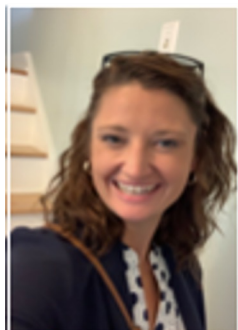


# Understanding Autism: What Parents Need to Know



AUTISM ACCEPTANCE

# APS Autism/Low Incidence Team



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# What is Autism?

- A type of **neurodiversity**
- A developmental disability
- Believed to affect 1 in 54 people
- 4 out of 5 people diagnosed are male
- A life-long condition



# Two Primary Characteristics of Autism:

All people diagnosed or labeled with ASD have both

**Impairments in  
Language,  
Communication, and  
Social Interaction**

**Restrictive and  
Repetitive Thoughts  
and Behaviors**



# Impairments in Language, Communication, and Social Interaction

- Talking too much or too little
- Not able to communicate verbally
- Not understanding figurative speech (idioms, metaphors, similes)
- Misunderstanding directions
- Repeating certain words or phrases ("Echolalia")



- Doesn't understand turn-taking
- Difficulty with conversations
- Doesn't understand "Unwritten Rules"
- No Theory of Mind (perspective taking)
- Hard time making and keeping friends



# Restrictive and Repetitive Thoughts and Behaviors

- Stereotypic or “stimming” behaviors, such as fidgeting, flapping, or rocking
- Unusual or limited interests
- Lack of impulse control
- Strong need to engage in a certain behavior
- Need to do the same thing the same way, over and over
- Perseverative thinking (can not get certain thoughts or memories out of their mind)
- Need to place items in a particular way



# Secondary Characteristics

All will have **SOME** of these:

Difficulty with change

Anxiety

Avoids eye contact

Can decode but not comprehend (hyperlexia)

Good at some skills, but not others

Motor skill deficits

Sensory differences

Eloping/wandering

## Health issues

- IBS
- Seizures
- Depression
- Ear infections/hearing loss

# ASD and Sensory Issues

- Unusual responses to sensory stimuli.
- Hyper (over) or hypo (under) sensitive to one or more senses.



