

Equating Autism and Technology

To leverage the unique abilities of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, to translate a disability into a special talent had been the main innovation for project Prayas, an initiative of Autism Society of India along with SAP labs India Pvt. Ltd. Bangalore since June 2011.

We have worked in the following major areas-

1. Using Technology as an early intervention tool by developing an on line free portal called www.learn4autism.com
2. Using iPads to enable readiness for learning
3. Using technology to establish complete rehabilitation by exploring and facilitating employment opportunities

At Prayas we have been able to discover the unique potentials of persons with ASD and equated these with Technology.

- **Attention to detail**
- **Photographic memory**
- **Association to events, facts etc**
- **Love to follow order or structure**
- **Learning in real life situation**
- **Repetition-use in bringing perfection**
- **Unerring focus**
- **Pattern recognition**
- **Openness and Truthful**

Equation between Technology and Modalities of learning of persons affected with Autism

- It offers order in learning.
- It follows a medium of visuals, graphics and sounds
- It offers predictability.
- Applications can be used repeatedly to strengthen learning.
- It is a non-judgemental and non-threatening tool, helps in dealing with issues related to Sensory Defensiveness

The following table summarizes our work related to the use of technology and the three elements of our CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME.

Focus Area	Description
<p>Skill Development at an early age</p> <p>Reinforcing Potentials: Through computers</p>	<p><i>It focusses on learn4autism, the free, on line educational resource, its concept, principle and curriculum. The methodology developed makes it simple and easy for an educator or parent to use technology as an early intervention tool. It is an indigenous programme where principles of special education are equated with technology and how steadily one can develop skills related to computer.</i></p>
<p>Early intervention through iPads</p>	<p><i>iPad has been used at Prayas as the early intervention tool where a child is still at the readiness level of 3Rs, communication and learning to use his/her time effectively. Why and how iPad is so effective is the focus.</i></p>
<p>Exploring Employment Opportunities</p> <p>Digitization, Documentation, Testing and Applicability of Multi Media-</p>	<p><i>Digitization and Data Entry are the simpler tasks for any individual; Prayas has augmented its focus to others areas like Testing and Designing.</i></p> <p><i>Testing Software may be a skill with repetition but it is a high end skill, needs precision; five persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders are employed at SAP in this task in a completely OPEN employment situation.</i></p> <p><i>Software testing involves:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i><u>Repetitive</u> test execution</i> • <i><u>Scrutiny</u> of changes in application</i> • <i><u>Repetition</u> of tests in multiple systems, devices etc</i> • <i><u>Transparent</u> reporting of issues/status</i> • <i>High volume <u>manual</u> tests due to limited automation support/benefits</i> <p><i>What becomes a challenge and monotony for regular testers over time can be managed with testers who have autism because they are strong on observation, repetition and openness.</i></p> <p><i>Digital Designing seems to be an avenue to explore the possibilities of employment in terms of OPEN, SUPPORTED, SHELTERED and SELF. Prayas shows those avenues with respect to the applicability by developing skills and being a part of a product.</i></p>

To summarize the effort, we at Prayas have been able to look at Autism Spectrum Disorders as a condition where a lot can happen if we just change our ways of teaching and training.