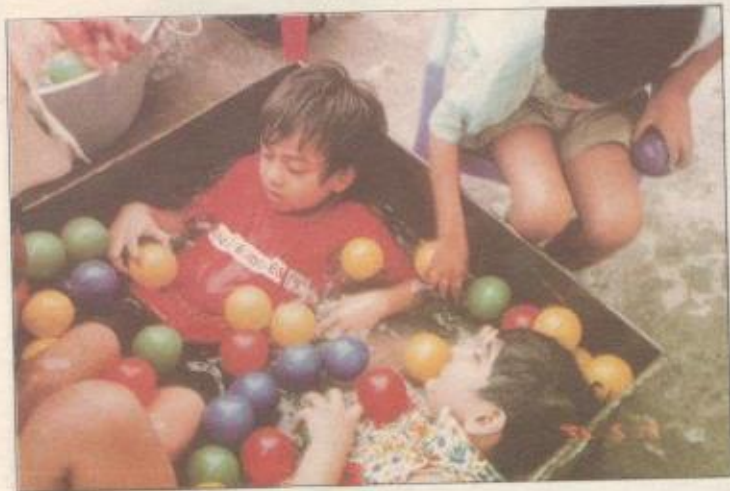


ABC of Autism

Merry Barua, director, Action For Autism, counsels parents on how to deal with these special kids



Vanita Singh

ONE IN EVERY 500 people in India is affected by autism and 80 per cent of the sufferers are males. So what is autism? "It is a developmental disorder that is present from birth. However, it may manifest itself, at the latest, by the age of two-and-a-half years," explains Merry Barua who is the director of a non-governmental organisation Action For Autism.

The NGO trains autistic kids, their parents, teacher and others dealing with the patients affected by the disorder. Besides which, Barua says,

Autism primarily affects areas of communication, social interaction and creates sensory difficulties

the organisation is now concentrating on building 'a national centre for Advocacy, Research and Training' to combat the disease and learn more.

Autism primarily affects areas of communication, social interaction and creates sensory

difficulties. How does one identify an autistic child? "There are no set parameters for identification. However, most autistic children prefer to maintain a distance from the crowd. They live in their own world." insists Barua.

Before addressing an autistic person, "you need to have a clear understanding of the disorder," she adds. The key phrase while dealing with autism is "structured behavioural methods." Join the Autistic person in his activity, show interest in him, Barua advises. However, she points out that one needs to be patient: one should first try to get acquainted with the likes and dislikes of a person and then try to draw him out.

Action For Autism
Call 641-6469/70