

DSM-5	Red Flags	Characteristics	Parent Concerns
Social communication and Social Interaction	Hard to get eye contact Rarely shares enjoyment with you Rarely shares interests with you Rarely respond to name and/or social bids for attention Stronger interest in objects vs. people	Not interested to be nearby, look at your face, and or sustain looking at your eyes. A child might share a gaze briefly, look past you or turn their head away. Not smiling, laughing, and/or looking to you to share enjoyment when you are available. Enjoying something but not seeking you out to join them. Not showing facial expressions that let you know they are happy. Not wanting to share their interests with you by looking and gesturing. Not making sounds or saying words to get your attention to their interests. Not interested in connecting with people. Not being tuned in and listening for your voice. Not turning and looking at you when you call them by name. Not responding to other attempts to get their attention or notice where you are pointing. Not showing an eagerness to draw your attention to things that interest them by gesturing or showing. Not using objects as a way to get your attention.	"It's hard to get his attention." "It's like they're in their own world." "Everything she does is on her own terms." "It only happens if it's their idea" "He completely ignores his baby sister." "She totally ignores me when I call her name. She chooses not to listen." "Sometimes I wonder if they hear me. It looks like they are looking past me at times."

DSM-5	"Red Flags"	Characteristics	Parent Concerns
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Warren, 2008; Bennie et al., 2019; Baranek, 1999; Clifford, Young, & Williamson, 2007; Osterling and Dawson, 1994; Osterling Dawson, & Munson, 2002

Communication Behaviors	Limited use of gestures (show and point) and or sounds, words	Not using gestures and pointing by 12-14 months. Not using gestures and sounds between 9-16 months to let you know what they are interested in.	"Whatever they need they get things by themselves. They are really independent."
	Little or no imitating people or pretending	Not observing others and copying what they do and say by 13 months. This includes imitating things like drinking from a cup, eating with utensils, or starting to pretend play with toys and objects. Showing a strong preference for using objects during solitary play.	"He likes to take the blocks and put them into piles and doesn't like it when I try to join in or stack them too."
	Difficulty following a gesture and maintaining eye contact	Showing difficulty using gestures such as reaching, raising their arms, giving, waving, clapping, and/or pointing from 9-16 months of age.	"She repeats lines and songs from TV and videos but doesn't use words to ask for things."
	Uses your hand as a tool	Forming unique ways of communicating with you by using your hands. They might pull your hand or push a body part like to get something or get something done without looking at you.	"He can't tell me what he wants. He'll push me around in the kitchen till I figure out what he wants." "They'll take my hand and make it push the buttons to play music again and again."

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Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities	Unusual ways of moving body parts, hands, fingers	Showing an unusual stiffening or spreading of their fingers. Moving their body in postures or movements in unique ways.	"She plays with all of her toys by lining them up."

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	Repeats unusual movements with objects	Repeating a movement with an object like spinning, balancing, rolling, knocking down, lining up, or putting objects into a space. Engaging in repetitive actions that seem unusual for their age.	"He'll dump out all his blocks and then pile them back in his truck over and over."
	Develops rituals and gets upset with change	Children learn their daily routines and adjust to changes that come up. Showing an unwillingness or difficulty with changes to a routine or getting upset with the changes.	"When I turn off the TV, I know there's going to be meltdown and battle for naptime."
	Excessive interest in particular objects or activities	Not shifting their attention between people and objects for social interactions. Showing an excessive interest in particular objects and/or activities like they are stuck or overly focused.	"He studies things very carefully, he's really focused on the letters in his books."
	Extremely focused on or attached to unusual objects	Appearing focused or attached to objects that are unusual for their age such as pieces of fabric, utensils, a strand of beads, rocks, sticks, a tiny toy, running water, gadgets, or appliances. An interest in things they can take apart and put back together.	"Whenever I try to vacuum, she covers her ears and screams so I avoid doing it."
	Unusual reaction to sounds, sights, or textures	Showing a strong reaction, sensitivity to certain sounds, sights, smells, movements, and/or textures. They might get overly excited or cover their ears in response to a noise. You might notice squinting or clapping to certain lights, gagging with certain food textures, or showing a strong dislike with a clothing item or substances on their hands. Showing elevated levels of anxiety, happiness, depression, or excitement or responding to a situation by over- or under-reacting.	"They love water and will turn the sink on and watch the water go down the drain until stop them."
	Strong interests in unusual sensory experiences		
	A child might express challenges with executive function and self-regulation	Demonstrating difficulty sequencing the order of tasks, like the steps of getting dressed or trying to climb the steps of a slide. Having trouble problem-solving or seeing the possibility of more than one solution to a problem.	"They are afraid of the shower and runs away and hides when it's time to bathe."