

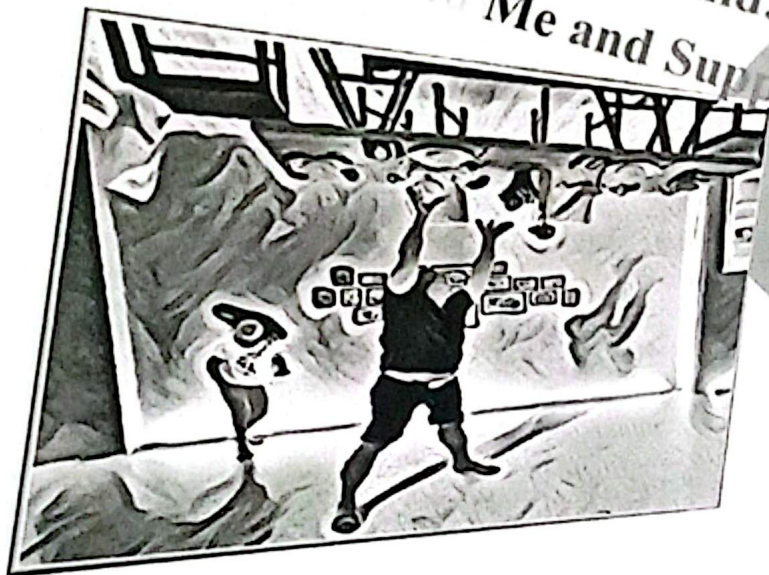
**I Am an Autistic Child:
Please Understand Me and Support Me**



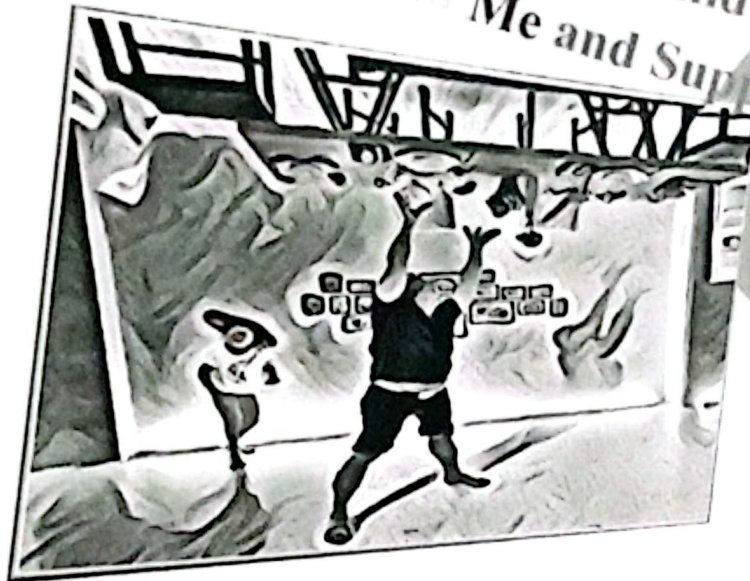
LEE JUN CHOI
SOPIAN BUJANG
AHMAD SOFIAN SHMINAN



*I Am an Autistic Child:
Please Understand Me and Support Me*



*I Am Autistic Child:
Please Understand Me and Support Me*



Lee Jun Choi
Sopian Bujang
Ahmad Sofian Shminan

UNIMAS PUBLISHER

2026



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Published in Malaysia by
UNIMAS Publisher,
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak,
94300 Kota Samarahan,
Sarawak, Malaysia.

Printed in Malaysia by
Pusat Pembangunan Kemahiran Sarawak (PPKS),
Jalan Canna, Tabuan Jaya,
93350 Kuching,
Sarawak, Malaysia.



Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

National Library of Malaysia

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the National Library of Malaysia

ISBN 978-629-7783-34-5

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Acknowledgment

This book would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of so many remarkable individuals. I am deeply grateful to my family, friends, and colleagues who believed in my work and provided unwavering support throughout this journey.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my colleagues, especially AP Dr. Sopian Bujang and Ts. Ahmad Sofian Shminan, for their continuous encouragement and insights.

A special thanks to Dr. Glenn Williams, my sabbatical leave supervisor at Nottingham Trent University, UK, for his invaluable guidance and mentorship. I am also profoundly grateful to Dr. Lai Sang Lao and the members of the Autism and Neurodiversity Research Group at Nottingham Trent University, UK, for their generous sharing of ideas and unwavering support.

I am particularly indebted to my students and fellow professionals at UNIMAS for their thoughtful feedback and stimulating discussions that have enriched my understanding of autism. Your dedication to the field continues to motivate me.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to the Dean of the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development, UNIMAS, for providing the support and resources that made this project possible. Your encouragement has been instrumental in bringing this book to life.

To the parents, caregivers, educators, and, most importantly, the children on the autism spectrum who inspired this work —this book is dedicated to you. Your resilience, strength, and love serve as a constant source of motivation. May this book help pave the way for a deeper understanding and support for every autistic child.

Thank you.

Lee Jun Choi

*To my wife, Wong Siau Min
and my children,
Dr. Jason Lee Tian Yi
Dr. Jerry Lee Tian Zhi
and
Jane Lee Ling*



Preface

As we navigate through the complexities of child development, one of the most important aspects of raising and supporting children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is understanding their unique perspectives and needs. The title of this book, *I Am an Autistic Child: Please Understand Me and Support Me*, reflects a simple yet profound message: autistic children are first and foremost children, and they, like all children, deserve to be understood, accepted, and supported in a way that fosters their growth, well-being, and potential.

This book was written with caregivers, educators, parents, and guardians in mind. Through its pages, I aim to bridge the gap between knowledge and empathy, providing a comprehensive resource that not only explains the signs and challenges associated with ASD but also offers practical strategies and insights for creating a nurturing and supportive environment. Whether you are just beginning to learn about autism or seeking deeper insights into the experiences of autistic children, this book will serve as a guide for navigating the many aspects of autism.

