive sensory input, leading to fight/flight/freeze.
 - **Meltdowns** – Outward emotional release due to overload.
 - **Shutdowns** – Inward withdrawal and loss of communication.
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Emotional Processing & Masking

- **Masking** – Suppressing autistic traits to fit in, which is exhausting and mentally taxing.
 - May involve altering tone, rehearsing scripts, monitoring body language and eye contact.
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Autism in Girls

- Diagnostic criteria historically based on boys.
 - Girls may mask more, have socially acceptable special interests, appear more imaginative in play, and often have advanced vocabularies but limited conversational depth.
 - Higher rates of anxiety and people-pleasing.
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Autism and ADHD

- Co-diagnosis allowed only since 2013.
 - Estimated **30–80%** overlap.
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- ADHD types:
 - **ADHD-I** (inattentive) – distractibility, forgetfulness, unfinished tasks.
 - **ADHD-H** (hyperactive/impulsive) – fidgeting, excessive talking, impatience.
 - **ADHD-C** (combined).
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Strengths of Autistic People

- High intelligence potential
 - Strong long-term memory
 - Determination and resilience
 - Independence and loyalty
 - Strong in 1:1 situations
 - Attention to detail, integrity, and acceptance of differences.
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Key Takeaways

- Learn from autistic individuals and families.
 - Recognise “different” as not “less.”
 - Promote understanding, inclusion, and acceptance.
 - Consider changes in environments to better support autistic people.
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