

Take Time To Allow Time

Presented by Triple A & NHS England



Produced in partnership with



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Take Time To Allow Time

Full Film



To view the full film please click on the link below.

<https://vimeo.com/319826408>

About the film

The film shows three individual young people who have autism, in different scenarios. The purpose of doing this is to demonstrate that autism is not the same for each person. Whilst one person may have difficulties with executive function (planning and organisation), someone else may have difficulties with understanding



the language and motives of others. Some young people are able to 'hold it together' in school, appearing to mask or manage their anxieties, and feel they can only let their frustrations go once they leave the school premises. For others, anxieties and frustrations begin to build from the moment they get up and accumulate throughout the day, each apparently 'little' thing mounting up and developing into an explosion at the end of the day, which only those closest to them see, such as family and friends.

Autism is different for every individual, and how family and teachers see their autism, or *when* they 'see' their autism can be very different. Frequently, parents, carers and teachers see opposing views of the same person, just because they are not seeing the young person throughout the whole day.

The film portrays three times of the day: before school, during school and after school. The scenarios are similar to many individuals' experiences and the effects of seemingly small occurrences have on them differ considerably. However, by taking time to get to know what autism looks like for each individual and getting to know them, by asking them, 'What works for you?' or, 'What doesn't work for you?' can improve relationships and result in calmer, happier young people and give parents/cares, teachers and friends a greater understanding of their needs.

The first scene involves a teenager getting organised for the day ahead in her familiar and well-practised routine – getting dressed and ready for school whilst her father is trying to hurry her up. Time is a pressing factor for the father...



The second scene occurs in a school setting. Here, another teenager's self-coping strategies are misinterpreted by the teacher and the situation escalates between teacher and student as communication breaks down.



In the final scene, we see how a 'throw-away' remark, unintended to cause any distress, is misunderstood by the boy and how it is the final remark, or 'perceived criticism' of the day, that tips him into a 'meltdown'.



In each case, difficulties and differences with social communication, social interaction, a rigidity of thought and social imagination and sensory processing differences (the four diagnostic areas of differences for autism) are the defining and underlying factors of how everyday events, seemingly minor to those who are neurotypical (someone who does not have autism), can affect the individual.

The scenes also help to demonstrate that autism is **different for every individual**; the reaction of one person to any given scenario, is different to how someone else with autism may react. For those people without autism, knowing how autism affects each individual with autism, is critical if we are to help each other understand autism and work together towards a common goal – that of being able to talk about and manage the difficulties experienced in social situations which can cause misunderstandings and increase anxious their thoughts and feelings.

CONTEXT

An *All Party Parliamentary Group* undertook working on the Children and Families Act 2014. They also worked with The National Autistic Society and Ambitious about Autism to bring about the inclusion of autism training in Initial Teacher Training courses in 2018.

Since then, they have produced a report, “**Autism and Education in England 2017**” in order to highlight some of the concerns which pupils, families and teachers continue to have about how “*the education system in England works for children and young people on the autism spectrum*”.

Their findings report:

- Despite the reforms following the **Children & Families Act 2014** to the special educational needs system in England, children and young people who are on the autistic spectrum continue to be disappointed by the education system.
- Less than **50%** of those autistic children who were surveyed, say they are unhappy and that their teachers and peers do not understand them or know how to help or support them.
- **Over half** of the young people would like a teacher who understands them and say that this single thing would improve their school experience for them.
- **70%** of parents report that not enough support was given to their child fast enough.
- **42%** of parents have stated that an assessment of special educational needs was turned down following an initial request.
- **40%** of parents believe that the school which their child attends doesn't meet their child's needs.
- **Less than half** of teachers report being confident about supporting a young person who is autistic.

AUTISM: IN A 'NUTSHELL' ...

...An idiom typically meaning 'briefly' or 'concisely', but for someone with autism, this phrase can conjure images of autism being inside the shell of a nut. A humorous image perhaps – but what if that image just causes confusion and the belief that everyone else is talking in riddles or speaking a different language to yourself – an experience that happens throughout the day, every day and nobody has provided you an interpreter. Such is the start of the 'minefield' (not a field full of mines) of everyday obstacles to understanding, which someone with autism has to attempt to navigate.

But this is just the start of a very big puzzle for an individual on the autism spectrum. There are many other obstacles to understanding in a world where people talk in idioms, do not behave in a logical manner by expressing feelings through actions, signalling emotions through body language or facial expressions and expecting others to understand non-verbal signals – all rather than using words.

