

Autism in the Early Years

Sara Mansi
Barnet Early Autism Model
sara.mansi@barnet.gov.uk

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Task checklist

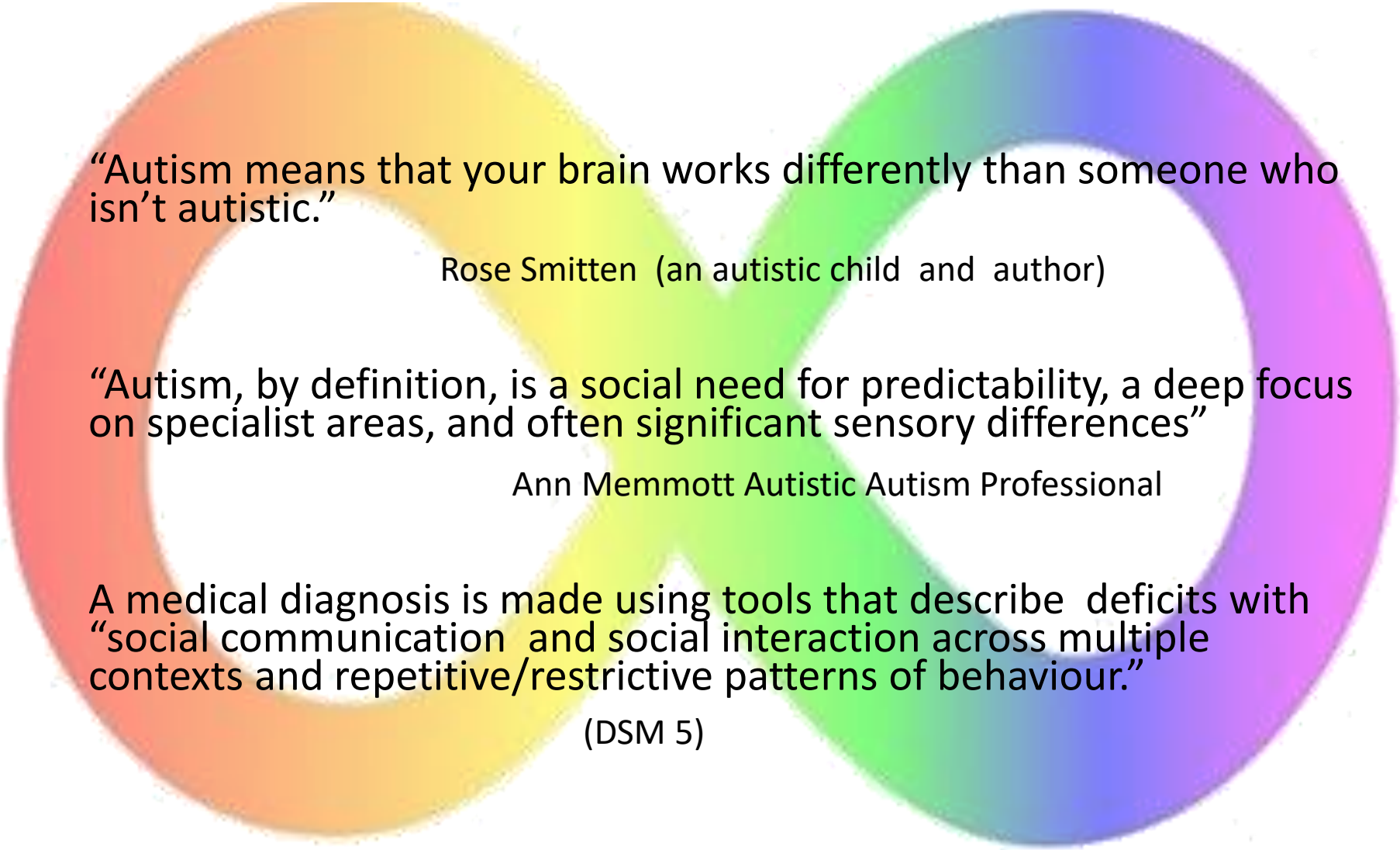
1. What is autism? 

2. Building positive relationships and creating an enabling environment 

3. Stimming 

4.Resources 

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"Autism means that your brain works differently than someone who isn't autistic."

