

FACT SHEET Autistic Clients

Diagnosis Categories

Autistic Disorder (infantile autism)
Rett's Disorder
Asperger's Disorder
Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

Characteristics

Lack of responsiveness to people
Involvement with objects
Active withdrawal – hitting, kicking, biting, spitting
Indifference to affection or reinforcement
Impairment in multiple non-verbal behaviors
Lack of cooperative play or appropriate peer relations
Gross impairment in communication skills
 Mutism
 Echolalia
Inability to name objects
Metaphorical language
Abnormal speech melody or inflection
Stereotypical, bizarre, and alien behaviors
 Rhythmic, repetitive behaviors (rocking, hand shaking)
Perseveration
Poor impulse control
Catastrophic reaction
Movement disorders especially motor planning
 Difficulty in starting, stopping, and transitioning into new movement
Labile affect
Perceptual distortion

Considerations and Cautions

Be very watchful
Protect the client's safety at all times
Be aware of their impulsivity especially around instruments
Be careful about physical proximity and touching
Keep verbalizations short and to the point
Follow client lead based on client's response in the moment
Respond musically to their behavior, rhythms, vocalizations
Don't require verbal response or singing
Rhythmic, repetitive music useful