

Glossary

Visit the Autism Speaks Video Glossary at www.AutismSpeaks.org to see video of the items in blue.

A

Absence Seizure, see Seizures

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is the US law that ensures rights of persons with disabilities with regard to employment and other issues.

Angelman Syndrome is a genetic disorder causing developmental delay and neurological problems, often accompanied by seizures. Children often display hyperactivity, small head size, sleep disorders and movement and balance disorders.

Anticonvulsant is a type of drug used to prevent or stop seizures or convulsions. Also called antiepileptic.

Aphasia is the complete or partial loss of ability to use or understand language.

Apraxia is a disorder consisting of partial or total incapacity to execute purposeful movements, without impairment of muscular power and coordination. The person has difficulty sequencing movements. Apraxia may be specific to speech.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a style of teaching using series of trials to shape desired behavior or response. Skills are broken into small components and taught to child through a system of reinforcement.

Asperger Syndrome is a developmental disorder on the Autism spectrum defined by impairments in communication and social development and by repetitive interests and behaviors, without a significant delay in language and cognitive development.

Astatic Seizure, see Seizures

Atonic Seizure, see Seizures

Audiologist is a professional who diagnoses and treats, individuals with hearing loss or balance problems.

Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) is test considered to be current gold standard for diagnosing ASD and, along with information from parents, should be incorporated into a child's evaluation.

Autism Spectrum Disorders encompasses the following disorders listed in DSM-IV: Autistic Disorder,

Asperger's Disorder, PDD – Not Otherwise Specified, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, and Retts Disorder.

B

C

Casein is protein found in milk, used in forming the basis of cheese and as a food additive.

Celiac Disease is a disease in which there is an immunological reaction within the inner lining of the small intestine to gluten, causing inflammation that destroys the lining and reduces the absorption of dietary nutrients. It can lead to symptoms of nutritional, vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

Cerebral Palsy (CP) is an abnormality of motor function (as opposed to mental function) that is acquired at an early age, usually in utero or at less than a year of age, and is due to a brain lesion that is non-progressive.

Childhood Disintegrative Disorder is a disorder in which development begins normally in all areas, physical and mental. At some point between 2 and 10 years of age, the child loses previously developed skills. The child may lose social and language skills and other functions, including bowel and bladder control.

Chromosome 15 Duplication Syndrome is a rare chromosomal disorder. Symptoms may be similar to Prader-Willi and Angelman syndromes and range from asymptomatic cases to variable combinations of skeletal, neurological, gastrointestinal, psychological, and other abnormalities in association with developmental delay.

Chronic Constipation is an ongoing condition of having fewer than three bowel movements per week.

Clinical Features are directly observed during examination; based on or characterized by observable and diagnosable symptoms of disease.

Cognition is mental process of knowing, including aspects such as awareness, perception, reasoning and judgment.

Cognitive Skills are any mental skills that are used in the process of acquiring knowledge; these skills include reasoning, perception and judgment.

Colitis is inflammation of the large intestine .

Complete Blood Count (CBC) lab test reporting number of white blood cells, red blood cells, platelets, hemoglobin, hematocrit & other values reflecting overall blood health.

Compulsions are deliberate repetitive behaviors that follow specific rules, such as pertaining to cleaning, checking, or

counting. In young children, restricted patterns of interest may be early sign of compulsions.

Computed Axial Tomography (CT) examines organs by scanning with X rays and using computer to construct series of cross-sectional scans. Called "CAT" scan.

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) common virus of herpes family. May be asymptomatic in healthy people. May be serious in patient with impaired immune system. Infection in utero may cause serious developmental disorders.

D

Declarative Language is used to communicate what the mind is producing. It is what is most common in conversation, whereas Imperative Language is used to ask questions, make commands or give instructions.

Developmental Disorder refers to several disorders that affect normal development. May affect single area of development (specific developmental disorders) or several (pervasive developmental disorders).

Developmental Individual Difference Relationship (DIR) is therapy, known as Floortime, that seeks to move the child toward increasingly complex interactions through mutually shared engagement.

Developmental Milestones skills or behaviors that most children can do by a certain age that enable the monitoring of learning, behavior, and development.

Developmental Pediatrician is a medical doctor who is board-accredited and has received sub-specialty training in developmental-behavioral pediatrics.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual the official system for classification of psychological and psychiatric disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association.

Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT), is technique incorporating principles of ABA, including positive reinforcement. Not in itself ABA. Used to teach behaviors in one-to-one setting. Concepts are broken down into small parts.

Dyspraxia is brain's inability to plan muscle movements and carry them out. In Speech, this term may be used to describe Apraxia.

E

Early Intervention (EI) is a state-funded program designed to identify and treat developmental problems or other disabilities as early as possible. Eligibility for EI is from birth to three years of age.

Echolalia is repeating words or phrases heard previously,

either immediately after hearing word or phrase, or much later. Delayed echolalia occurs days or weeks later. Functional echolalia is using quoted phrase in a way that has shared meaning, for example, saying "carry you" to ask to be carried.

Electroencephalogram (EEG) a test using electrodes on scalp to record electrical brain activity. For diagnoses of seizure disorder or abnormal brain wave patterns.

Epilepsy (Seizure disorder) is pattern of repeated seizures, causes include head injury, brain tumor, lead poisoning, genetic & infectious illnesses. Cause is unknown in 50% of cases.

Esophagitis is inflammation of the esophagus, the soft tube-like portion of the digestive tract connecting the pharynx with the stomach.

Expressive Labeling is the communication of a name for an object or person, see expressive language.

Expressive Language is communication of intentions, desires, or ideas to others, through speech or printed words. Includes gestures, signing, communication board and other forms of expression.

Extended School Year (ESY) Services are provided during lbreaks from school, such as during summer vacation, for students who experience substantial regression in skills during school vacations.

F

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) means that education must be provided to all children ages three to twenty-one at public expense.

Floortime a developmental intervention for children with autism involving meeting a child at his current developmental level, and building upon a particular set of strengths.

Fragile X is a genetic disorder that shares many of the characteristics of autism. Individuals may be tested for Fragile X.

G

Gastritis is inflammation of the stomach.

Gastroenterologist doctor specializing in diagnosis & treatment of disorders of GI tract, including esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, pancreas, liver, gallbladder & biliary system.

Gastroesophageal Reflux return of stomach contents back up into the esophagus which frequently causes

heartburn due to irritation of the esophagus by stomach acid.

Gastrointestinal pertains to the digestive tract, including the mouth, throat, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, and rectum.

General Education is a pattern of courses in multiple subjects taught to the same grade level to deliver a well-balanced education.

Geneticist refers to a medical doctor who specializes in genetic problems. Genes are the unit in the chromosome that contain the blueprint for the transmission of inherited characteristics.

Gestures are hand and head movements, used to signal to someone else, such as a give, reach, wave, point, or head shake. They convey information or express emotions without the use of words.

Global Developmental Delay is diagnosis in children younger than 5, characterized by delay in two or more developmental domains, sometimes associated with mental retardation.

Gluten is a protein present in wheat, rye, and barley.

Grand mal Seizure, see Seizures

H

Hyperlexia is the ability to read at an early age. To be hyperlexic, a child does not need to understand what he or she is reading.

Hyperresponsiveness, *Hypersensitivity*, see Sensory Defensiveness

Hyposensitivity, *Hyporesponsiveness*, is abnormal insensitivity to sensory input. Child who appears to be deaf, whose hearing is normal, is under reactive. Child who is under reactive to sensory input may have a high tolerance to pain, may be clumsy, sensation-seeking, and may act aggressively.

Hypotonia is a term that means low muscle tone.

I

Incidental Teaching teaches a child new skills while in their home or community, in natural context or “in the moment,” to help make sense of what they learn during formal instruction and generalize new skills.

Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) is developed by a multidisciplinary team including family as primary participant. Describes child’s level of development

in all areas; family’s resources, priorities, & concerns, services to be received and the frequency, intensity, and method of delivery. Must state natural environments in which services will occur.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) identifies student’s specific learning expectations, how school will address them with appropriate services, and methods to review progress. For students 14 & older, must contain plan to transition to postsecondary education or the workplace, or to help the student live as independently as possible in the community.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the US law mandating the “Free and Public Education” of all persons with disabilities between ages 3 and 21.

Infectious agents are organisms that cause infection; can be viruses, bacteria, fungi, or parasites.