Therefore, Autism: *A concise explanation*

Autism affects more than 1 in 100 people in the UK according to the National Autistic Society (NAS).

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition which affects an individual from birth, however, it may not be evident from birth. Signs of autism may develop at different stages as the young person progresses through school and beyond due to increasing social demands.

It is often referred to as an invisible disability, although many would argue that it is not a disability at all, just a different way of thinking and processing information – perhaps more logical and precise, with clear rules and boundaries.

It is not a mental health difficulty nor a learning disability

Autism may be diagnosed alongside other conditions such as ADHD, dyspraxia, dyslexia, hearing and/or visual impairments, hyperlexia, learning difficulties and mental health conditions such as OCD, eating disorders, anxiety and depression (to name a few). Some of these other conditions can sometimes be more obvious and may be diagnosed first before an autism diagnosis (if diagnosed at all).

The ratio of boys to girls differs according to various studies over time and around the world, but research currently suggests that autism affects more males than females, ranging from 2:1 to 16:1 (NAS). However, in recent years, there is growing evidence and a greater recognition that autism can present differently in females which has led to misdiagnosis, late or lack of a diagnosis. Females are more likely to 'mask' or 'camouflage' (copy those around them) in order to fit in, which has led many women reporting subsequent mental health issues.

A person with autism often has sensory processing differences, being **over-sensitive, under-sensitive** or having sensory differences which fluctuates between the two.

Processing information works differently for someone who is autistic. It can affect their ability to plan, organise and carry out an activity without support; their executive functioning skills can be significantly impeded.

For someone on the autism spectrum, it means they have differences in:

Social Communication

Conversational skills, body language and gestures, non-literal language

Social Interactions

Maintaining relationships, recognising and expressing emotions.

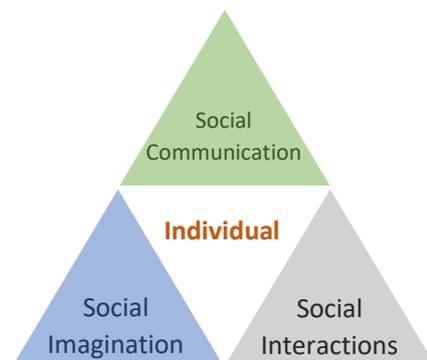
Social Imagination

Understanding and predicting other people's thoughts and behaviour, coping with the unfamiliar.

This pattern is often referred to as the **Triad of Differences** (also known as the Triad of Impairments: Lorna Wing 1981)

The Triad is also usually associated with:

- **Restricted, repetitive** patterns of behaviour, interests or activities
- Sensory **sensitivities**
- **Anxiety**



These differences can lead to a number of difficulties:

- **Interpretation of language literally** (idioms, as previously stated, giving rise to misunderstandings)
- Being **unable to understand the behaviour and emotions** of others
- Being able to **predict outcomes of their own actions** or that of others
- **Predicting or guessing** what someone else may do

- Being able to **understand or explain their own behaviour**
- **Knowing how to react or understand** the emotions of others (this can lead some people to say that someone on the autism spectrum has little or no empathy – which is not true).

Critically, each person experiences autism differently; what is autism for one person, is not the same as autism for someone else. In order to understand autism, having a broad awareness of autism is a good start but getting to know the individual and what it's like for that individual is vital.

THE FILM IN DETAIL

Story One

This storyline highlights a slower processing of information in that being asked to do more than one task at a time can cause anxiety. It also demonstrates difficulties with planning and organisation (executive function).

It addresses how, for this young person, having a routine is part of their coping strategy to be able to get ready for the school day – whilst having a routine helps with organisation, anything which disrupts this routine, such as not being able to find her skirt, disrupts her strategy for getting ready on time, but also creates anxiety.

Her anxiety about not being able to complete her routine renders her temporarily non-verbal and she 'shuts down' because her anxiety is so great. She is unable to process the situation at a faster speed and is therefore unable to find her skirt in order to complete her routine.

Processing information is also an issue in that she is performing the act of getting ready for school but then she is given further instructions - the external stress of her Dad encouraging her to get ready (thus being asked to do more than one thing whilst she is already trying to process finding her skirt) is adding to her anxiety.



The girl reaches for the sanctity of her headphones and music in order to escape the stress of the situation. The situation has become too much.

