



CLM e-News
August 2006

Calvary Life Ministries

Giving You Hope, When Life Hurts



JUST FACTS

Facts about AUTISM

Autism is a developmental disability that affects a person's ability to communicate, to reason and to interact with others. It is a spectrum disorder meaning it affects individuals differently and to varying degrees.

In 1943, psychiatrist Leo Kanner applied the term to children who were socially withdrawn, struggled with language acquisition and were preoccupied with repetitive tasks. A year later, Austrian psychiatrist, Hans Asperger, applied the term to children who were also socially detached and preoccupied with routine but yet were highly verbal and intellectually quite bright. Today we recognize that both men were describing two faces of a highly complicated and variable disorder.

The range of intellectual ability in children who suffer from autism is considerable. Some may have severe learning disabilities while others may have average or above average intellects. Some may be linguistically fluent while others are mute. Autism can also be accompanied by physical disabilities such as Down's Syndrome or epilepsy. No two people with autism will exhibit the same characteristics.

What to look for - signs of autism (usually apparent in toddlers; watch for a cluster of symptoms)

- No pointing by one year
- No babbling by one year; no single words by 16 months; no two-word phrases by 24 months
- Any loss of language skills at any time
- No pretend playing
- Little interest in making friends
- Extremely short attention span

- No response when called by name; indifference to others
- Little or no eye contact
- Repetitive body movements, such as hand flapping, rocking
- Intense tantrums
- Fixations on a single object, such as a spinning fan
- Unusually strong resistance to changes in routines
- Oversensitivity to certain sounds, textures or smells

What does someone who suffers from autism look like?

Children with autism do not look any different from other people, which lead some to refer to autism as the "invisible disability". Generally, an autistic child will seem remote or detached because of his failure to make eye contact and his difficulty in relating to others, finding comfort instead in solitary repetitive activities like spinning a toy or lining up cars in a row.

How can autism be diagnosed?

To date there is no one medical test that can be used to detect autism. The issue is further complicated by the fact that no two children with autism behaves in the same way nor develops in the same manner.

A visit to a developmental pediatrician with expertise in autism or Asperger's syndrome is necessary. The pediatrician will evaluate your child with a team of specialists (speech therapists, occupational therapists, behavior therapists) to determine the areas in which your child needs help.

How to treat it?

Experts agree that early intervention is important. Research has shown that a large majority of children with autism who have received early intervention have shown significant improvement.

Children with autism do not look any different from other people...



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- **Speech therapy:** can help overcome communication and language barriers
- **Occupational therapy:** helps with sensory integration and motor skills
- **Behavioral therapy:** improves cognitive skills and reduces inappropriate behaviors
- **Educational therapy:** A highly structured approach works best
- **Special diets:** Eliminating certain food groups, such as dairy, helps some children

Autism affects the whole family, not just the child who is autistic. It is important for parents to acknowledge they need help and support. Joining a parent self-support group (such as HeART Club Plus) can make a difference. Not only do your resources for help expand, but you can also benefit much from the experiences of others who are going through what you are going through now.

The following is information on HeART Club and HeART Club Plus (both of these are extended services of Calvary Life Ministries):



HeART Club

(Venue: No. 2, Jln Damansara Endah, Damansara Heights, KL; Date: 3rd Saturday of each month; Time: 3PM – 5PM)

More information about HeART Club...

What do we do?

- We provide opportunities for children with autism and learning disabilities to experience different types of creative activity – drawing, music, craft, acting, dance.
- We aim to reveal strengths and talents to build self-esteem, teach self-expression, communication skills and independence.
- It is a time for fun, socialising, and support for family and care-givers.

Where are we headed?

Our long-term goal is to build a home for special children in Calvaryland, a social compassionate ministry of Calvary Church in Sungai Pelek. This home will facilitate training in income-generating skills and independent living.

What do we offer?

- Friends and fun
- Experience new things.....drama, music, dance, arts & crafts
- A showcase for abilities and talents
- Support for caregivers

Who should join?

- Children with special needs including learning difficulties, developmental or physical disabilities;
- Who want to make friends and have fun;
- Ages 7-18 years

Membership is RM30.00/year which includes:

- Art and Activity Materials
- Refreshments

HeART Club Plus

(same venue/date/time as HeART Club)

A self-help group for parents and caregivers of special children. This is a parent-led group that offers support and encouragement in caring for oneself and one's family.



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Besides HeART Club and HeART Club Plus, the following are additional sources for help and inquiries:

National Autistic Society of Malaysia (NASOM)
(Persatuan Kebangsaan Autisme Malaysia)

Address: 4, Jalan Chan Chin Mooi, off Jalan Pahang, 53200 Kuala Lumpur.

Tel No.: 03-4022 3744
Fax No.: 03-4025 4495

Email: nasom@streamyx.com
Web: <http://nasom.my.diip.net>

Contact Person: Liew Yoon Loy

Designation: Executive Director

Age Group Served: 0 – 13 years old

Kiwanis Disability Information and Support Centre (KDISC)

Address: No. 21, Jalan SS 3/82, 47301 PJ

Tel No.: 03-7877 0096
Fax No.: 03-7877 8096

Email: info@disabilitymalaysia.com
Web: www.disabilitymalaysia.com

Contact Person: Dr. Jason Cheong

Designation: Vice-President
(Kiwanis Club of Pantai KL)

Persatuan Sumber Autisme Ibumapa Malaysia (PR4A)
Parents' Resource For Autism, Malaysia

Address: No. 51-3, Jalan Radin Anum, Bandar Baru Seri Petaling, 57000 Kuala Lumpur

Tel No.: 03-9057 2000

Fax No.: 03-9057 3818

Web: www.pr4a.org

Type of Organisation: Non-profit organisation

Year Founded: 1998

Contact Person & Designation:

- Mr. K C Lim, President (kc-lim@tm.net.my)
- Ms. Josephine Woo, VP (jopswoo2@yahoo.com)
- Mr. Rana Dutta, Secretary (ranadutta8@hotmail.com)

EXCO Members: Ms. Connie Yee & Mr. Yong

Operating Hours: Help Line serves 24 hours a day

Age Group Served: All ages

CONTACT US

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Director:

Pam Guneratnam (MSc)
