

Autism

Autism is considered by the National Institute of Mental Health to be a brain disorder that typically affects a person's ability to communicate, form relationships and respond appropriately to the environment. Some people with autism are relatively high functioning with normal patterns of speech and intelligence. Others are considered developmentally delayed, mute, or they have serious language delays.

Over half a million people in the U.S. are believed to have Autism or a related disorder, making it one of the most common developmental disabilities. Yet it remains largely misunderstood.

Signs & Symptoms

Individuals experiencing Autism may exhibit some or all of the following symptoms:

- Avoidance of eye-to-eye contact
- An inability to understand social and nonverbal cues
- Communication problems, including delayed or absence of speech
- Odd patterns of communication
- Inability to use imagination in play
- Restricted, repetitive or ritualistic behaviours, interests and activities
- Patterns of self-stimulation or reassurance, such as head banging, arm pinching or hand flapping

Therapeutic Approach

The key to treating autism is early evaluation. Indeed, some researchers believe several signs of oncoming problems can be detected in infancy.

In addition to conventional measures - which may include medication and behavioural therapy - modalities such as CranioSacral Therapy can play an important role in a comprehensive therapeutic approach. Dr. John E. Ulfendoff, developer of CranioSacral Therapy, investigated its effects on autistic children in Michigan in the 1970s. He spent approximately six months each year for three years searching for etiologic factors in autistic behaviour. His research included physical examinations, hair analysis, blood electrophoretic studies and craniosacral system evaluations.

His studies concluded that CranioSacral Therapy was beneficial in treating Autism. When it was used to restore the mobility of the craniosacral system, typically autistic behaviours - including head banging, thumb sucking, toe walking and self-mutilation - were either alleviated or diminished. In 2000, Dr. Ulfendoff presented his findings before a U.S. Government Reform Committee meeting on Autism.