



What is the difference between Autism and Asperger's Syndrome?

While some would say that Asperger's is a high functioning form of autism or the best case scenario in autism, there is in fact no consensus about the differences between autism and Aspergers except in how they are each diagnosed. Children diagnosed with Asperger's don't have a delay in verbal communication skills. As they start talking at the same time as their peers, Asperger's is usually diagnosed later than autism with 11 being the average age for an Asperger's diagnosis. Beyond that, there is much debate about how autism and Asperger's are related. Some argue that people with Asperger's become more aware of their differences leading to more challenges with depression later in life or that mental health conditions in general are more associated with Aspergers than autism.

One interesting theory is that Hans Asperger was more interested in looking at strengths associated with autism while Leo Kanner was more focused on the challenges. Both writing about autism in 1943, Hans Asperger famously quoted, *for success in science or art, a dash of autism is essential.* Leo Kanner famously quoted, (autistic children) *'were kept neatly in refrigerators which did not defrost. Their withdrawal seems to be an act of turning away from such a situation to seek comfort in solitude.'* Although they both used the term autism they had different ideas about causes and outcomes for children with the condition.

In 2010, we at the Provincial Autism Centre find that many resources written for people with Asperger's are also beneficial for people with (classic) autism. Some resources assume more strengths amongst people with Asperger's or a higher possibility in employment and relationships. Too, some with autism begin identifying more with Asperger's as they learn that this label has less stigma associated with it. There are many adults with classic autism that have found their niche in life, and many people diagnosed with Asperger's who have not. In our experience there is much common ground between adults with both labels.