

# Practical Strategies for supporting students with ASD

By Emma McCarthy

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# Introductions



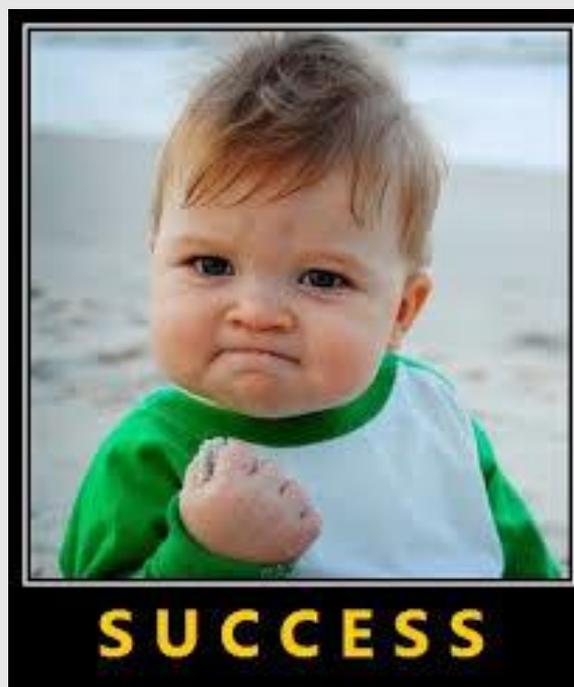
We are all learners!



# Learning Intentions

- 1. To provide information to understand the diagnosis of ASD**
- 2. Investigate ways to engage students with high impact and applied strategies.**
- 3. Empowering students to identify, know and grow their strengths.**
- 4. Confirm, consolidate and share your practice.**

What would success be for you?



The Knowledge is in the room



# What works for your students?

- Capture the practice wisdom that you have about strategies that support engagement for students.



What works best in your experience to progress student learning?



# Historical Context: Chronology of Autism

- Pre-1900s: Historical accounts
- 1911: The term 'autism' first coined
- 1943: Leo Kanner first described autism as we know it
- 1944: Hans Asperger identifies 'Asperger syndrome'
- 1940s to 1960s: Confusion & lack of understanding
- 1960s to 1980s: From 'refrigerator mother' theory to a better understanding
- 1980s to 1990s: Emergence of body of knowledge from individuals with ASDs
- 1991: Hans Asperger's work is translated into English
- 1994: Asperger Disorder is added to the DSM IV
- 1996: Concept of 'spectrum' evolved
- 2000 to present: Ongoing research, education and awareness

# Names for Autism

Low Functioning Autistic Disorder	High Functioning Autistic Disorder	Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Autism</li><li>• Classic Autism</li><li>• Kanner's Autism</li><li>• Autie*</li><li>• Severe Autism</li><li>• Low Functioning Autism</li><li>• High Functioning Autism</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Asperger syndrome</li><li>• A.S</li><li>• Aspie*</li><li>• Aspergian*</li><li>• Mild Autism**</li><li>• High Functioning Autism</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PDD-NOS</li><li>• Atypical Autism</li><li>• Mild Autism**</li></ul>



# Activity

- From watching Sheldon Cooper describe his method for making friends.
- What do students with ASD find hard to do?

# New DSM-V Definition

1. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across contexts, not accounted for by general developmental delays.
2. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities.

<http://www.dsm5.org/proposedrevisions/pages/proposedrevision.aspx?rid=94#>

# Triad of Impairments

**Social & Emotional  
Difficulties**

**Language &  
Communication  
Difficulties**

**ASD**

**Poor Flexibility of  
Thought (Imagination)**

**Repetitive &  
Stereotyped Patterns  
of Behaviour**

# Language & Communication

- Difficulty with:
  - Written and oral expression
  - Written and oral comprehension
  - Pragmatics (e.g. code-switching, body language, eye contact)
  - High level language (ambiguous & figurative)
  - Eg: Sense of humour and jokes
  - Unusual prosody-voice profiles



Image: taliesin, 2006

Disordered or  
absent  
language

Echolalic or  
repetitive  
language

Reasonable  
language but  
circumscribed  
interests

# Social & Emotional

- Difficulty with:
  - Friendships
  - Relationships
  - Theory of Mind
  - 'Unwritten' social rules