In my years of experience as a psychologist and educator, I have seen firsthand the challenges faced by families and communities in understanding autism. Often, misunderstanding or a lack of information can lead to frustration, confusion, and, in some cases, isolation. My goal is to alleviate these challenges by providing accurate, accessible information that empowers you to engage with autistic children in a positive, meaningful, and informed way. Autism is not a condition to be feared or stigmatized. It is a way of being that is valid and deserving of respect. By learning about autism, we can better advocate for these children, help them navigate the world in their unique way, and, most importantly, show them that they are loved, valued, and understood.

To achieve this goal, this book presents most of its content through **infographics**, a decision grounded in the need to make complex information about ASD more **accessible, engaging, and impactful**. Autism is a multifaceted condition that involves diverse developmental, behavioral, and social aspects, requiring clear and effective communication strategies to ensure that caregivers, educators, parents, and guardians can easily understand and apply the knowledge presented. Research has consistently shown that visual learning enhances comprehension and memory retention. Infographics simplify complex ideas by combining text, symbols, and illustrations, making it easier for readers to process, recall, and apply information in real-life scenarios. This is particularly crucial for topics related to autism, where understanding behavioral patterns, intervention strategies, and support mechanisms requires clarity and precision.

Autism-related topics often involve intricate concepts, such as neurodevelopmental processes, sensory sensitivities, communication challenges, and intervention techniques. Infographics allow for the breakdown of these concepts into structured, visually appealing formats that eliminate unnecessary complexity while maintaining depth and accuracy. This ensures that readers—regardless of their level of expertise—can grasp key takeaways quickly and effectively. Traditional text-heavy books can be overwhelming, particularly for busy caregivers, educators, and parents who may not have the time to go through dense academic explanations. Infographics provide a visually stimulating and reader-friendly approach that sustains engagement, making learning an interactive and enjoyable experience. By using colors, icons, and structured layouts, the book keeps readers invested while reducing cognitive overload.

One of the key objectives of this book is not only to educate but also to provide **actionable strategies** for supporting autistic children. Infographics serve as **quick reference tools** that readers can easily revisit whenever needed. For instance, visual guides on **sensory-friendly environments, communication strategies, or early intervention techniques** can be instantly understood and applied in real-world situations, benefiting both the child and their support system. Furthermore, visual representations of information enhance **accessibility**, particularly for individuals who are neurodivergent, those with learning disabilities, or those who prefer visual learning. Many autistic individuals, as well as their caregivers and educators, find visual aids more intuitive than lengthy textual explanations. The use of infographics aligns with universal design principles, ensuring that the book remains inclusive and beneficial for a diverse audience.

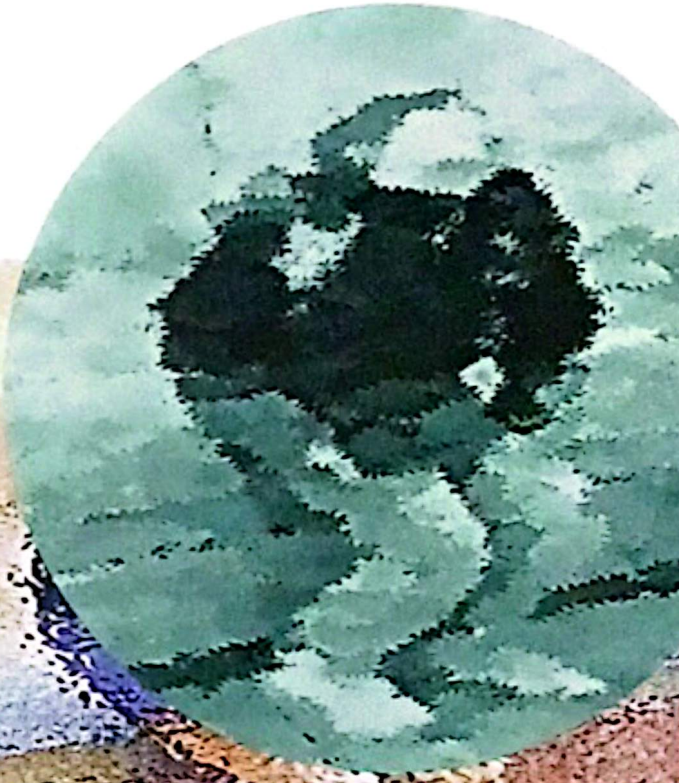
One of the biggest challenges in autism advocacy and education is fostering **empathy alongside knowledge**. Infographics, with their ability to present scenarios, emotions, and experiences in a **relatable and visually compelling manner**, help bridge this gap. By illustrating real-life challenges faced by autistic children, as well as the best approaches to support them, infographics foster a **deeper emotional connection** and a stronger sense of responsibility among readers. In today's digital age, people are increasingly accustomed to consuming information through visual formats such as infographics, charts, and interactive media. The shift from traditional text-based content to visually enriched learning is supported by neuroscience, which indicates that the human brain processes **visual information 60,000 times faster than text**. By adopting this approach, the book aligns with contemporary learning styles, ensuring that the information remains **relevant, impactful, and easy to absorb**.

In the process of writing this book, we have carefully selected and incorporated images to enhance the understanding and support for autistic children. We wish to declare that all photographs included in this book were either taken by myself or my co-authors. The individuals featured in these images are our own family members and the family members of our co-authors, who have graciously consented to their inclusion. Additionally, certain images used in this book have been sourced from free image platforms on the internet. These images have either been **blurred or modified** to ensure that they do not infringe upon copyright regulations and maintain the privacy and anonymity of individuals depicted. Every effort has been made to respect intellectual property rights and ethical considerations in the use of these visual materials.

