

Understanding Autism



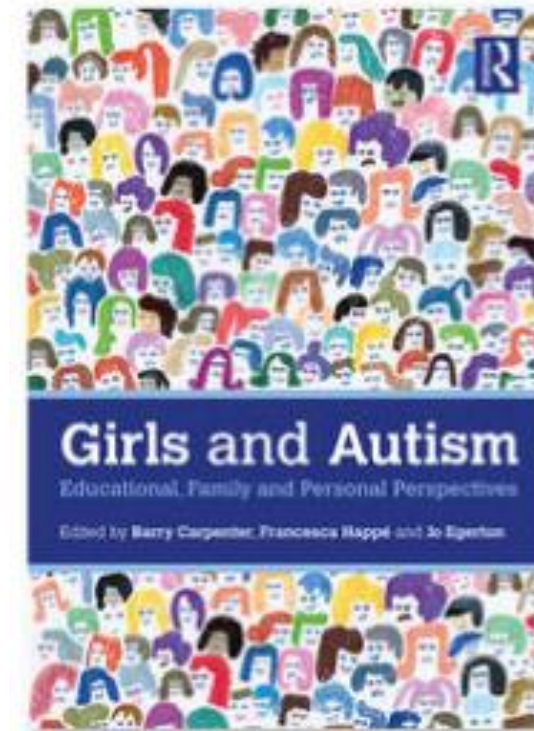
Aims

- To develop your understanding of autism and the way it affects your child
- To think about the strengths and abilities of your child



‘Imagine you were a child being told you have a condition that enables you to think differently from other people; a condition which inspires specific interests, in which you will have an expert knowledge and passion, that you may have an eye for detail and a logical mind which also allows you to think creatively. Imagine being told that it will cause problems along the way but that it is OK because you will be supported in facing these challenges’

Katie Buckingham (2019). ‘The advantages of autism’ in Girls and Autism





Activity

You and your child

Please introduce yourself and tell us three things about your child.

This could be things they are good at, enjoy doing or are interested in.



What is autism?





Autism is a lifelong, developmental condition that affects the way a person communicates, interacts and processes information.

It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while all children with autism share certain features, their condition will affect them in different ways.

[Why Autism is a Difference, not a Deficit - YouTube](#)





https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbwRrVw-CRo&feature=emb_logo



What is autism?

**Autistic pupils have differences in three areas of development.
These are:**



Social understanding
and communication.



Flexibility,
information
processing, and
understanding.



Sensory processing
and integration.

**We need to look at these differences in terms of both the strengths
and challenges that might arise.**



People on the autism spectrum often have an uneven range of abilities, in that they do very well on some areas of development and can struggle with others. This will impact on their behaviour, relationships and learning. We need to adjust our expectations to accommodate this and cannot take for granted what a young person can or cannot do.



Children on the autism spectrum are all different from one another, with personalities as unique as any child. Your child is part of a family, a community and a culture and this needs to be considered as well as their autism. Many autistic children also have co-occurring conditions, and issues with sleep, eating, or generalised anxiety, for example. It is important to appreciate the potential impact of these on their physical and mental health, learning and development.



Watch the film of autistic young people talking about their experiences

1. Think about your own child and fill in the key areas of difference sheet
2. How do these differences impact on your child at home or in school?

We will share this with the group.







Pupil-Centred Planning

Being pupil-centred means that you:

- Identify strengths as well as where additional support is needed.
- Help children to express their views and ensure they are listened to and respected.
- Help other adults get to know the children they work with and reflect on the impact they might have on them.
- Aim to work towards more meaningful outcomes for autistic children.

