



Common issues observed in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

1. Communication Difficulties

Children with autism often show significant challenges in verbal and non-verbal communication.

Common issues include:

- **Delayed speech or no speech** development
- **Echolalia** – repeating words or phrases without understanding
- **Limited use of gestures** (pointing, waving, nodding)
- **Difficulty starting or maintaining conversations**
- **Literal understanding of language** – trouble with sarcasm, jokes, or metaphors
- **Unusual tone, pitch, or rhythm** of speech (robotic or singsong voice)
- **Difficulty answering questions** or following multi-step directions
- **Lack of “joint attention”** – not sharing focus on an object or event with others

2. Social Interaction Challenges

Social reciprocity — the give-and-take of social interaction — is often impaired.

Common issues include:

- **Limited eye contact** or facial expressions
- **Reduced response to name or social greetings**
- **Difficulty understanding others’ emotions or intentions**
- **Limited interest in peers** or playing with others
- **Preferring to be alone** or engaging in parallel play rather than interactive play
- **Difficulty interpreting social cues** such as tone, body language, or personal space
- **Limited empathy or perspective-taking** (Theory of Mind challenges)
- **Trouble forming or maintaining friendships**



3. Repetitive and Restricted Behaviours

Children with autism often display repetitive actions or have fixed routines.

Common issues include:

- **Repetitive body movements** (hand flapping, rocking, spinning)
- **Repetitive use of objects** (lining up toys, spinning wheels)
- **Rigid adherence to routines** – distress with small changes
- **Intense, restricted interests** (fixation on topics like trains, numbers, or maps)
- **Insistence on sameness** – same route, food, or clothing preferences
- **Repetitive speech** or scripting from videos or books

4. Sensory Processing Difficulties

Autistic children often experience differences in processing sensory input.

Common issues include:

- **Hypersensitivity (over-reactive)** – dislike of loud sounds, bright lights, certain textures
- **Hyposensitivity (under-reactive)** – seeking strong sensory input (touching, jumping, spinning)
- **Unusual sensory interests** – staring at lights, smelling objects, fascination with spinning items
- **Difficulty with clothing textures** or food textures
- **Poor tolerance to grooming activities** – haircut, brushing teeth, bathing
- **Fluctuating responses** – sometimes under- and sometimes over-reactive to the same input

5. Behavioural and Emotional Issues

Behavioral expressions often arise from difficulty communicating or managing emotions.

Common issues include:

- **Tantrums or meltdowns** due to frustration or sensory overload
- **Aggression** (hitting, biting, kicking) especially when unable to express needs
- **Self-injurious behaviors** (head-banging, hand-biting)
- **Anxiety or fear** in unfamiliar environments
- **Difficulty with transitions or unexpected changes**
- **Emotional dysregulation** – quick shifts between emotions
- **Difficulty identifying or labeling emotions**
- **Sleep disturbances** (irregular sleep patterns, insomnia)



6. Motor and Coordination Difficulties

While autism is primarily a social-communication disorder, many children also show motor differences.

Common issues include:

- **Delayed gross motor skills** (running, jumping, balancing)
- **Delayed fine motor skills** (writing, buttoning, cutting)
- **Poor hand–eye coordination**
- **Clumsiness or unusual gait**
- **Difficulty imitating motor actions** (clapping, dancing, exercise movements)
- **Low or high muscle tone (hypotonia/hypertonia)**

7. Cognitive and Learning Differences

Intellectual ability in autism varies widely, but thinking styles are often different.

Common issues include:

- **Uneven cognitive profile** – strong memory but weak comprehension
- **Difficulty with abstract thinking or imagination**
- **Poor generalization** – can't apply learned skills to new contexts
- **Rote learning** rather than conceptual understanding
- **Attention difficulties** – short attention span or hyperfocus on one topic
- **Difficulty following multi-step tasks**

8. Daily Living and Adaptive Skill Issues

Children with autism may require support for age-appropriate self-care skills.

Common issues include:

- **Delayed toilet training**
- **Difficulty feeding independently** or picky eating
- **Challenges with dressing or grooming**
- **Poor safety awareness** (wandering, climbing, touching unsafe objects)
- **Difficulty understanding personal boundaries**
- **Over-dependence on adults for daily tasks**



9. Emotional and Mental Health Concerns

Children with autism may also experience co-occurring emotional issues.

Common issues include:

- **Anxiety disorders** (especially social anxiety)
- **Depression or withdrawal**
- **Obsessive–compulsive behaviors**
- **Phobias** (fear of specific sounds, people, or situations)
- **Difficulty coping with frustration or failure**

10. Associated Medical and Neurological Issues

Many autistic children have accompanying physical or neurological conditions.

Common co-occurring issues include:

- **Epilepsy or seizure disorders**
- **Sleep disturbances**
- **Gastrointestinal problems (constipation, food intolerance)**
- **Feeding issues (oral aversion, sensory-based refusal)**
- **ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)**
- **Dyspraxia (Developmental Coordination Disorder)**
- **Tics or repetitive vocalizations**

11. Strengths Often Overlooked

It's equally important to recognize the **strengths** that many children with autism possess:

- Excellent **memory** and **attention to detail**
- Strong **visual learning** and pattern recognition
- Deep focus and persistence in areas of interest
- Honest, straightforward communication
- Unique **creative or analytical thinking styles**



Summary Table

Domain	Common Issues
Communication	Delayed speech, echolalia, difficulty with conversation
Social Interaction	Poor eye contact, limited play, difficulty with peers
Behavior	Repetitive movements, rigid routines, tantrums
Sensory	Hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity to stimuli
Motor Skills	Poor coordination, delayed fine/gross motor milestones
Cognition	Uneven learning profile, difficulty generalizing
Adaptive Skills	Delayed ADLs, poor safety awareness
Emotional	Anxiety, meltdowns, mood swings
Medical	Sleep, GI, epilepsy, ADHD
Strengths	Memory, pattern recognition, honesty, focus