

Reiki and Autism Spectrum Disorders



Autism Spectrum Disorder is on the Rise

In 2023, according to the CDC, about 1 in 36 children are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ASD has been rising steadily over the years, up from 1 in 69 children in 2012 and 1 in 150 children in 2000. ASD affects all races, ethnicities and socioeconomic groups.

Can Reiki Help?

Reiki is an energetic healing technique of Japanese origin utilized by people all over the world for wellness and for stress reduction when facing a variety of different issues, from everyday stress to assisting with comfort for illnesses. Some people have also explored the idea of using Reiki to help people with autism spectrum disorders. Very little research exists on the use of Reiki for autism spectrum disorders specifically, but more general studies have indicated that Reiki may potentially be effective for this purpose.

Autism Spectrum Disorders Defined

We at IARP prefer to term it simply **autism spectrum** but it is scientifically known as ASD so we will use that term for this article. Autism Spectrum Disorders, or ASD, are a group of disorders that affect an individual's ability to function "normally" in social settings (whatever "normal" is termed to be.). These disorders usually appear in the first two years of life.

However, different is not wrong, it is just life from another perspective. We are all beautiful in our own unique ways.

Some of the symptoms of autism spectrum disorders include:

- Unwillingness to make or maintain eye contact.
- Highly focused interests in specific topics or objects.
- Repetitive behaviors.
- Problems with two-way conversation.
- Unusual responses to others' emotions or affection.

- Unusual attachment to routines or specific settings.
- Repeating words or phrases.
- Difficulty understanding others' points of view.
- Unusual tone of voice.

Most affected people are diagnosed with ASD during their childhood and will continue to struggle with the disorder throughout their lives. The severity of ASD varies considerably. While some people have only a mild version of the disorder and are able to live a full, productive life as an adult, others are completely disabled and may require full-time care and supervision.

Autism spectrum disorders are extremely difficult to treat, and no one full cure has been found as of yet. When medications are prescribed to individuals with ASD, they are typically aimed at treating one or more of the symptoms of the disorder. Medications that may be prescribed include antidepressants, ADHD medications, and drugs designed to control irritability or aggression. People with ASD may also participate in special therapeutic or educational programs intended to help them cope with their disorder and live as normally as possible.

Unfortunately, some of the medications prescribed to people with ASD may cause other side effects. In addition, many people with ASD may continue to experience problems even with treatment. For this reason, it is common for ASD sufferers and/or their parents to explore integrative treatment options and therapies to use as a complement to their traditional care. One of these is Reiki.

Reiki and Autism

How Can Reiki Help with ASD?

Studies and anecdotal reports indicate that Reiki may potentially provide a number of different benefits to people who participate in sessions on a regular basis.

Some of the benefits that may be helpful for people with ASD may include:

A chance to connect with another person in a different way.

One of the hallmarks of ASD is difficulty with social interaction. Children and adults with ASD may find it difficult to make a connection with the people around them, whether they are family members or classmates. During Reiki sessions, an individual with ASD will have the chance to connect with his or her practitioner in a unique way.

Reduced stress and anxiety.

People with ASD are often fidgety and hyperactive. Studies have shown that exposure to Reiki may help reduce feelings of stress and anxiety, which may, in turn, have a calming effect on individuals with ASD.

Healthier sleep patterns.

ASD can disturb sleep patterns significantly, which leads to exacerbated symptoms and more stress. Reiki may help in part to improve these sleep patterns, allowing the client to get a more restful, restorative sleep.

More control over the disorder.

The parents of children with ASD, as well as the children themselves, often feel that they are at the mercy of a

disorder they cannot control. Reiki sessions allow both children and their caregivers to be proactive about dealing with symptoms and improving their quality of life.

Challenges

Although some studies and reports indicate that Reiki may be helpful for people with ASD, performing Reiki on a client with this condition can be challenging for the practitioner. Especially in the case of young children, ASD makes it difficult to remain still and calm for extended periods of time. Because Reiki sessions require the client to be still, this can present a problem. Some parents of children with ASD have found that Reiki sessions are more successful when the child is drowsy or asleep. Other parents report that beginning with a shorter Reiki session and gradually working up to a longer one is effective for children with ASD. Make sure that your practitioner is aware of the diagnosis and the potential challenges before the first session so that he or she can prepare properly. A short initial 15 to 30-minute session may be appropriate.

Reiki for Caregivers

The effects of Autism Spectrum Disorders aren't restricted to the person with the diagnosis. Parents and other caregivers of children with ASD also deal with significant worry, fatigue, and emotional turmoil as they attempt to care for the affected individual. In many cases, these caregivers may even experience physical problems as a result of the ongoing stress. Reiki may help caregivers to deal with some of these issues so that they can provide better care for their child. Specifically, caregivers who participate in Reiki sessions may benefit from lower stress levels, less anxiety, and better quality of sleep. Participating in Reiki sessions may also help the caregiver to improve his or her understanding of the purpose of these sessions, the procedure used, and the nature of the results.

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