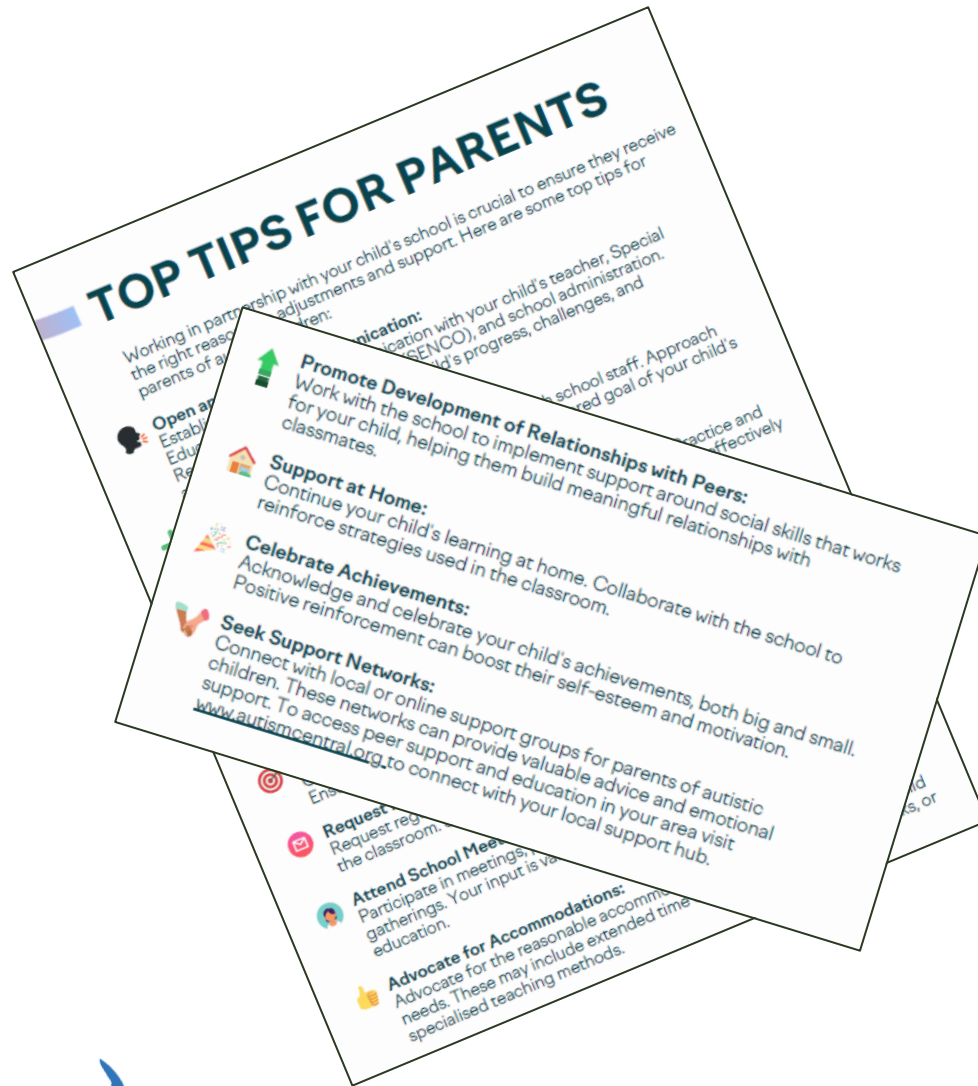
ONE PAGE PROFILE Supported by
 Department for Education

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| What you can do to help me: | My name is: I am years old I communicate by: | What is important to me: |
| What people like and admire about me: | Me Click to add a photo here | My strengths & talents: |
| My dream is to: | My fears / worries / things I don't like: | My favourite things: |

 Autism Education Trust
www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk

Key Strategy: Pupil Profile





Pupil-Centred Planning

Sharing information between parents and school is key to pupil-centred planning. This helps schools to understand what adjustments may be required to support them.

It is important to know:

- What your child's strengths and interests are?
- What is important to them?
- How to communicate with them?
- What their sensory and social preferences are?
- What support they need to be happy and access learning?
- How to support them when they are distressed?





Autistic children often have a special area of interest that they are passionate and knowledgeable about.

Remember to focus on the strengths and interests of your child. This will support their learning, motivation and emotional wellbeing.

Key Strategy: Pupil Profile





Focus on strengths



- Rote Learning and memory
- Ability to concentrate on topics of interest
- Ability to pay attention to small details
- Learning rules and using concrete information
- Ability to stay focussed when motivated
- Visual learning and thinking style





“What if the greatest compliment you ever received was you are so normal”

Rosie King
TED Talk (2014)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQ95xlZeHo8>



Useful Resources and Websites:

What is autism

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/asd.aspx>

After your child's diagnosis

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/diagnosis/children/recently-diagnosed.aspx>

Having an autistic sibling

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/siblings.aspx>

Autism and girls

<https://nasen.org.uk/resource/flying-under-the-radar-pdf.html>

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/gender/stories.aspx>

BAME and autism

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/bame-autism.aspx>

Key Resource: Autism Education Trust 'Working Together with your child's school.'