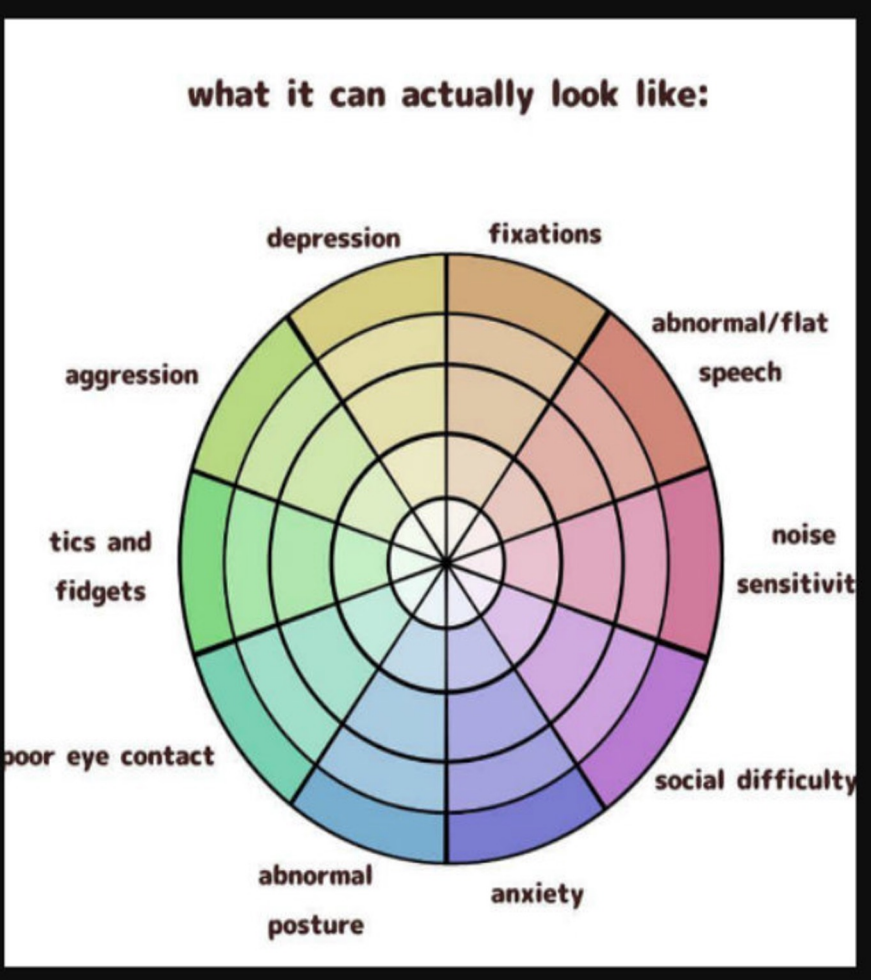
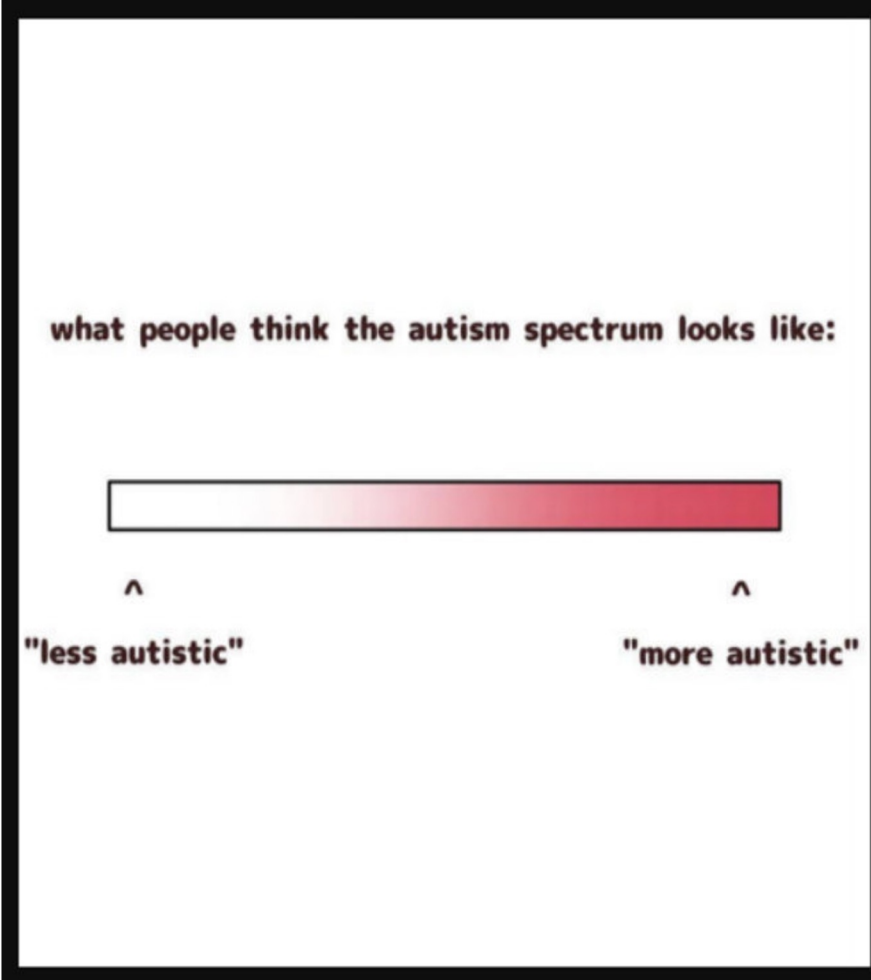
## Affected senses include:

**Auditory (Hearing)**  
**Tactile (Touch)**  
**Vestibular (Balance)**  
**Proprioceptive (Gross motor)**

**Olfactory (Smell)**  
**Visual (Seeing)**  
**Gustatory (Taste)**



# What it means to be on the Autism "Spectrum"



It is NOT a Likert scale from 1-5



# Unexpected Behaviors

May Result From Autistic Characteristics

- Difference between **Intent** and **Impact**
- Will vary from student to student
- Will vary between settings, time of day, etc. with certain students
- Examples:
  - Blurting out
  - Difficulty with self-regulation (meltdowns)
  - Difficulty relating to peers
  - Others??

