



Understanding Autism: The Search for Answers

Scientific American Editors

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Understanding Autism: The Search for Answers by the Editors of Scientific American

The term "autism" first appeared in the early 1900s and comes from the Greek word "autos," meaning self, used to describe conditions of social withdrawal – or the isolated self. Today, autism is one of three diagnoses that the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) includes in autism spectrum disorder (ASD). While our understanding of this condition has grown exponentially, research has been fraught with controversy. Autism appears to be on the rise, depending on how you define it, and its causes more complex than imagined. In this eBook, *Understanding Autism: The Search for Answers*, Scientific American's editors have gathered the most current information on autism, including how it's diagnosed, risk factors, treatments and therapies. Section 1 begins with the symptoms, or traits, of ASD, which include three main disabilities: lack of social skills, lack of communication skills, and repetitive behaviors. Also in this section, "The Hidden Potential of Autistic Kids" discusses the flip side of the equation – instead of focusing on the condition's limitations, what unique capabilities might people possess – a thread that continues in the remarkable stories of Section 2, "Autistic Savants. Subsequent sections examine the complicated genetic and environmental causes, the nature of the autism "epidemic" as well as the most current therapies. Changes to the diagnostic criteria in the DSM-5 caused understandable concern and are reviewed in two important stories by Ferris Jabr. Finally, in discussing available therapies, two companion pieces by Nancy Shute take us on a journey through the minds of parents, many of whom are desperate to help their autistic kids lead easier, productive and more fulfilling lives. While science rushes to offer better options, this eBook gives a synopsis of the state of the union - what we know and what we don't know about this challenging condition.

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Luis Garcia:

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Carlo Young:

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Samuel Hamby:

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Brenda Moulton:

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