

What is Aspergers?

Dr Hans Asperger, an Austrian paediatrician, originally described Asperger's Syndrome in 1944. The syndrome has more recently been classified as an autistic spectrum disorder. Children and adults with Asperger's Syndrome have an intellectual capacity within the normal range, but have a distinct profile of abilities that has been apparent since early childhood. The profile of abilities includes the following characteristics:

A qualitative impairment in social interaction:

- * Failure to develop friendships that are appropriate to the child's developmental level.
- * Impaired use of non-verbal behaviour such as eye gaze, facial expression and body language to regulate a social interaction.
- * Lack of social and emotional reciprocity and empathy.
- * Impaired ability to identify social cues and conventions.

A qualitative impairment in subtle communication skills:

- * Fluent speech but difficulties with conversation skills and a tendency to be pedantic, have an unusual prosody and to make a literal interpretation.

Restrictive Interests:

- * The development of special interests that is unusual in their intensity and focus.
- * Preference for routine and consistency.

The disorder can also include motor clumsiness and problems with handwriting and being hypersensitive to specific auditory and tactile experiences. There can also be problems with organisational and time management skills and explaining thoughts and ideas using speech. The exact prevalence rates have yet to be determined, but research suggests that it may be as common as one in 250. The aetiology is probably due to factors that affect brain development and not due to emotional deprivation or other psychogenic factors.

The characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome described above are based on the diagnostic criteria and current research and have also been modified as a result of my extensive clinical experience. I would like to provide a personalised description of Asperger's Syndrome that also incorporates the person's qualities as well as their difficulties.

People with Asperger's Syndrome are often described, as having [social skills deficits](#), reluctance to listen, difficulty understanding social give and take, and other core characteristics, is typically quite misunderstood and/or misdiagnosed in our country today.

First recognized by Hans Asperger in 1944, who recognized that the patterns of behaviors and characteristics were often noticed in the parents as well, most noticeably in the fathers, and he very perceptively noted, *"that the condition was probably due to genetic or neurological, rather than psychological or environmental factors,"* (Attwood, 2006, p. 2).

Psychologists, physicians, educators, and parents remain largely uneducated and uninformed regarding [high functioning autism and Asperger's Syndrome](#), particularly in girls and women, and the person is often misdiagnosed (Fattig, 2007). *"Asperger's syndrome has probably been an important and valuable characteristic of our species throughout evolution,"* (Attwood, 2006, p. 2).

[Autism](#) impacts normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. The disorder makes it hard to communicate with others and relate to the social world. In some cases, aggressive and/or self-injurious behavior may be present (Autism Society of Delaware, 2005); however, internal behaviors such as withdrawal, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and social isolation may be just as prevalent (Fattig, 2007). *"Persons with autism may exhibit repeated body movements (hand flapping, rocking),*

unusual responses to people or attachments to objects and resistance to changes in routines. Individuals may also experience sensitivities in the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste," (Autism Society of Delaware, 2005).

One reason why the prevalence in girls and women is so low in comparison to boys and men may be the fundamental lack of awareness of what Asperger's Syndrome "looks like" in females. Traditional frameworks may indicate that the female with Asperger's Syndrome is just shy, quiet, perfect at school so her parents must be exaggerating, tomboyish, moody, overly competitive, aloof, Gothic, depressed, anxious, or a perfectionist (Fattig, 2007). The Viennese pediatrician, Asperger, described a group of children with similar characteristics, observing that *"the children's social maturity and social reasoning were delayed and some aspects of their social abilities were quite unusual at any stage of development,"* (Attwood, 2006, p. 2).

Science

Albert Einstein provided the theory of relativity and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for the work he did with photoelectric effect. Characteristics, which may indicate that Einstein was a fellow Aspie: Einstein could not speak fluently at the age of nine (Botham, 2006, p. 16), language delays are common in children with high functioning autism. His parents suspected that he might actually be mentally retarded (Botham, 2006, p. 16).

Isaac Newton dropped out of school as a teenager (Botham, 2006, p. 15).

Benjamin Franklin was considered to be one of the most important of the founding fathers of our country. He was a theorist, author, politician, scientist, activist, and diplomat. His scientific contributions included physics, discovery of electricity, and theories regarding electricity (Wikipedia, 2007). He was also the first head of the post office. Indicating the potential need for rigid rule and order, with sorting tendencies. "Benjamin Franklin's peers did not give him the assignment of writing the Declaration of Independence because they feared that he would conceal a joke in it," (Botham, 2006, pp. 17-18). Aspies are notorious for an extreme or different sense of humor.