Inclusion involves educating all children in regular classrooms, regardless of degree or severity of disability. Effective inclusion takes place with planned system of training and supports; involves collaboration of multidisciplinary team including regular and special educators.

J

Joint Attention is the process of sharing one’s experience of observing an object or event, by following gaze or pointing gestures. Critical for social development, language acquisition, cognitive development. Impairment in joint attention is a core deficit of ASD.

K

L

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is setting that least restricts opportunities for child with disabilities to be with peers without disabilities. The law mandates that every child with a disability be educated in a Least Restrictive Environment.

M

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a diagnostic technique using powerful electromagnets, radio frequency waves, and a computer to produce well-defined images of the body’s internal structures.

Mainstreaming is where students are expected to participate in existing regular ed classes, whereas in an inclusive program classes are designed for all students. May be gradual, partial, or part-time process (e.g., student may attend separate classes

within regular school, or participate in regular gym and lunch only).

Maternal Rubella is a mild, highly contagious virus, also known as “German measles” that crosses the placenta from infected mothers and leads to major developmental defects in developing fetus.

Melatonin is a hormone produced by pineal gland, involved in regulating sleeping and waking cycles. Sometimes used for chronic insomnia. Consult your child’s physician before giving melatonin; it is not recommended for all patients with sleep problems.

Mental Retardation describes person with limitations in mental functioning that cause them to develop more slowly than typical child. They may take longer to learn to speak, walk, and take care of personal needs such as dressing or eating, and are likely to have trouble learning in school. May be mild or severe.

Modified Checklist of Autism in Toddlers (MCHAT) is a screening tool for identifying young children who may be referred to specialist for further evaluation and possible Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis.

Motor deficits are physical skills that a person cannot perform or has difficulty performing.

Motor function (or Motor Skills) is the ability to move and control movements.

N

Neurocutaneous Disorders are genetic disorders leading to abnormal growth of tumors. Usually first appearing as skin lesions like birthmarks; may eventually lead to tumors affecting central nervous system and other parts of the body.

Neurologist refers to a doctor specializing in medical problems associated with the nervous system, specifically the brain and spinal cord.

Nonverbal Behaviors are things people do to convey information or express emotions without words, including eye gaze, facial expressions, body postures, and gestures.

O

Obsessions are persistent and intrusive repetitive thoughts. Preoccupations with specific kinds of objects or actions may be an early sign of obsessions.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea breathing disorder interrupting breathing during sleep when air flow cannot flow through the nose or mouth although

efforts to breathe continue. Throat collapses during sleep causing snorting and gasping for breath. May cause daytime sleepiness. May increase risk of hypertension and heart problems.

Occupational Therapy assists development of fine motor skills that aid in daily living. May focus on sensory issues, coordination of movement, balance, and self-help skills such as dressing, eating with a fork, grooming, etc. May address visual perception and hand-eye coordination.

Occupational Therapist helps minimize impact of disability on independence in daily living by adapting child’s environment and teaching sub-skills of the missing developmental components.

Operant Conditioning is the modification of behavior through positive and/or negative reinforcement.

P

Perseveration is repetitive movement or speech, or sticking to one idea or task, that has a compulsive quality to it.

Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD) group of conditions involving delays in development of many basic skills, including ability to socialize with others, to communicate and use imagination. Includes Autism, Asperger Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Rett Syndrome and Pervasive Development Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified.

Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS) a category of PDD referring to children having significant problems with communication & play, and some difficulty interacting with others, but are too social for diagnosis of autism.

Petit Mal Seizure, see Seizures

Phenylketonuria (PKU) a metabolic disorder involving deficiency of enzyme phenylalanine hydroxylase which leads to harmful buildup of phenylalanine in body. Symptoms range from mild to severe. May cause mental retardation.

Physical Therapy uses specially designed exercises and equipment to help patients regain or improve their physical abilities.

Physical Therapists design and implement physical therapy programs and may work within a hospital or clinic, in a school, or as an independent practitioner.

Pica is persistent eating or mouthing of non nutritive

substances for at least 1 month when behavior is developmentally inappropriate (older than 18-24 months). Substances may include items such as clay, dirt, sand, stones, pebbles, hair, feces, lead, laundry starch, vinyl gloves, plastic, erasers, ice, fingernails, paper, paint chips, coal, chalk, wood, plaster, light bulbs, needles, string, cigarette butts, wire, and burnt matches.

