

## Adolescent Autism: Understanding, Challenges and Supportive Strategies

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### Abstract

Adolescence is a period of significant change and growth, marked by the transition from childhood to adulthood. For adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), this transition can present unique challenges and opportunities. Understanding adolescent autism, its characteristics, challenges, and supportive strategies, is crucial for parents, educators, and healthcare professionals to effectively support these young individuals in their journey to adulthood.

**Keywords:** Adolescence; Autism; Repetitive behaviours

### Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex neurodevelopmental disorder that affects communication, behavior, and social interaction. It is called a “spectrum” disorder because it varies widely in its presentation and severity, with each individual having a unique set of strengths, challenges, and characteristics. Some common features of ASD [1,2].

### Methodology

Difficulty with understanding and using verbal and non-verbal communication, such as gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Engaging in repetitive movements or behaviours, such as hand-flapping, rocking, or lining up toys. Heightened sensitivities or preferences to sensory stimuli, such as light, sound, touch, taste, or smell. Many individuals with ASD have areas of strength or special interests, such as music, art, math, or science [3].

### Challenges faced by adolescents with autism

Adolescence can be a particularly challenging time for individuals with autism, as they navigate the physical, emotional, and social changes that come with this stage of life. Some common challenges faced by adolescents with autism include:

Difficulty forming and maintaining friendships, understanding social cues, or fitting in with peers. Difficulty with organization, time management, or understanding abstract concepts, which can impact academic performance. Difficulty managing emotions, dealing with frustration or anxiety, and understanding their own feelings or the feelings of others. Planning for life after high school, such as college, vocational training, or employment, can be overwhelming and uncertain [4,5].

### Supportive strategies for adolescents with autism

Despite the challenges, there are many supportive strategies and interventions that can help adolescents with autism thrive during adolescence and beyond. It's essential for parents, educators, and healthcare providers to work together to provide individualized support and guidance.

An IEP is a tailored educational plan designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities, including ASD. It may include accommodations, modifications, and specialized instruction to support academic success.

Social skills groups or training programs can help adolescents with autism learn and practice social skills, such as conversation, empathy,

and friendship-building. CBT can help adolescents with autism manage anxiety, improve emotional regulation, and develop coping strategies for dealing with social and academic challenges. Early and ongoing transition planning can help adolescents with autism prepare for life after high school. This may include exploring post-secondary education options, vocational training, or employment opportunities, and developing independent living skills. Family counseling can help parents and siblings understand and support their adolescent with autism, while also addressing family dynamics and communication challenges [6-8].

### The role of parents and educators

Parents and educators play a crucial role in supporting adolescents with autism. It's essential to approach the situation with empathy, understanding, and patience. Some ways parents and educators can support adolescents with autism include:

Establishing routines and predictable schedules can help adolescents with autism feel more secure and organized. Encourage adolescents to develop and practice independent living skills, such as cooking, cleaning, or managing finances, to build confidence and self-reliance. Teach adolescents with autism to advocate for their needs and preferences, whether it's in the classroom, social settings, or healthcare settings. Encourage adolescents to participate in activities or groups that align with their interests, strengths, or passions, which can help foster positive relationships and build self-esteem. Stay informed about autism research, therapies, and resources, and connects with other parents, educators, and healthcare providers for support and collaboration.

Adolescence is a period of growth, change, and transition for all young people, but it can be especially challenging for adolescents with autism. By understanding the unique characteristics, challenges, and strengths of adolescents with autism, and implementing supportive strategies and interventions, we can help them navigate this critical stage of life with confidence, resilience, and success.

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**Received:** 01-Apr-2024, Manuscript No: jcalb-24-132678, **Editor Assigned:** 03-Apr-2024, pre QC No: jcalb-24-132678 (PQ), **Reviewed:** 17-Apr-2024, QC No: jcalb-24-132678, **Revised:** 19-Apr-2024, Manuscript No: jcalb-24-132678 (R), **Published:** 26-Apr-2024, DOI: 10.4172/2375-4494.1000629

**Citation:** Amara A (2024) Adolescent Autism: Understanding, Challenges and Supportive Strategies. J Child Adolesc Behav 12: 629.

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It's essential for parents, educators, and healthcare providers to work collaboratively to provide individualized support and guidance, promote independence and self-advocacy, and create a supportive and inclusive environment that values the unique contributions and potential of every adolescent with autism.

With the right support, understanding, and resources, adolescents with autism can overcome challenges, build on their strengths, and achieve their full potential as they transition into adulthood. By embracing their uniqueness and celebrating their accomplishments, we can help create a brighter and more inclusive future for all individuals with autism [9,10].

Adolescence is a transformative period filled with both challenges and opportunities, and for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), this journey can be uniquely complex. Understanding and supporting adolescents with autism requires a collaborative and individualized approach that acknowledges their strengths, challenges, and unique perspectives.

## Conclusion

It's crucial for parents, educators, and healthcare providers to work together to create a supportive and inclusive environment that fosters independence, self-advocacy, and personal growth. By implementing tailored interventions, such as individualized education plans, social skills training, and cognitive-behavioral therapy, we can help adolescents with autism navigate the social, academic, and emotional challenges of adolescence more effectively. Moreover, promoting acceptance, understanding, and inclusion within schools, communities, and society at large can help break down barriers and create opportunities for adolescents with autism to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their communities. In embracing the diversity and

potential of every adolescent with autism, we not only support their journey towards adulthood but also enrich our communities with their unique perspectives, talents, and strengths. With compassion, patience, and commitment, we can help adolescents with autism build fulfilling lives and achieve their full potential in all aspects of life.

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