

Communication

Overload

Processing

Sensory

Communication- Persons with ASD experience difficulty effectively communicating and interacting with others. These challenges are especially evident when the person is under stress, or in crisis. They may be non-verbal, or display “Echolalia”, where their use of language is repetitive. It helps to know how the person you are interacting with communicates. They may make use of an augmented communication device, sign language, or they may be accompanied by someone who is able to communicate with them.

Overload- Persons with ASD can easily become “overloaded” when they are in crisis mode- if they become frustrated by their inability to effectively communicate with you; if they experience more sensory input than they can tolerate, or if they are unable to process information, questions or commands. A person with ASD in overload may shut down, flee, or may meltdown and become combative. It is imperative that officers have the tools to prevent, recognize and respond to potential overload.

Processing- Persons with ASD are not typically able to process information, questions or commands at the same rate as their neuro typical peers. Brain imaging studies have revealed that messages coming into the brain take longer, therefore, officers need to remember that a delay in response is more likely due to the processing challenges, rather than a purposeful refusal or inability to answer their questions, or respond to their commands.

Sensory- Persons with ASD frequently underreact, or overreact, to sensory stimuli. It could be touch, sounds, certain tastes and textures, and is highly dependent on the individual. Officers should always be aware of their surroundings, and attempt as best they can to minimize sensory stimuli.