We sincerely hope that this book serves as a valuable resource for those who seek **to understand, support, and advocate** for autistic children. It is more than just an informational guide—it is a **visually enriched, practical resource** that fosters **awareness, empathy, and action**. I encourage you to reflect on the insights shared and the strategies presented. I invite you to join me on this journey of **learning and growth**, as we work together to build a future where every autistic child is given the tools they need to **thrive**.

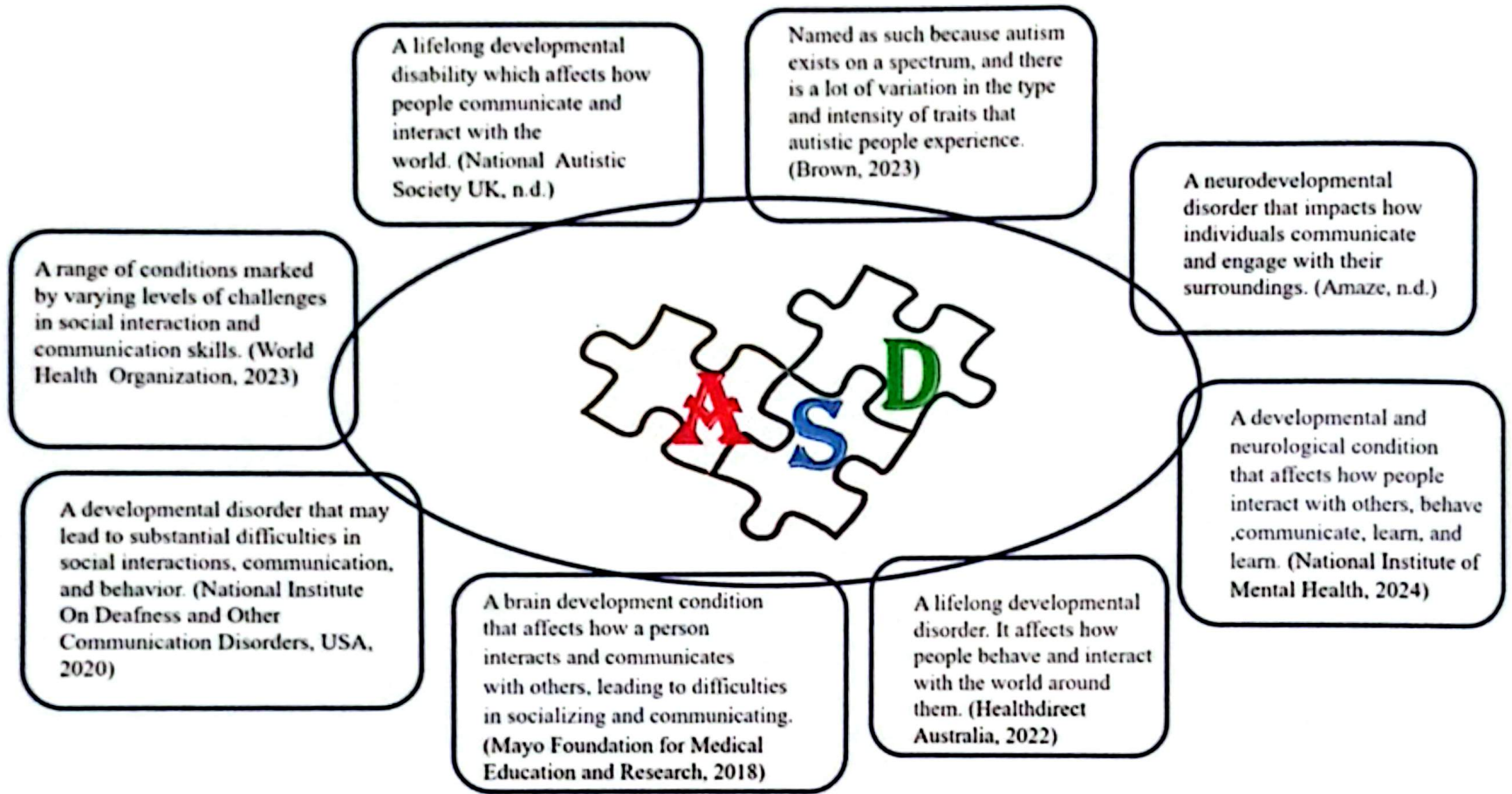
Lee Jun Choi
Sopian Bujang
Ahmad Sofian Shminan
18 January 2025

