

Giftedness in Children with Asperger's Syndrome

Umida Mekhmanovna Utbasarova, PhD,

Acting Associate Professor of the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, Alfraganus University.

Nilufar Usmanova

Student of Alfraganus University

Abstract: This article is dedicated to the peculiarities of socialization of children with Asperger's syndrome in general education institutions. Asperger's syndrome is most often diagnosed in primary and secondary school, with the school community serving as its indicator. The article describes how to recognize a child with Asperger's syndrome and what difficulties these children face at school. According to statistics, about 94% of children with Asperger's syndrome are subjected to bullying. The article provides recommendations on what to do if bullying of a child with Asperger's syndrome is suspected.

Key words: Asperger's syndrome, socialization, children, education, school.

Introduction.

In many neuropsychological and defectological studies, giftedness is considered as a specific situation of abnormal atypical development. "In childhood, we encounter so-called prodigies, or wonder children, who display rapid maturation of some talent at an early age. It has long been noted that in such premature and excessive development of talent, there is something close to the pathological, i.e., abnormal." Sometimes these children are placed in remedial classes or sent for individual home schooling.

The basis of the problems lies in disharmonious development - the combination of delayed development of some functional systems with partial acceleration of others and disruption of the sequence of mental function development. The cause of disharmonious development can be an innate or early acquired persistent disproportion of the psyche, for example, in psychopathy or in gifted children. This group of children, in addition to the specific development of higher mental functions (for example, a very high level of mathematical skills development with the presence of severe dysgraphia, etc.), is characterized by impairments in the emotional and volitional sphere, manifested in an inadequate reaction to external stimuli, "as a result of which behavior is more or less impaired and active adaptation to the environment is hindered." Unfortunately, personal and emotional maturation does not occur quickly and cannot be accelerated unlike intellectual maturation. The lack of full-fledged interaction with peers and the deficit of play activity lead to the underdevelopment of regulatory functions.

Studies by M.E. Bogoyavlenskaya and T.G. Goryacheva (2003) showed that disorders of the 1st and 3rd brain blocks (according to A.R. Luria) in gifted children have similar symptoms to "average" children - increased exhaustion and insufficient voluntary regulation of behavior, while disorders of the 2nd block - information processing - are individual for each child.

Increased exhaustion manifests itself in the fact that gifted children find it difficult to endure any activity that requires sufficiently long physical or mental effort.

The insufficiency of voluntary behavior regulation is manifested in the decrease of voluntary attention. A child can only do what they like, and for as long as they succeed at it. As soon as a child encounters difficulties, they refuse to continue the activity.

A study of the emotional qualities of mathematically gifted children (students of the physics and mathematics school at Moscow State University) using drawing tests [8] revealed a connection between emotional-personal qualities and the peculiarities of the interhemispheric organization of mental processes (PLO profile). Ambidexters proved to be less well-adjusted compared to other types of PLOs. Both in pictograms and in the "family drawing," attention was also drawn to the more frequent use of symbols, letter and verbal designations, and less frequent depiction of people (including the subject themselves) compared to the control group of general education school students. In the "unknown

animal" drawing, gifted children exhibited depressive and aggressive tendencies in boys and demonstrative tendencies in girls.

Thus, although no peculiarities in brain structure inherent to genius have yet been discovered, giftedness is a specific form of dysontogenesis due to the imbalance of various functional systems, delay, absence, or inversion in the passage of certain genetic programs or age stages.

How do genius children differ from ordinary children?

There is no clear boundary. Moreover, outstanding abilities and intellectual giftedness are almost always closely intertwined with so-called mental deviations, dysfunctions in perceiving the surrounding world, and disorders in various areas. Children who are brilliant in one field of activity are extremely poorly oriented in another. As a rule, this causes difficulties, mostly social, which manifest in three main areas. These are social interaction in society, social imagination, and social communication. They are often referred to as the "triad of impairments" or Asperger's syndrome.

Asperger's syndrome (AS) is a form of autism, but unlike typical autism, children with AS do not have speech problems. On the contrary, their speech is extremely pedantic and "heavy" with complex sentences and phrases, as well as old-fashioned words, yet always grammatically correct. A seven-year-old child with this syndrome might regularly speak in language suitable for a university philosophy textbook. Their intellectual level is often above average. Such children are called aspies. They usually don't have the learning disabilities associated with autism, but they may still have some disorders such as speech development delay, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or epilepsy.

One of my aspie friends humorously says about himself:

"Sometimes I open the refrigerator or enter a room and for a while can't figure out what I'm doing there or what I want. The purpose of the action falls out of focus."

Asperger's syndrome includes several basic symptoms, and if your child doesn't have them, they probably don't have this syndrome. The basic symptoms include:

- problems with nonverbal communication, including eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures. For example, a person might not notice that their conversation partner is bored.
- difficulties in establishing and maintaining friendships. Aspie children want friends but simply don't know how to make them.
- lack of interest in other people's hobbies
- tendency to follow the same rigid routine, which often has no practical purpose
- repetitive body movements, such as rocking back and forth
- lack of emotional attachment to parents and close ones
- extreme organization
- poor coordination of movements, unusual posture and gait
- slow, monotonous speech that is overly academic
- difficulties in perceiving sensory stimuli, such as loud sounds

Although Asperger's syndrome can significantly complicate life in many ways, it is inextricably linked to unique talents! Such children have phenomenal memory, which typically leads to extensive knowledge on many topics. Most often, these include history, politics, geography, philosophy, mathematics, and programming. People with AS become leading experts in their areas of interest. And their sphere of interests is very wide, ranging from mathematical models of human history to dialogues between Judaism and Judeo-Christianity.

"Aspergers" are exceptionally skilled in written language and possess a rare sense of humor.

AS allows one to view the world from a unique perspective. Such children may lack social cognition, but they can appreciate things that "normal" people don't notice. Aspies think completely differently. For example, when a person with Asperger's syndrome performs design work, they seem to run a three-dimensional, fully animated "video" of images in their mind! Such a person can "start testing" equipment in a virtual reality computer that exists only in their imagination!

A prime example of AS in cinema is Barry Levinson's film "Rain Man," which depicts precisely the form of the disorder that borders on genius.

Not a disease that needs treatment, but a complex syndrome, a genius syndrome. Why, then, are rare purity of soul, inability to be hypocritical, and an acute thirst for truth interpreted by "normal" humanity as ugliness?....

If there are people around you who seem strange, awkward, and funny - don't rush to push them away. Take a

closer look at them, and perhaps you, like me, will be fortunate enough to befriend a person with such a brilliant syndrome. Although for some reason, the word "suffering" seems somewhat inappropriate here.

If you are open to everything new, thirsty for knowledge, loving, and able to listen, then consider yourself incredibly lucky to meet an aspie on your path!

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