

Should I Investigate the Autistic Spectrum?

1. Can *you* answer “yes” to any of the following?
 - Do you know a brother, sister or child diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder, possibly with associated dyspraxia or dyslexia?
 - Or an adult or child who is clearly highly intelligent – perhaps particularly so in certain fields – yet who seems markedly hampered relating to others socially?
 - Might any of these ever mis-read facial expressions/body language, give poor eye contact or interpret speech over-literally? Do they possibly show over-use, under-use or inappropriate use of language? Can they show limited comprehension of the effect of their words/actions upon others? Do they find it hard to cope with change, have a strong dependence upon routine or vastly over-react in stressful or crowded situations?
 - Do you know anyone described not as being “autistic” but “on the autistic *spectrum*”?
2. Answering ‘yes’ to any of the above does *not* mean an individual must be autistic. Rather, on further investigation, it *may* mean that they possess some of the wider autistic *spectrum* of traits.
3. Those with the classic traits, in varying combinations and ranging from mild to severe, are growing in numbers (reported as a net increase, as opposed to broader diagnostic criteria). More and more ecclesias and their members, directly or indirectly, are affected.
4. As the traits are not immediately obvious physically, autistic spectrum disorder is notorious as the ‘invisible disorder’ – frequently leading to mis-judgements on all sides, to the hurt of many and to the damage of family, and/or ecclesial, relationships.
5. Developing an insight into the autistic spectrum can be an answer to prayer; a key to peace-making and peace of mind; and lead to worthwhile improvements for these families and their ecclesias. So much can often be done to help by aware individuals that the spectrum at least warrants investigation.