CHAPTER 1: Autism Spectrum Disorder and Me

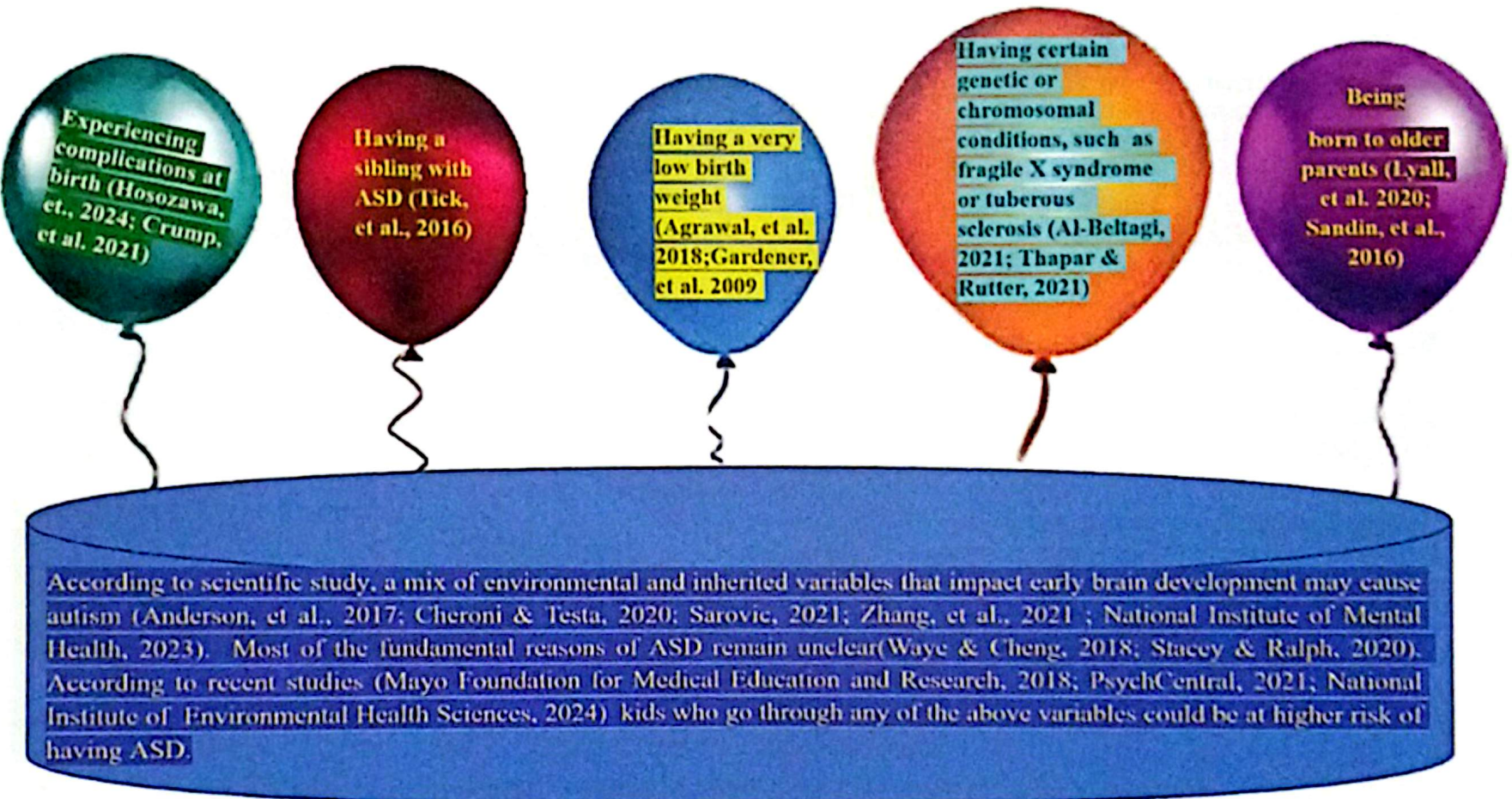




What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?



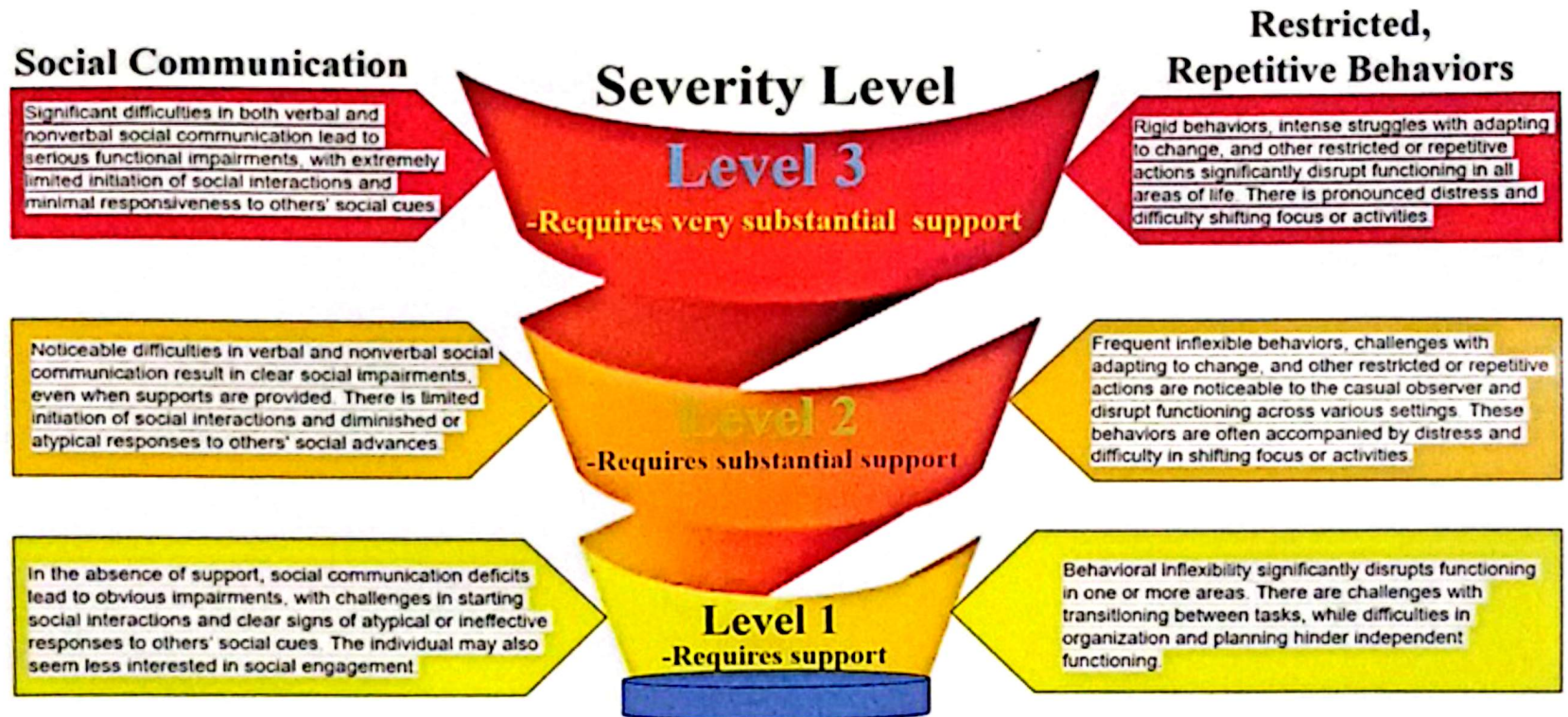
Possible Causes of Autism Spectrum Disorder





