



Autism Education Series: Understanding Autism

What is Autism?

- Autism spectrum disorder involves differences in how the brain develops. It is a life-long neurodevelopmental condition.
- Autism spectrum disorder is diagnosed by looking at behaviour. There are no physical or medical tests that can show if someone has autism.
- The signs of autism are sometimes seen in toddlers but may not become clear until the preschool years, or even later in life.
- Autism affects how a person interacts and communicates with others, thinks, and behaves.
- The differences in autism vary between people. Differences may also vary within a person. For example, one child may have severe difficulty with language, but milder social challenges. For another child, the opposite might be true.
- The term “Autism Spectrum Disorder” captures this range of differences, which is why it is called a spectrum.

After a Diagnosis of Autism

- It is normal to feel many emotions.
- You may feel:
 - Overwhelmed with the journey ahead, sadness, or fear
 - Relief for the explanation of signs you were observing



Early Intervention

Research shows that early intervention leads to positive outcomes later in life for people with autism.

Supports for children with autism should include:

- A focus on individual strengths and abilities of the child and family
- Availability in different settings like home and preschool
- Bring together different supports that promote independence, skill development, community involvement
- Involve family and caregivers