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100 words

Autism

Simon Baron-Cohen

Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) occur in 1% of the population, are strongly heritable, and result from atypical neurodevelopment. Classic autism and Asperger Syndrome (AS) share difficulties in social functioning, communication and coping with change, alongside unusually narrow interests. IQ is average or above in AS with average or even precocious age of language onset. Many areas within the 'social brain' are atypical in ASC. ASC has a profile of impaired empathy alongside strong 'systemising'. Hence, ASC involves disability (when empathy is required) and talent (when strong systemising would be advantageous). Psychological interventions that target empathy by harnessing systemising may help.

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