

READING ONE A GENIUS EXPLAINS

VOCABULARY

1 Read the short piece about Daniel Tammet, who is considered by many to be a genius. Being a genius does not mean that all aspects of your life are easy or even that you are good at everything. Daniel is very good at some things but challenged by others. Pay attention to the boldfaced words. Try to understand them from the context.

Autism and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) are names given to groups of complex developmental disorders involving the brain. Some of the symptoms of these disorders are problems with verbal and non-verbal social **interaction**, the display of repetitive behavior, and an inability to be **flexible**. Many people with ASD **compensate** for these problems and are able to be high functioning and lead “normal” lives; others are more **disabled** by the disorder.

ASD is an umbrella term that includes many subcategories. One of these subcategories is autistic **savants**. Psychologists **estimate** that 10 percent of people with ASD have some savant abilities. An autistic savant is a person with an unusual ability, skill, or knowledge that is much more developed than that of an average person. Many savants are able to **retain** large amounts of information in their memory. For example, some autistic savants can recite entire dictionaries or telephone books word for word. Others are able to draw detailed maps of an area after flying over it once in a helicopter. Although the autistic savant has these specific abilities or skills, he or she may have difficulty with other types of mental or physical tasks.

Daniel Tammet is an autistic savant. Like many people with ASD, he **benefits** from leading a **predictable** life. In other words, he has fewer problems if his life has structure and routine. If it does not, he may become **anxious**. One of Daniel’s special abilities is in mathematics; he is able to almost immediately solve complex multiplication problems. When he does this, he sees each number he is multiplying as an **image**. These images transform into a third image, which is the **sum**.

Why autistic savants have these special abilities is a question that still has no definitive answer.

2 Complete the sentences with the words in the boxes.

compensate estimate retain

1. No one is sure of the exact number of autistic savants there are in the world, but experts _____ that there are fewer than 100.
2. Studies indicate that one hemisphere of a savant’s brain may _____ for damage to the other hemisphere.
3. It is amazing how much information a small USB drive can _____.

anxious disabled flexible predictable

4. Children may feel _____ about their first day in a new school because they don’t know what to expect.
5. For me, it is very hard to change my plans because I am not very _____.
6. Although savants have amazing abilities and knowledge, in other areas of their lives they may appear to be _____.
7. Because I know him so well, Sam’s reaction to my suggestion was very _____.

benefit image interaction savant sum

8. It is sometimes hard for people who are shy to engage in social _____, especially with people they don’t know well.
9. Finding the _____ of 20×3 in your head is not difficult.
10. A(n) _____ can exhibit amazing mental powers and is able to memorize huge amounts of information.
11. One _____ of my new job is health insurance, and another is two weeks of paid vacation.
12. Even though Daniel had not been to Paris in many years, he still had a clear _____ in his mind of what his hotel looked like.