Image: Arbron

Aloof

Passive

Active but  
'inappropriate'  
or 'odd'

# Flexibility Of Thought (Imagination & Play)

- Mouthing, spinning & flicking of toys/ household objects
- Difficulty in imagining future events or attaching past events to a current situation
- Lining up or colour coding blocks & toys
- Preference for predictable environments
- Difficulty coping with change in routines/planned events
- Difficulty with flexible thinking (i.e. thoughts can be rigid & stereotyped)



Image: donnors

Using  
objects for  
sensation  
only

Unimaginative  
use of toys

Unable to  
imitate  
symbolic  
play or play  
sequences

Unable to  
initiate  
symbolic  
play

# Asperger's Disorder Definition

A pervasive developmental disorder characterized by clinically significant impairments.

- Social deficits
- Rigid focused interests
- Anxiety

\* in the absence of language impairment and cognitive delay, so often diagnosed later

\* the full criteria of autism are not met

# Asperger's Disorder Presentation

A distinct pattern of social impairment

“not due primarily to a desire to withdraw from social contact” (Wing, 1981)

- Often make attempts at interacting socially with others
- Naive and socially awkward
- Difficulty understanding social rules
- Ask inappropriate and intrusive questions
- Offer minute details about their favourite interests

# Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified(PDD-NOS)

**Do not meet criteria  
for Autistic Disorder**

Do not meet  
criteria for any  
other specific  
disorder

Severe & pervasive  
impairment in  
social interaction

Presence of  
stereotyped  
behaviour, interests  
and activities

Impairment of non-  
verbal or verbal  
communication



# Repetitive & Obsessive Behaviours

- Behaviour is often described as repetitive or obsessive
- Can also present as a preference for routines
- Preoccupation for 'parts' rather than the whole
- May include behaviours such as:
  - rocking
  - twirling
  - flicking
  - arm flapping