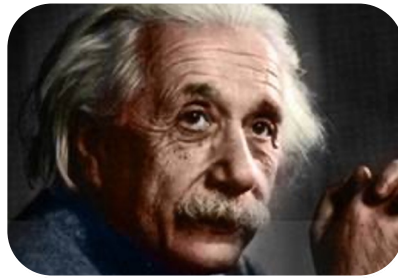
# Strengths Associated With Being Autistic

- Able to see and remember details
- Can stay focused on something you enjoy for a long time
- Solve problems in a new and creative way
- People with ASD can be REALLY good at things they enjoy
- Honest and direct communicators
- Passionate interests
- Curious
- Friends with ASD are loyal and interesting!





Temple Grandin



Albert Einstein



Breanna Clark



Heather Kuzinich



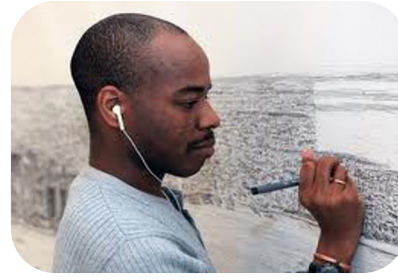
David Byrne



Satoshi Tajiri



Susan Boyle



Stephen Wiltshire



Elon Musk



Greta Thunberg

# Famous Autistics



Shigeru Miyamoto



Daryl Hannah

# In their own words....

- Messages from [#ActualAutistics](#), young adults living and working in Arlington
  - Sarah
  - Justin
  - Ariel

# What You Should Know About Autism

## by Sarah Cornett

- Every person with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is completely different.

*It is like no snowflake that falls from the sky is the same.*

- Most people with Autism like to hyper-focus on a certain topic, interest, activity, and/or a hobby.

*Example: My hyper-focus is looking at Google Maps.*

*Sometimes a hyper-focus can also be a superpower!*

- Boys are diagnosed with autism earlier than girls are, and ASD is 4 times more likely to be diagnosed in boys than girls.

*Even though a pediatric neurologist said I was on the autism spectrum, it still took several years after his diagnosis for me to get ASD support in elementary school, because I wasn't typical (boy-model) autistic.*



# Super-focus can be a Superpower but Anxiety can be our Kryptonite

Anxiety can make me shy, defensive and stubborn. It is one of the biggest obstacles I deal with when I am trying to do new things or face challenges. I take medication, but I am also learning coping skills to work through my anxiety.





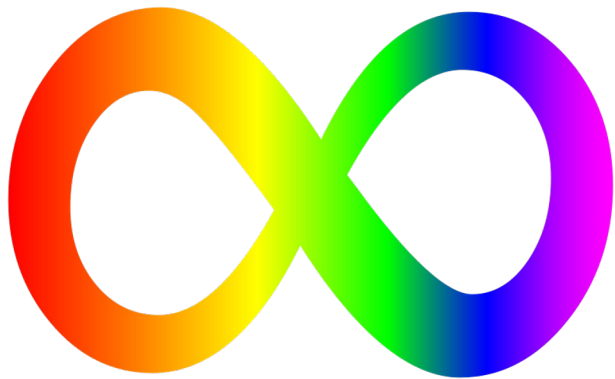
# Sarah Cornett

- Sarah is a graduate of Wakefield High School and the PEP program
- She helped start the Order of Self-Determination and is now a volunteer mentor
- She is a college student at Northern Virginia Community College
- She belongs to Cool Aspies
- She works for the Arc of Northern Virginia
- She is an award-winning artist