Story Two

The second of the stories focusses on the concept that lack of eye contact doesn't necessarily mean that someone isn't listening. For many people on the autistic spectrum, making eye-contact can be painful, upsetting and confusing. Whilst lack of eye-contact is a trait of autism, it isn't true that all autistics are unable to make eye contact.



In this scene, the teacher has misinterpreted the girl's use of 'putty' throughout the lesson as lack of focus and rudeness. The removal of the 'putty' at the start of the teacher's conversation with her, which she has been using as a tool to keep her focussed, makes her distressed (although the girl isn't able to express her distress at this point as her anxiety level is high).

The teacher asks the girl to look at her whilst she is speaking to her at the end of the lesson. This is something which the girl finds difficult and, in her efforts to do as instructed, she becomes distracted by the spots on the teacher's blouse and begins to count them in her head instead.

As the teacher continues to lose patience with her student, the girl is unable to contain her distress any longer and leaves the classroom angry and upset...

Story Three

The final story demonstrates the differences in processing information and how something like an every-day idiom can create confusion and anxiety leading to a final 'meltdown'.

This scene indicates how, throughout any given day, a young person at school has had to deal with a number of difficult or confusing situations which they have had to process, or more aptly 'figure out', in order to understand what is going on around them. The result is an explosion at the overload of endless 'puzzles' which has been presented to an individual throughout the day, from the moment they got up in the morning.



The teacher's use of the word, "butterfingers" at the end of a long day is the trigger which is the final remark as the boy reaches 'overload' and his journey home is one of mounting frustration and anxiety which finally explodes once in the safety of his own home (this is known as the 'Coke Bottle Effect').

For each storyline portrayed, we then see the young person explaining how autism affects them and how the other person can help support them for their own particular needs.

It is important to note that any discussion after a young person displays a 'shutdown' or 'meltdown' should be conducted at a time when they are calm and are able to verbalise their thoughts. (It may be that this type of conversation is conducted with the parent or carer if the young person is unable to communicate their own needs.)

FACE-TO-FACE

Finding out how autism affects individuals differently

Please Note: *Although the film depicts the discussions being done face-to-face, it is advisable to sit at an angle or next-to to the person with autism. Sitting opposite can make the discussion much harder for the person who has autism because the position almost demands making eye-contact!*

Story One

The resulting conversation between the girl and her father draws attention to the differences which seem to exist between school and home. He queries why she gets, "such amazing feedback at school but at home," she shuts him out.

The girl is able to articulate how exhausting school is – figuring out how she needs to behave in different situations, 'masking' or copying the behaviour of others in order to fit in, often not understanding why she has to behave this way. Such puzzle-solving and 'acting' in order to conform is a constant drain on her energies so that by the time she does get home at the end of the day, she doesn't have to maintain her pretence any longer; she can be who she truly is. The energy required to navigate her day has exhausted her. Being social at the end of the day, communicating with family or friends, is too much; she requires more solitude and time in which to process the day's events. Having to speak and discuss her day would only add to her daily stresses.

Their conversation highlights the 'snowball effect' – in that if something happens (an unexpected conversation, a request, any social interaction which she has not completely understood) and there isn't enough time to process the information, before the next thing comes along, it makes that next situation or conundrum harder to deal with, solve or work through.

The girl suggests that by giving her one instruction, or one piece of information at a time, and giving her the time to process that information, would help her cope.

Story Two

The conversation which takes place between the teacher and student addresses how the several questions and statements aimed at the girl in this scenario resulted in an overload; she was unable to process each of the points made at the speed at which the teacher was making them:

"...it's to your benefit to listen in class."

"This is exactly why I've asked you to stay behind."

"I'm here to help you ...

"...but I can't do that if you're not paying attention."

"It's incredibly rude to ignore me..."

"...not only addressing the whole class..." *(what other meaning can be understood by the word 'addressing'? Is the teacher sending letters to everyone?)*

"...but also you personally."

"This is a very important year for you,"

"and you need to start taking it more seriously..."

"Are you even listening?" *(Is this another rhetorical question? Does this require an answer? If she answered truthfully, 'No,' what would be the teacher's reaction?)*

(A rhetorical question which some students with autism can often attempt to answer at their cost, not understanding that they are not actually being asked to give an answer at this point – would be considered rude from a neurotypical perspective, but from an autistic perspective, they would simply be answering the question which had been put to them.)