Rose Smitten (an autistic child and author)

"Autism, by definition, is a social need for predictability, a deep focus on specialist areas, and often significant sensory differences"

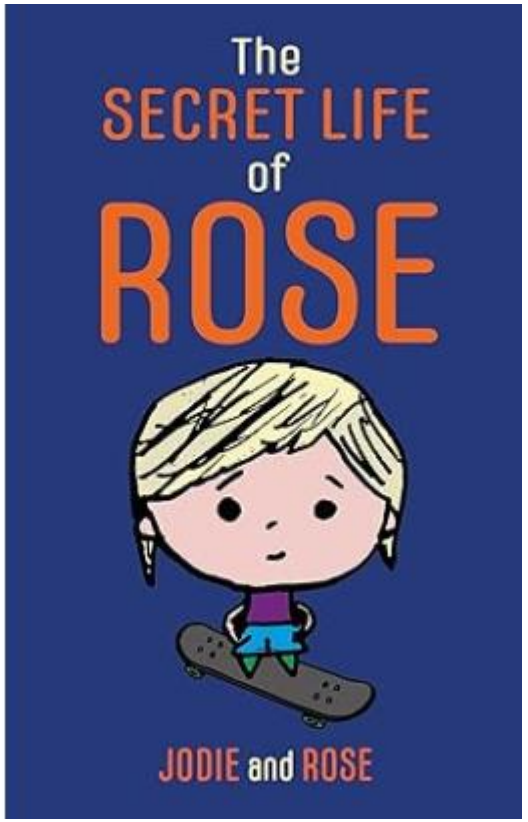
Ann Memmott Autistic Autism Professional

A medical diagnosis is made using tools that describe deficits with "social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts and repetitive/restrictive patterns of behaviour."

(DSM 5)

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'My brain sees the world in a different way.' Rose Smitten

'Autism is a different perspective on the world, a different way of sensing what's around you. Very often this sense leads to a mind full of wonder and amazement. Taking in the world in such an intense way means that overload can easily be reached at times. However this can also result in experiencing incredible levels of joy.' Jodie Clarke (Rose's mother)

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In this training identity-first language ('autistic person' rather than 'person with autism') will be used throughout in accordance with preferences stated by the autism community

(Kenny et al., 2016).



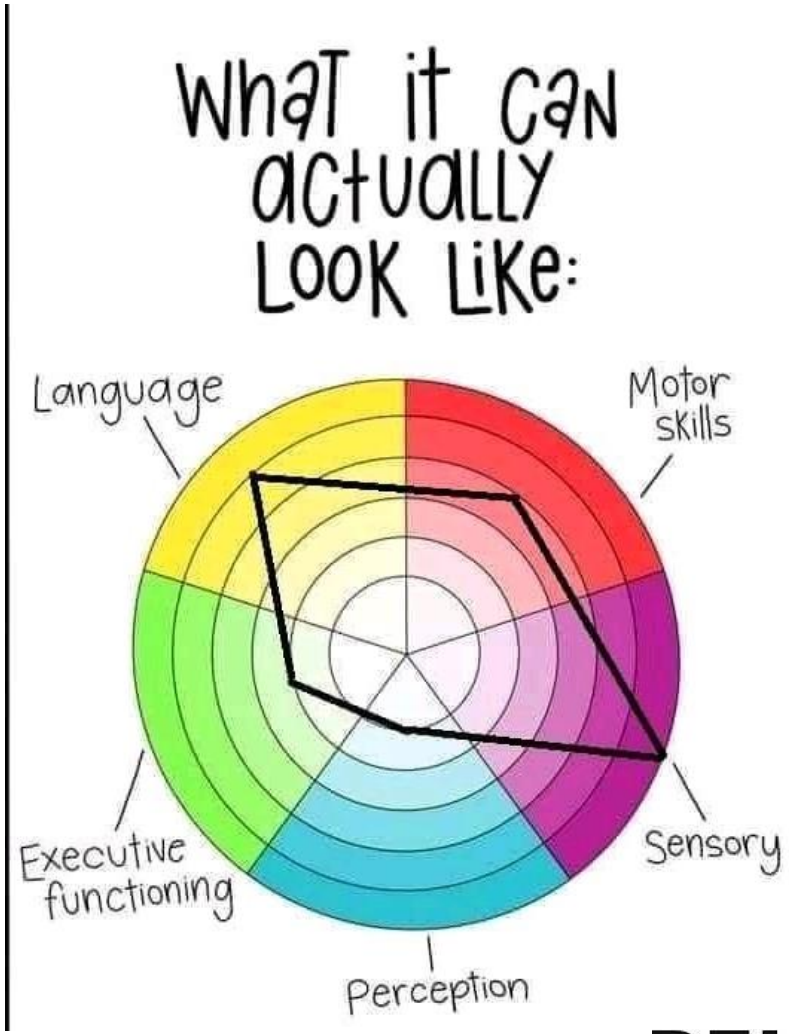


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There is no linear 'autism spectrum', there are Autistic people whose profiles change:



What it can mean to be Autistic →



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Hendon HARP video- CRAE's Sensory Sensitivity Film at HARP - YouTube 0:34-2:10



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Areas of Difference

Every autistic child will have a range of abilities and differences within each of these areas.

INTERACTING

Autistic children have differences in the way they interact, play, and develop relationships.



PROCESSING INFORMATION

Autistic children have differences in their attention, interests, and how they learn.



SENSORY DIFFERENCES

Autistic children have differences in taking in and making sense of sensory information.



COMMUNICATION

Autistic children have differences in the way they communicate, understand, and use language.



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Task checklist

1. What is autism? 

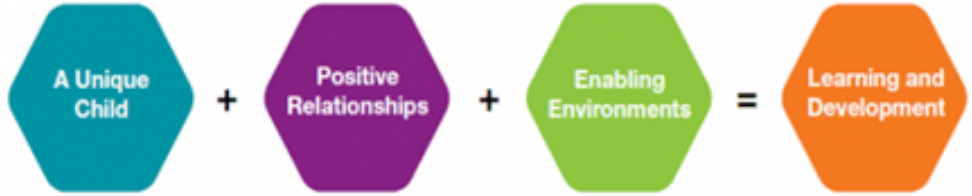
2. Building positive relationships and creating an enabling environment. 

3. Stimming 

4. Resources 

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Building Positive Relationships and Creating Enabling Environments



