

Thompson Center for Autism
& Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri

Building on Your Child's Strengths

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The "A" Word

Diagnosis:

The answer that leads to questions.

Can I do this?? What caused my child to have autism?
Does everyone feel this overwhelmed? *I wonder if...*
Which way do I turn? *Who do I listen to?*
 Everyone gives me a different answer!!
 Why didn't we do something sooner?
Am I doing enough for my child?
WHAT DO I DO NOW? *Why us?*
 Why doesn't my child receive that many hours of therapy?
 Which information is correct??



What Caused My Child's Autism?

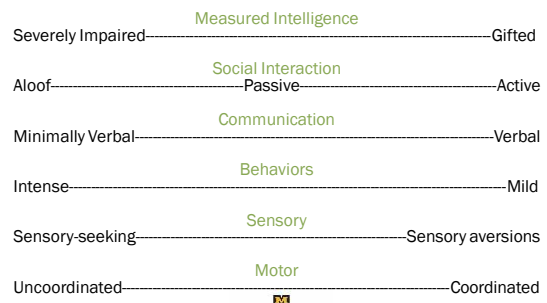
- Research has identified over 100 rare gene mutations associated with autism
- Most likely a complex combination of genetic risks and environmental factors
- Not due to vaccines or lack of parent bond



Autism

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - Autism spectrum disorder (**ASD**) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. (CDC)
 - Their brain works differently
 - Clinical world=Deficit Focused
 - Your world=Your Child

The Spectrum of Autism



Turning Deficits into Strengths

Unique Skills and Insights

Each individual has unique skills and characteristics that can be assets

- Attention to detail
- Dependability
- Loyal
- Logical
- Ability to focus
- “Out of the box” thinking
- Imaginative
- Diverse
- Gifted
- Likable
- Not judgmental



Differences in Social Communication

- Lack of eye contact
- May have limited language
- Difficulty understanding and using gestures, facial expressions/emotions, body posture, tone of voice
- Decreased abstract language
- Inappropriate social remarks



Differences in Social Communication

- ~~Lack of eye contact~~ **Aware of their environment**
- ~~May have limited language~~ **Resourceful**
- ~~Difficulty understanding and using gestures, facial expressions/emotions, body posture, tone of voice~~ **Prefer explicit communication**
- ~~Decreased abstract language~~ **Literal**
- ~~Inappropriate social remarks~~ **Honest, Curious**



Differences in Repetitive or Restricted Behavior/Interests

- May have repetitive motor or vocal behavior
- May have rigidity and inflexibility within routines
- Interacts with items/objects in repetitive and peculiar ways
- May have a specialized interest that is all encompassing
- May become distressed at changes in routines or expectations



Differences in Repetitive or Restricted Behavior/Interests

- ~~May have repetitive motor or vocal behavior~~ **Quirk that makes them unique**
- ~~May have rigidity and inflexibility within routines~~ **Attention to detail**
- ~~Interacts with items/objects in repetitive and peculiar ways~~ **Creative thinker**
- ~~May have a specialized interest that is all encompassing~~ **Expert in that area**
- ~~May become distressed at changes in routines or expectations~~ **Rule follower**



Tools for Support

Get to Know Me

Get to Know Me!

How I communicate:

Things that upset me:

My favorite things:

How I feel pain:

Things that help me be calm:

Best way to communicate with me:

My name:
My birthday:
My caregiver(s) name(s):
My medications and medical history:

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Tools for Support

4. Develop *your* community

- Practitioners and providers
 - An autism background is always helpful
- School contacts
 - Ask about district autism specialists
- Autism community & other parents
 - Columbia/ Jefferson City SEPTA (Special Education PTA)
 - Central Missouri Autism Caregivers (CMAC)
 - Thompson Center Mentoring Program



Tools for Support

1. Take advantage of the options available to you



- Get on wait lists
- Medical/professional services
- County resources and community outreach
- School resources (IEP and 504)



Tools for Support

2. Develop a roadmap

- Helps to organize the what, who, where, how
- Prioritize your needs
- Start with one thing

3. Acquire knowledge regularly

- Thompson Center Resources
 - Follow us on FB
 - Autism Speaks
 - Free Tool Kits



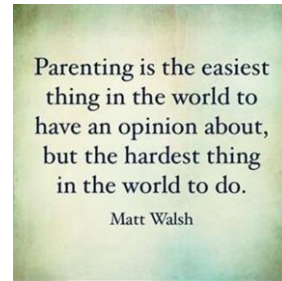
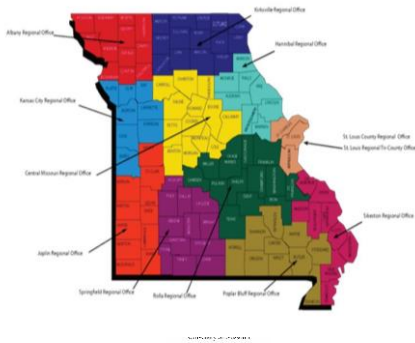
Tools for Support

5. Ask for help – take some breaks!

- Respite care!
- Family and friends
 - Don't be afraid to give some tips on what works and what doesn't!
 - You know your child best!



Regional Office



Thank you!

- Questions?

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