"I asked how on earth you think you're going to get through the exams with this attitude?" *(Again, does this demand an answer or is the teacher making a point by posing another rhetorical question?)*

The student further states that asking her to stay behind once the class has gone, also makes her feel very uncomfortable. She is already aware of her differences to other students and believes they see her as different, odd or weird, so isolating her in front of her peers enhances her feelings of difference.

The girl is also able to inform her teacher that she had been using the putty as a strategy to help her focus whilst listening to her. Although for some students it may be a sign that they have become distracted, for her, it is an essential part of how she is able to hone her listening skills and actually avoid distractions – such as by looking at the pattern on her teacher’s blouse.

The teacher further learns that when she asked her student to make her look at her (thus making eye contact with her) it only exacerbated the pupil’s distress. Looking away enables the girl to focus on what is being said – it reduces the amount of information which she needs to process. (Looking at and interpreting someone’s facial expressions can be very confusing and upsetting to someone with autism.)

Coping strategies which this student has devised to help her deal with the everyday demands and expectations of her neurotypical peers are not signs of rudeness, but are ways in which she is able to engage with others and her surroundings.

Story Three

The start of the boy’s ‘meltdown’ witnessed by the friend is scary and confusing; the friend doesn’t understand what could have happened to make the other boy so angry. The friend does not see the bigger explosion at home.

This is often referred to as the ‘Coke Bottle Effect’ (or ‘Delayed Effect’) – the boy, having experienced multiple pressures throughout the day has given the appearance of coping in school; it seems to others that he is coping well with all the demands and expectations made of him. However, once beyond the school gates, he is no longer able to bottle up his frustrations as the pressure from the delayed effect of the day’s trials is finally released – he can be who he really is in the safety of his home. (Read the [Coke Can Meltdown](#)).

The boy’s first attempt at communication with his friend is a hand-written, “Sorry”. Now that he is calm, he is aware of his actions and is embarrassed by them, but knows that when he reaches exploding point, he is unable to control his actions or what he says.

The friend’s non-judgemental approach encourages the boy to talk about his ‘meltdown’ or explosion and the reasons for it. He says that he is unable to express himself when things get too much - when he is overloaded.

The final ‘trigger’ of the day, was the teacher’s comment concerning him not being able to make it on to the football team if he had, “butterfingers”. Again, it is an idiom used by many people, but taken literally, how does someone have fingers made of butter? What does this mean? The boy was unable to process what the teacher meant by this statement (what was probably meant as a light-hearted comment, the boy has understood the words in their literal sense and been confused by it – the effort of trying to understand the teacher’s meaning has been yet another struggle, one of many, throughout a very long day).

Once the boy was on his way home, he could no longer suppress his anxieties and confusion; the effort of trying to understand the many social exchanges, in addition to learning in lessons; such social 'puzzles' are perhaps more demanding than the lessons themselves. Abiding by the school rules, he knows he should not, or cannot, vent his frustration in school, but once beyond the school gates, he no longer has those restrictions. The result is a ['meltdown'](#).

Now that the boy is calm, the friends are able to talk and agree that if he doesn't understand something, he can ask his friend to explain it. However, it is also agreed between them that if the boy needs space in order to "work through....stuff" which has built up through the day, then his friend will leave him alone until he's better able to talk about his anxieties.

(The Incredible Five Point Scale (Dunn Buron & Curtis) and subsequent publication, A 5 Is Against the Law (Dunn Buron) give useful strategies to support the student and adults around them.)

HOW CAN YOU HELP

Take time and get to know the individual as well as you are able

Listen to what they have to say about their own experience of autism

Develop an 'autism lens' – try to see the world through their eyes

Talk to the individual when they are calm and receptive

Find out about their strengths

Find out about their interests

Use their interests to engage the individual in lessons or outside the classroom; make a connection

Check that they have understood what you mean

Be clear in your use of language; try not to be ambiguous

Give instructions one thing at a time

Make instructions or information visual so that they are 'concrete'. Concrete means they can go back to them for reassurance and check what they are doing is right; they do not have to verbally keep checking with you (it won't be because they haven't listened to the instructions – it is more likely that they are unable to process the information which you have given as the same speed as others)

Listen carefully to the child/parents/carers – don't rely only on what you can see....

Are there strategies being used elsewhere that you can employ?

Accept differences – trying to get autistic individuals to act like everyone else can be detrimental to the individual

Ask what their coping strategies are - How you can help....?