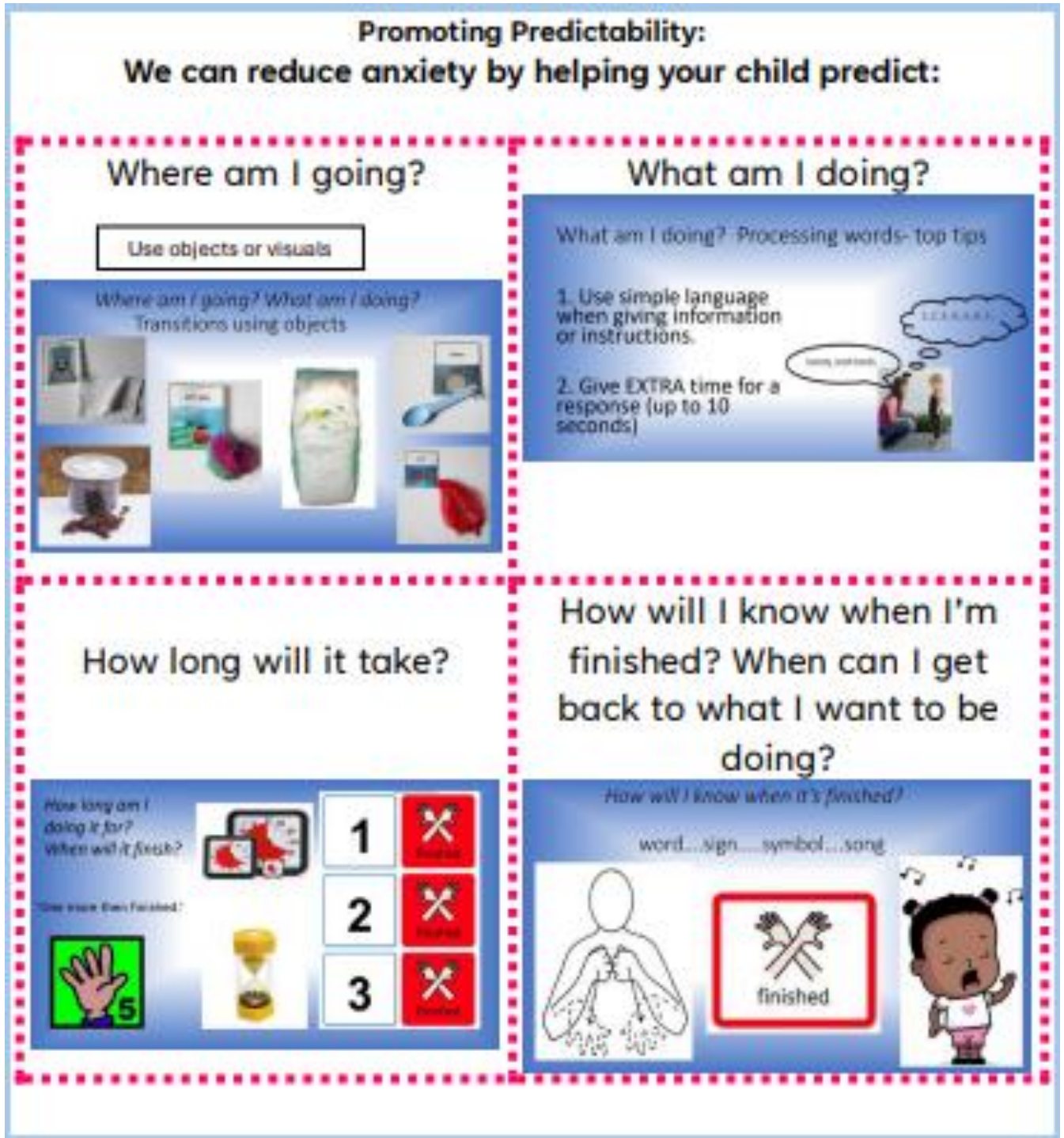
- **Follow your child's lead (Intensive Interaction- David Hewitt) -** Be available, *copy, join in, pause, repeat!*
- **Understand your child's unique communication preferences and styles –** with support from parents, staff and speech therapists.
- **Adjust your communication style**
  - **Reduce language-** when giving instructions or when a child is overwhelmed
  - **WAIT** – allow up to 10 seconds of processing time. Silence is golden!
  - **Offer choices-** this generates autonomy and joint attention.
- **Create opportunities for interaction** using anticipation, ready steady go, don't overhelp, joint play for joy.
- **Know and encourage a child's special interests-** hyperfocus and regulatory.
- **Promoter of predictability** – staff, routine and setting
- **Sensory supporter -** consider the unique sensory profile and the environment, ca adjustments/ reductions be made?
- **Model Model Model** – 'Show we don't just tell me.'
- **Positive and regular communication between home and nursery.**
- **Play to facilitate joy, fun and laughter!!!**

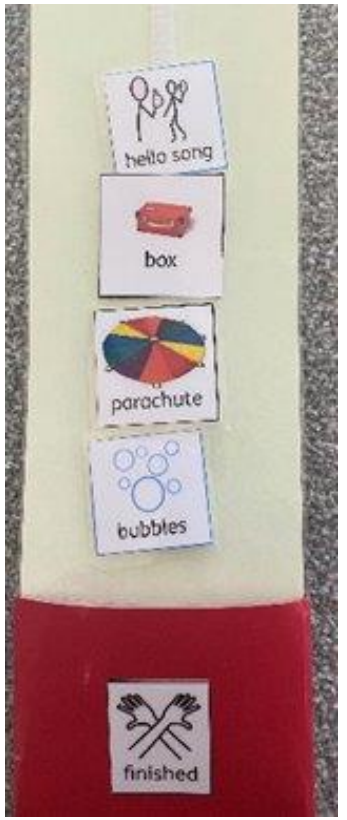


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Predictability

Preference for routines and familiar places/people.





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Schemas of Play





Transporting

Children will be fascinated with moving objects and themselves from place to place.



Trajectory

Children will be interested in how things move and respond.



Enveloping

Children are learning about space and capacity.



Transforming

Children are learning about cause and effect.



Connection

Children are exploring how things join together and separate.



Rotation

Children show fascination with things that rotate.



Positioning

Children will be interested in placing objects in lines, patterns or rows.



Enclosing

Children are exploring concepts that relate to size, shape and pattern.



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Can you *have "play goals"* for another person?

Before you answer that question, ask yourself: ***"What is your goal?"***

That is, ask yourself honestly, when "playing" with your learner or loved one are you focused on:

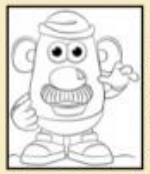
facilitating development?

OR

empowering engagement in activities that facilitate joy?