# Having Autism

By Justin Boatner



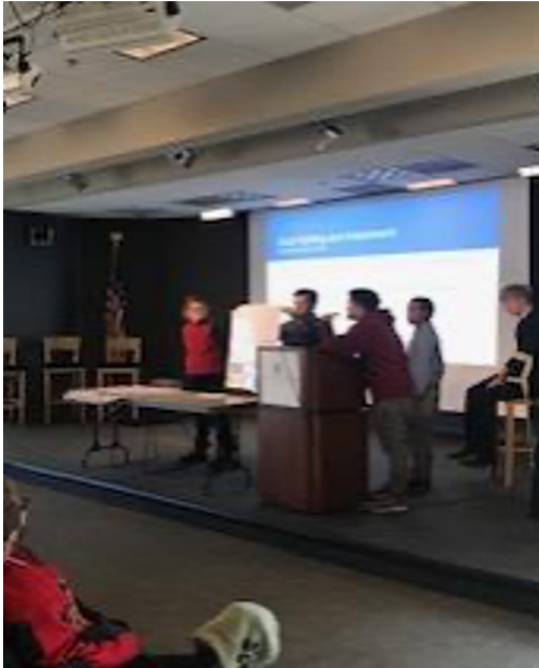
# Do I need to be afraid of their diagnosis?

## Do not be afraid of their diagnosis!

Do not be afraid of what your child goes through with autism. Every second is a new positive experience with autism. Give them support. Give them kindness. Show them what the world is and learn what the lens are like for people with autism. We view things in a different lens than neurotypical people.



# About Justin



- Justin is a graduate of Wakefield High School and the PEP program.
- He is a disability rights activist and a founding member of the *Order of Self-Determination*
- He is an accomplished chef
- He is board member of *Inclusive Pathways to Success*
- He is active with *Athletes without Limits*
- He writes a blog called *Autism with a Voice*



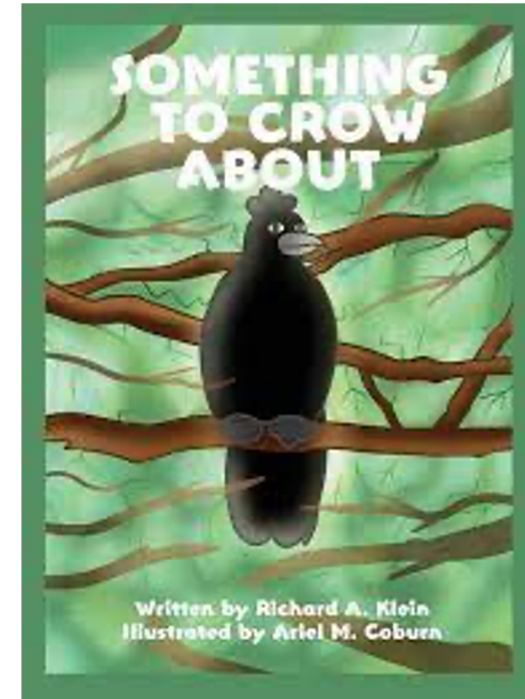
# Everything you need to know about autism

By Ariel Coburn



# Employment, Higher Education, Relationships, & Other Forms of "Adulthood"

- What I love most about my job at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program is that as an autistic adult, I get to work with kids I can identify with even if they require more support than I do. Throughout my time here, I have learned how diverse the autism spectrum is and how no two autistic children are alike, with varying strengths and weaknesses.
- At George Mason University, I am working on an individualized study degree, so I can take whatever classes I choose and are relevant to my career path. One day, I want to be an art therapist in a special education setting so I can combine my two greatest passions; art and helping people.
- Relationship-wise, love happens when you least expect it, and you don't always have to travel far and wide to find the right person.







# Strategies for Success

# Clear Expectations

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- Use pictures and writing, not just words
- Explain what materials are needed, and when the project is finished
- Some things might have to be repeated
- Avoid idioms, sarcasm, and metaphors
- Avoid using ambiguous phrases (“put that away”)



# Visual Supports



- Picture Communication Symbols
- Visual Schedule
- Photographs and Videos
- Highlighters
- Reading Windows
- Illustrations
- Stickers

# More Examples of Visual Supports

The **ZONES** of Regulation®

<b>BLUE ZONE</b> Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	<b>GREEN ZONE</b> Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	<b>YELLOW ZONE</b> Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	<b>RED ZONE</b> Mad/Angry Mean Terrified Yelling/Hitting Out of Control

**Calm Down Choices**

- Belly Breathing
- Read a Book
- Draw a Picture
- Count to Ten
- Get a Drink
- Take a Walk
- Listen to Music

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Reinforcer Menu

ball 	candy 	puzzle 	book 
dolls 	video game system 	computer 	music 
crayons 	iPad 	cookie 	bubbles 
chips 	board games 	trampoline 	drinks 





