



Severity Levels for ASD

As the most recent changes to the DSM diagnostic criteria have gathered the different presentations of ASD under the one diagnosis, 'Autism Spectrum Disorder', it was necessary to distinguish between the various levels to which individuals are affected.

These levels are explained in the following table:

Severity levels for ASD	Social Communication	Restricted interests; repetitive behaviours
Level 3 Requiring very substantial support	Severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills cause severe impairments in functioning, very limited initiation of social interactions and minimal response to social overtures from others.	Preoccupations, fixated rituals and/or repetitive behaviours markedly interfere with functioning in all spheres. Marked distress when rituals or routines are interrupted. Very difficult to redirect from fixated interest or returns to it quickly.
Level 2 Requiring substantial support	Marked deficits in verbal and non-verbal social communication skills; social impairments apparent even with supports in place. Limited initiation of social interactions and reduced or abnormal response to social overtures from others.	RBBs and/or fixated interests appear frequently enough to be obvious to the casual observer and interfere with functioning in a variety of contexts. Distress of frustration is apparent when RBBs are interrupted. Difficult to redirect from fixated interest.
Level 1 Requiring support	Without supports in place deficits cause noticeable impairments. Has difficulty initiating social interactions and demonstrates clear examples of atypical or unsuccessful response to social overtures from others. May appear to have decreased interest in social interactions.	Rituals and repetitive behaviours (RRBs) cause significant interference with functioning in one or more contexts. Resists attempts by others to interrupt RRBs or to be redirected from fixated interests.

Intellectual disability is not mentioned here, although generally those at the higher levels of severity will have more problems intellectually than those on the lower levels.

Individuals previously diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome are most likely to be functioning on level 1 in both social communication and RRBs.

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