

I am here to discuss my child, who is struggling in certain areas at home and at school. While some of these behaviors and challenges are more commonly understood to be signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), others seem “atypical” at first glance while potentially indicating a need for further evaluation.

“Atypical” autism — once inconsistently diagnosed as Asperger’s or PDD-NOS, or sometimes not diagnosed at all — has a very different checklist than traditional autism. Many autistic children will have some of these symptoms (known as clusters), but few will have all of them.

My son/daughter is \_\_\_\_\_ years old and is in \_\_\_\_\_ grade in school.

Check all that applies to your child.

### Traditional Signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social impairments (lack of friends, lack of social interaction) | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty with transitions and change                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited social skills  | <input type="checkbox"/> Obsessive interests  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive impairments  | <input type="checkbox"/> Flapping hands, rocking, spinning                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nonverbal or delayed speech                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repeats words or phrases   | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids physical contact  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repetitive behaviors   | <input type="checkbox"/> Little safety or danger awareness                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lacks interest in cooperative and/or imaginative play            | <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme anxiety  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids eye contact   | <input type="checkbox"/> Interest in order (lining up toys, etc.)                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lacks “empathy” or understanding of others’ feelings             |   |

### “Atypical” (lesser known) signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hyperactivity   | <input type="checkbox"/> Low self-esteem  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impulsivity   | <input type="checkbox"/> May have delayed speech, or may learn to speak on time or even early, but may have unusual speaking patterns or use words in unusual ways (may even use very adult-style vocabulary)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Short attention span  | <input type="checkbox"/> Very quiet, or conversely very talkative   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irritability  | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe separation anxiety  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-injury   | <input type="checkbox"/> Fearful of crowds  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meltdowns   | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong response to loud noises, strong smells, unexpected touch, and other sensory experiences   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty sleeping   | <input type="checkbox"/> Meltdowns or other strong behaviors as a response to unexpected changes in routine and/or transitions  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited tolerance to new foods, very picky  | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty following verbal directions   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unusual behaviors, “quirky”   | <input type="checkbox"/> May chew intensely on objects, like shirt collar or sleeve   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scared of unusual things, nervous a lot   | <input type="checkbox"/> OCD-style behaviors, such as repeated counting or need to have things remain the same  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty making and keeping friends (wants to make friends, but doesn’t know how)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty understanding social interactions that seem instinctive, such as: taking turns, sharing, asking questions, apologizing for a mistake (or conversely, over-compensating because of confusion about social rules: apologizing frequently, giving toys away, asking inappropriate questions, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefers talking to adults or younger children   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One-sided conversations, has trouble listening  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spends a lot of time alone  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repetitive behaviors, such as pacing or hopping   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flapping hands or stimming, but less obvious, such as finger fluttering or tapping            |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited imaginative play, prefers tangible tasks like playing an instrument or building Legos |   |

These symptoms overlap with ADHD, anxiety, Sensory Processing Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Tourette Syndrome, Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder, and many other neurological and mental health disorders. ASD is also often comorbid with many of these. This checklist is not a diagnostic tool. It is designed to support discussion and potential evaluation with doctors, mental health providers, occupational therapists, educators, etc.

The checklist was created by Hannah Grieco M.Ed. for ParentingPod.com, a resource for parents and educators on mental health and wellbeing. Visit [ParentingPod.com](https://ParentingPod.com) for more materials, guides, and self-help articles.