

AUTISM: A TRAINING **FOR FIRST RESPONDERS**



**CENTRE de RESSOURCES et de FORMATION
RESOURCE and TRAINING CENTRE**



OBJECTIVES

1. The importance of training first responders about autism spectrum disorders (ASDs)
2. What is autism?
3. Communication strategies
4. Deescalate a crisis situation
5. Complications
6. 911 calls
7. Resources

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

- About 1 in 68 children have been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) according to estimates from the CDC.
- ASD is reported to occur in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.
- It is 4.5 times more common among boys (1 in 42) than among girls.
- ASD commonly co-occurs with other developmental, psychiatric, neurologic, chromosomal, and genetic diagnosis.
- The co-occurrence of one or more non-ASD developmental diagnosis is 83%.

WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism is a neurological disorder that affects:

- Communication
- Social relations
- Learning
- Behaviours
- Sensory integration

The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged.

CHARACTERISTICS

A person with ASD can:

- Engage in repetitive behaviours
- Appear unaware when people call their name or talk to them
- Avoid eye contact and prefer being alone
- Have trouble expressing their needs
- Be sensitive to touch, sounds of lights
- Not understand notions of danger or security rules

RELATED DISORDERS

- Intellectual disorder
- Sensory integration disorder
- Anxiety disorder
- Depression
- Characteristics of obsessive compulsive disorder
- Medical problems
- Sleep problems
- Epilepsy

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

1. Speak in short and clear sentences
2. Give step by step instructions
3. Avoid the use of sarcasm or popular expressions
4. Give the person enough time to respond to your instruction
5. Use gestures or model the instruction

DEESCALATE A CRISIS SITUATION

Consider the sensory environment.

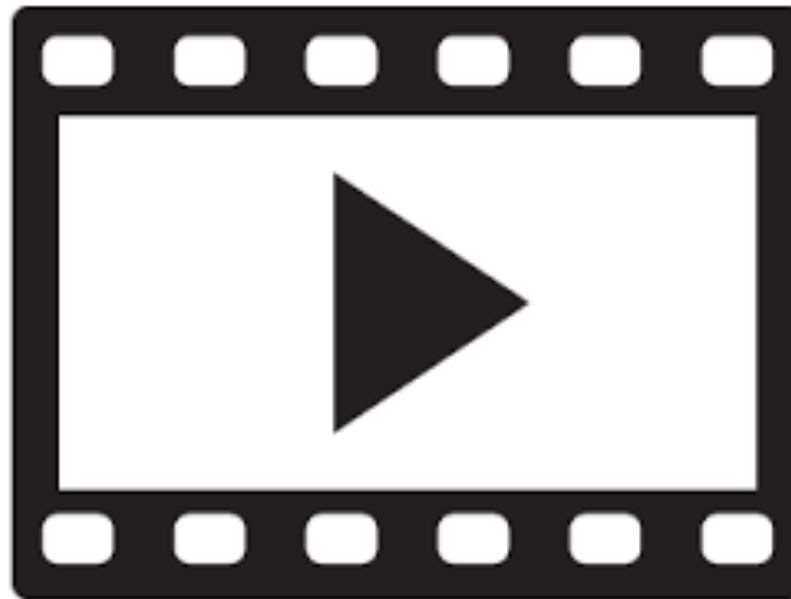
- Flashing lights
- Loud sirens
- Radios
- Big crowds
- Invading personal space

The factors can overwhelm a person with autism and increase their anxiety.

DEESCALATE A CRISIS SITUATION

- Remain calm and reassuring
- Give clear step by step instructions
- Avoid touching the person or inform them before doing so
- Avoid crowds
- If possible, turn off flashing lights
- If possible, turn off sirens
- **GIVE TIME**

VIDEO: “SKILLS AND STRATEGIES FOR FIRST RESPONDERS”



asdfirstresponders.ca

COMPLICATIONS

People with autism may:

- Look for places to hide
- Refuse help from a police officer or firefighter
- Feel intimidated by the presence of a first responder
- Not understand the notion of danger or safety regulations
- Appear to be difficult or aggressive with a first responder

RESOURCES

www.cdc.gov

www.autismspeaks.ca

www.casda.ca

www.autismcanada.org

www.cnaf.net

IMAGES

blog.magestic.com