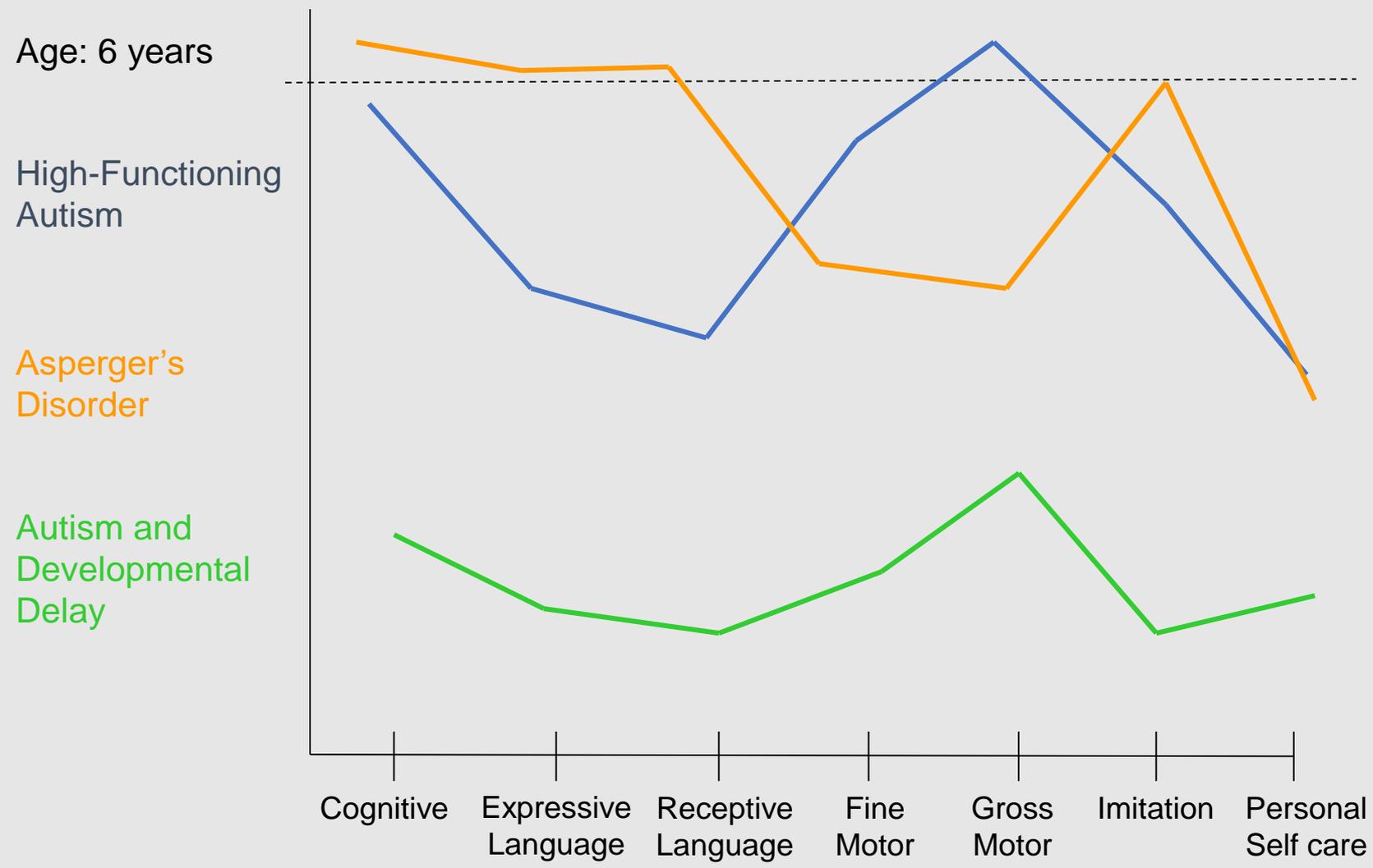


Repetitive  
Body  
Movements

Fascination  
with Sensory  
Stimuli

Object, Verbal  
& Skill  
Routines

Circumscribed  
Interests



*\* Children with an ASD usually have an uneven profile of ability*

# Secondary Difficulties & Conditions

ASD may co-exist with other conditions, disorders or difficulties, including:

- Intellectual disability
- Speech and/or language difficulties & disorders
- Anxiety and/or depression
- Attention difficulties & disorders (incl. AD/HD)
- Sleep disorders / parasomnia
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Epilepsy / EEG abnormalities
- Sensory dysfunction
- Fine and gross motor deficits
- Tourette Syndrome
- Down Syndrome

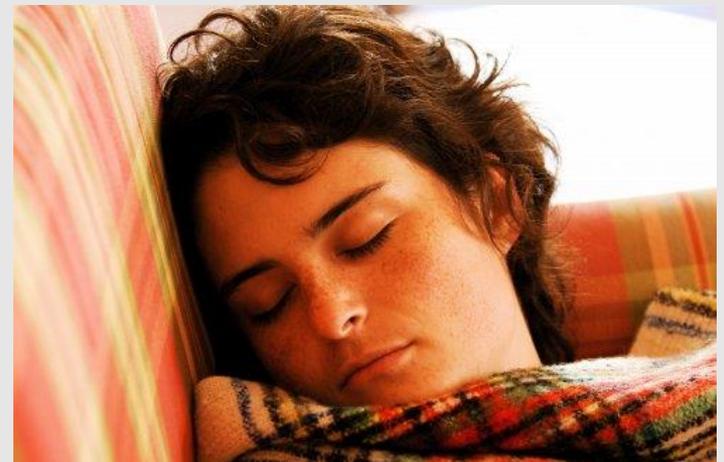


Image: Pedrosimoses7, 2006

## Other Features

### Simonoff (2008)

- 29.2% have social anxiety disorder
- AD/HD 28.2%
- 28.1% have Oppositional Defiance Disorder – challenging behaviour to avoid situations that cause anxiety
- Sleep disorders / parasomnia (up to 83%, Ming et al, 2009)

# Anxiety

- Anxiety can present in different ways through ritualistic behaviour and/or challenging behaviour.
- It can also lead to withdrawal from social interaction.
- Offensive language
- Withdraw into their special interest
- Stealing
- Display repetitive behaviour as a calming mechanism
- Self-injury
- Aggression and violence

