

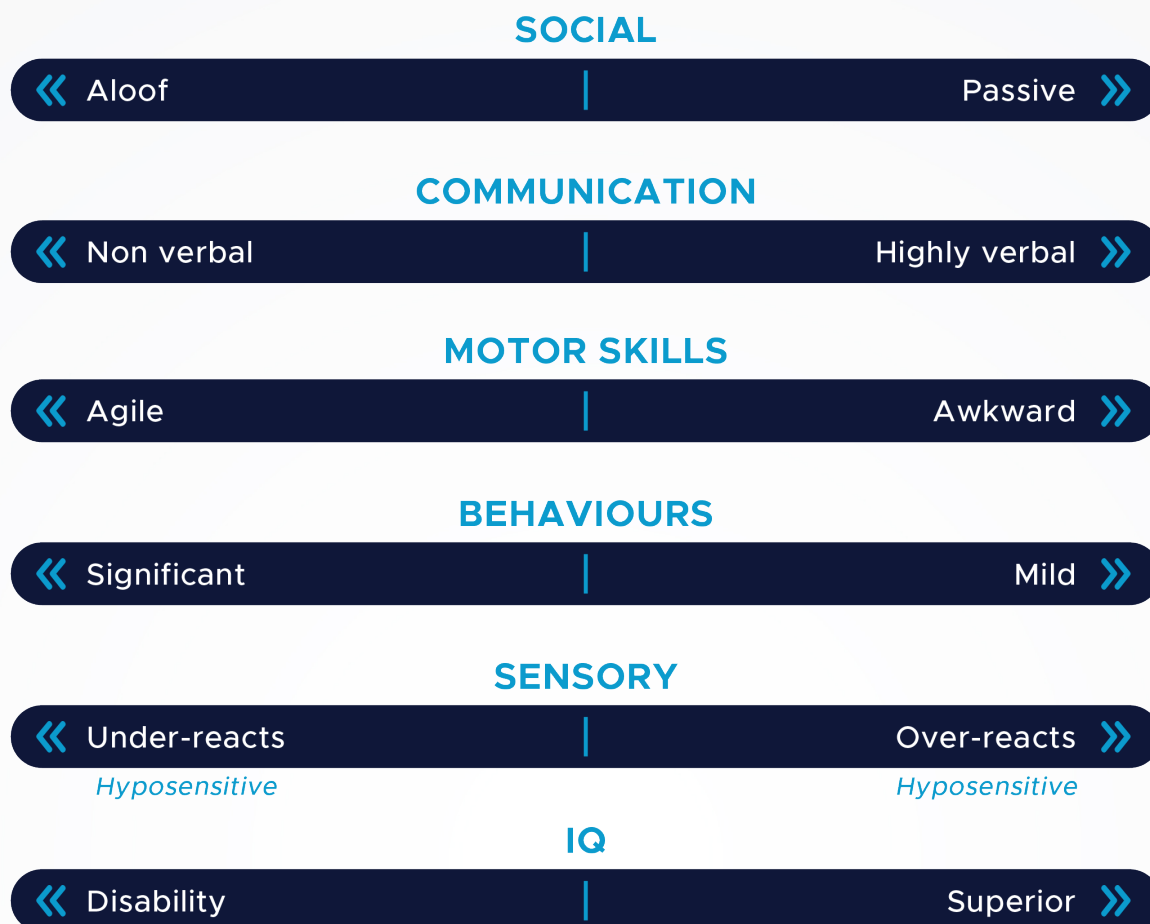


DIAGNOSIS - WHAT TO DO? WHERE TO GO? WHAT NEXT?

Autism and other related/similar conditions cannot be diagnosed using medical tests. Instead, diagnosis relies on **observation of behavioural features**. The criteria is constantly being re-evaluated to reflect the growing understanding of the Autism Spectrum. As our knowledge of autism grows so does the need for re-evaluation of the autism criteria, for example only recently sensitivity to sensory stimuli has been included as part of the criteria.

Everyone on the spectrum is very different. Often, at my workshops, I ask people to circle where they think the child they know sits on the criteria on the following page. Usually, the circles end up all over the page or people will say **“It depends on where the child is or who the child is with”** and I couldn’t agree more, the Autism Spectrum is very complex and individual. It is because of this individuality that getting a diagnosis can be a very slow and arduous process.