Using toys and recreational activities as a medium for teaching and / or scaffolding a range of skills and abilities.

For Example:



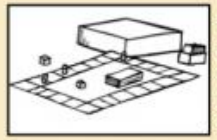
Mr. Potato Head to encourage grasp strength and visual motor skills



Doll House to scaffold language development and representational play



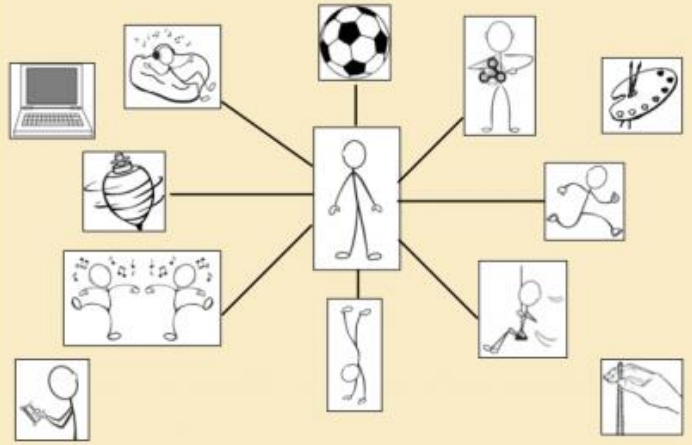
Balls to facilitate gross motor and visual motor coordination and reciprocity



Board games to provide opportunities to learn turn taking and cooperation

Activities introduced to facilitate development may become play, but, often they do not initially meet the criteria for play and may never.

Facilitating active engagement in an experience that is freely chosen, intrinsically motivated, self-directed, restorative, and joyful - no matter how different it looks to you!



Activities that are freely chosen, intrinsically motivated, self-directed, restorative, and joyful are **PLAY** (Lester & Russell, 2010). There is no right way to play.

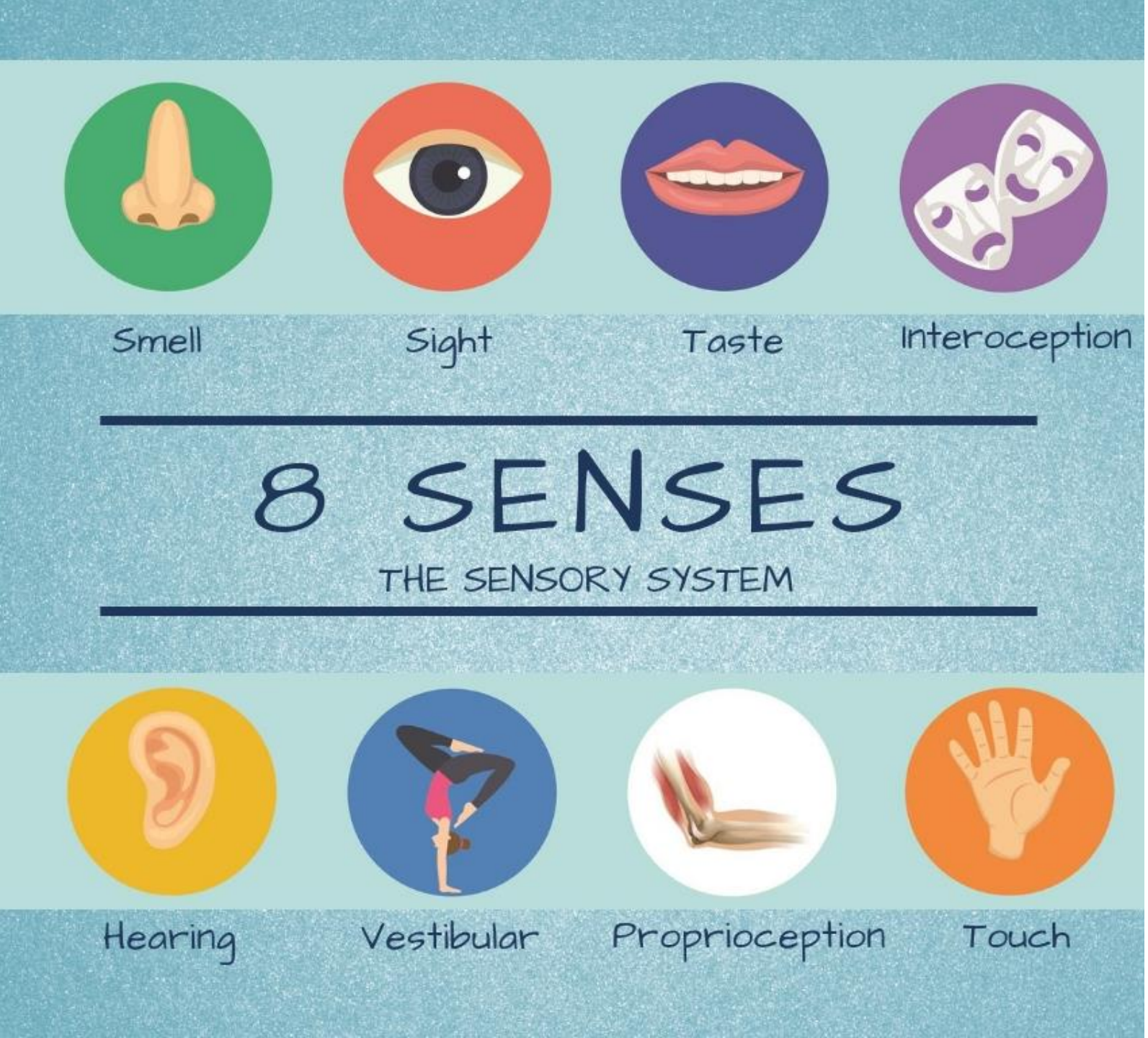
Play is immersive. Play is exploration. Play is individualized. Play is restorative. Play is regulating. Play is fun. Play is functional.