Create a 'Pupil Profile' with the child and parent/carer

Be aware of, and understand the impact of their environment, in relation to potential sensory differences in order to make reasonable adjustments

Their style of learning may be different – they may need to walk around, fiddle, and have a routine or method (make reasonable adjustments)

Be overt in helping them to organise themselves e.g. provide visual prompts for items they may need

Homework may be an issue – provide time/place in school when they can do it and give clear guidance on what and how they may do it – be aware that your words and instructions may be followed exactly!

Provide a quiet space/area where an individual can go, especially at unstructured/social times

Give an overview of the whole topic being studied to show relevance – sometimes they may not see the 'big picture' due to a 'weak central coherence' (not being able to see all the pieces and putting them together as a whole).

Give explicit signposting and cues for transitions throughout a lesson (avoid assuming they will naturally follow your logical train of thought or intentions).

PERSPECTIVES — STUDENTS, SENDCOs & PARENTS

Before filming began, groups of young people (boys and girls) between Years 7 to 13, in secondary schools from around Cumbria were asked a few simple questions. In the following their points are summarised; a number of the points raised were repeated in different schools.

To access the accompanying Focus Feedback (Illustrated) PDF, please click the link below.

www.tripleproject.org.uk/film-feedback

Additional points to note:

For many, it isn't until a child reaches Primary School or even Secondary School, that differences become apparent. The transition from Primary to Secondary may be a determining factor – the huge changes which take place at this time can become overwhelming for the individual; the start of a number of previously unapparent traits becoming obvious and a matter of great concern. This may be because of a number of factors, not necessarily because the school or parents have 'missed' seeing traits. Primary Schools, by their very nature, are nurturing and the contact between teachers and parents may be closer than that of secondary.

Infant and Primary Schools generally have one teacher per class for the whole year (they can also have the same Teaching Assistant with that class in support), with little change throughout the year. In many Primary Schools, changes of adults may gradually be introduced as the child progresses from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 in preparation for the numerous different subject specialist teachers they will encounter at Secondary School.

It is vital that transitions between years, Key Stages and especially the transition from Primary to Secondary schools is planned in advance in order to affect the best possible outcomes for the individual.

Clare Sainsbury (2009):

"...schools need to be aware of the importance of the social curriculum as well as educational curriculum"

"...the optimum environment to learn the social curriculum and develop reciprocal play with peers is at school."

SENSORY DIFFERENCES

It has been suggested that approximately **90%** of individuals with autism experience sensory differences. These differences affect not just the usual five senses, that of **sight, sound, smell, touch** and **taste**, but also body awareness (**proprioceptive**), balance (**vestibular**), and even **synaesthesia**, which is a rare condition of experiencing one of the senses but it being interpreted as another – such as hearing a sound but experiencing it as something which can be seen, such as a colour.

The senses can be over-sensitive (hyper) or under-sensitive (hypo) to something; they can even fluctuate between the two.

Sensory overload can result in a ‘meltdown’ or shutdown’. Getting to know the individual and finding out about their sensory needs, adopting a sensory profile and making reasonable adjustments for someone, can make a big difference to how they experience the world around them, thus having a big impact on their resulting behaviour.

For more information about sensory differences visit <https://www.autism.org.uk/sensory>

SIGHT

Over-sensitive	Under-sensitive	Help by...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Unable to tolerate dark, bright or flashing lights</i> • <i>May cover their eyes; need to wear a peaked cap</i> • <i>May usually look down at the ground</i> • <i>May focus on detail</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>May have problems with throwing and catching due to poor depth-perception; appearing clumsy</i> • <i>Can be attracted to light</i> • <i>Objects may lose their features or appear dark</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual supports • Coloured lenses

SOUND

Over-sensitive	Under-sensitive	Help by...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>May be able to hear distant whispered conversations clearly</i> • <i>Noises can be magnified or distorted</i> • <i>Unable to cut sounds out</i> • <i>May make their own sounds to block out the ones they dislike</i> • <i>May need to wear ear-defenders or noise-cancelling headphones</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Might enjoy noisy places</i> • <i>May not hear some sounds</i> • <i>May make loud sounds themselves for enjoyment</i> • <i>May need visual supports</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing or allowing ear plugs/ ear-defenders/ noise-cancelling headphones • Making sure the person is pre-warned about sudden or loud noises • Allowing the individual to listen to music • Shut doors to reduce external noises • Create a screened workstation in the classroom

