

Common Terms

It may help to familiarize yourself with terms commonly used by autistic people. here are some common words and acronyms for your reference

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASAN	<u>Autistic Self Advocacy Network</u>
Alexithymia	Difficulty in identifying and expressing your own emotions, as well as those of other people
Autistic burnout	When an autistic person's needs are not accommodated it can cause autistic burnout defined as: pervasive long-term chronic stress involving lack of skills or function, reduced tolerance to social and other stimuli; could possibly be associated with suicidal ideation
Deep/intense interests	75-90% of autistic people have deep interests. You may also hear these called "special interests". Some autistic people don't like this term, so try to say deep/intense interests instead
Hyperfocus	Deep and overt concentration on a specific subject or thought
Hyper fixation	Extreme fixation on one narrow subject that can last for years
Hyperlexia	Advanced and unexpected reading skills and abilities in children way beyond their chronological age

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Masking/ Camouflaging	Deliberately camouflaging autism related behaviors to increase social acceptance. Masking, or “acting normal” is exhausting for autistic people. It can be even more stressful for those who face additional bias due to their identity
Meltdown	An emotional outburst due to circumstances where the ability to cope is overwhelmed
Overstimulation	When someone is exposed to too much stimulation. This may include bright lights, loud noises, or crowds. Overstimulation may cause the person to have a meltdown or become withdrawn. An autistic person may have different abilities to self-monitor their levels of stimulation
Sensory processing disorder and nonverbal learning disabilities	This is not a formal diagnosis, but many families and individuals are told that they have sensory processing disorder if they are under-responsive or over-responsive to sensory input. This term is a way to communicate that the individual may need support with sensory issues
Stimming, “stims”	Repetitive behaviors such as rocking, hand flapping, or other physical behaviors that may function to reduce anxiety, communicate feelings, and/or reduce or refocus external stimulation
Shutdown	An unconscious defense response to being overwhelmed due to extreme sensory overload, anxiety, or fear