



Autism & Early Childhood

AUTISM OVERVIEW

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that impacts communication, social skills, and behavior. Early diagnosis and intervention are critical in helping young children with autism reach developmental milestones.

TYPICAL EC BEHAVIORS VS. TYPICAL ASD BEHAVIORS

Typical Early Childhood Behaviors:

- Tantrums: Often related to frustration or not getting what they want
- Defiance: Refuses to follow directions but understands expectations
- Impulsivity: Grabs items from others or interrupts impulsively
- Attention-Seeking: Engages in disruptive behaviors to gain attention from peers or adults
- Short Attention Span: Loses focus but can be redirected with engaging activities



Typical ASD Behaviors:

- Strong Responses: May occur due to sensory overload, change in routine, or communication challenges
- Non-Compliance: May stem from difficulty understanding verbal instructions or transitions
- Repetitive Behaviors: Engages in repetitive actions like hand-flapping or lining up objects
- Social Withdrawal: Avoids interaction with others, not out of defiance but due to challenges in social communication
- Hyperfocus or Lack of Engagement: May become overly focused on one activity or seem disengaged with no interest in others



STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING EC STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

- **Routine & Structure:** Consistency helps children with autism feel secure.
- **Visual Supports:** Use visuals like schedules, task cards, and social stories.
- **Sensory Accommodations:** Be mindful of sensory sensitivities (e.g., noise, textures).
- **Individualized Learning:** Tailor activities to the child's developmental level.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Celebrate successes and build motivation.

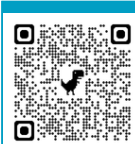
DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Children with ASD may develop skills at a different pace. Monitoring key areas of communication, social interaction, and motor skills can help identify areas of need early.

Developmental Area	Typical Milestone	Autism Milestone
Communication	Speaks in short phrases by age 2	Delayed or absent speech
Motor Skills	Walks by 18 months	May have delays in motor coordination
Social Interaction	Plays with peers by age 3	Prefers solitary play

REMINDER

Every child with autism is unique. Recognizing the difference between typical early childhood behaviors and autism-related behaviors is crucial for providing effective support in the classroom.



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