

UNIVERSITY OF
LOUISVILLE®

KENTUCKY AUTISM
TRAINING CENTER 

What is Autism?

Laura Ferguson, M.Ed., BCBA

What is Autism?

)

Autism is a complex developmental disability that has a neurological basis that causes impairments in social interactions, communication, and the presence of unusual behaviors and interests.

Demographics

- Knows no racial, ethnic, or social boundaries
- Four times more prevalent in boys than girls
- Usually affects sensory and motor processing systems of the brain
- Varying degrees of severity in different individuals

Autism is NOT!!!

- The result of bad parenting
- Unruly individuals who choose not to behave
- Always associated with behavioral challenges
- The same in every child

Prevalence of Autism

1 in 88 children are affected by autism

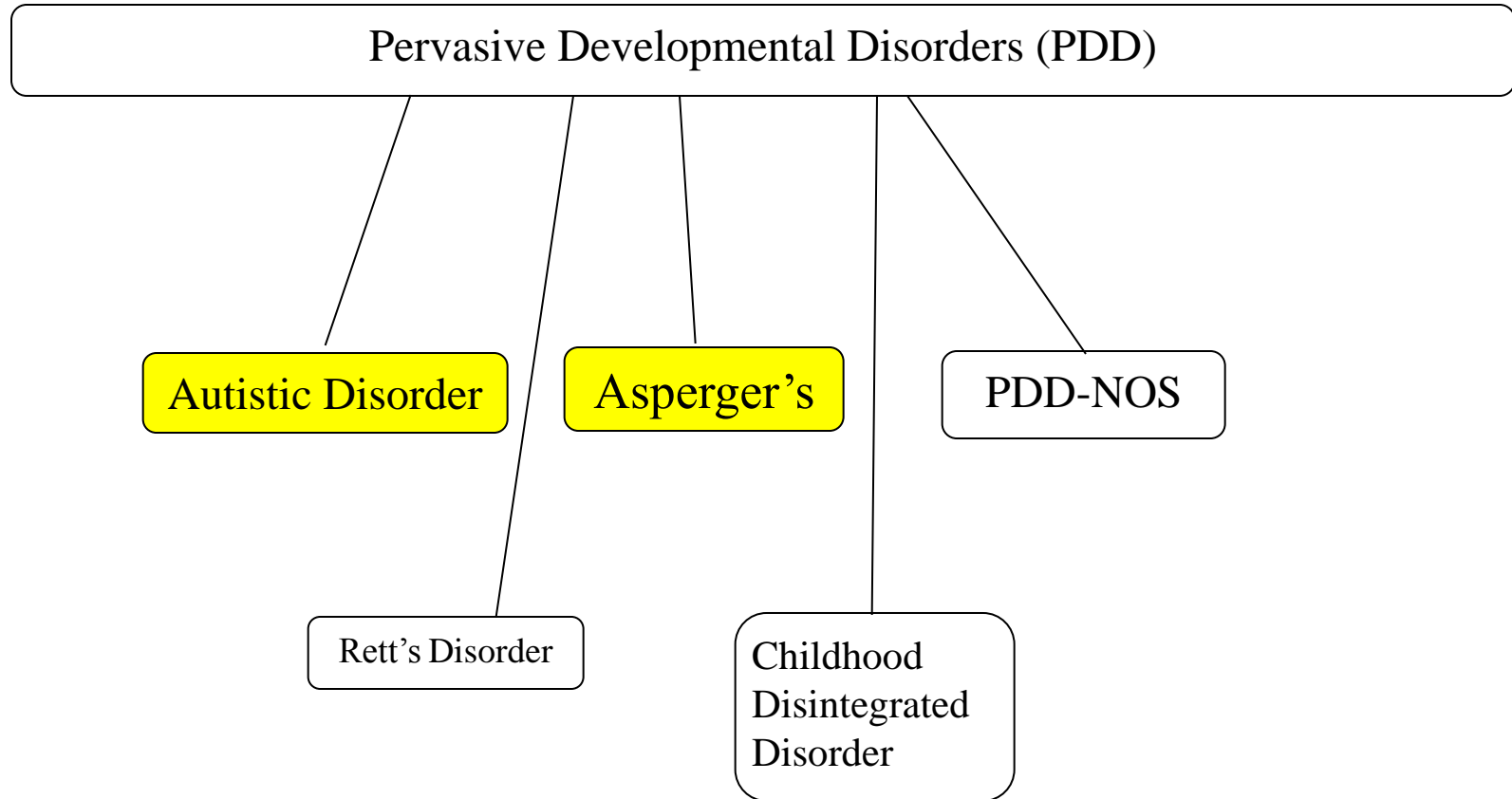
1 out of 54 boys

1 in 252 girls

More children are diagnosed with autism than juvenile diabetes, AIDS, and cancer combined