Facilitating development and *authentic* play should not be confused when writing goals. We can have goals around development, but the only true "play goal" we can have for another person is really a goal for us, as their partners, to ensure the person's access to opportunities and resources to engage in whatever activities they consider PLAY!

Autism Level UP!

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SENSORY

- Unique ways of exploring and processing the world around them
- Feeling some sensory input much more intensely or barely at all

Sensory seeking vs sensory defensive

- Eye contact- can be uncomfortable and hinder processing of language.

Interoception- *internal bodily senses e.g. hunger, emotions, full bladder.*

Proprioception- *co-ordinate our movements and identify weight, size and pressure.*

Vestibular- *balance and movement stimulated by movement up/down back/forward around/over.*

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STIMMING

Why do some autistic people stim?

- for enjoyment
- an attempt to gain sensory input, eg rocking may be a way to stimulate the balance (vestibular) system; hand-flapping may provide visual stimulation
- an attempt to reduce sensory input, eg focusing on one particular sound may reduce the impact of a loud, distressing environment; this may particularly be seen in social situations
- to deal with stress and anxiety and to block out uncertainty.
- Stimming may look like:
  - Arm/hand flapping
  - Finger flicking
  - Rocking
  - Jumping, spinning, twirling
  - Head banging
  - Repetitive use of an object
  - Verbal- repeating the line of a song, screaming, a word or phrase (delayed echolalia)

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.. a weight lifted from my chest. A release of pressure that's built up inside me

.. my bones are buzzing and it only stops if I stim. It's my entire nervous system calming down



.. relief. It's an outlet. Like liberating a lot of stored energy



An electric current flowing through me. - Joshua
An electric charge I need to shake off



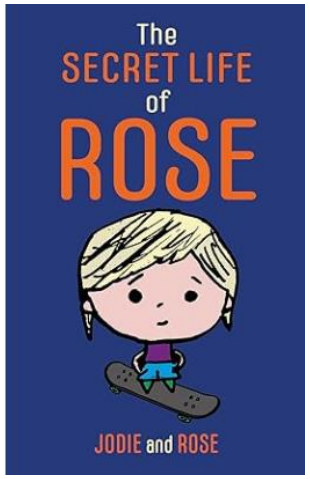
Recharging. Calming.
A breath of fresh air



Autism_sketches

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'Stimming helps me to let out energy, to focus and concentrate and to feel more calm and chilled.' Rose Smitten

Stimming should never be discouraged due to fear of judgement from others; instead, onlookers should have stimming explained to them...Stimming behaviours are closely lined with sensory profiles of autistic people; therefore, it can be helpful for both parents and children to be aware of their own stims and to use them as coping tools in managing emotions.' Jodie Clarke, Rose's mother