# ASD Experience of Anxiety

- Caught in the detail
- Narrow focus
- Strong preference for sameness
- Difficulty changing attention
- Poor understanding of the social world
- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Language difficulties
- Learning difficulties
- Heightened sensory experience

# Sensory Difficulties

Sensory Difficulties are common - 70-80% have sensory dysfunction

- These can exhibit in different ways:
- Touch – soft or heavy
- Sight – bright lights
- Hearing - noise
- Smelling – aversion to some smells
- Taste – taste and texture

# Causes Of ASD



A neuro developmental disorder (Yang et al, 2007)

## **Possibly several causes?**

- Neurological causes? (Baron-Cohen et al, 2000)
- Genetic factors? (Gupta et al 2007, Yang et al 2007)

ASD cases – have no known cause (idiopathic)

- 5-10% of cases – predisposition to ASD due to have an associated disorder (e.g. Fragile X, Tuberous Sclerosis)

# Prevalence & Recurrence



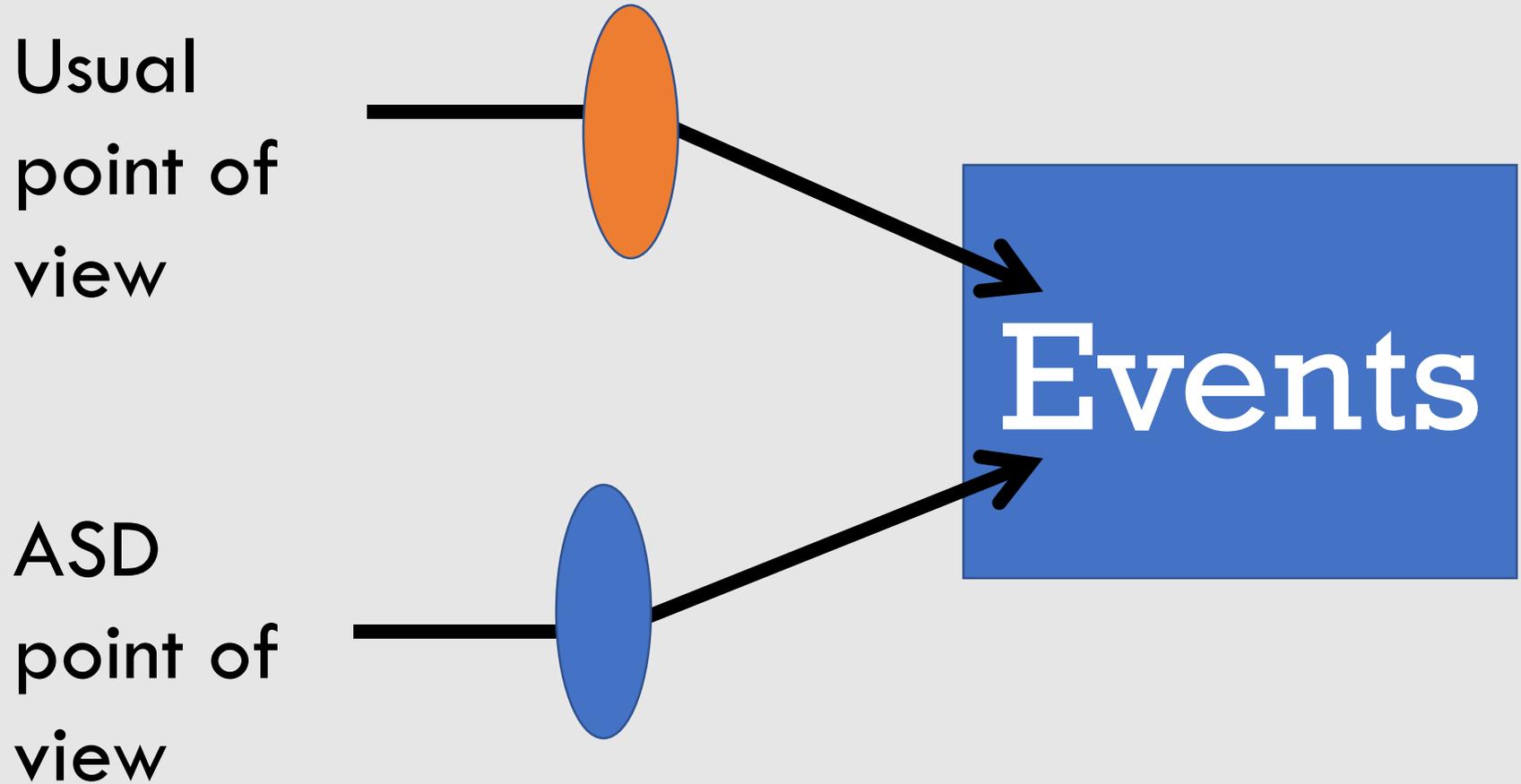
www.WallpapersLover.com

- Prevalence - Approximately 1/160

Baird et al (2000)	Chakrabarti & Fombonne (2001)	Bertrand et al (2001)	Chakrabarti & Fombonne et al (2005)
1/170	1/160	1/150	1/170

- Autism Spectrum Disorder has a (diagnostic male: female) sex ratio of 4:1 (Anello et al, 2009)
- The ICD-10 classification gives the sex ratio for Asperger syndrome as 8:1
- Recurrence rate of autism in a second sibling – approximately 8% (Volkmar, 2005)

# Strategies for Children on the Autistic Spectrum



# Eye Contact

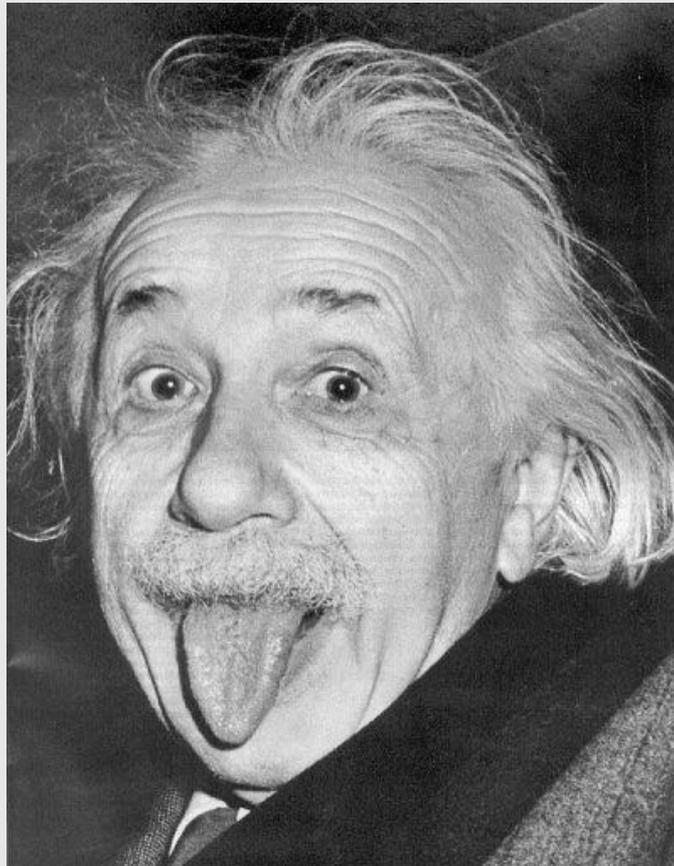
*Encourage but do not  
force eye contact*

