

## Impacts and Deficits in NT ASD Relationships

<p><i>Autism Spectrum Disorder is a term used to describe a spectrum of neurodevelopmental conditions existing from very early life which affects how the brain processes information.</i></p>			<p><i>These impacts result in a unique Posttraumatic Relationship Syndrome (PTRS) that Karen Rodman has termed Ongoing Traumatic Relationship Syndrome (OTRS) for those still in the relationship.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Normal developmental milestones</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Developmental steps in ASD</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Deficits as a result</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Possible impacts on NT partners</u></p>
<p>Joint attention</p>	<p>Obsessive interest in one's own needs</p>	<p>Difficulty sharing experiences &amp; interests</p>	<p>Perspective, interests &amp; needs disregarded by partner</p>
<p>Theory of mind/Theory of own mind – awareness of self and others</p>	<p>Inability to see one's own or another's point of view</p>	<p>Inability to be “ in someone else's shoes”</p>	<p>Loss of sense of self; insecurity; uncertainty of own reality</p>
<p>Ability to read and interpret body language / facial expression</p>	<p>Limited understanding of body language / facial expressions</p>	<p>Inability to register others' emotions</p>	<p>Emotions unacknowledged, not validated and disregarded by partner</p>
<p>Ability to repair &amp; maintain relationships, have life-long</p>	<p>Inability to repair and nurture relationships</p>	<p>Few, if any, real friends</p>	<p>Unresolved disputes, unfinished interactions and unresolved emotional</p>

friendships			upset
Emotional reciprocity	Lack of empathy for people	Inability to relate to or sense others' emotions	Lack of input / return of feelings / emotional support
Desire or need to socialise and make "small talk"	Inability to see the need for small talk	Difficulties in making relationships, uses role playing, copying & masking outside home	Lack of intimate connection such as "pillow talk"
Sense of humour / understanding of irony & human frailty	Limited humour/ inability to laugh at oneself and one's own mistakes	Limited ability to admit to mistakes	No redress when wronged, receives no "natural justice"
Abstract language	Limited to literal understanding of language	Limited ability to understand irony /metaphor / jokes	Unrequited efforts to make themselves "heard" / lack of loving banter
Desire to share own and others' interests	Obsession with own interests	Difficulty sharing anything	Loneliness in the relationship, few shared positive memories
Ability to generalise learning to new situations	Rigid compartmentalisation of concepts	Inflexibility in learning new ways and growing	Unacknowledged and non-validated perspectives
Abstract thinking	"Concrete" thinking, lacking insight	Little appreciation of "hidden" meaning in life	Denial of truth; "gaslight" phenomenon; self-doubt
Imagination and ability to dream of possibilities	Solitary imagination	Tendency to remain "stuck in a rut" in life	Reduction and narrowing of life
Development of auditory skills	Deficient oral / aural communication with	Tendency to misinterpret others'	Object of misunderstandings producing

and articulate verbal skills	receptive / expressive language difficulties	intentions; uses non-sequiteur	self –doubt/ confusion
Responsibility for own actions	Blames others for problems / mistakes	Inability to acknowledge or learn from mistakes	Falsely blamed, develops strong anger arising from injustice
Ability to share problems and concerns as a means to solve them	Inability to share problems or foresee consequences and possibilities	Tendency to get into problem situations; “Mr Magoo” Syndrome; oblivious to turbulence of problems	Requirement socially / emotionally to fix the unconsidered consequences
Social conscience, sense of “fair play”	Undeveloped social conscience& overly strict adherence to rules; narrowly focussed, unable to interpret nuance in life	<b>POSSIBLE</b> psychopathic, sociopathic or criminal behaviour, black and white attitude to life	Exposure to insufficient or unsafe conditions / dismissal of concerns, may feel intimidated and humiliated
Ability to react & act spontaneously	Inappropriate responses or no response	Awkwardness in family and social situations	Deficiency of positive feedback or assistance
Innate knowledge about social behaviour	Lack of real understanding of social behaviour	Desire for isolation or over socialisation	Undesired isolation, lack of option for full participation in life
Comfort, pleasure & pain in sensory experiences	Sensory overload or unawareness	Excess or avoidance of touch & physical contact	Deficiency of human physical contact
Intuition about life	Lack of intuition	Lack of common-sense	Obligation to repair misunderstandings& social gaffes by partner
Balanced development of emotional and intellectual skills	Development of intellectual skills over emotional skills	Interactions limited to intellectual unless prompted	Feelings of being socially mimicked and depended upon, service as a social “seeing–eye dog”

Ability to show love in tone of voice, eyes, treatment of others	Limitation to "gifts of service"	Cold and unloving behaviour, lack of compassion	Object of manipulation, intermittent reward; experiences fear with loss of trust in the relationship & self
Attachment to people, places and things	Lack of attachments to people	Attitude that others are dispensable	Unrequited love; loss of self-esteem, feelings of being unappreciated and used
Reflection and insight into self	Lack of sense of self in relation to others	Inability to reflect on own life	Obligation to accommodate partner without compromise or negotiation from partner
Ability to make decisions using emotions and intellect	Uncertainty of own feelings about things	Poor decision making / naiveté	Hopelessness in seeking partner's opinions or commitment
Executive functioning	Lack of organisational skills	Inability to navigate complex processes	Obligation to prompt or fulfil partner's neglected duties
Ability to prioritise tasks and multi-task	Limited to only one task at a time	Neglect of urgent responsibilities / panic	Obligation to solve urgent disasters alone and for partner
Ability to gain wisdom from experiences	Lack of generalisation of learning and awareness of important experiences	Inflexible or absent personal philosophy / ideology	Superficial, unfulfilling relationship