


# Catatonia: Shutdown and Breakdown in Autism Spectrum Disorder

Do sensory issues look different in Teens and Adults?

Teens and adults with sensory issues need a chance at proper intervention.

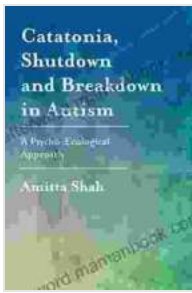


INTEGRATED Learning Solutions

## Signs & Symptoms

Children	Teens/Adults
Resistance or sensitivity to textures in items like food, clothing, or paper.	Bothered by clothes. Often wears loose or more comfortable clothing.
Frustration with busy, noisy classrooms or parties.	Either dislikes touching or struggles to respect others personal boundaries.
Sensitive to smells. Often points out something smells bad when no one else can smell anything.	"Still" a picky eater.
Behavioral outbursts and meltdowns.	Dislikes loud crowded environments.
	Overreacts to sudden loud noises like vacuums and sirens.

Catatonia is a complex neuropsychiatric syndrome characterized by a range of motor and behavioral abnormalities, including:



## Catatonia, Shutdown and Breakdown in Autism: A Psycho-Ecological Approach by Maureen Healy

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 163 pages



\* Decreased or absent movement (catatonic stupor) \* Unusual body postures (catatonic rigidity) \* Waxy flexibility (maintaining a posture imposed by others) \* Mutism (not speaking) \* Negativism (resisting instructions or requests) \* Echoing (repeating words or phrases) \* Stereotypies (repetitive movements)

Catatonia can occur in various psychiatric disorders, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In the context of ASD, catatonia often manifests as a sudden and significant change in behavior, marked by social withdrawal, decreased communication, and motor abnormalities.

### **Epidemiology and Prevalence**

The prevalence of catatonia in ASD is estimated to be around 10-20%. It typically occurs in children and adolescents, with a mean age of onset around 12 years. Catatonia in ASD is more common in males than females.

### **Symptoms of Catatonia in ASD**

The symptoms of catatonia in ASD can vary widely, depending on the severity and duration of the episode. Common symptoms include:

\* **Motor Symptoms:** \* Decreased or absent movement \* Unusual body postures \* Waxy flexibility \* Stereotypies \* **Behavioral Symptoms:** \* Mutism \* Negativism \* Echoing \* Social withdrawal \* Decreased communication \* **Other Symptoms:** \* Irritability \* Anxiety \* Aggression \* Self-injury

### **Causes of Catatonia in ASD**

The exact cause of catatonia in ASD is unknown. However, several factors are believed to contribute, including:

\* **Neurological Abnormalities:** Dysregulation in certain neurotransmitter systems, particularly dopamine and serotonin, is thought to play a role. \* **Genetic Factors:** Genetic mutations associated with ASD may increase the risk of developing catatonia. \* **Environmental Factors:** Stressful life events, such as a change in routine or a traumatic experience, can trigger catatonic episodes in individuals with ASD.

### **Diagnosis of Catatonia in ASD**

Diagnosing catatonia in ASD can be challenging, as the symptoms overlap with those of other neurological and psychiatric conditions. A comprehensive clinical evaluation is essential, including:

\* Physical examination \* Neurological examination \* Psychiatric history and assessment \* Observation of behavior

The Bush-Francis Catatonia Rating Scale is a standardized tool commonly used to assess catatonic symptoms.

## **Treatment of Catatonia in ASD**

Treatment for catatonia in ASD typically involves a combination of medications and behavioral interventions.

\* **Medications:** Antipsychotics, benzodiazepines, and stimulants are commonly used to manage the motor and behavioral symptoms of catatonia. \* **Behavioral Interventions:** Speech therapy, occupational therapy, and social skills training can help improve communication, social skills, and motor functioning. \* **Environmental Modifications:** Providing a safe and predictable environment, reducing stress, and maintaining consistency in routines can help prevent or manage catatonic episodes.

## **Prognosis and Outcomes**

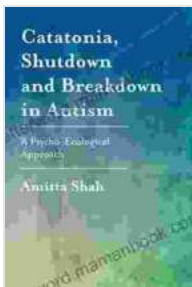
The prognosis for catatonia in ASD varies depending on the severity and duration of the episode. Catatonic episodes typically last from a few weeks to several months. With appropriate treatment, most individuals with ASD experience improvement in symptoms and a return to normal functioning. However, some individuals may experience chronic catatonia or relapse into catatonic episodes.

Catatonia is a complex neuropsychiatric syndrome that can occur in autism spectrum disorder. Characterized by a range of motor and behavioral abnormalities, catatonia can significantly impact an individual's social, emotional, and physical functioning. Accurate diagnosis and prompt treatment are essential to improve outcomes and prevent complications. With a comprehensive approach that includes medications, behavioral

interventions, and environmental modifications, most individuals with ASD can experience significant improvement in their symptoms and quality of life.

## Additional Resources

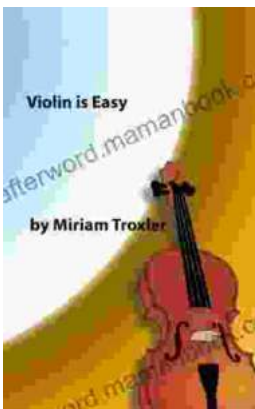
\* National Institute of Mental Health: Catatonia \* Autism Speaks: Catatonia in Autism \* The Bush-Francis Catatonia Rating Scale



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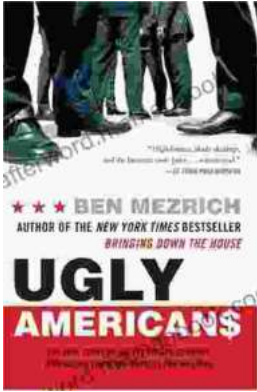
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