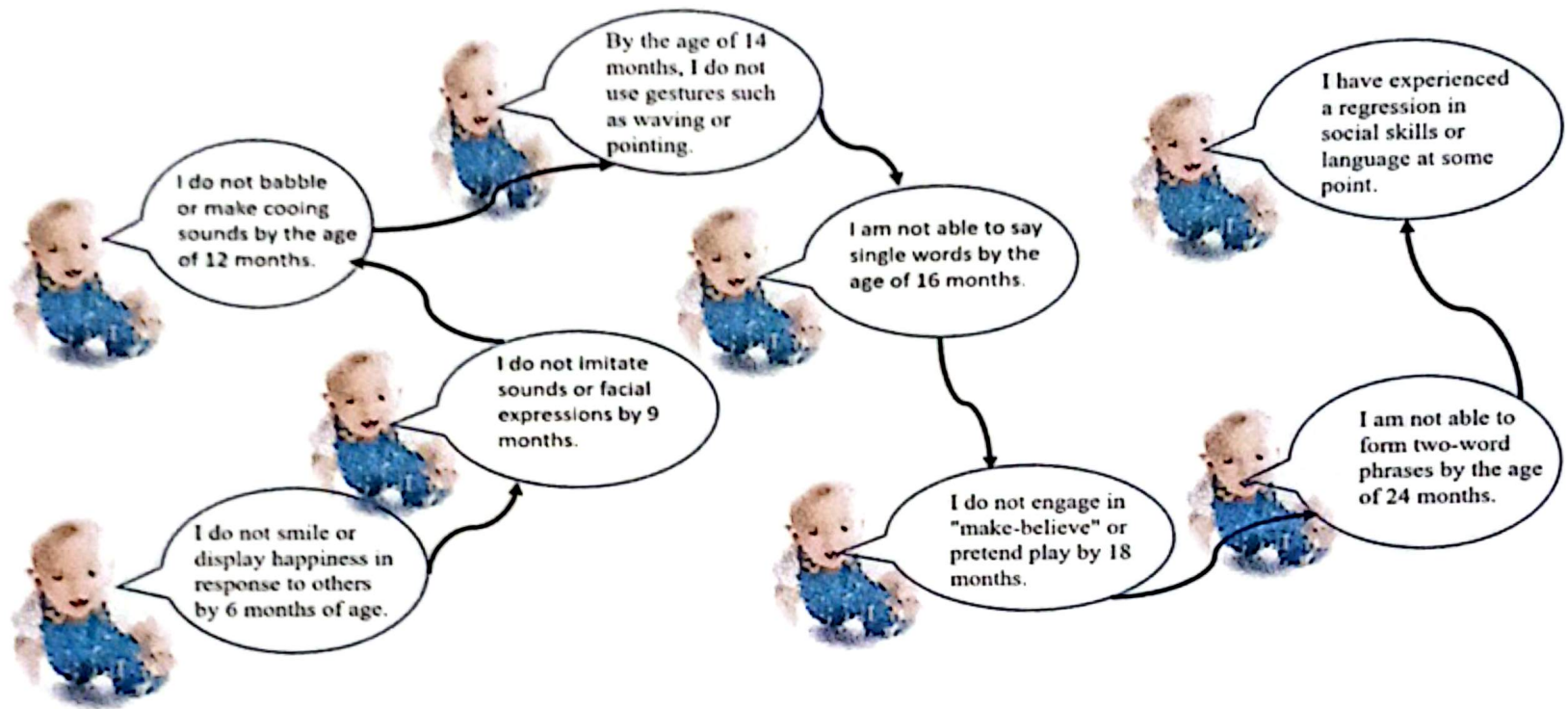
Severity Levels for Autism Spectrum Disorder: DSM-5-TR

Note: The full-text of the DSM-5-TR severity levels for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is provided below with permission from the APA.



Source: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/levels-of-autism>

Common Signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder Often Appear Early in My Development



Sources: Wetherby & Prizant, 2000; Baranek, 2002; Ozonoff et al., 2010; Landa et al., 2013; Pierce et al., 2019; Lord et al., 2020; American Psychiatric Association, 2022



Some Possible Red Flags You Might Notice About Me if I Am Autistic



Sources: Wetherby & Prizant, 2000; Baranek, 2002; Ben-Sasson et al., 2009; Ozonoff et al., 2010; Landa et al., 2013; Pierce et al., 2019; Lord et al., 2020; American Psychiatric Association, 2022

Possible Red Flags

I tend to see the world in a literal way and find it challenging to grasp abstract concepts or use my imagination.

I tend to prefer playing by myself rather than with other children.

I might insist that playmates interact with me in specific, predictable ways.

I engage with objects, toys, and potential playmates in unusual or unconventional ways.

I tend to ignore or react angrily when other children invite me to join their play or suggest changing the activity.

A photograph of a young child with dark hair, wearing a white shirt, sitting at a table and playing with various toys, including a red toy car and a black and white ball. The child is looking down at the toys. The photo is circular and serves as a background for the central text.

(2) I Have Difficulties in Playing with Other Children

I struggle with age-appropriate types of play, like rule-based games, pretend play, or team sports.

I often engage in rigid, repetitive play, and my play rarely includes imaginative or pretend activities.

I repeatedly play with the same objects (like toys, doors, or containers) in the same way each time.

