ASD
Autism and Asperger’s
What are Autism and Asperger’s syndromes?

Click on the link below for a video describing Autism and Asperger’s syndromes.
http://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/aspd.aspx

Click on link to a video made by a 22 year old man with autism about his life at secondary school.
https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/teachers-tv-understanding-autism-6049241

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others. When we have autism, we see, hear and feel the world differently to other people. A young person once gave the following description: "My life is like a painting to the world and behind it is another painting where I am on a different planet - sometimes the paintings merge and I feel as if I am in the world, but on a different planet at the same time.”

How is Autism and Asperger’s diagnosed?

A diagnosis is the formal identification of autism. It usually involves a couple of assessment meetings and information that is gathered from the young person’s development as well as their functioning at home, socially and at school. Contact with school is usually made. The young person will also spend some time in assessment meetings on their own with the clinician. At the end of the assessment an ASD report is written, combining the outcome of all the assessments.

These are some symptoms which may be present:

**Difficulties with social communication**

Autistic people have difficulties with interpreting both verbal and non-verbal language like gestures or tone of voice. Many have a very literal understanding of language, and think people always mean exactly what they say. They may find it difficult to use or understand:

- facial expressions
- tone of voice
- jokes and sarcasm.

Others have good language skills, but they may still find it hard to understand the expectations of others within conversations, perhaps repeating what the other person has just said or talking at length about their own interests.

**Difficulties with social interaction**

Autistic people often have difficulty ‘reading’ other people - recognising or understanding others’ feelings and
intentions - and expressing their own emotions. This can make it very hard for them to navigate the social world. They may:

• appear to be insensitive
• seek out time alone when overloaded by other people
• not seek comfort from other people
• appear to behave ‘strangely’ or in a way thought to be socially inappropriate.

Autistic people may find it hard to form friendships. Some may want to interact with other people and make friends, but may be unsure how to go about it.

**Highly-focused interests**

Many autistic people have intense and highly-focused interests, often from a fairly young age. These can change over time or be lifelong, and can be anything from art or music, to trains or computers. An interest may sometimes be unusual. One autistic person loved collecting rubbish, for example. With encouragement, the person developed an interest in recycling and the environment.

Many channel their interest into studying, paid work, volunteering, or other meaningful occupation. Autistic people often report that the pursuit of such interests is fundamental to their wellbeing and happiness.

**Repetitive behaviour and routines**

The world can seem a very unpredictable and confusing place to autistic people, who often prefer to have a daily routine so that they know what is going to happen every day. They may want to always travel the same way to and from school or work, or eat exactly the same food for breakfast.

The use of rules can also be important. It may be difficult for an autistic person to take a different approach to something once they have been taught the ‘right’ way to do it. People on the autism spectrum may not be comfortable with the idea of change, but may be able to cope better if they can prepare for changes in advance.

**Sensory sensitivity**

Autistic people may also experience over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light, colours, temperatures or pain. For example, they may find certain background sounds, which other people ignore or block out, unbearably loud or distracting. This can cause anxiety or even physical pain. Or they may be fascinated by lights or spinning objects.

Read more about repetitive behaviour and routines and sensory processing.
Does it help to have a diagnosis?

Getting a timely and thorough assessment and diagnosis may be helpful because:

- it helps autistic people (and their families, partners, employers, colleagues, teachers and friends) to understand why they may experience certain difficulties and what they can do about them
- it allows people to access services and support.

If I suspect my child has Autism or Asperger’s, what do I do?

The diagnosis of Autism or Asperger’s can only be done by a trained professional or team of people, as mentioned earlier. We offer multidisciplinary ASD assessments in Stepping Stones Clinic. You can contact you yourselves for an appointment or your GP can make a referral.

After your child’s diagnosis

A diagnosis can help your child to get autism-specific support, but this doesn't happen automatically. Support can include specific support at school or support from social services or financial assistance to you. The National Autistic society is a useful resource with hosts of helpful guidance and advice. An autism diagnosis can be difficult to come to terms with and it is very important for young people and parents to be supported and to be proved with the right support at this stage. We offer post-diagnostic workshops; family interventions and social skills training and support. We also offer help with sensory integration where that is indicated.
At times children or young people with ASD has additional difficulties such as depression, anxiety, OCD or ADHD which needs treatment in its own right. We also provide those interventions, when indicated.

We also offer individual therapy or group sessions to help young people who have been diagnosed with ASD. We also offer support and help to parents in order to help their children at home.

Stepping Stones clinic: Who we are

Stepping Stones clinic is a mental health clinic for children, young people, young adults and families. We offer a range of assessments and interventions that are all delivered by highly experienced clinicians. We have a multidisciplinary team of child psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, family therapists, occupational therapists, child psychotherapists and dieticians.

All our clinicians are registered with their regulatory bodies. All our interventions are based on the latest evidence. We are regulated by CQC and contracted into all medical insurances. We provide a world-class service. We monitor progress and improvement throughout every treatment delivered to ensure high quality outcomes. We work in partnership with families and their children. Every person gets a tailor-made treatment package and we aim to offer appointments and deliver treatment as soon as they are received at a time that will suit each family.

Our passion is patient care – Dr Trudie Rossouw, Clinic Director, Stepping Stones Clinic

Useful addresses and telephone numbers

The National Autistic society’s website is a very resourceful guide, full of information, resources and advice.

Local support groups

Click on this link for information on local support groups

Please contact us on:

07944877172

or info@steppingstonesclinic.uk

16 Canon Hill road, N14 7HD.

www.trudierossouw.co.uk

www.steppingstonesclinic.uk