# Visual Schedules

- Daily or for an activity
- Include items needed for class
- Color-coding may help
- Visual (photos, icons, maps)



## Megan's Daily Schedule



Monday

arrival

circle

language Art

snack

PE

lunch

recess

math

Social Studies

dismissal



Mrs. Jones' Math Class

I Need:

- green textbook
- green notebook
- green pencil case
- calculator

Routine:

- go to seat
- put homework in green basket
- get assignment
- copy notes
- listen to teacher
- raise hand to answer question

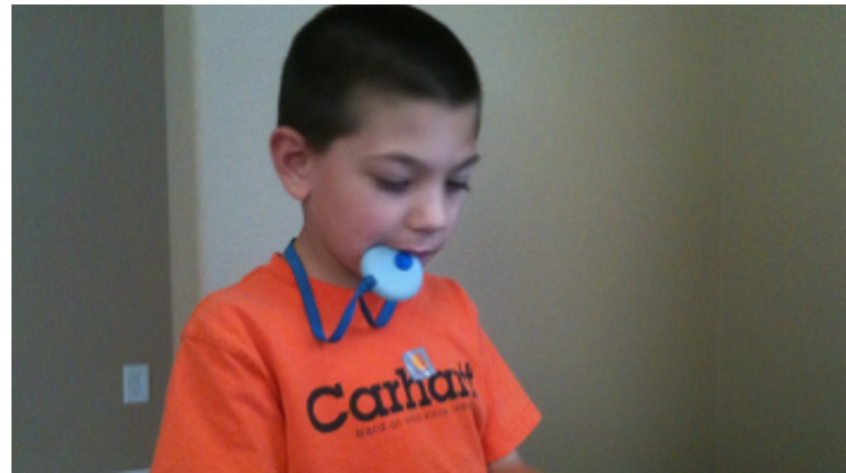
math	geography	science
pencil <input type="checkbox"/>	pencil <input type="checkbox"/>	pen <input type="checkbox"/>
textbook <input type="checkbox"/>	textbook <input type="checkbox"/>	textbook <input type="checkbox"/>
paper <input type="checkbox"/>	atlas <input type="checkbox"/>	paper <input type="checkbox"/>
calculator <input type="checkbox"/>	binder <input type="checkbox"/>	folders <input type="checkbox"/>
ruler <input type="checkbox"/>	ruler <input type="checkbox"/>	laptop <input type="checkbox"/>
markers <input type="checkbox"/>	markers <input type="checkbox"/>	headphones <input type="checkbox"/>

**To Do** **Done**

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

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# Sensory Supports



- Squeezy balls and hand fidgets
- Alternative seating
- Backpacks, headbands, weighted blankets
- Sunglasses or soft lights
- Breaks to walk and move
- Headphones
- Chewy objects or gum
- Music
- Aromatherapy