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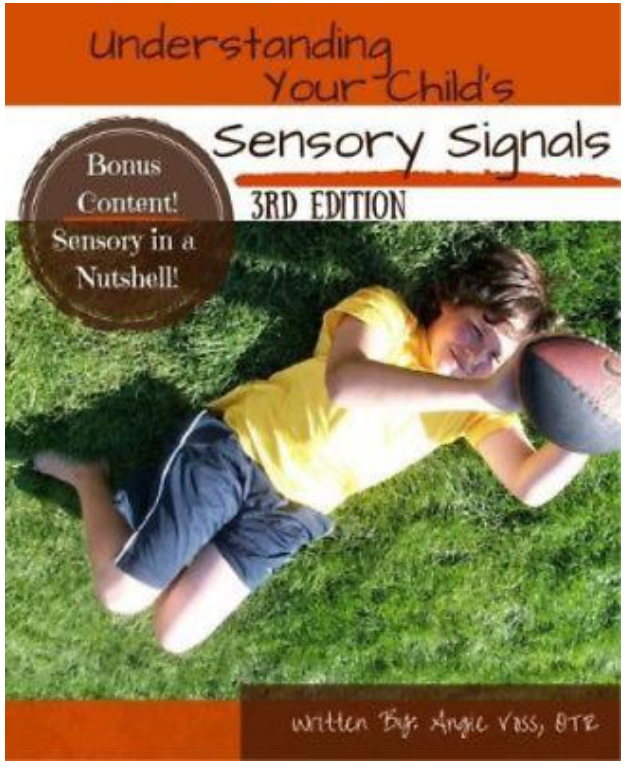


4. Resources

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Books -highly recommend





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BBC SOUNDS PODCAST



Jamie Knight



Robyn Steward

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Online training/resources

Training:

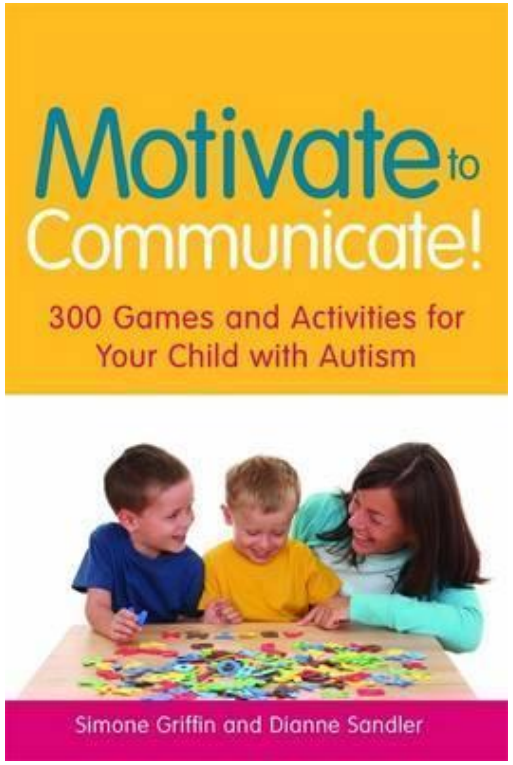
- EY SEND - Information for Settings - Oakleigh School
- EY Toolkits Barnet Local Offer :: Home / Senco Zone / Early Years
- Children's Integrated Therapy Training Information for Professionals
- Contact me for bespoke training- Barnet Education and Learning Service – Sara Mansi (lead teacher) for BEAM sara.mansi@barnet.gov.uk.
- Curiosity Programme- Home - Attention Autism Ltd | UK & Ireland
- Intensive Interaction- Intensive Interaction - Fundamentals of Communication
- Interoception in Early Learners- Interoception and Early Learners | Kelly Mahler Blog and online training On-Demand Course: Interoception & Early Learners: Establishing Body Listening from an Early Age - Kelly Mahler
- National Autistic Society- NAS- National Autistic Society