December 2009, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Report
IDEA Partnership (2010)

DSM-IV Criteria



Autism: Diagnostic Criteria for Eligibility

DSM-IV

- Qualitative impairment in ***SOCIAL INTERACTION***
- Qualitative impairments in ***COMMUNICATION***
- ***RESTRICTED and STEREOTYPED*** behaviors, interests and activities

“Qualitative impairment in **SOCIAL INTERACTION**, as manifested by at **least two** of the following”:

- Impairment in nonverbal communication (gestures, eye gaze, etc.)
- Failure in developing peer relationships
- Lack of spontaneous sharing of enjoyment, interests, etc.
- Lack of social or emotional reciprocity

Difficulty in SOCIAL INTERACTION in the classroom and other settings

- Turn taking
- Interrupting adult and peer non-verbal cues
- Using symbolic play skills to *pretend*
- Partner work; cooperative group work
- Effectively navigating social situations (discussed later)

“Qualitative impairment in **COMMUNICATION**, manifested by at **least one** of the following”:

- Delay in or total lack of spoken language.
- Impairment in ability to initiate or sustain conversation.
- Stereotyped use of language.
- Lack of make-believe play

Difficulty in COMMUNICATION in the classroom and other settings

- Staying on-topic
- Interrupting, blurting out, and always telling the truth
- Partner work; cooperative group work
- Engaging beyond the surface during non-individual activities

“Restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities, as manifested by at **least one** of the following”:

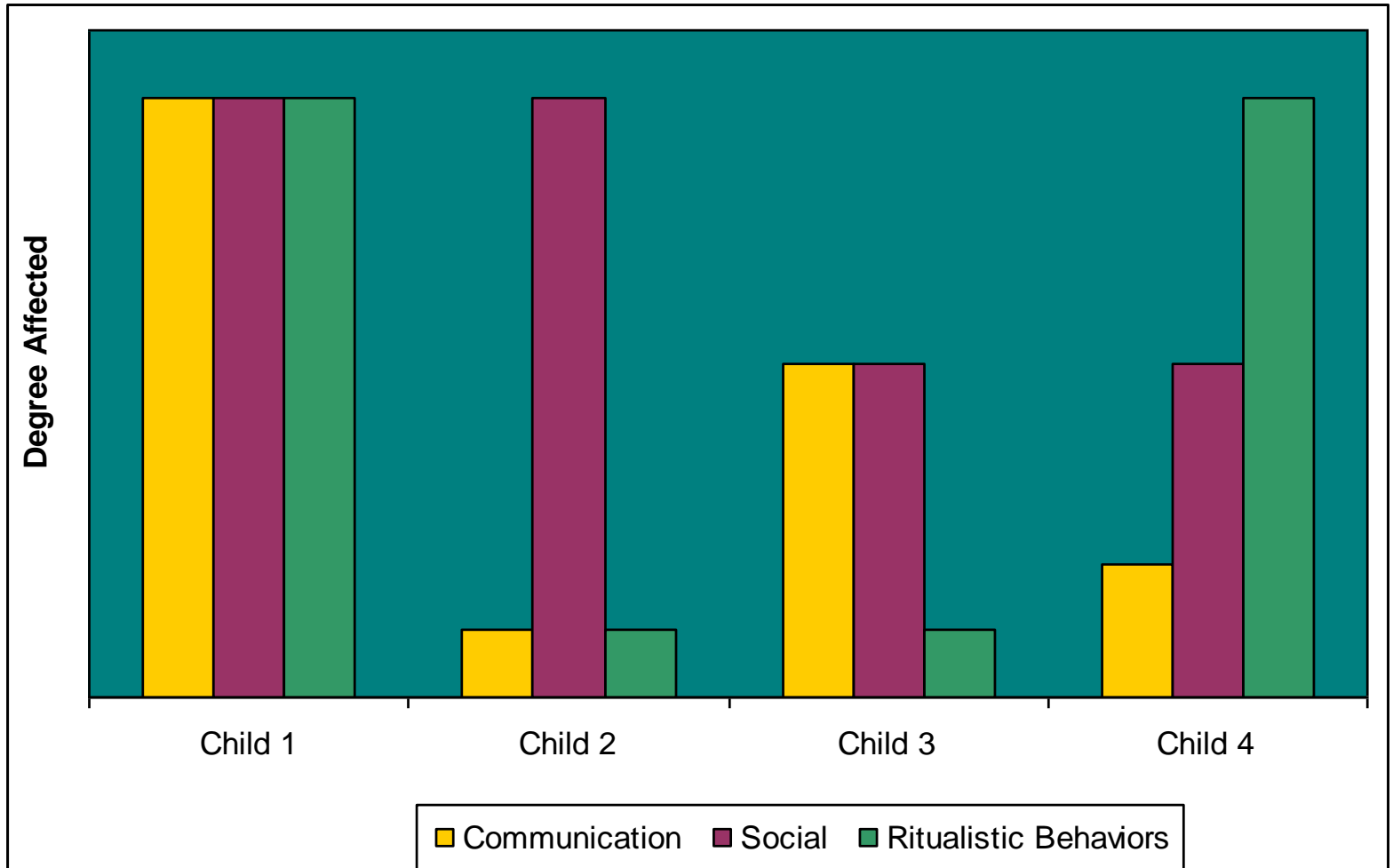
- Abnormally obsessive interests
- Rigid adherence to routines
- Stereotyped motor movements
- Preoccupation with parts of objects