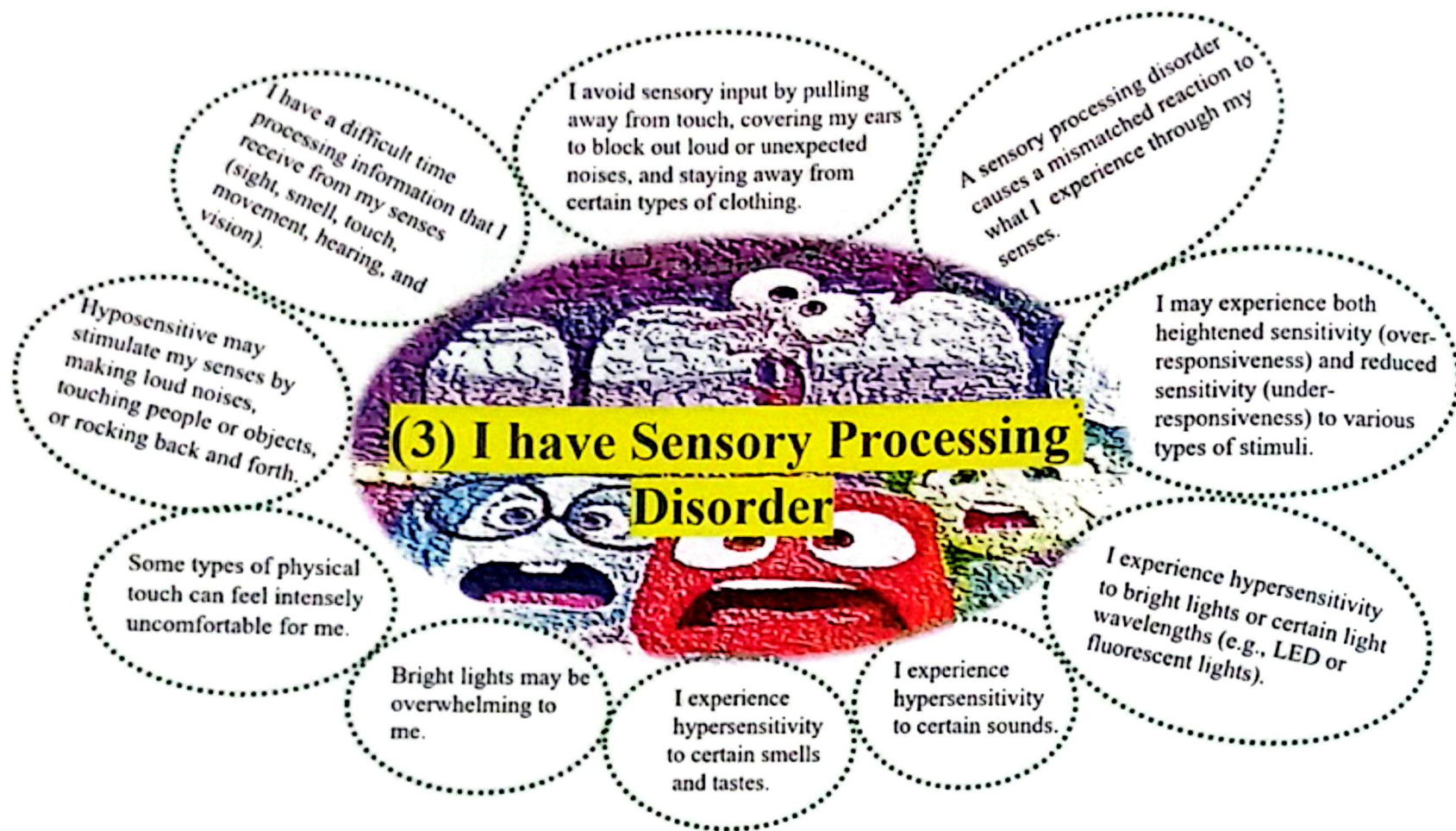
I repeatedly reenact the same scenes (often from TV) in the exact same manner.

I typically line up objects or toys rather than using them for pretend or interactive play.

Sources: Wetherby & Prizant, 2000; Baranek, 2002; Ben-Sasson et al., 2009; Ozonoff et al., 2010; Landa et al., 2013; Pierce et al., 2019; Lord et al., 2020; American Psychiatric Association, 2022



Possible Red Flags



Sources: Wetherby & Prizant, 2000; Baanek, 2002; Ben-Sasson et al., 2009; Ozonoff et al., 2010; Landa et al., 2013; Pierce et al., 2019; Lord et al., 2020; American Psychiatric Association, 2022.

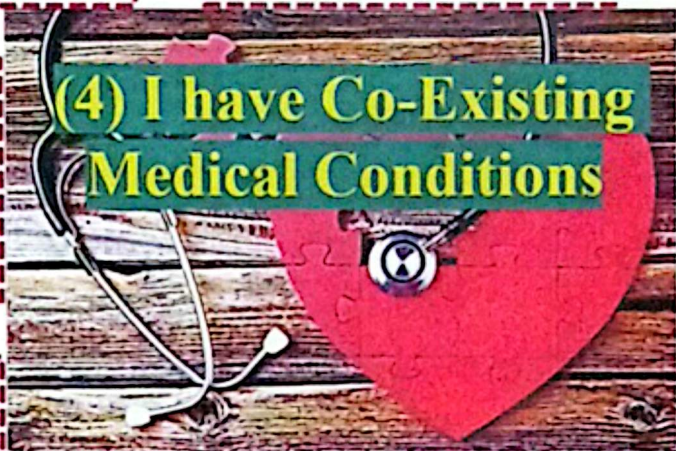
Possible Red Flags

I often struggle with sleep, as many autistic children find it difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep through the night.

Many autistic children, including myself, can experience gastrointestinal (GI) issues such as constipation, diarrhea, or vomiting.

I face challenges with Including both fine and gross motor abilities; for instance,, I may find it difficult to use silverware or scissors and may struggle with activities like climbing, jumping, or other basic physical tasks.