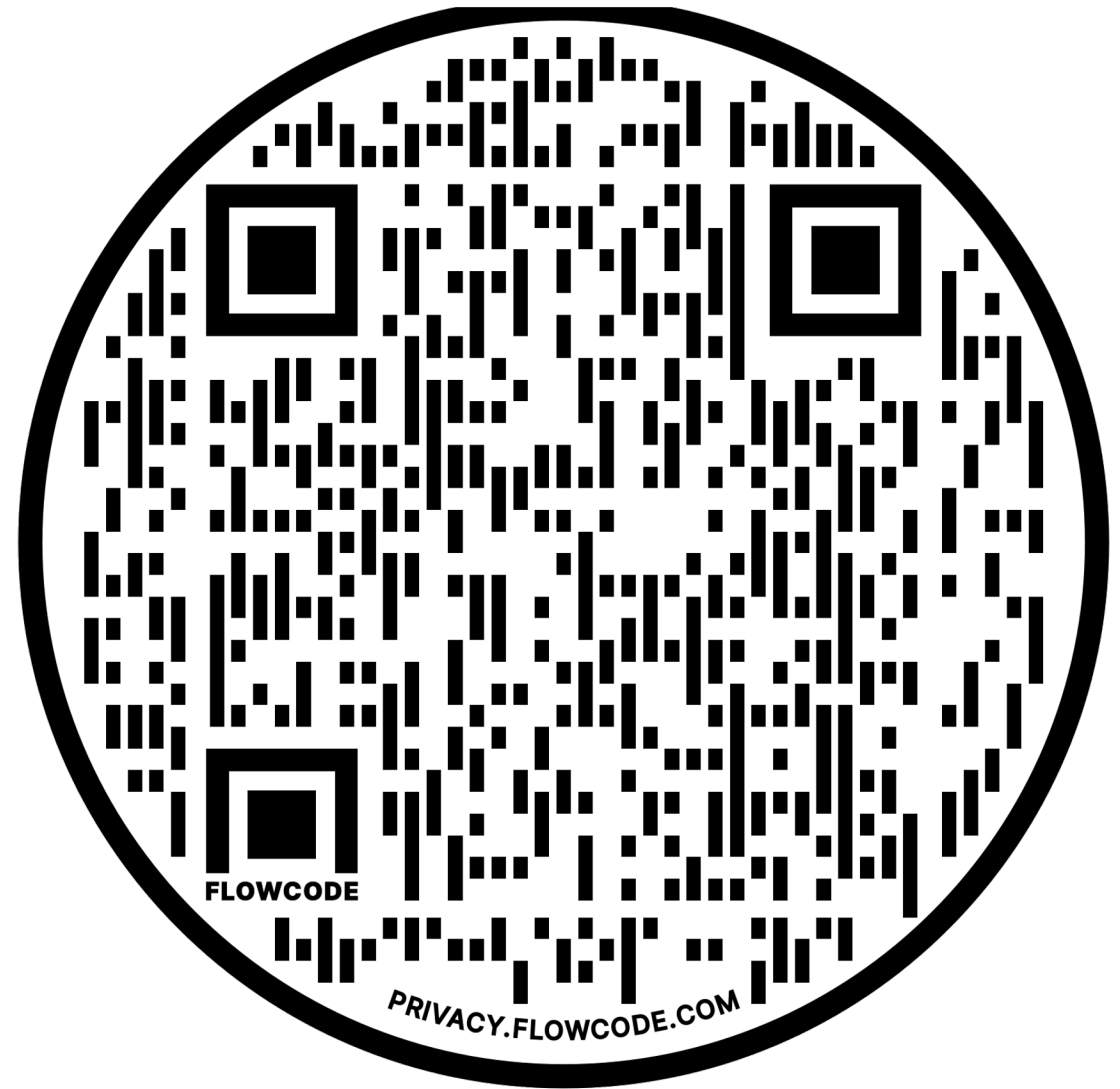


# Additional Evidence-Based Strategies Include:

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- Applied Behavioral Analysis
- Task-Analysis
- Social Narratives
- Token Economies
- Providing Choices
- Naturalistic Interventions
- Modeling
- Structured Play Groups

<https://vcuautismcenter.org/resources/EBP.cfm>



# Local Resources

- **Parents of Autistic Children** <http://www.poac-nova.org/>
- **Virginia Autism Resource Center** [www.varc.org](http://www.varc.org)
- **Commonwealth Autism Services** [www.autismva.org](http://www.autismva.org)
- **Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC)** [www.peatc.org](http://www.peatc.org)
- **The ARC of Northern Virginia** <http://thearcofnova.org>
- **VCU Autism Center of Excellence (ACE)** <http://www.vcuautismcenter.org/>

# Resources: General Information

<b>American Autism Association</b>	<a href="https://www.myautism.org/">https://www.myautism.org/</a>
<b>Autistic Self-Advocacy Network</b>	<a href="http://autisticadvocacy.org/">http://autisticadvocacy.org/</a>
<b>National Professional Development Center on Autism</b>	<a href="http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu">autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu</a>
<b>Organization for Autism Research</b>	<a href="http://www.researchautism.org/">http://www.researchautism.org/</a>
<b>Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence</b>	<a href="http://www.ocali.org/">http://www.ocali.org/</a>
<b>Autism Speaks</b>	<a href="http://www.autismspeaks.org/">www.autismspeaks.org/</a>
<b>Autism Society of America</b>	<a href="http://www.autism-society.org/">http://www.autism-society.org/</a>

# Questions?

