

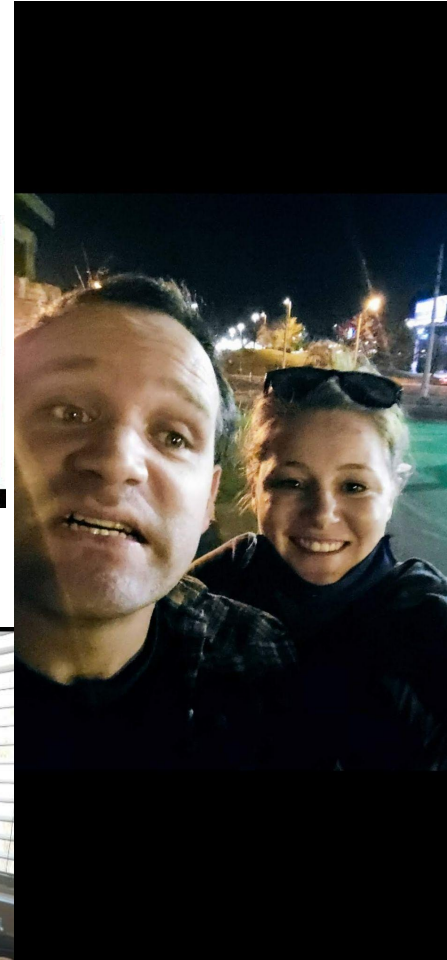
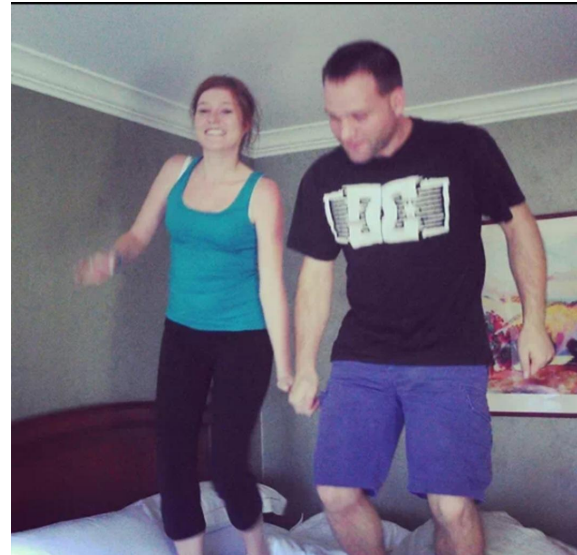


**ARIZONA**  
— DEPARTMENT OF —  
**ECONOMIC SECURITY**

**Autism Spectrum Disorder:  
Understanding the Fundamentals of the Diagnosis**

# Mary DeCarlo, M.Ed., BCBA, LBA

- Program Administrator, Behavior Support and Services, DDD
- Licensed Behavior Analyst, Certified Trauma Specialist
- I am Nicky's little sister, and his biggest advocate.
- I have worked in this space professionally for nearly 20 years.
- Areas of expertise in behavioral assessment, ABA treatment of adolescents/adults
- Current interests include: evidence based practices for dual diagnosis (IDD and BH), policy development, and increasing access for those with significant support needs.
- Cat-62-"Glad you came"



# Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to identify the 3 areas of impairment associated with autism spectrum disorders
- Participants will be able to summarize the core characteristics and understand the differences in support needs of individuals with autism
- Participants will be able to apply the information learned to inform how they can improve their work and interactions with individuals with autism spectrum disorder



# Autism at a Glance

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain.
- Individuals diagnosed with ASD have challenges with social communication and interaction, and restricted or repetitive behaviors or interests.
- Symptoms of ASD can vary in intensity across symptoms, causing significant variance in presentation across individuals.
- It is important to note that some people without ASD might also have some of these symptoms. But for people with ASD, these characteristics cause clinically significant challenges.



# Evaluation of Autism

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association all indicate the following components should be part of a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation for autism spectrum disorder:

Careful review of behavioral history

Developmental History

Direct observation

Formal assessment of language, cognitive, and adaptive abilities

Evaluation of co-occurring developmental conditions

Etiologic/Genetic Evaluation (review of medical conditions)



# Conditions with overlapping symptoms

- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- Intellectual Developmental Disorder
- Language Disorders/Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder
- Selective Mutism
- Stereotypic Movement Disorder
- Rett Syndrome
- Anxiety Disorders
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorders
- Schizophrenia
- Personality Disorders
- Reactive Attachment Disorder



# Autism as a Spectrum

- Autism is a Spectrum, and each person with autism is different. The newest diagnostic manual includes the following previous diagnoses as part of Autism Spectrum Disorder.
  - Autism Disorder
  - Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
  - Asperger's Syndrome
  - Rett Syndrome
  - Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (NOS)



# Autism as a Spectrum

An individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder has challenges in 2 primary areas:

