



Nurture Pods
EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

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The strengths of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

General information about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) – The “Spectrum”

ASD is a neurodevelopmental disorder which can affect several areas of a child’s development and the core symptoms of ASD are impaired social - communication and repetitive behaviours or interest.

Various disorders can be classified under ASD and this includes Autistic Disorder and Asperger Syndrome. This spectrum of disorders and subtypes highlights the fact that an individual may have symptoms that range from very severe which may affect most areas of their daily functioning to mild cases where an individual can lead a relatively typical life.



Strengths of ASD & Utilizing them

Individuals diagnosed with autism are often described in terms of their deficits and difficulties they faced but there are definitely strengths and exceptional skills and abilities that make these individuals unique. Some of the strengths that your child might have can include but is not limited to:



- Strong visual skills
- The use of images may assist their learning of verbal information and material
- You could utilize your child's visual skills to help him / her in other areas for instance
- Putting visual reminders around your house
- Using a visual schedule for smaller activities



Good at understanding and working with rules

Building on your child's great understanding can help him / her develop new skills such as:

- Having clear rules on when certain things should be done. This can help make daily activities more structured and easy for your child to follow.
- Good memory of details (rote memory) o Children with ASD are often good at rote memory (learning by heart) where they are able to remember huge chunks of information.
- You can encourage your child to use rote memory for learning useful information such as alphabets and timetables.

Other unique capabilities exhibited by real life examples

An exceptional example demonstrated by British artist Mr. Stephen Wiltshire:

- Mr. Wiltshire was diagnosed with autism at the tender age of 3 but he was applauded and recognized for his amazing ability to draw detailed cityscapes from memory.
- He drew our Singapore cityscape entirely based on memory after embarking only on an hour – long helicopter ride, where he saw an aerial view of our Singapore skyline.



19 – year - old student Sheng Jie and his artistic ability

A student in the Artist Development Programme (ADP) in Pathlight School, Sheng Jie's love for art and dinosaurs enabled him to draw and decorate his artwork without the help of any reference material. His artwork has since gained recognition when Ms Ho Ching was seen holding a denim dinosaur – motif purse during an official visit to the White House in the United States.



One thing to note is that it is vital to never assume that any child has any or all of these strengths as mentioned above.

However, having awareness that your child has such ability can create an opportunity to form a connection, his artwork his motivate him / her to accomplish more complex challenges or to utilize that particular strength into overcoming other areas of deficits.



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