

# A Timeline Of Autism Classifications

by Embrace ASD



John Langdon Down

1887

**1887:** British physician **John Langdon Down** describes a group of children that didn't show many of the hallmarks of more typical mental retardation, and called it **developmental retardation**.

What Down described is referred to as **low-functioning autism** today.

**1908:** The Swiss psychiatrist & eugenicist **Eugen Bleuler** uses the term **autism** to describe schizophrenic patients who were especially withdrawn into themselves:

“ The **autistic withdrawal** of the patient to his fantasies, against which any influence from outside becomes an intolerable disturbance. ”

**1926:** The Soviet child psychiatrist **Grunya Sukhareva** describes boys with a condition she names **schizoid personality disorder**.

What she described was what ultimately became known as **Asperger syndrome**.



Grunya Sukhareva

1926

1908



Eugen Bleuler

**1943:** Austrian-American child psychiatrist **Leo Kanner** publishes a paper in which he describes 11 children who were highly intelligent, but with:

“ A powerful desire for aloneness, and an obsessive insistence on persistent sameness. ”

**1944:** **Leo Kanner** coins the term **early infantile autism** to refer to the condition he described the year before.



Hans Asperger

1944

1943



Leo Kanner

1952

**1944:** Austrian paediatrician **Hans Asperger** publishes a paper in which he describes 4 boys with special talents, but also with:

“ A lack of empathy, little ability to form friendships, one-sided conversations, intense absorption in a special interest, and clumsy movements. ”

Hans Asperger called the condition **autistic psychopathy**.

‘Psychopathy’ refers to mental disorders (psychopathology); it has nothing to do with what is understood by psychopathy today.

**1952:** In the DSM-I, autism is categorized under the umbrella term **childhood schizophrenia**.

**1981:** English psychiatrist **Lorna Wing** publishes a paper where she introduces the English-speaking medical world to the work of Hans Asperger.

To avoid confusion about the term ‘autistic psychopathy’, she suggests the term **Asperger’s syndrome**.



Lorna Wing

1980

1981

**1980:** The DSM-III lists infantile autism, separated from **childhood schizophrenia**

1987

**1987:** The DSM-III-R replaces ‘infantile autism’ with **autism disorder**.

**1993:** The ICD-10 includes the diagnosis **Asperger syndrome**.

1994

1993

**1993:** The DSM-IV includes the diagnosis **Asperger syndrome**.



Simon Baron-Cohen

2000

**2013:** The DSM-5 adds **autism spectrum disorder** as an umbrella condition encompassing all previous separate autism-related diagnoses.

**2000?:** English clinical psychologist **Simon Baron-Cohen** is one of the researchers who use the term **autism spectrum condition**, and refrain from referring to it as a disorder.

2013

2018

**2018:** New research indicates differences between Asperger syndrome and **high-functioning autism**, thus taking the generalization of ASD into question.