



# EPO1: What is Autism?

Here's what you'll find in this guide:

- 'What is Autism?' Episode Notes
- Further Exploration: Suggested Resources
- Deeper Discussion Questions
- Group Activity

- \* Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that affects 1 in 68 children in the United States, but people all over the world are affected by it.
- \* 1 in 42 boys and 1 in 189 girls are affected by autism within the United States.
- \* Autism is not a disease. People are born with it so you can't "catch" it and it is a lifelong disability.
- \* Autism is a spectrum disorder. This means that the symptoms and characteristics of autism can present themselves in a wide variety of combinations, from mild to severe. Although autism is defined by a certain set of behaviors, children and adults can exhibit any combination of the behaviors in any degree of severity, the level of developmental delay is unique to the individual. Two children, both with the same diagnosis, can act very differently from one another and have varying skills.
- \* In May 2013, the diagnostic criteria incurred several changes which included the new classification system. The new classification system "eliminated the previously separate subcategories on the autism spectrum, including Asperger syndrome, PDD-NOS, childhood disintegrative disorder and autistic disorder. These subcategories are now folded into the broad term autism spectrum disorder (ASD)" ("Answers to frequently asked questions," n.d.).
  - Individuals with a previous diagnosis on the autism spectrum, including those with Asperger syndrome or PDD-NOS, did not lose their ASD diagnosis. Many individuals chose to maintain their label of Asperger's syndrome as part of their identity, etc. ("Answers to frequently asked questions," n.d.).



## Further Exploration

- \* There is no “cure” for autism, but we now have a better idea of what could cause autism and how to treat it. Most cases of autism seem to be caused by a combination of genetic predispositions and environmental factors which may influence early brain development.
- \* Autism cannot be detected in utero and there are no medical tests that can diagnose autism. Autism is diagnosed by specially trained physicians and psychologists through a series of behavioral evaluations.
- \* Characteristics of autism include:
  - qualitative impairment in social interaction (e.g., lack of eye contact or little to no peer interaction)
  - Qualitative impairment in communication (i.e., delayed or lack of spoken language)
  - Restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests and activities (e.g., lining up objects, talking only about trains, watching the same video clip repeatedly)
- \* Reference:

Answers to frequently asked questions about DSM V. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/DSM-criteria>

### For Parents and Educators

#### **Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder** <http://bit.ly/qsac-academy-asd>

Free online course by QSAC for parents and teachers. The course covers a brief history of autism and the revised diagnostic criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

#### **Real Life Tips for Kids with Autism** <http://bit.ly/real-life-tips>

Practical tips from autism experts on the Kohl's Autism Awareness Community Hub for families who have children diagnosed with ASD.

#### **School Community Kit**

##### <http://bit.ly/autism-speaks-school-kit>

This kit will provide helpful information, tools and strategies for supporting students with autism.

#### **Let Me Hear Your Voice**

##### <http://bit.ly/hear-your-voice>

Written by Catherine Maurice, this book has been pivotal in the field of autism and ABA.

#### **Don't Freak Out Guide to Parenting Kids with Aspergers**

##### <http://bit.ly/dont-freak-out-guide>

A practical guide written by Sharon Fuentes, a parent and editor of Zoom Autism Magazine, and Neil Mc Nerney, a licensed school counselor/family therapist.

#### **Topics in Autism**

##### <http://bit.ly/topics-in-autism>

This is a helpful set of books by a variety of authors including Andy Bondy, Lori Frost and Mary Jane Weiss. Easy reads. Valuable information.



## For Children and Teens

### **Educating Children about Autism in an Inclusive Classroom**

<http://bit.ly/autism-inclusive-classroom>

76 page teaching guide for parents and educators with lesson plans and handouts.

### Explore the Literal Mind

#### **Unintentional Humor**

<http://unintentionalhumor.com>

Unintentional Humor is a hilarious book series about the communication challenges that result from a literal interpretation of language.

### Literature for Kids Featuring Protagonists with Autism

#### **Mighty League, Vol 1: The Terrible Taunting**

<http://bit.ly/mighty-league-1>

An engaging and interactive story app about a young boy who sees the world for a very different perspective. Email [geekclubbooks@gmail.com](mailto:geekclubbooks@gmail.com) for code to download the story app for free.

#### **Face Value Comics**

<http://facevaluecomics.com/>

The world's first comic book series with heroes with autism.

#### **How to Be Human Diary of an Autistic Girl**

<http://bit.ly/how-to-be-human>

Wondering what it's like inside an autistic child's head? Florida's book provides great insights. A teacher guide is available on the Creston Books website with compassion/empathy curriculum.

#### **Leah's Voice**

<http://leahsvoicethebook.com/>

A realistic children's book with insights on autism and the life of a sibling.

#### **He's Not Naughty**

<http://www.hesnotnaughty.co.uk/>

Children's book by a mother with two boys with Aspergers Syndrome. Helps to explain to small children about why children with autism behave the way they do. Illustrated by an autistic artist.

#### **Really Really Like Me**

<http://bit.ly/really-like-me>

Children's book written and illustrated by two individuals on the autism spectrum—it promotes acceptance among young children with and without disabilities.



Find Bluebee TeeVee, Autism Information Station on [YouTube.com/BluebeeTeeVee](https://www.youtube.com/BluebeeTeeVee)



# Deeper Thinking

## Discussion Questions

*Episode 1: "What is Autism" was created to give you an overview and understanding of the definition of autism. There is an opportunity to use this video to teach children about autism awareness, self-acceptance, peer-acceptance, and acting differently towards those who are different. These questions are designed for deeper thinking and discussion.*

- 1. In the webisode, you learned that autism is a condition that affects the way a person's brain works. How do you think someone with autism feels?*
- 2. What is it like to feel different and not fit in?*
- 3. The world would be a better place if we did not criticize people who are different. How could you be a better person and help someone who is different?*
- 4. Why is it important to accept people with autism?*
- 5. In the webisode, James mentions that some people with autism have a literal understanding of words or phrases. What does this mean?*
- 6. In the webisode, Leo says "It's like a spectrum of abilities...and possibilities?" Explain what he's trying to say.*
- 7. What's the lesson James is trying to teach you in this webisode? Why is it important?*
- 8. Do you know someone with autism? What did you learn in this webisode that will help you become a better friend?*

## Group Activity

- 1. What questions do you have about autism? Write them down.*
- 2. Choose one question.*
- 3. Share your question with the class.*
- 4. Does anyone know the answer? If not, where could you find the answer? Make a list.*
- 5. Now see if your group can find the answer and report back to the class.*