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) an alternative communication system using picture symbols. Taught in phases starting with simple exchange of symbol for desired item. Individuals learn to use picture symbols to construct complete sentences, initiate communication, & answer questions.

Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT) therapeutic teaching method using incidental teaching opportunities to target and modify key behaviors related to communication, behavior, and social skills.

Prevalence is the current number of people in a given population who have a specific diagnosis at a specified point in time.

Proprioception is the receiving of stimuli originating in muscles, tendons and other internal tissues.

Prosody is the rhythm and melody of spoken language expressed through rate, pitch, stress, inflection, or intonation. Some children with ASD have unusual intonation (flat, monotonous, stiff, or “sing songy” without emphasis on the important words).

Psychiatrist is a doctor specializing in prevention, diagnosis & treatment of mental illness. Has received additional training & completed a supervised residency in specialty. May have additional training in specialty, such as child psychiatry or neuropsychiatry. Can prescribe medication, which psychologists cannot do.

Psychologist is a professional who diagnoses and treats diseases of the brain, emotional disturbance, and behavior problems. May have a master’s degree (M.A.) or doctorate (Ph.D.) in psychology. May have other qualifications, including Board Certification and additional training in a specific type of therapy.

Q

R

Receptive Labeling, see receptive language

Receptive Language the ability to comprehend words and sentences. Begins as early as birth and increases with each stage in development. By 12 months a child

begins to understand words and responds to his name and may respond to familiar words in context. By 18 to 20 months a child identifies familiar people by looking when named (e.g., Where’s mommy?), gives familiar objects when named (e.g., Where’s the ball?), and points to a few body parts (e.g., Where’s your nose?). These skills commonly emerge slightly ahead of expressive language skills.

Reinforcement, or *reinforcer*, is any object or event following a response, increasing or maintaining the rate of responding. Positive reinforcer may be produced by, or be added after a response.

Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) a therapeutic teaching method based on building intelligence competencies of social connection -- such as referencing, emotion sharing, coregulation, and experience sharing -- that normally develop in infancy and early childhood.

Respite Care is temporary, short-term care provided to individuals with disabilities, delivered in the home for a few short hours or in an alternate licensed setting for an extended period of time. Respite care allows caregivers to take a break in order to relieve and prevent stress and fatigue.

Rett Syndrome is a very rare disorder in which patient has symptoms associated with PDD along with problems with physical development. They generally lose many motor, or movement, skills – such as walking and use of hands – and develop poor coordination. Condition has been linked to defect on the X chromosome, so it almost always affects girls.

S

Seizure refers to uncontrolled electrical activity in the brain, which may produce a physical convulsion, minor physical signs, thought disturbances, or a combination of symptoms.

Seizure, Absence, takes form of staring spell. Person suddenly seems “absent.” Has brief loss of awareness. May be accompanied by blinking or mouth twitching. Absence seizures have very characteristic appearance on EEG. Also called a *petit mal seizure*.

Seizure, Atonic, seizure where person loses muscle tone & strength &, unless supported, falls down. Atonic means lack of muscle tone & strength.

Seizure, Subclinical (Electrographic Seizures), are seizures that are visible on the EEG, but the patient does not exhibit clinical symptoms. Electroencephalography often detects subclinical seizures during sleep.

Seizure, Tonic-clonic, Seizures involving two phases – tonic phase when body becomes rigid, & clonic phase of uncontrolled jerking. May be preceded by aura & are often followed by headache, confusion, & sleep. May last for seconds, or continue for several minutes.

Self Regulation and *self-control* are related but not the same. Self-regulation refers to both conscious and unconscious processes that have an impact on self-control, but regulatory activities take place more or less constantly to allow us to participate in society, work, & family life. Self-control is a conscious activity.

Sensory Defensiveness is a tendency, outside the norm, to react negatively or with alarm to sensory input which is generally considered harmless or non-irritating to others. Also called hypersensitivity.

Sensory Input, see sensory stimuli

Sensory Integration is the way the brain processes sensory stimulation or sensation from the body & then translates that information into specific, planned, coordinated motor activity.