*You could say  
“Look my way”*



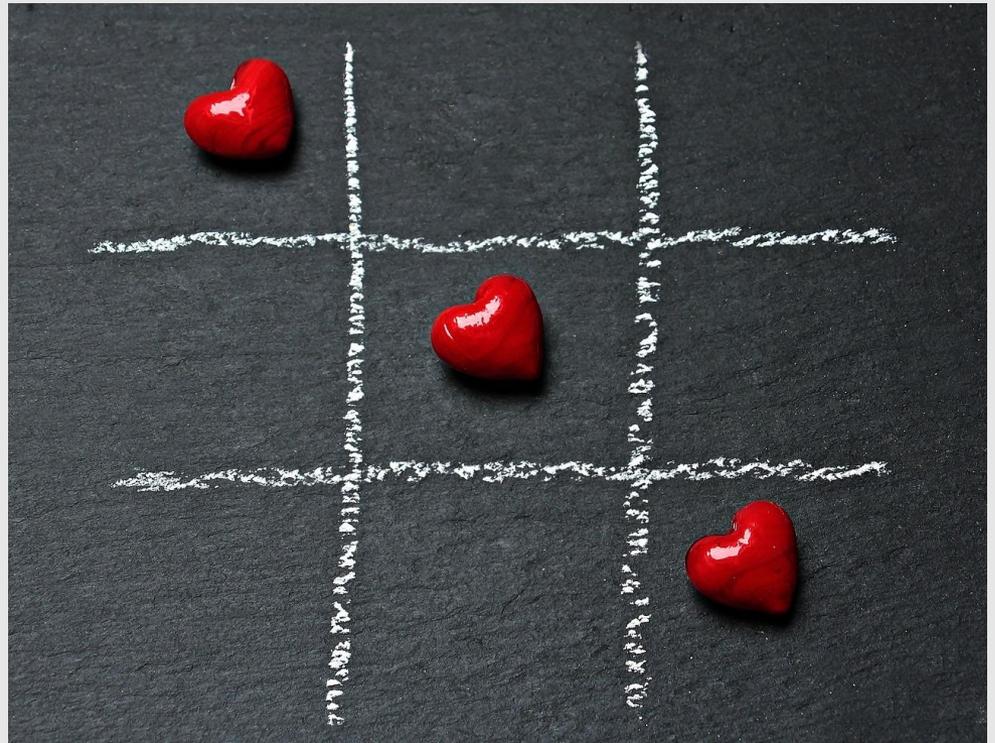
Image: P. Sapiano, 2007

“If I can't picture it, I can't understand it”



Albert Einstein

# Strategies for supporting ASD



# Temple Grandin I think in pictures



# Visual Aides & The Communication Symbol Hierarchy

Many individuals with ASD can benefit from the use of visual cues as they can help:

- Understand activities or expectations
- Understand what is going to happen next or in the future
- Express what s/he wants, needs or thinks



## Pictures can teach a skill

- Pictures help bridge the understanding gap...from simple to complex ideas
- Pictures, diagrams and text give prompts, reminders and affirmations of expectations
- Use of personal or familiar pictures will be the most effective.
- Combining several simple pictured tasks together can get quite complex results.
- Make a list of common 'visual' prompts we have in public places

# ASKING FOR HELP



Look around to see what other students are doing. Try to figure out what is supposed to happen next.



If that did not help, raise your hand and look towards the teacher.



Think of the question you need to ask in your head. Practice it in your head.



When the teacher comes over, show her the place on your paper you are stuck and then ask the question you have in your head.



Watch the teacher's face as she talks or watch what she writes on your paper to show you the answer.



If the answer still doesn't make sense to you, tell the teacher you are still confused.



When she is done, look at her and say, "Thank you."



Get back to work!

# Seasons Activity on visualizing

- Sequence a task in pictures and text to support a student to complete a task at school...unpacking school bag, talking to friends, getting prepared to do assigned work, manners...

# Routine And Boundaries



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00	MT2202 Ordinary Differential Equations FTH1		LABC2072 Computer Graphics (S) Dual	MT2282 Numerical Analysis F Williamson, G03	
10:00	XMT2202 Ordinary Differential Equations MS15 / Roscoe, 2.3		LABC2073 Computer Graphics (S) Dual	XMT2202 Ordinary Differential Equations Simon Engineering, Basement Theatre 3A	XMT2202 Ordinary Differential Equations MS15
11:00	C52012 Algebra and Data Structures 1.1		XMT2212 Further Linear Algebra 1.5		MT2202 Ordinary Differential Equations Stogford, Theatre 1
12:00	MT2212 Further Linear Algebra Roscoe, Theatre A	MT2282 Numerical Analysis F Williamson, G03	C52072 Computer Graphics 1.1		MT2212 Further Linear Algebra Stogford, Theatre 1
1:00			PASS Peer Assisted Study 1027 / SF15 / LF17 / J056		XMT2212 Further Linear Algebra Simon Engineering, Basement Theatre 4A
2:00	C52072 Computer Graphics 1.1			XMT2212 Further Linear Algebra MS17	
3:00		C3307 Tutorial			
4:00		C52012 Algebra and Data Structures 1.1			