THE AUTISM SPECTRUM



The Autism Spectrum table above shows the complex nature of ASD, and why each person on the spectrum is so different.

What to do if you notice a child engages differently?

Once families, carers, teachers, educators notice the child engages differently it can be hard to know what to do next. When an educator notices this, I always think it is best to suggest to families/carers that they seek help from a paediatrician or psychologist. I strongly believe you should never say you think there is something “wrong” with the child, rather say, **“I notice they learn and engage differently.”**

I love what Dr Tony Attwood says, **“Without a diagnosis, children are judged, with a diagnosis they can be supported.”**

It is recommended families seek a professional opinion from a paediatrician, psychologist or other authorised autism specialist.

What to do following a Diagnosis

I recently asked on my facebook page what people recommended for families/carers to do following a new diagnosis. Here is a great response from Marie:



Marie Petz Your son is still your son, label or not.

Sue Larkey and Tony Attwood provide a range of books and professional development for parents and teachers of kids on the spectrum.

Seeing an OT, speech pathologist and/or educational psychologist are great starting points for developing strategies for your child.

Having daily plan charts and explaining the 'what' is happening and why are helpful for kids on the spectrum.

Clear rules, expectations and instructions are crucial for kids with an ASD.

Speak to your son's school and your GP for recommendations on local professionals who can help.

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FUNDING OPTIONS TO INVESTIGATE

Often getting funding can be difficult and it can be hard to know where to start. Below I have listed a couple of suggestions. Keep in mind the process can be arduous and takes time however **the returns can be worthwhile**.

- ✔ **Carers Allowance** through Centrelink to help pay for sensory toys or paediatrician appointments.
- ✔ **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)** to get a key worker to help with your child.
- ✔ **Mental Health Care Plan**, through your GP, which allows for up to 10 therapy visits per year to an Occupational Therapist or psychologist subsidised under Medicare. This can be extended for another 5 in some cases.
- ✔ **Complex Care Needs Plan** allows for 5 speech therapy appointments subsidised by Medicare per year.
- ✔ **Helping Children with Autism** funding has now been replaced with NDIS in most regions.
- ✔ Notify your school or preschool ASAP. I recommend speaking to staff about how to **access extra learning support for your child** or any other services the school provides.

WEBSITES TO HELP YOU ALONG THE WAY

- ✓ <https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism>
- ✓ <https://amaze.org.au>
- ✓ <http://www.positivepartnerships.com.au>
- ✓ <https://www.autismspectrum.org.au>

SUPPORT GROUP



Tona O'Connor Find a local ASD support group, they often have a FB page as well as meetings. Other parents are often your best source of knowledge of therapists or programs in your local area and relevant things you need to know about.

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You can often find a local support group for parents/carers with children on the Autism Spectrum and there are a number of online ones as well!

These support groups will be able to offer you lots of helpful tips, resources, local services as well as provide you with the opportunity to talk to others going through a similar situation as you.

MOST OF ALL LOOK AFTER YOURSELF.

Consider finding a psychologist for yourself or other family members.

NEW FACEBOOK GROUP FOR PARENTS/CARERS

I have started my own private Facebook support group for any Parents/Carers who would like a private community to share the journey together.

Find on Facebook : Sue Larkey Parent/Carer Support Group



WHAT TO DO IF FAMILIES/CARERS DON'T WANT A DIAGNOSIS?

Part of the grief process is “denial” and occasionally families/carers resist diagnosis as part of that process. It is important to support and guide them where possible and be an advocate for the child to get the support and understanding they require.

STAGES OF GRIEF



In Module 2 of my Accredited [“Early Childhood Course”](#) I explain the stages of grief. If you want to learn more join my 5 Hour Online Course

EARLY CHILDHOOD COURSE



WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

- Understanding Different Learning Styles
- Talking to Families/Carers about Diagnosis
- How to use Different Ways of Teaching
- How to help children develop - communication (verbal & non verbal)
- Stages of Play How to create an inclusive play program
- Meltdowns & Tantrums
- 3 Steps to Positive Behaviour Support

ENROLL NOW