Politics

Napoleon Bonaparte was reportedly afraid of cats, favored mathematicians or physical scientists, and tended to exclude humanists from his inner circle. He believed humanists were troublemakers. He also required his servants to wear his boots, breaking them in for him, before he would wear them (Botham, 2006, p. 17).

George Washington, the first president of the United States of America. He was extremely terrified of being buried alive, therefore, he dictated that he be "laid out for three days just to be sure he was dead," (Botham, 2006, p. 2). People on the Aspie team, perceive or think about the world differently than others (Attwood, 2006, p. 2).

Artists

Leonardo da Vinci took twelve years to paint the Mona Lisa's lips, and could write with one hand while drawing with the other (Botham, 2006, p. 13).

Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (March 6, 1475 – February 18, 1564) was an Italian Renaissance painter, sculptor, architect, poet and engineer. Despite making few forays beyond the arts, his versatility in the disciplines he took up was of such a high order that he is often considered a contender for the title of the archetypal Renaissance man, along with his rival and fellow Italian Leonardo da Vinci.

Inventors

Bill Gates has long been suspected of demonstrated Aspie traits, and where would we be without his contributions? His first business, Traff-O-Data, involved the creation of a machine recording the number of cars passing a point on a road (Botham, 2006, p. 18).

Actors

Robin Williams was voted least likely to succeed in high school (Botham, 2006, p. 27). People with Asperger's are noted to have "an unusual prosody" affecting tone, rhythm, pitch, and speed of speech. And egocentric preoccupation dominates their thoughts, and they often need more assistance in self-help skills and organization (Attwood, 2006, p. 3).

Writers

Author, Virginia Woolf, would only write her books when standing (Botham, 2006, p. 59), and she suffered from depression, social isolation, and eccentricities.

Shakespeare reportedly spelled his own name in several different ways (Botham, 2006, p. 60). Hans Christian Anderson was word blind and he never learned to spell correctly (Botham, 2006, p. 61). Written language difficulties often accompany Asperger's Syndrome and ADD/ADHD.

Goethe reportedly hated the sound of barking dogs (Botham, 2006, p. 60), which could indicate hyperactivity to sound or noises; and he "could only write if he had an apple rotting in the desk drawer," (Botham, 2006, p. 60).

Isaac Asimov has a book included in each Dewey decimal category (Botham, 2006, p. 61), which could indicate compulsivity or perseverative need for control or ritual.

The novel, Gatsby, written by Ernest Vincent Wright, has a word count of fifty thousand with no word containing the letter e (Botham, 2006, p. 60). Phobic?

Charles Dickinson dropped out of school and suffered from insomnia. He believed that if his bed was facing north, and he was in the center, he might be able to sleep (Botham, 2006, p. 61). Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, nightmares or night terrors, is common in people with Asperger's. Creating odd rituals and routines as a coping mechanism is also frequent in our people.

Hans Christian Andersen or simply H.C. Andersen (April 2, 1805 – August 4, 1875) was a Danish author and poet, most famous for his fairy tales. Among his best-known stories "The Snow Queen", "The Little Mermaid", "The Emperor's New Clothes" and "The Ugly Duckling". During Andersen's lifetime he was feted by royalty and acclaimed as having brought joy to children across Europe. His fairy tales have been translated into well over a hundred languages and continue to be published in "millions of copies all over the world".

Without Asperger's, Where would we be?

Many children, who are diagnosed at a very young age with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), may in fact have Asperger's Syndrome (Brunett & Williams, 2005). Asperger's Syndrome is typically characterized by average to above average intelligence, poor social communication, poor social skills, lack of eye contact, rigid need for rules and routine, anxiety and/or depression, pedantic speech, sensory processing difficulty, and perseverative thought processes. Persons with high functioning autism or Asperger's tend to rely heavily on rigid internal rules and struggle with the unwritten social rules of social interaction. Failure accompanies a student with AS, like a close companion, and we may need much reassurance during stressful periods.

A psychologist, and friend, stated, "*You have to remind them that for every criticism, it can take upwards of hundreds of complimentary comments to undo the extreme embarrassment or humiliation,*" (Caton, 2007).

