

Autism explained by weak brain links

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Poor communication between brain areas in people with autism may give clues to difficulties they have in relating with other people, a study has found.

As the weak links mean they benefit less from social situations, it may explain why they do not interact well, said the study published in *Neuroimage*, the BBC reported Sunday.

Researchers from the University of London compared brain scans of 16 people with autism spectrum disorders, or ASD, and above-average IQs, as well as 16 volunteers unaffected by ASD.

The two groups were shown four images on a screen -- two of houses and two of faces. They were then asked to concentrate on either the faces or houses and decide if they were identical.

In the control group, paying attention to pictures of faces caused a significant increase in brain activity, but for ASD people it made no impact at all on the brain, explaining their lack of interest in faces.

Both groups had the same reaction to houses.

Research head Dr. Geoff Bird of the UCL Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience said, "It seems that, for people with ASD, paying attention to a face is much harder to do and doesn't have the same effect."

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