

A More Down-to-Earth Description of Asperger's by Lois Freisleben-Cook

I saw that someone posted the DSM IV criteria for Asperger's but I thought it might be good to provide a more down to earth description. Asperger's Syndrome is a term used when a child or adult has some features of autism but may not have the full blown clinical picture. There is some disagreement about where it fits in the PDD spectrum. A few people with Asperger's syndrome are very successful and until recently were not diagnosed with anything but were seen as brilliant, eccentric, absent minded, socially inept, and a little awkward physically.

Although the criteria state no significant delay in the development of language milestones, what you might see is a "different" way of using language. A child may have a wonderful vocabulary and even demonstrate [hyperlexia](#) but not truly understand the nuances of language and have difficulty with language pragmatics. Social pragmatics also tend to be weak, leading the person to appear to be walking to the beat of a "different drum". Motor dyspraxia can be reflected in a tendency to be clumsy.

In social interaction, many people with Asperger's syndrome demonstrate gaze avoidance and may actually turn away at the same moment as greeting another. The children I have known do desire interaction with others but have trouble knowing how to make it work. They are, however, able to learn social skills much like you or I would learn to play the piano.

There is a general impression that Asperger's syndrome carries with it superior intelligence and a tendency to become very interested in and preoccupied with a particular subject. Often this preoccupation leads to a specific career at which the adult is very successful. At younger ages, one might see the child being a bit more rigid and apprehensive about changes or about adhering to routines. This can lead to a consideration of OCD but it is not the same phenomenon

Many of the weaknesses can be remediated with specific types of therapy aimed at teaching social and pragmatic skills. Anxiety leading to significant rigidity can be also treated medically. Although it is harder, adults with Asperger's can have relationships, families, happy and productive lives.

NOTE: Lois Freisleben-Cook's description was originally a post to the [bit.listserv.autism-newsgroup/listserv](mailto:bit.listserv.autism-newsgroup@listserv). I thought it was an interesting explanation and included it on this site. A visitor recently pointed out that not all Asperger Syndrome children exhibit superior intelligence and felt that the post was somewhat misleading. It is my understanding that the majority of children diagnosed with AS do have at least an I.Q. in the normal range and that many children do have I.Q.'s in the superior range. It is important that you take the time to read through several explanations of AS, many of which are available on O.A.S.I.S. In addition, use the bibliographies, the libraries, and those professionals working with you to further your knowledge about Asperger Syndrome.