



## Autism Support Levels (a DSM-5 re-write)

<b>Level 1 Support Needs</b>	<p><b>An Autistic person who requires support from other people.</b></p> <p><b>Definition:</b> without support in place, difficulties with neurotypical social communication can cause the Autistic person to have noticeable impairment when interacting with neurotypical people or organisations.</p>	
	<b>Part A: the Autistic Social World</b>	<b>Part B: the Autistic Sensory World</b>
	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Autistic person has difficulty initiating social interactions, particularly with neurotypical people.</li> <li>• There are clear examples of occasions where a neurotypical person has attempted to interact with the Autistic person, and the Autistic person has either not responded, or has responded in a way that the neurotypical person found unusual or 'odd'.</li> <li>• The Autistic person may appear to have decreased interest in participating in social interactions.</li> <li>• There is difficulty in the to-and-fro of neurotypical conversation.</li> <li>• The Autistic person may attempt to make friends with other people in ways that neurotypical people find 'odd'.</li> <li>• The Autistic person has a history of difficulty making friends, particularly with those who do not share the same neurotype.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Autistic person's strong adherence to their preferred ways of moving, engaging in interests, need for sameness and predictability and patterns of sensory seeking and avoidance causes significant interference with the person's ability to function in one or more neurotypical contexts.</li> <li>• The Autistic person has difficulty switching between activities.</li> <li>• The Autistic person has difficulty with organising and planning, which hampers their ability to be independent from other people.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">©Nicolle Griffin, Very Helpful Chats 2023</p>

## Level 2 Support Needs

**An Autistic person who requires substantial support from other people.**

**Definition:** even with supports in place, the Autistic person continues to have marked difficulty using a verbal and non-verbal communication style preferred by neurotypical people.

### Part A: the Autistic Social World

#### Examples:

- Even with support from other people, the Autistic person still experiences social difficulties communicating with non-Autistic people.
- The Autistic person only initiates social interactions with other people on limited occasions.
- There are clear examples of occasions where a neurotypical person has attempted to interact with the Autistic person, and the Autistic person has either not responded, or has responded in a way that the neurotypical person found 'abnormal'.
- The Autistic person's interactions with other people may be limited to discussing their interests.
- Neurotypical people may find the Autistic person's non-verbal communication, i.e., body language and facial expressions, to be 'markedly odd'.
- The Autistic person may only speak in simple sentences.

### Part B: the Autistic Sensory World

#### Examples:

- The Autistic person has very strong adherence to their preferred ways of moving, engaging in interests, requirement for sameness and predictability and patterns of sensory seeking and avoidance interfere with the person's ability to function in a variety of neurotypical contexts.
- The Autistic person's patterns of stimming, engaging in interests, need for sameness and predictability and sensory sensitivities are frequent enough that they are obvious to a casual observer.
- The Autistic person experiences difficulty and/or distress changing focus or action.

### Level 3 Support Needs

**An Autistic person who requires very substantial support from other people.**

**Definition:** The Autistic person has severe difficulty with neurotypical verbal and non-verbal social communication skills, and this causes severe impairment in their ability to function in neurotypical contexts.

#### Part A: the Autistic Social World

##### Examples:

- The Autistic person initiates social interactions with other people only on very limited or very rare occasions.
- The Autistic person gives only a minimal response to someone who attempts to initiate an interaction with them in a neurotypical manner.
- The Autistic person may only respond to very direct social approaches.
- When the Autistic person initiates an interaction with someone else, it is perceived by neurotypical people as being an 'unusual' approach, and usually, it is for the purpose of the Autistic person meeting their own needs.

#### Part B: the Autistic Sensory World

##### Examples:

- The Autistic person has such strong adherence to their preferred ways of moving, engaging in interests, needs for sameness and predictability and patterns of sensory seeking and avoidance that it markedly interferes with their ability to function in all neurotypical spheres.
- The Autistic person has extreme difficulty coping with change.
- The Autistic person experiences great difficulty and/or great distress changing focus or action.