John Couch Adams
Joy Adamson
Hans Christian Andersen
Sherwood Anderson
Archimedes of Syracuse
Hans Asperger
Julian Assange
W. H. Auden

Sir A.J. Ayer
Dan Aykroyd CM
Charles Babbage FRS
Stefan Banach
Syd Barrett / Roger Barrett
Béla Bartók
Daisy Bates
Samuel Beckett
Ludwig van Beethoven
David Bellamy OBE
Jeremy Bentham
Richard Borcherds
Robert Boyle
Gordon Brown
Anton Bruckner
Warren Buffett
Tim Burton
David Byrne
Lewis Carroll
Augustin Louis Cauchy
Henry Cavendish
King Charles XII of Sweden
Bruce Chatwin
Bram Cohen
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Marie Curie
Helen Dale / Darville / Demidenko
Henry Darger
Charles Darwin
"Dibs"
Emily Dickinson
Paul Dirac OM FRS
Greg Egan
Albert Einstein FRS
Robert Emmet
Paul Erdos
Robert "Bobby" Fischer
Tim Fischer AC FTSE
Sir Ronald Aylmer Fisher FRS
Henry Ford
Janet Frame ONZ CBE
Rosalind Franklin
Evariste Galois
Bill Gates
Antoni Gaudi
Charles de Gaulle
Johann Carl Friedrich Gauss
Kurt Godel
Major-General Charles George Gordon CB
Glenn Gould
Temple Grandin
Sir William Rowan Hamilton
Daryl Hannah
G. H. Hardy
John Hartford
Hermann Hesse
Patricia Highsmith
David Hilbert
Gerard Manley Hopkins
Edward Hopper

John Howard (1726-1790)
Peter Howson
Stonewall Jackson
Thomas Jefferson
Muhammad Ali Jinnah
Irene Joliot-Curie
Sir Keith Joseph CH PC
James Joyce
Wassily Kandinsky
Leo Kanner
Immanuel Kant
Andy Kaufman
Alfred Kinsey
Stanley Kubrick
Ladyhawke / Pip Brown
Paul Laffoley
Joseph Louis Lagrange
Oscar Levant
Charles Lindbergh
Nikolai Lobachevsky
Deborah Locke
Courtney Love
H. P Lovecraft
L.S. Lowry
James Clerk Maxwell FRS
Darius McCollum
Herman Melville
Gregor Mendel
Michelangelo
Reg Mombassa / Christopher O'Doherty
Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, 1st Viscount Montgomery of Alamein KG GCB DSO PC
Caiseal Mor
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Les Murray
John F. Nash Jr.
Craig Newmark
Sir Isaac Newton FRS
Craig Nicholls
Nico / Christa Paffgen
Moe Norman
Gary Numan
George Orwell
Patrick Pearse
Grigori Perelman
King Philip II of Spain
Henri Poincare
Enoch Powell MBE
Willard Van Orman Quine
Srinivasa Ramanujan
Charles Richter
Bernhard Riemann
Paul Robeson
Peter Mark Roget FRS
Bertrand Russell
Carl Sagan
Erik Satie
Solomon Shereshevskii
William Shockley
Boris Sidis
William James Sidis

Adam Smith
Vernon L. Smith
Socrates
Spinoza
Richard Stallman
Lawrence Summers
Screaming Lord Sutch / David Sutch
Jonathan Swift
Satoshi Tajiri
Daniel Tammet
Nikola Tesla
Henry David Thoreau
Alan Turing
J. M. W. Turner
Maurice Utrillo
Eamon de Valera
Michael Ventris
Louis Wain
Robert Walser
Andy Warhol
John B. Watson
Simone Weil
Orson Welles
Herbert G. Wells
Opal Whiteley
Norbert Wiener
Thomas "Blind Tom" Wiggins
Ludwig Wittgenstein
Jack B. Yeats
W. B. Yeats
Bill Gates

Historical people from earlier periods (died before 1975)

- Jane Austen, 1775-1817, English novelist, author of *Pride and Prejudice*
- Béla Bartók, 1881-1945, Hungarian composer
- Bobby Fischer, 1943-2008, World Chess Champion
- Michelangelo, 1475-1564 - Italian Renaissance artist
- Erik Satie, 1866-1925 - Composer
- Ludwig van Beethoven, 1770-1827, German/Viennese composer
- Alexander Graham Bell, 1847-1922, Scottish/Canadian/American inventor of the telephone
- Anton Bruckner, 1824-1896, Austrian composer
- Henry Cavendish, 1731-1810, English/French scientist, discovered the composition of air and water
- Emily Dickinson, 1830-1886, US poet
- Thomas Edison, 1847-1931, US inventor
- Albert Einstein, 1879-1955, German/American theoretical physicist
- Seth Engstrom, 1987-Present, Magician and World Champion
- Henry Ford, 1863-1947, US industrialist
- Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790, US politician/writer
- Kaspar Hauser, c1812-1833, German foundling, portrayed in a film by Werner Herzog
- Oliver Heaviside, 1850-1925, English physicist
- Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1826, US politician
- Carl Jung, 1875-1961, Swiss psychoanalyst
- Franz Kafka, 1883-1924, Czech writer
- Wasily Kandinsky, 1866-1944, Russian/French painter
- Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1865, US Politician
- H P Lovecraft, 1890-1937, US writer