I might experience anxiety, which can cause my heart to race, my muscles to tense up, stomach aches, and at times, I may even feel completely frozen in place.



(4) I have Co-Existing Medical Conditions

As an autistic child, I have a higher likelihood of being diagnosed with seizure disorders resulting from abnormal electrical activity in the brain Experiencing sudden, unpredictable seizures could be a sign of epilepsy.

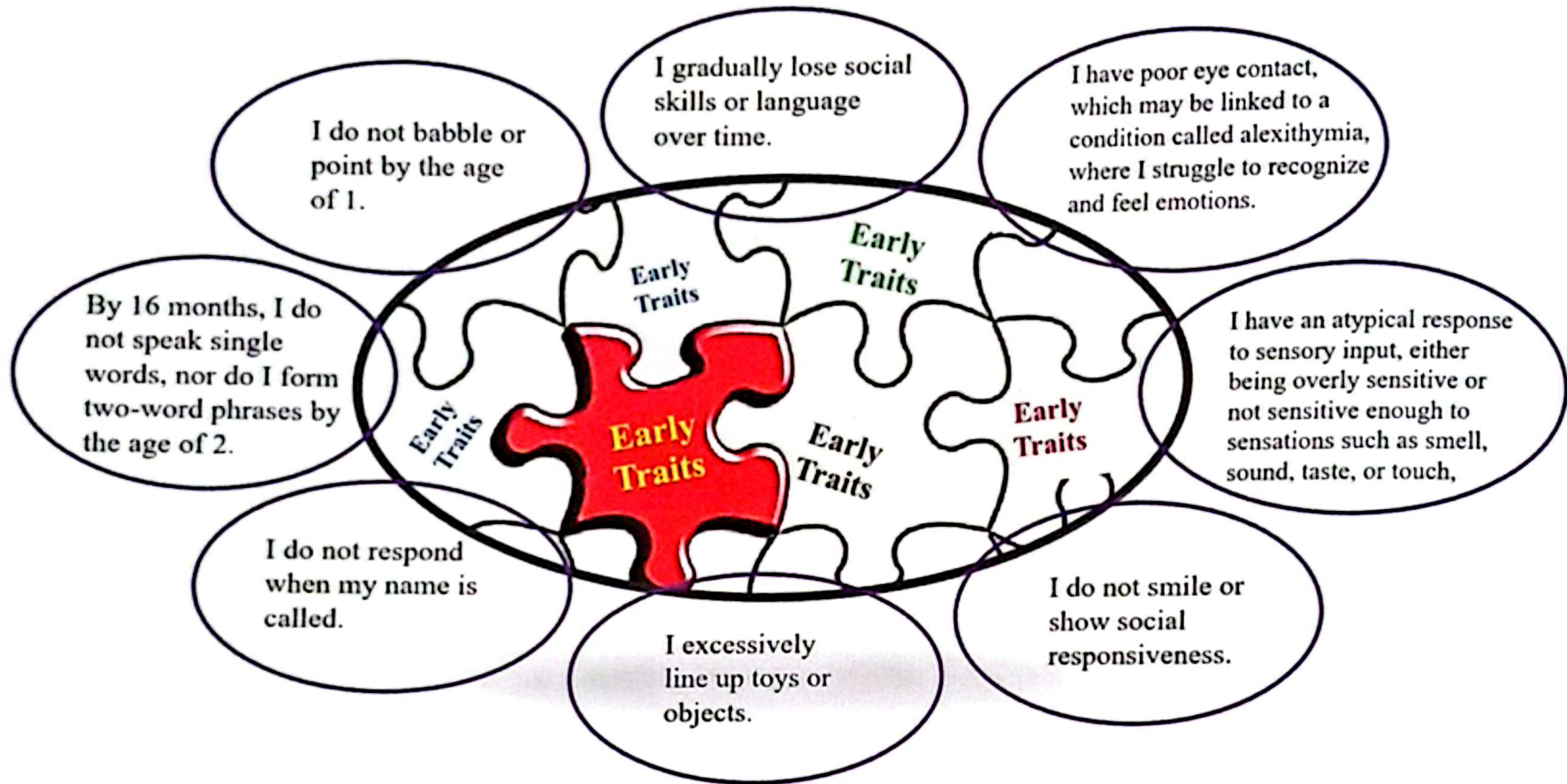
I experience feeding and eating difficulties, which may include highly restricted food preferences and strong aversions to specific tastes and textures.

As an autistic child, I am more prone to experiencing mental health or developmental challenges like social anxiety, generalized anxiety, ADHD, depression, or obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

Sources: Wetherby & Prizant, 2000; Baranek, 2002; Ben-Sasson et al., 2009; Ozonoff et al., 2010; Landa et al., 2013; Pierce et al., 2019; Lord et al., 2020; American Psychiatric Association, 2022.



Early Traits in Autism (Before the Age of 3)



Sources: Wetherby & Prizant, 2000; Baranek, 2002; Rogers et al., 2003; Ben-Sasson et al., 2009; Ozonoff et al., 2010; Landa et al., 2013; Pierce et al., 2019; Lord et al., 2020; Mayo Clinic, 2022; American Psychiatric Association, 2022.

Well-known Autistic Individuals from the Past and Present



CHAPTER 6:

**Parents' Concerns
and
Challenges**

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Glossary

Access

The ability to obtain or make use of necessary resources, services, or spaces. In the context of autism, access may refer to making educational, social, and physical environments inclusive and adaptable to meet the needs of autistic individuals.

Acquisition

The process of learning or developing a new skill, behavior, or knowledge. For children with autism, acquisition of social, communication, or daily living skills may be a primary focus in various interventions.

Advocacy

Supporting and speaking up for oneself or others, especially in gaining rights, resources, and understanding. Advocacy in autism may involve educating the community, advocating for inclusive policies, or ensuring autistic individuals have access to appropriate services and accommodations.