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/shop/parents-guide/>



Books:

Can I Tell You About Autism? by Jude Welton, Jessica Kingsley

Can I Tell You About Asperger's Syndrome? by Jude Welton, Jessica Kingsley

Do You Understand Me? by Sofie Koborg Brosen, Jessica Kingsley

Asperger's: What Does It Mean To Me? by Catherine Faherty, Future Horizons

All Cat's Have Asperger's by Kathy Hoopman, Jessica Kingsley

Different Like Me by Jennifer Elder, Jessica Kingsley

A Special Book About Me by Josie Santomauro, Jessica Kingsley

Asperger's Syndrome by Tony Attwood, Jessica Kingsley

The Survival Guide for Kids with Autism Spectrum Disorder by Verdick and Reeves, Free Spirit



Thank you for your attention and participation
The next session is session two:-

Communication and Interaction



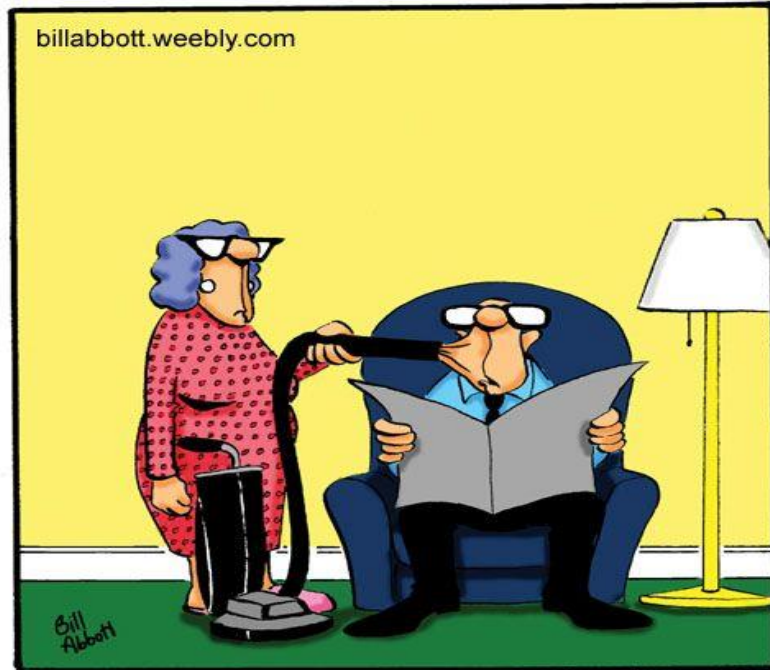


Aims

To explore the way communication and interaction may be different for children on the autism spectrum

To explore ways to support the communication and interaction of your child





“Shall I move?”

Communication is a two-way process for sharing information and ideas between two or more people and can be verbal or non-verbal. For most of us, communication is a tool for social bonding.

By sharing our thoughts, opinions, experiences and emotions, we get to know and understand other people and ourselves. We are also able to form and maintain relationships.





Image taken from All Things A

7-9 years

- Listens to key information and makes relevant, related comments:
e.g. "So all mammals are warm blooded, have fur or hair and their babies all drink milk."
- Identifies clearly when they haven't understood:
e.g. "What's maize?" or "Get a blue what?"
- Able to infer meaning, reason and predict:
e.g. "It's getting very hot in here," means open the window.

- Uses a range of words related to time and measurement:
e.g. century, calendar, breadth.
- Uses a wide range of verbs to express their thoughts, or about cause and effect:
e.g. "I wonder what she's thinking," or, "If we run we should get there on time but we might arrive late."
- Joins in discussions about an activity using topic vocabulary:
e.g. "I saw some chicken eggs hatching in the incubator on the farm last Friday."

- Speech is clear, uses words with three sounds together or words with lots of syllables:
e.g. splash or string; rhinoceros or identical.
- Uses regular and unusual word endings:
e.g. walked or fell.
- Uses complex grammar and sentences to clarify, summarise, explain and plan:
e.g. "So the bee collects the pollen from the stamen and then flies to another flower and pollinates it."