SMELL

Over-sensitive	Under-sensitive	Help by...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Smells may be overpowering</i> • <i>Aversion to other people's perfumes, skin lotions etc.</i> • <i>Like wearing the same clothes</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Are attracted to strong smells and seek them out</i> • <i>Do not notice extreme smells</i> • <i>Smell themselves and people around them</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid using strong smelling perfumes and deodorants • Wearing unscented lotions and potions or perfumes

TOUCH

Over-sensitive	Under-sensitive	Help by...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dislikes being touched</i> • <i>Over-reaction to different temperatures or sensations</i> • <i>Certain food textures are avoided</i> • <i>May avoid brushing teeth, washing hair, wearing certain clothing</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enjoys pressure and/or tight clothes</i> • <i>Likes 'bear-hugs' or weighted clothing/blanket</i> • <i>Low pain threshold</i> • <i>Chews on clothes, objects, anything!</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow the individual to chew on specifically designed chew objects such as bracelets and necklaces • Permit the individual to use squeeze or fidget objects • Allow something from home which they may use in school (piece of cloth/cuddly toy) • Allow the individual to wear clothing they feel comfortable in eg leggings instead of loose trousers

TASTE

Over-sensitive	Under-sensitive	Help by...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>May require bland-tasting foods</i> • <i>Poor/picky eater</i> • <i>Easily 'gags' at different foods</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Likes strong/spicy tasting foods</i> • <i>Licks and tastes objects</i> 	

BODY AWARENESS (PROPRIOCEPTION)

Over-sensitive	Under-sensitive	Help by...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>May have difficulties with fine motor skills e.g. fastening buttons</i> • <i>Moves their whole body to view something</i> • <i>Places own body in awkward positions</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bump into people and objects</i> • <i>Poor judgement of personal space</i> • <i>Easily drops things – having low muscle tone</i> • <i>Unaware of their own body sensations – eg not knowing the difference between being hungry and full</i> • <i>Leans against people, walls, etc.</i> • <i>Tendency to stumble and trip over things</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give thought to the seating plan in a classroom; ask for their preference • Seat near the door to avoid any unnecessary movement around the classroom • Remind them about the ‘arm’s-length’ rule to help them judge personal space

BALANCE (VESTIBULAR)

Over-sensitive	Under-sensitive	Help by...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finds certain sports difficult, where control of movement is required</i> • <i>Frightened of movements which require their feet leaving the ground: playground activities; head in an upside-down position</i> • <i>Difficulty with uneven surfaces</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enjoys movement and spinning around</i> • <i>Rocking backwards and forwards</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a time and space to allow for spinning and movement • Make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

The Equality Act 2010 and Reasonable Adjustments

“ The duty is ‘to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the substantial disadvantage’ to a disabled person caused by a provision, criterion or practice applied by or on behalf of a school, or by the absence of an auxiliary aid or service. In the Equality Act 2010 as a whole, there are three elements to the reasonable adjustments duty that relate to:

1) Provisions, criteria and practices

Extract taken from: [Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils – Guidance for Schools in England](#) (2015 Equality and Human Rights Commission)

In short, schools must make certain that they have made appropriate reasonable adjustments for any young people who have autism or any other disability BEFORE they resort to exclusion.

Reasonable adjustments might include:

- Allowing the young person to use a fiddle/fidget toy
- Have a quiet area or workstation within a classroom
- Consider having alternative school trips, providing additional support for the young person (must be done at no extra cost for the parent/carer)
- Different start and finish times to lessons and/or the school day (thus avoiding busy times in corridors)
- Use of headphones/ear defenders
- Have support or alternative arrangements put in place at large gatherings of pupils such as at assemblies, sports days or school plays

Further information about this can be found on the following link:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/in-education/resolving-disagreements/discrimination-gb.aspx>

OTHER CONDITIONS

Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)

<https://www.pdasociety.org.uk/what-is-PDA/about-pda>

PDA is gaining recognition as having a specific profile on the autism spectrum. It is driven by anxiety and the need to control. A person with PDA will resist every-day demands and will avoid them at all costs. Although someone with autism will be reluctant to follow demands by such methods as ignoring or blocking them out in an unsociable manner; someone with PDA will be far more direct in their approach.

It is worth noting that many of the strategies used to help and support someone on the autism spectrum are less likely to work with someone with PDA. A highly individualised, flexible and intuitive approach may to better outcomes.

