

No longer a loner in Delhi

Has your child suddenly become withdrawn and silent? It could be a case of autism. Don't panic. Delhi offers hope to autistic people.



Merry Barua taking notes while dealing with an autistic child at the Action for Autism.

AUTISM IN DELHI

Hrithik Roshan's meek portrayal of an autistic kid in *Koi Mil Gaya* may not

have been the best way to define autism. Albert Einstein was autistic, so is Bill Gates (a milder case though). This is just to bring home the point that autism is neither a disease, nor does it imply mental retardation. It's a deficiency, which can surely be managed, if not cured completely.

With increasing awareness on the subject, parents and doctors are now able to detect autism at an early stage. Kids with autism also need educational strategies that are distinct from children without any developmental disability. They are also different from children with mental retardation, unaccompanied by autism.

Delhi, fortunately, is getting to be one of the most proactive hubs for treating autism. "Delhi is the best place to go for autism

treatment in the whole of South Asia," says Subarno Chakraborty, who has been taking his autistic son to Merry Barua's Action for Autism (AFA) for the last 8-9 years. "It's the lack of services and trained professionals, and the high treatment costs in foreign countries that make people come all the way from the Gulf and Bangladesh to Delhi," says Nidhi Singhal, a psychologist at AFA.

Action for Autism

Merry Barua's AFA at Jasola Vihar is a pioneer in the field. Besides Delhiites, it has patients from outside of India, like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Dubai. AFA has special teacher training and parent-child programmes. They do diagnostics and assessment, as well as networking with other organisations such as Aastha, Muskan and the Spastic Society. They also work in conjunction with schools such as Sanskriti, The Shriram School, Vasant

Training courses for parents

Tanurina Association
The organisation has been working on autism since 1987 and uses a psychologist-cum-counselor, a speech therapist, a psychologist and a music therapist in its programmes. Tanurina students also participate in the Special Olympics. 24, Kirti Vihar, Old Market, Connaught Place.

Clubs

Their forte is Asperger's Syndrome in autistics. People with Asperger's Syndrome are deficit in social interaction and unusual responses to the environment, similar to those in autism. They are affiliated with the SNDT University, Mumbai. E-123 Kalkaji. Call: 26439535.

Valley and St Mary's. AFA has got autism put in the National Trust Act and is now pitching for the Disabilities Act. (DA)

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