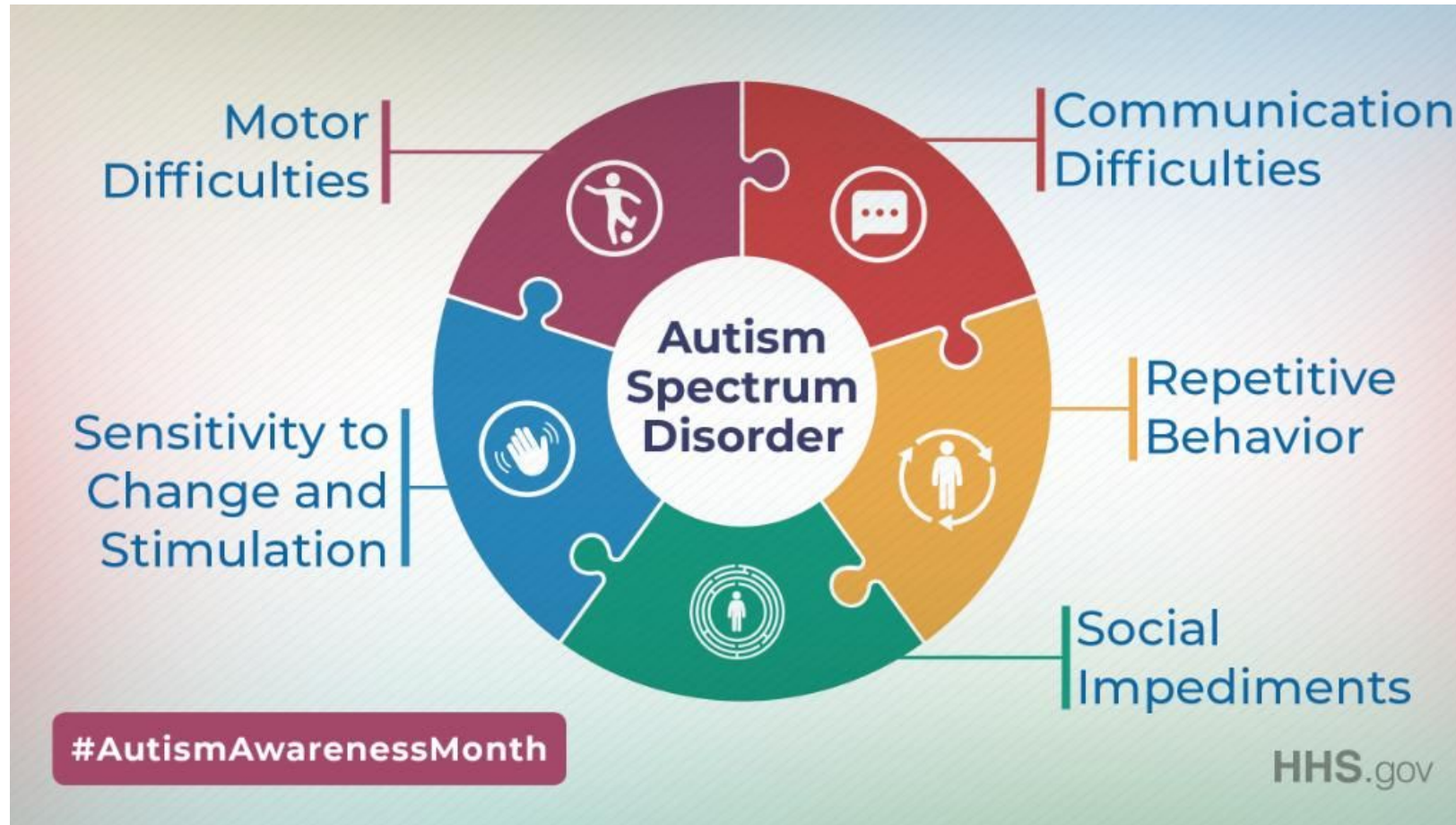
- Social Communication and Social Interaction
  - Must be across multiple contexts
  - Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity
  - Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction
  - Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships
- Restricted or Repetitive Behaviors or Interests



# Autism as a Spectrum



# Autism as a Spectrum



# Additional Diagnostic Criteria

- Symptoms must be manifested during the early developmental period (usually by 2 years of age)
- Symptoms must cause a clinically significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of current functioning
- These impairments must not be better explained by intellectual disability or global developmental delay.



# Important Considerations

- Not all individuals with autism act the same way
- Each individual has their own unique strengths and challenges
- Individuals with autism spectrum disorder are able to learn
- It is important support this population without changing who they are as individuals



# Autism's Discovery



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# Discussion

- What are some reasons that autism is such a relatively new diagnosis?
- Why did institutions become such harmful places?



# Autism's Outlines



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# Discussion

- What are some core characteristics of autism?
- Why do some people with autism need support their entire lives while others do not?



# Neurotypical Miscues



# Discussion

- What did Caren misunderstand about Mickey's connection to cats?
- How is that different from her expectations at the graduation?



# References

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Center for Disease Control:

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Yates K, Le Couteur A. Diagnosing autism/autism spectrum disorders. J Paediatr Child Health. 2016;26(12):513–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paed.2016.08.004>

If you are interested in watching the documentary film, *In A Different Key*, you can find it on PBS or Amazon.

If you are interested in streaming the film for your organization, please visit <https://www.inadifferentkeythemovie.com/>

# In A Different Key