Sensory Integration Dysfunction a neurological disorder causing difficulties processing information from the five classic senses (vision, hearing, touch, smell, & taste), sense of movement (vestibular system), and positional sense (proprioception). Sensory information is sensed normally, but perceived abnormally. May be a disorder on its own, or with other neurological conditions.

Sensory Integration Therapy is used to improve ability to use incoming sensory information appropriately & encourage tolerance of a variety of sensory inputs.

Sensory stimulus agent, action or condition, internal (e.g., heart rate, temperature) or external (e.g., sights, sounds, tastes, smells, touch, & balance) that elicits physiological or psychological response. Response depends on ability to regulate & understand stimuli & adjust emotions to demands of surroundings.

Sleep Hygiene a set of practices, habits & environmental factors critically important for sound sleep, such as minimizing noise, light & temperature extremes & avoiding naps & caffeine.

Social Reciprocity back-and-forth flow of social interaction. How behavior of one person influences & is influenced by behavior of another & vice versa.

Social Stories, developed by Carol Gray, are simple stories that describe social events & situations that are difficult for a child with a PDD to understand. For ex-

ample, a social story might be written about birthday parties if the child appears to have a difficult time understanding what is expected of him or how he is supposed to behave at a birthday party.

Social Worker is a trained specialist in the social, emotional & financial needs of families & patients. Social workers often help families & patients obtain the services they have been prescribed.

Special Education is specially designed instruction, at no cost to families, to meet unique needs of child with disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals & institutions, & in other settings & instruction in physical education.

Speech & Language Therapist, or Speech Language Pathologist, specializes in human communication. The focus is on communication, not speech, to increase child's ability to impact and understand their environment.

Speech & Language Therapy is provided with the goal of improving an individual's ability to communicate. This includes verbal and nonverbal communication. The treatment is specific to the individual's need.

Spoken Language (also referred to as expressive and receptive language) use of verbal behavior, or speech, to communicate thoughts, ideas, & feelings with others. Involves learning many levels of rules - combining sounds to make words, using conventional meanings of words, combining words into sentences, and using words & sentences in following rules of conversation.

Stereotyped Behaviors refer to an abnormal or excessive repetition of an action carried out in the same way over time. May include repetitive movements or posturing of the body or objects.

Stereotyped Patterns of Interest or restricted patterns of interest refer to a pattern of preoccupation with a narrow range of interests and activities.

Stim, or "self-stimulation" behaviors that stimulate one's senses. Some "stims" may serve a regulatory function (calming, increasing concentration, or shutting out an overwhelming sound).

Subclinical Seizure, see Seizures

Symbolic Play is where children pretend to do things & to be something or someone else. Typically develops between the ages of 2 & 3 years. Also called make believe, or pretend play.

Syndrome is a set of signs & symptoms that collectively define or characterize a disease, disorder or condition.

X
Y
Z

T

Tactile Defensiveness is a strong negative response to a sensation that would not ordinarily be upsetting, such as touching something sticky or gooey or the feeling of soft foods in the mouth. Specific to touch.

Thalidomide is a sedative & hypnotic drug that has been the cause of malformation of infants born to mothers using it during pregnancy. Thalidomide acts as an angiogenesis inhibitor & can inhibit bone formation. Currently used to treat certain types of cancer.

Training and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) is a therapeutic approach broadly based on the idea that individuals with autism more effectively use & understand visual cues.

Tonic-clonic seizure, see Seizures

Tuberous Sclerosis is a neurocutaneous disorder characterized by mental retardation, seizures, skin lesions & intracranial lesions. An autosomal dominant disorder that occurs in 1 in 7,000 births.

Typical Development (or healthy development) describes physical, mental, & social development of a child who is acquiring or achieving skills according to expected time frame. Child developing in a healthy way pays attention to voices, faces, & actions of others, showing & sharing pleasure during interactions, & engaging in verbal & nonverbal back-and-forth communication.

U

V

Valproate, or Valproic Acid, is an antiepileptic drug used to treat epilepsy, migraines & bipolar disorder. Given orally or by injection. Associated with high rate of serious adverse events, including major congenital abnormalities & fetal death with in utero exposure.

Verbal Behavior is a method of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) for teaching children with autism, based on B.F. Skinner's description of the system of language.

Vestibular System refers to the body's system for maintaining equilibrium.

W

www.AutismSpeaks.org