- Stories have a good structure with a distinct plot, an exciting event, clear resolution and conclusion:
e.g. "...and everyone got home safely which was great."
- Uses intonation to make storytelling and reports exciting and interesting.
- Adds detail or leaves information out according to how much is already known by the listener.

- Uses formal language when appropriate in some familiar situations:
e.g. Showing a visitor around school.
- Understands conversational rules:
e.g. Looks at listener to judge feedback. Gives more detail if needed.
- Uses tone of voice, stress on words and gestures naturally to add meaning.
- Uses language for full range of different reasons:
e.g. complimenting, criticising, negotiating.

9-11 years

- Sustains active listening to both what is said and the way it is said.
- Follows longer instructions that are not familiar:
e.g. "Put the stripy folder that's on top of the cupboard into the bottom drawer of my desk."
- Understands different question types:
e.g. open, closed, rhetorical.
- Understands simple jokes and simple idioms, but can't really explain why they are funny or what they mean:
e.g. You can't have your cake and eat it.

- Makes choices from a wide and varied vocabulary:
e.g. 'Leap' instead of 'jump'; 'terrified' instead of 'frightened'.
- Uses sophisticated words but the meaning might not always be accurate:
e.g. "My bedroom was meticulous."
- Knows that words can have two meanings and uses them appropriately. Can't always explain how they are linked:
e.g. 'Hard' (rigid object and tough person).

- Uses long and complex sentence structures:
e.g. "I will come with you only because it means you will stop going on at me."
- Uses questions to help conversations flow.
- Sentences average about 7 to 10 words - longer in stories than in conversation.
- Knows when a sentence is not grammatically correct and can explain rules of grammar.

- Tells elaborate entertaining stories which are full of detailed descriptions.
- Everyday language is detailed and not always about their immediate experience.
- Incorporates a subplot in telling stories and recalling events, before resolving the main storyline.
- Uses complex joining words:
e.g. meanwhile, therefore.

- Uses different language depending on where they are, who they are with and what they are doing:
e.g. Formal style with the headteacher in school; relaxed and informal with family at home; and 'cool' language with friends in the park.
- Communicates successfully; shares ideas and information, gives and receives advice, and offers and takes notice of opinions.
- Realises when people don't fully understand and tries to help them.

Conversations and Social Interaction

5-7 years

- Takes turns to talk, listen, and respond in two-way conversations and groups.
- Keeps to a topic but easily prompted to move on if it takes over.
- Copies others' language and begins to be aware of current peer language:
e.g. Copies swear words, says, 'Cool', or 'Yeah right.'
- Uses and experiments with different styles of talking with different people.

7-9 years

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**Think of an example when
communication went well with
your child**

- Think about what was being discussed and the why, who and how parts.
- Why did it go well?

We will share this with the group

Activity



Children on the Autism Spectrum have a wide range of communicative ability. This includes differences in both verbal expression (spoken language) and comprehension (understanding of language).