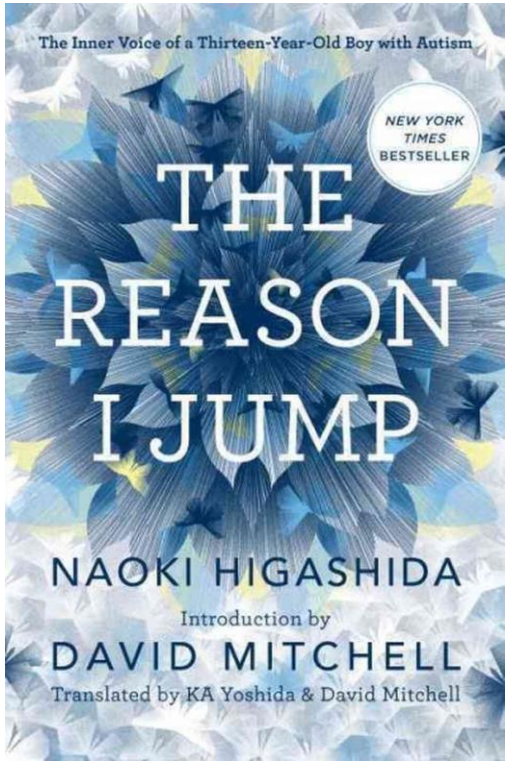
Resources to tell parents about:

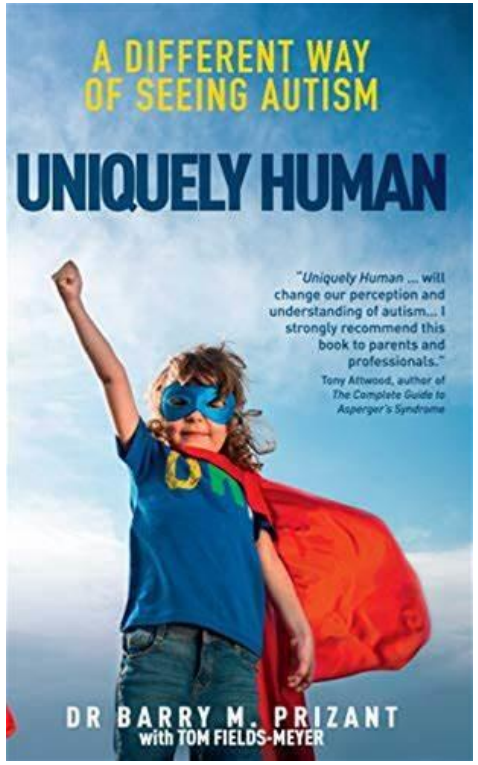
- Barnet Local Offer Autism page- Barnet Local Offer :: Home / Autistic Children and Young People
- BELS- Barnet Early Autism Model- For preschool aged children with a diagnosis of Autism and their parents/carers with Autism Parent Carer Programme-Barnet Local Offer :: Home / Pre-school and Primary School
- Barnet Mencap - Parenting Programmes and workshops - Barnet Mencap
- Amazing Things Happen! Video to explain Autism made by the National Autistic Society. Translated into 20+ languages
- National Autistic Society- NAS- National Autistic Society
- Right from the Start- Guide for parents Parent toolkit | Ambitious about Autism

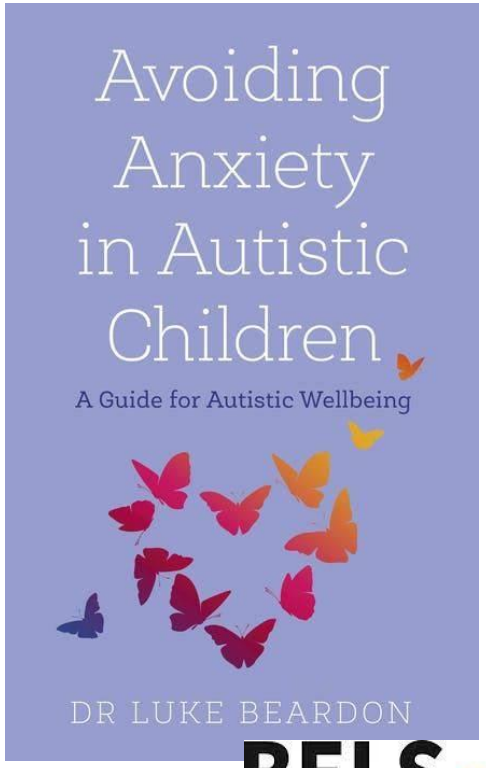
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Books for adults









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TOP TIPS



1. Unique interests/loves. Stim and play to facilitate joy, restoration and laughter!!!

2. Promoter of predictability– staff, routine and setting

A child should know ‘where am I going?, what am I doing?
How long for? When will it finish?

3. Sensory supporter - consider the unique sensory profile and the environment, can additions/ adjustments/ reductions be made?