



9270 Siegen Lane, Ste 501, Baton Rouge, LA 70810  
225-767-5032 Office 888-531-1703 Fax  
225-802-9430 Vicky 225-302-8228 Stacy  
[www.dtsbr.com](http://www.dtsbr.com)

## What is Autism from a Core Deficit Perspective

It seems like a basic question, but when asked “what is autism?” people have a difficult time coming up with an answer. The reason may be simply because autism is a “spectrum” disorder. It impacts people in different degrees and in different ways. I’ve heard it said that “you meet one person with autism, and that is exactly what you have met, ONE person.” All people are unique, and certainly this stands true for people who have autism. However, there are commonalities. If there were not, how could we make a diagnosis? One way to clarify the commonalities among people impacted by autism is to consider it from a core deficit perspective.

Core Deficits are the common areas of impairment in all those who have the diagnosis. For example, people with Type 1 diabetes do not produce insulin. In the case of autism, the growth and development of the brain is impaired. The human brain develops neural pathways and collaborations through experiences, relationships and thinking. In the brain impacted by autism, the brain does not develop in the same dynamic manner. The lack of neural connectivity in the brain causes impairment in the areas of information processing and motivation.

Symptoms of autism are different than the underlying core deficits. Symptoms are a sign or indication that the core deficit is present. For example, a symptom of Type 1 diabetes is excessive thirst. Some symptoms of autism include repetitive behavior, difficulty with social skills, unusual communication, and differences in behavior. Treating the symptoms of the disease is not the same thing as treating the core deficits. We would not treat diabetes by giving the person a glass of water. Likewise, treating autism through social skills training, behavioral training and speech therapy, while helpful are unlikely to address the underlying core deficits of autism. Ironically, the standard of treatment in autism is to treat symptoms.

Finally, co-occurring conditions are those conditions which can happen simultaneously with any given disorder. People who are vulnerable to one disorder, unfortunately are often more likely to be impacted by a co-occurring disorder along with it. Type 1 diabetics are high risk for having thyroid issues. People with autism are high risk for having other disorders, such as verbal apraxia, sensory integration disorder, anxiety, nutritional allergies and/or deficits, sleep disorder, behavior disorder and learning disabilities. Treating the co-occurring condition is different than treating the core deficit. One would not expect to see improvement in type 1 diabetes by treating a thyroid issue. Likewise, one may see improvements in speech growth via speech therapy, but that is not going to impact the underlying core deficits of autism. **At Dynamic Therapy Specialists we are interested in treating the Core Deficits of autism.**