Challenging Behaviors and Developmental Disorders

or flight responses in children with autism often result from high anxiety level in combination with sensory processing difficulties. Sleeping irregularities and toileting problems are very common during early childhood in children with all levels of autism severity. Temper tantrums are one of the highest occurring problems in children with various severity levels, particularly during early childhood (Maskey, Warnell, Parr, Le Couteur, & McConachie, 2013). Temper tantrums and aggressive behaviors are particular barriers to social skills development. Aggressive behaviors toward others or self (e.g. self-injury) are troubling and difficult to deal with, and they seem to be more common in children who have minimal expressive language abilities (Maskey et al., 2013). Furthermore, children who have limited language abilities are more likely to be placed in special schools or day programs. Figure 4.1 depicts a range of challenging behaviors in children with autism.

In the following section, I will present two case examples of children with ASD who have two different functioning levels.

Ethan: A Case Example of Level 3 ASD

As an infant, Ethan had difficulties nursing. He had and still has a very irregular sleeping cycle. He wakes up in the middle of the night and does not go to sleep for two or three hours. As an infant, Ethan did not show any interest in playing peek-a-boo or lap games with his parents or grandparents. Ethan’s parents were concerned...