Face-blindness (prosopagnosia)

Face-blindness is not a core feature of autism but it can also affect many people who are on the autism spectrum. It is the inability to remember faces, even ones which are familiar to them. For some, there is difficulty in distinguishing a human face from that of an object.

As stated by the National Institutes for Neurological Disorders and Stroke,

"Prosopagnosia is not related to memory dysfunction, memory loss, impaired vision, or learning disabilities."

This can lead to communication difficulties and a reluctance to engage with others – remembering someone's face is a key to friendships and relationships in general.

Alexythmia

Again, Alexythmia is not a core feature of autism, but is more common in those who are on the autism spectrum. It means that someone can lack the ability to identify their own emotions and understand the feelings of others. They may also have difficulties in being able to distinguish between their own feelings and bodily functions.

GIRLS AND AUTISM

Gender and Diagnosis

Historically more boys than girls have been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Condition.

Leo Kanner in 1943 – *11 children were seen, only 3 were girls.*

Hans Asperger in 1944 – *all cases described were boys.*

Currently it is estimated that boys in the UK are **4 times more likely** to get a diagnosis than girls.

Attwood (2000), Ehlers & Gillberg (1993) and Wing (1981) have all considered that *many women and girls are never referred for diagnosis.*

Several sources have suggested that the diagnostic criteria have leaned more towards boys' characteristics than girls, therefore professionals have been more likely to diagnose boys than girls.

Gould & Ashton-Smith (2011) have said that the diagnostic process should be altered to take account of the differences between the genders.

Dr Meng-Chuan Lai, Autism Research Centre (University of Cambridge, 2013):

"The findings suggest that we should not assume that everything found in males with autism applies to females. This is an important example of the diversity within the 'spectrum'."

Girls' Presentation: Some differences

May appear to 'manage' at primary school.	May be 'mothered' by others; be the 'mother'.
May show less restricted repetitive type behaviours.	Girls' interests may be more socially acceptable and similar to others' eg horses, celebrities, pop bands – although they may be more intense and dominant; they may have a more 'nurturing' focus.
May play with toys differently – for example, setting up characters in a scene but...	...unable to play with the characters without a script or someone to 'lead the way'.

May have a detailed fantasy world with imaginary (invisible) friend(s).	Mask their differences having observed others to copy, using intellectual abilities – but not understanding their actions.
Internalise things.	May find it difficult to recognise and manage social conflict.
May not have a 'close' friend, but wander between groups.	Be vulnerable to manipulation by others.
May appear as if they are not listening but can recite the lesson back to you.	May learn 'scripts' to allow them to talk to others.
Are perhaps more at risk of developing mental health problems: anxiety, depression, anorexia.	Develop an intense friendship with one other person (thus reducing likelihood of being diagnosed ASC); becoming clingy or 'over-attached' and smother that friend.
More willing to talk about how they think and feel.	Have fewer repetitive ritualistic behaviours.
May sit at the back of a class/stand by the edge of the playground so that they can observe others on how to behave.	May rely on rules and report anyone who does not follow them.
Make friends with older/younger age groups – being either more understanding or less demanding.	Be very tired at the end of the day – exhausted by social pretence.
May be more expressive in their body language and facial expressions.	Better at socialising giving the appearance of being skilled; able to put on a performance.
All the differences may have the overall effect of others having less tolerance, more expectation and therefore less of a chance of being identified as having an autistic spectrum condition.	Less likely to be 'fickle' or 'bitchy' with friends.

Considered 'little philosophers' (girls) as opposed to 'little professors' (boys).	Less likely to have noticeable issues with co-ordination and/or movement.
Affect different personas (perhaps copied from books, films, friends).	May engage in conversation easily, with unusual intensity.
May 'squirrel away' items e.g. food, sweets, special objects.	

If a girl has a developmental or language delay, it's more likely that autism may be considered, whereas if they reach all the age appropriate markers, it is less likely.

Parents/carers may have more of a sense that something is different, perhaps unusually absorbed or in a world of their own.

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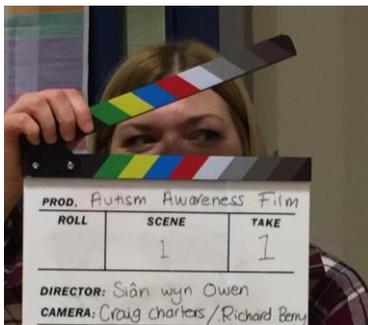
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