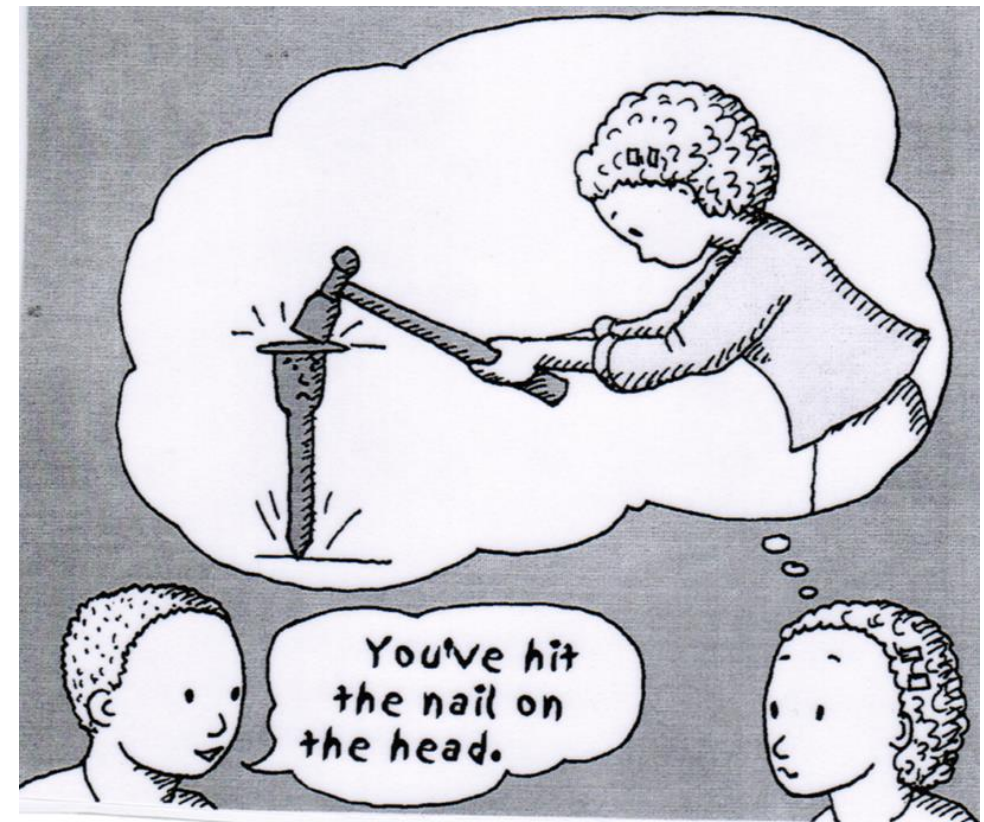
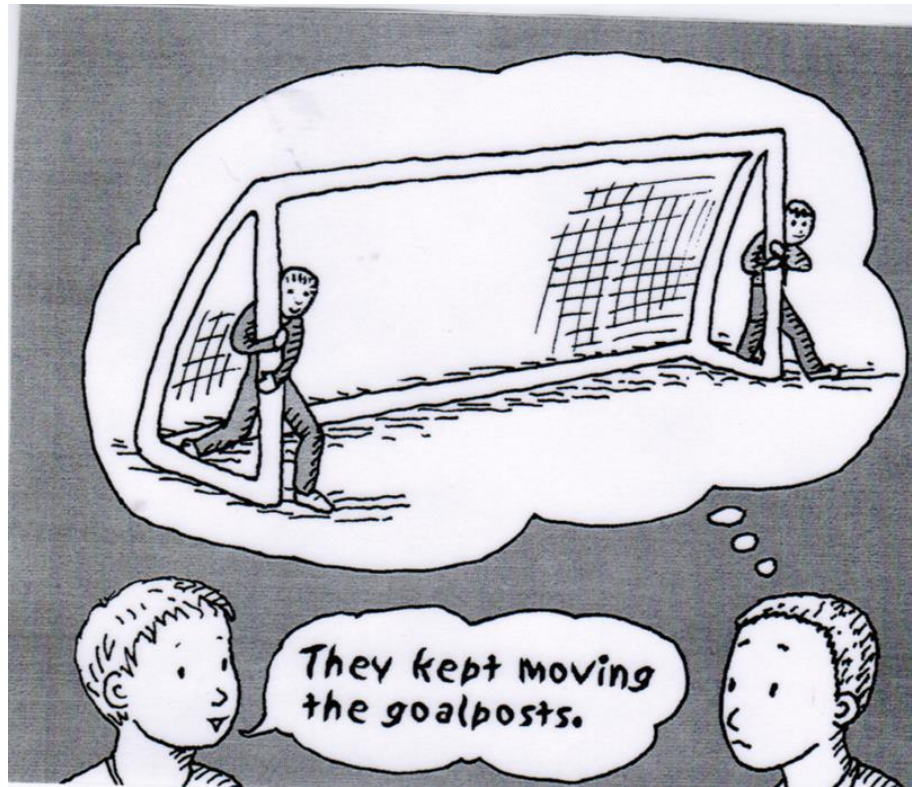
They may:

- not understand the **need** for communication
- not **initiate** communication
- not communicate clearly what they want or need
- have difficulty with **attention and listening skills**, particularly in relation to verbal communication
- have challenges **processing and understanding** language
- have a **literal understanding** of language, including understanding jokes and sarcasm, metaphors and idioms
- not understand or use **non-verbal cues** such as eye contact, facial expression and body language
- find it challenging to **take turns** in activities and conversations



idioms

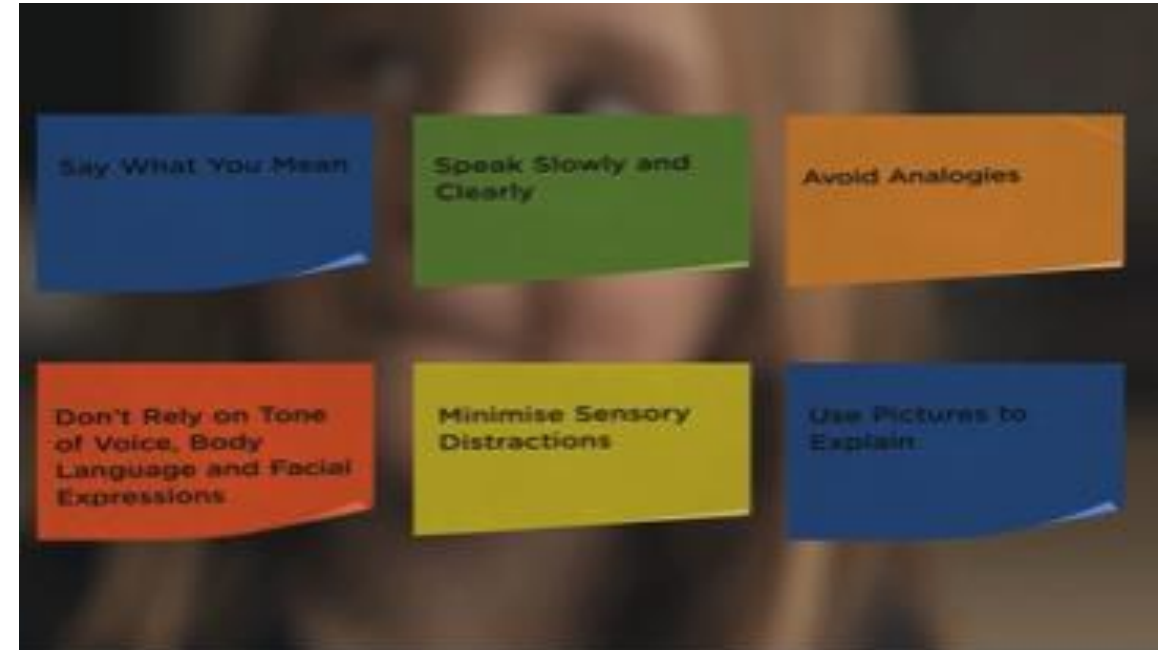
Think of all the phrases you/ people say which may be misunderstood because the words do not have their literal meaning.



Strategies

We need to adapt our style of communication:

- Use simple, clear and concise language
- Say what you mean and avoid analogies and sarcasm
- Allow time for processing and responding
- Use visual information to help understanding
- Don't rely on non-verbal cues e.g., tone of voice, body language or facial expressions
- Minimise sensory distractions
- Regularly check your child's understanding and ensure they have a means to communicate in all situations



[Videos - Awtistiaeth Cymru | Autism Wales | National Autism Team](#)





Supporting Communication

- 1. Motivate** – your child to communicate by making yourself exciting, using their interests and ensuring they have a reason to communicate with others
- 2. Modelling** – language, communication and play appropriate to your child
- 3. Adjusting** – verbal and non-verbal communication to match your child's level of understanding
- 4. Responding** – to your child's focus of attention and their attempts to communicate
- 5. Engaging** – your child's attention by using their name and getting down to their level to communicate
- 6. Promoting independence** – by giving your child choices and opportunities for initiating interactions

Key Strategy: Top tips for developing talk



Watch the film of autistic young people talking about their experiences

1. Think about your own child and fill in the key areas of difference sheet
2. How do these differences impact on your child at home or in school?

