

DSM 5 Autism Spectrum Disorder Levels of Support: Using the Autism Conversations Descriptive Triangle to Individualize the Diagnosis

	Level 1: Requiring Support	Level 2: Requiring Substantial Support	Level 3: Requiring Very Substantial Support
<p>DSM 5 Criteria A</p> <p>Social Communication and Language:</p> <p>(Social Communication)</p>	<p>Language skills well developed Usually has developed one or more areas of passionate interest Conversation with others focuses on conveying facts and details about preferred topics “Sensory-driven” speech (the person appears to repeat details for his or her benefit rather than sharing information for social interaction) Ability to organize and use language diminishes when responding to others in social situations, and when discussing emotions Some demonstrated use of non-verbal communication functions but inconsistent in the ability to interpret and use common cues</p>	<p>Language skills typically less developed than in children at Level 1 Use of language is prompt-dependent on adults May have developed one or more areas of passionate interest but has difficulty communicating details with others May initiate conversation but notable difficulties with reciprocal conversation Inflexible and limited in ability to participate in an extended conversation Use of repetitive questions and phrases is commonly seen Use of nonverbal communication cues inconsistent and infrequent</p>	<p>May be functionally nonverbal Rarely uses nonverbal communication functions (eye gaze, gestures, joint attention) When verbal skills are present: Vocabulary is organized around labeling Use of language is rote and self-directed with frequent use of scripted language Comments rarely directed toward a listener Expressive language more developed than receptive language in everyday situations Receptive language most organized when verbal requests are paired with visual contextual cues</p>
<p>DSM 5 Criteria A</p> <p>Social Interaction and Emotional Pattern of Differences:</p> <p>(Social Communication)</p>	<p>Usually initiates and extends social exchanges but does so on his or her own agenda Most comfortable with adults or younger children even though a desire for peer relationships is generally present Peer relationships are often a source of anxiety and are experienced as perplexing May have difficulty regulating emotional states as evidenced by inflexibility, explosive outbursts, behavior escalation</p>	<p>Prompt-dependent on adults to structure social exchanges and may be able to initiate and extend as long as structure is present Lacks flexibility in play routines May become anxious and agitated during loosely structured language and social interactions Access to language significantly decreases as emotional distress increases</p>	<p>Becomes anxious with social exchanges and does not generally initiate or sustain social interactions Tends to remove self from social exchanges Most comfortable with others when sharing sensory interests and limited language is used Easily distressed by unexpected changes in routine Responds best when distressed when language use is limited and visual prompts are provided</p>
<p>DSM 5 Criteria B</p> <p>Sensory Use and Interests:</p> <p>(Restricted Interests and Repetitive Behaviors)</p>	<p>Has developed one or more areas of passionate interests that may be age-appropriate in content but unusual in the individual’s focus and intense interest “Sensory-driven” quality to their narrative when sharing information with others about preferred topic Sensory triggers (noises, textures, changes in routine, perceived “unfairness”) lead to decrease in access to language and the individual reverts to the use of inflexible, immature, or unusual behaviors Unusual body movements are subtle but repetitive</p>	<p>Displays some drive to establish sensory-driven play but can be redirected by adults During social play, tends to create rigid and inflexible play routines Infrequent display of unusual body movements and mannerisms may be noted during times of stress or during solitary play times</p>	<p>Tends to focus intently on the sensory aspects of toys and materials Seeks out manipulative materials with visual and tactile features Creates repetitive sensory routines as a means to self-regulate anxiety Frequently displays distinctive unusual body movements and mannerisms</p>