Age Range

Refers to the span of years that a specific service, intervention, or educational approach is intended for. In autism, certain programs or resources may target specific age groups to tailor their effectiveness to developmental needs.

Age-Appropriate

Activities, materials, or behaviors that are considered suitable for a particular age group. For children with autism, it's essential to ensure that interventions, learning materials, and social interactions are both developmentally suitable and respectful of the child's age.

Alexithymia

A difficulty in recognizing, identifying, and expressing one's emotions. Many autistic individuals may experience alexithymia, impacting their ability to communicate feelings and understand emotional cues in others.

Alternative Communication Strategies

Methods used to help individuals with communication challenges express themselves. These may include tools like Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), sign language, or speech-generating devices, often beneficial for nonverbal or minimally verbal autistic individuals.

Anger Management

Techniques and practices designed to help individuals regulate their anger. For autistic children, anger management may involve learning how to recognize triggers, self-soothe, and express emotions in healthy ways, which can support overall emotional regulation.

Anxiety Symptoms

Signs of anxiety may include restlessness, excessive worry, difficulty concentrating, muscle tension, and sleep disturbances. Many autistic individuals experience heightened anxiety, which may manifest differently, including through behaviors such as repetitive movements or sensory-seeking behaviors.

Appendix A.

The National Autism Society of Malaysia (NASOM)

A nonprofit organization called the National Autism Society of Malaysia (NASOM) offers assistance to those who are autistic. NASOM was founded in 1986 by a group of professionals and parents with a focus on children and their immediate families. It is an excellent place to start if you think your child may have autism. It offers everything from tests and diagnosis to early intervention programs and career training. Below are the addresses of NASOM throughout Malaysia:

**1. NASOM Setia Alam
Vocational Centre**
25A-5, Setia Avenue
Jalan Setia Prima SU13/S, Section 13
Setia Alam, 40170 Shah Alam, Selangor
Darul Ehsan
Tel: +603-3359 0988 / +603-3359 3987
Email: cac@nasom.org.my

**2. NASOM Gombak
Early Intervention Programme**
SD 44, Jalan Amzil
Taman Rowther
68100 Batu Caves
Kuala Lumpur
Tel: +603-6178 0883
Email: gombak@nasom.org.my

**3. NASOM Taman Supreme
Vocational Centre**
No. 6, Jalan 2/98, Taman Supreme
56000 Cheras, Kuala Lumpur
Tel: +603-9133 7774
Email: supreme@nasom.org.my

**4. NASOM Jalan Ipoh
Vocational Centre**
2, Jalan 7/18B, Taman Batu Permai
Off Jalan Ipoh, 51200 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: +603-6242 5933
Email: kljalanipoh@nasom.org.my

**5. NASOM Teluk Pulai
Early Intervention Programme**
No. 5, Lorong Sepat 2
Taman Bertek, Teluk Pulai
41300 Klang, Selangor Darul Ehsan
Tel: +603-3373 2991
Email: klang@nasom.org.my

**6. NASOM Titiwangsa
Early Intervention Programme**
No. 62A-2, Lorong Maran
Off Jalan Kuantan
Taman Tasik Titiwangsa
53200 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: +603-4032 2373
Email: titiawangsa@nasom.org.my



I Am an Autistic Child: Please Understand Me and Support Me is more than a book, it is a heartfelt invitation to see the world through the eyes of an autistic child. Written with compassion, scientific rigor, and deep empathy, this visually rich guide bridges knowledge and understanding for parents, educators, caregivers, and all who walk alongside children on the autism spectrum. Through clear explanations, engaging infographics, and practical strategies, the book demystifies autism, dispels common myths, and offers evidence-based guidance on diagnosis, intervention, communication, emotional regulation, and everyday support. Each page speaks with a gentle yet powerful voice: "Understand me, accept me, and help me thrive." Whether you are newly beginning your journey with autism or seeking deeper insight and reassurance, this book will equip you with knowledge, inspire empathy, and empower action. It is a trusted companion for building a more inclusive, informed, and compassionate world for every autistic child.



Lee Jun Choi is a registered psychologist and an experienced educator with more than 30 years of service in the field of education and psychology. He is currently a senior lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and a member of the Malaysian Psychological Association (PSIMA). Trained in Educational Psychology, his academic and professional work spans child development, mental health, inclusive education, and community well-being. Throughout his career, he has worked closely with children, parents, teachers, and mental health professionals, particularly in supporting individuals with developmental and learning differences. His passion lies in translating scientific knowledge into practical, compassionate guidance that families and educators can easily understand and apply. **I Am an Autistic Child: Please Understand Me and Support Me** reflects his deep commitment to autism advocacy, early intervention, and inclusive practices. Written from both professional expertise and a heartfelt desire to foster empathy, this book aims to help society better understand autistic children not as problems to be fixed, but as individuals to be respected, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Sopian Bujang is an Industrial and Organisational Psychologist with wide experience in human resource development, strategic planning, digital transformation, training, and organisational development. He has more than 23 years of leadership experience and has served as a director, board member, manager, project leader, and committee chairperson in various organisations. He has led and participated in more than fifty research projects and has published several books and academic works. His expertise focuses on developing people, strengthening organisations, and promoting effective and inclusive practices. His contribution to **I Am an Autistic Child: Please Understand Me and Support Me** reflects his commitment to supporting human development and building caring, well-informed communities.



Ahmad Sofian bin Shminan is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). He has a background in Information Technology and Computer Science, with expertise in educational technology and computer-based learning. His research focuses on using digital tools, mobile applications, and e-learning to support education and intervention, including for autistic children and their caregivers. He has been involved in many research projects and has published in journals and international conferences. His contribution to **I Am an Autistic Child: Please Understand Me and Support Me** reflects his commitment to using technology to make learning, communication, and support more accessible and effective for autistic children and their families.