Difficulty in RRS BEHAVIORS in the classroom and other settings

- Staying on-task
- Seeing the big picture during academic activities
- Listening without dominating the conversation with own interest
- Turning peers off by “odd” behaviors
- Meltdowns with schedule changes

“If you know one child with autism, you know one child with autism”

- Each individual with an ASD brings his/her own unique way of interacting with the environment
- Each individual brings his/her own reinforcement history
- Each individual with an ASD is more like his/her peers than different



Theory of Mind

Being able to attribute mental states such as as desires, beliefs, emotions, and intentions to self and others in order to better understand their own behavior, or the behavior of others.

Theory of Mind

- The ability to make inferences about what other people believe to be true
 - Perspective taking
 - Difficulty anticipating what others will say or do in various situations

Theory of Mind

- Consider how an impairment in theory of mind might impact daily functioning
 - Appearance of being blunt or rude
 - Ability to lie
 - Understanding sarcasm
 - Negotiating
 - Compromising
 - Relationship development
 - Perspective Taking

Theory of Mind

Example:

The false-belief tasks

A child places a piece of candy in a drawer while they are playing. A parent then enters the room and without the child witnessing the switch places the candy in a different cabinet. When an child observing this is asked where they think the child will look for the candy, they respond in the drawer.

Individuals with autism respond that the child will look in the cabinet.

Executive Functioning

Deals with a set of processes that helps connect past experiences with present experiences.

People use these to perform in the area of planning, organizing, managing time and space, and remembering skills.

Executive Functioning

- Difficulty in ...
 - Perceiving emotions
 - Imitating others
 - Planning
 - Starting and stopping
 - Organizing (time, self, space)

HOPE??

YES!!!

- National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders
<http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/>
 - Evidence-based Practices!!!
- AIM (Autism Internet Modules)
<http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/>
 - Free, helpful, research-based information on topics surrounding ASDs

- **Antecedent Based Intervention**
- Computer-aided instruction
- **Differential reinforcement**
- Discrete trial training
- Extinction
- Functional behavior assessment
- **Functional communication training**
- Naturalistic interventions
- Parent-implemented intervention
- Peer-mediated instruction/intervention
- Picture Exchange Communication System™
- Pivotal response training
- **Prompting**
- **Reinforcement**
- Response interruption/redirection
- **Self-management**
- **Social narratives**
- Social skills training groups
- Speech generating devices
- Structured work systems
- Task analysis
- Time delay
- Video modeling
- **Visual supports**

Questions?

Contact info:

Laura Ferguson

Laura.ferguson@louisville.edu

Center contact info:

Telephone: (502) 852-4631

Fax: (502) 852-7148 E-mail: [katc @ louisville.edu](mailto:katc@louisville.edu)

<https://louisville.edu/education/kyautismtraining>

