

**QUESTION - What symptoms or behaviors indicate that someone with (Social Anxiety Disorder) SAD and/or AvPD (Avoidant Personality Disorder) may also have underlying ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder)?**

**ANSWER FROM GOOGLE BAIRD -**

Social anxiety disorder (SAD) and avoidant personality disorder (AvPD) share some overlapping symptoms with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), making it challenging to distinguish between the three. However, there are some key signs that may indicate that someone with SAD or AvPD also has ASD.

1. Difficulty understanding and responding to things unseen, to whatever is not factual or logical, e.g. emotions: Individuals with ASD may have difficulty recognizing and understanding the emotions of others, as well as expressing their own emotions; and they may interpret language literally and struggle with sarcasm, metaphors, and figurative language.
2. Problems with nonverbal communication: Individuals with ASD may have difficulty understanding and using nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. This can lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings in social interactions.
3. Difficulty with turn-taking and reciprocity in conversations: Individuals with ASD may struggle to engage in back-and-forth conversations, dominate conversations, or have difficulty understanding the concept of turn-taking.
4. Difficulty with understanding and responding to social expectations: Individuals with ASD may have difficulty understanding social norms and expectations, leading to awkward or inappropriate behavior.
5. Preference for routines and predictability: Individuals with ASD may thrive in structured environments with predictable routines and have difficulty adapting to changes in routine or unexpected events to which they may respond with angry outbursts or irritability.
6. Difficulty with executive functioning: Individuals with ASD may not only have difficulty being flexible with change but also with thinking flexibly (e.g. dealing with nuanced concepts vs. technical data & logic); and they may have difficulty with planning and organizing projects and managing their time.
7. Sensory sensitivities: Individuals with ASD may be hypersensitive to certain sounds, lights, textures, or tastes, making social situations overwhelming.

It is important to note that only some individuals with SAD or AvPD will have underlying ASD, and these signs may also be present in individuals with other mental health conditions or developmental disorders.