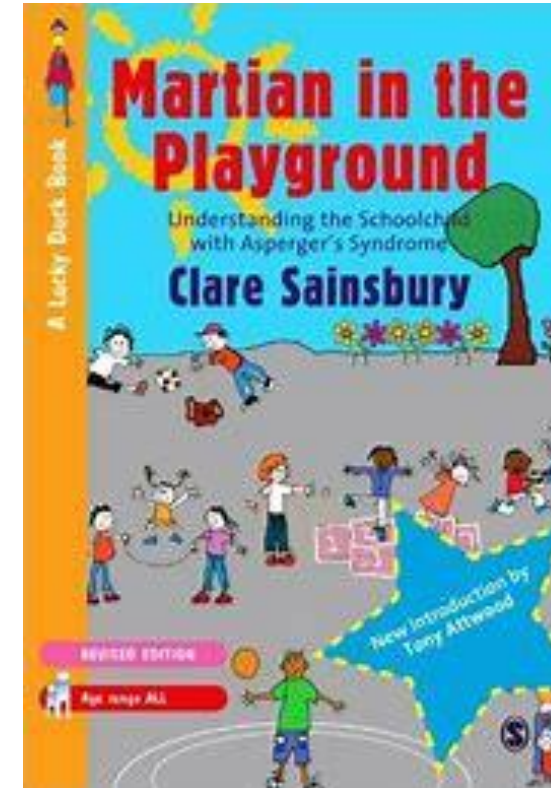
We will share this with the group.



“It's as if everybody is playing some complicated game and I am the only one who hasn't been told the rules”

Claire Sainsbury

Martian in the Playground:
Understanding The Schoolchild
With Asperger's, p8.



It can be helpful to teach specific strategies to support children in situations they find challenging.

These should:

- Reflect children's communicative and developmental level
- Focus on one area at a time
- Give opportunities to practice and generalise



1.
Make social rules clear



2.
Look beyond the behaviour



3.
Prompt the desired behaviour



4.
Give specific feedback about social interactions



5.
Practice turn-taking



6.
Social skills groups

Key Strategy: NAS Social Stories



Does the child know:



1. what they have to do?



2. why they have to do something?



3. what is happening next?

Countdown



Finished

4. what the steps are within each activity?



5. what to say/communicate?



6. when to take part?



7. how to calm themselves?



8. That they can ask/communicate for help?

New or unfamiliar social interactions and group activities can be challenging for a child on the autism spectrum and increase their level of anxiety.

They may need more concrete explanation and planning to understand what this will look like and how to participate.

Key Resource: NAS Visual Supports



Strategies

You can help by using **visual strategies** to facilitate communication and understanding.

- Enabling the children to 'see' the task
- Providing additional time for processing
- Continuing to be referred to after the spoken instruction is given
- They can be looked at, sequenced, rehearsed, and learned
- Helping the young person identify and carry out the stages of a task



Key Resource: NAS Visual Supports





Social Interactions often require a huge effort for children on the autism spectrum. They need to be able to understand how other people behave, how to respond appropriately to social cues from others, how to express themselves and how to manage their own behaviour. The motivation to engage with other people will vary between children on the autistic spectrum. We need to understand and respect each child's social differences and preferences.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05k8jj6>



Useful Resources and websites:

Speech, language and communication

<http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/>

<https://thespectrum.org.au/autism-strategy/autism-strategy-communication/>

Autism and social interaction

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/social-children.aspx>

<https://thespectrum.org.au/autism-strategy/social-interaction/>

Autism and Play

<https://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Developing-play-skills.pdf>

<https://www.scottishautism.org/services-support/support-families/information-resources/play>

Key Strategy: Top tips for developing talk (The Communication Trust)

https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/617945/tct_toptips_pdf.pdf

Key Strategy: Social Stories (National Autistic Society)

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx>

Key Resource: Visual Supports (National Autistic Society)

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/visual-supports.aspx>



Books

- ***Time To Talk*** (FS,KS1) by Alison Schroeder, LDA
- ***Socially Speaking*** (KS1/2) by Alison Schroeder, LDA
- ***The Friendship Formula*** (KS2/3) by Alison Schroeder, LDA
- ***The Conversation Train*** by Joel Shaul, Jessica Kingsley
- **Talkabout Programme** by Alex Kelly, Speechmark
- **Talkabout Activities** by Alex Kelly, Speechmark
- **Language Builders for Verbal ASD** by Liz Elks and Henrietta McLachlan, Elklan



Thank you for your attention and participation.
The next session will be focussed on:-

Sensory Processing
Emotional Regulation