- Ludwig II, 1845-1886, King of Bavaria
- Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1868-1928, Scottish architect and designer
- Gustav Mahler, 1860-1911, Czech/Austrian composer
- Marilyn Monroe, 1926-1962, US actress
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 1756-1791, Austrian composer
- Isaac Newton, 1642-1727, English mathematician and physicist
- Friedrich Nietzsche, 1844-1900, German philosopher
- Bertrand Russell, 1872-1970, British logician
- George Bernard Shaw, 1856-1950, Irish playwright, writer of *Pygmalion*, critic and Socialist
- Richard Strauss, 1864-1949, German composer
- Nikola Tesla, 1856-1943, Serbian/American scientist, engineer, inventor of electric motors
- Henry Thoreau, 1817-1862, US writer
- Alan Turing, 1912-1954, English mathematician, computer scientist and cryptographer
- Mark Twain, 1835-1910, US humorist
- Vincent Van Gogh, 1853-1890, Dutch painter
- George Washington, 1732-1799, US Politician
- Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1889-1951, Viennese/English logician and philosopher
- Virginia Woolf, 1882-1941, English Writer

Historical people prominent in the late twentieth century (died after 1975)

- Isaac Asimov, 1920-1992, Russian/US writer on science and of science fiction, author of *Bicentennial Man*
- Hans Asperger, 1906-1980, Austrian paediatric doctor after whom Asperger's Syndrome is named
- John Denver, 1943-1997, US musician
- Glenn Gould, 1932-1982, Canadian pianist
- Jim Henson, 1936-1990, creator of the Muppets, US puppeteer, writer, producer, director, composer
- Alfred Hitchcock, 1899-1980, English/American film director
- Howard Hughes, 1905-1976, US billionaire
- Andy Kaufman, 1949-1984, US comedian, subject of the film *Man on the Moon*
- L S Lowry, 1887-1976, English painter of "matchstick men"
- Charles Schulz, 1922-2000, US cartoonist and creator of *Peanuts* and *Charlie Brown*
- Andy Warhol, 1928-1987, US artist

Contemporary famous people

- Tony Benn, 1925-, English Labour politician
- Pip Brown "Ladyhawke", 1979-, New Zealand Singer/Songwriter, Musician
- Charles Dickinson, 1951, US Writer
- Bob Dylan, 1941-, US singer-songwriter
- Joseph Erber, 1985-, young English composer/musician who has Asperger's Syndrome, subject of a BBC TV documentary
- Bill Gates, 1955-, US global monopolist
- Genie, 1957-?, US "wild child" (see also *L'Enfant Sauvage*, Victor,)
- Crispin Glover, 1964-, US actor
- Al Gore, 1948-, former US Vice President and presidential candidate
- Jeff Greenfield, 1943-, US political analyst/speechwriter, a political wonk
- David Helfgott, 1947-, Australian pianist, subject of the film *Shine*
- Garrison Keillor, 1942-, US writer, humorist and host of *Prairie Home Companion*
- Paul Kostabi 1962-, writer, comedian, artist, producer, technician
- Kevin Mitnick, 1963-, US "hacker"
- John Motson, 1945-, English sports commentator
- John Nash, 1928-, US mathematician (portrayed by Russell Crowe in *A Beautiful Mind*, USA 2001)
- Keith Olbermann, 1959-, US sportscaster
- Michael Palin, 1943-, English comedian and presenter
- Oliver Sacks, 1933-, UK/US neurologist, author of *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* and *Awakenings*
- James Taylor, 1948-, US singer/songwriter
- Robin Williams, 1951-, US Actor
- Jamie Hyneman, 1956-, Co-host of *Mythbusters*
- Seth Engstrom, 1987-, Magician and World Champion in Sleight of Hand. The best man with a deck of cards that the world has ever seen.

Amy Lee

Richard Pearse (First to fly a plane),

Dr Janet Frame (Famed Authoress),

Charles de Gaulle (Great French warzhyphenztime/peacezhyphenztime leader/President),

T E Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) (British leader of Arab Revolt against Turks),

Captain Matthew Webb (First to swim the English Channel),

Satoshi Tajiri (Pokemon Inventor - formal diagnosis),

Dan Aykroyd (Leading Musician/Comedian, Blues Bros - formal diagnosis?),

Alfred Hitchcock (Horror-movie Sub-genre Creator),

Bobby Fischer (Greatest Chess Player Ever),

Daniel Tammet (Smartest Man Alive Today - formal diagnosis),

Les Murray (Greatest Living English Writer/Poet Alive - self diagnosis),

Gary Numan (Greatest Industrial Synch-pop Musician Ever),

Craig Nicholls (Lead singer of top Australian group The Vines - formal diagnosis).