## Timetable



	My Timetable
9:00 AM	
	Before morning Tea
	Morning Tea
	Before Lunch
	Lunch
	After Lunch
	Home

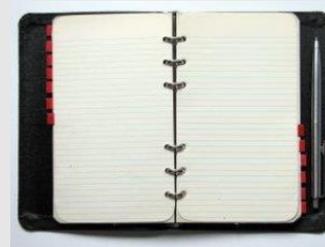
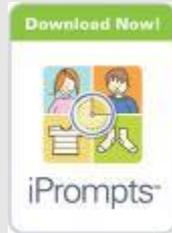


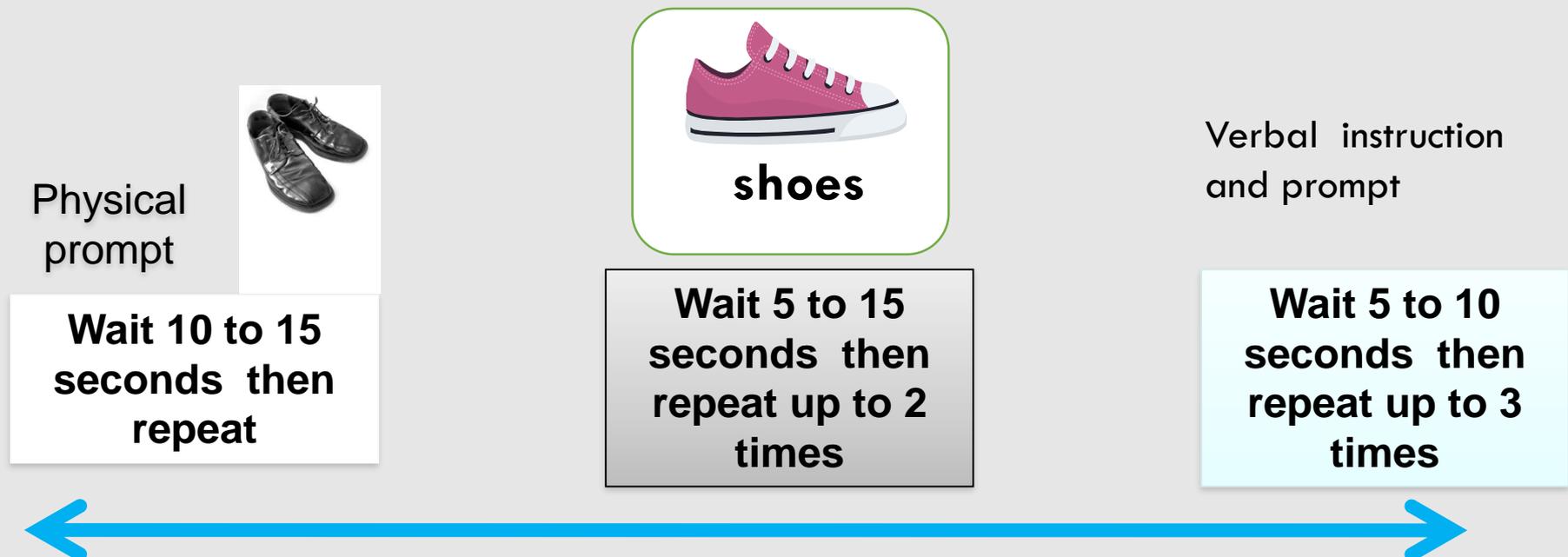
Image: alitaylor



ASD

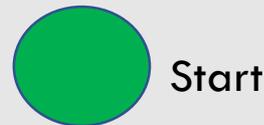
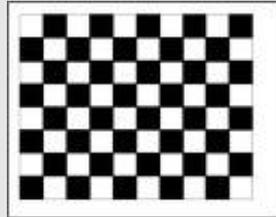
# Auditory Processing Time

- Give individuals adequate time to respond to a request, question, direction or instruction
- A minimum of 5-10 seconds is a good 'rule of thumb'



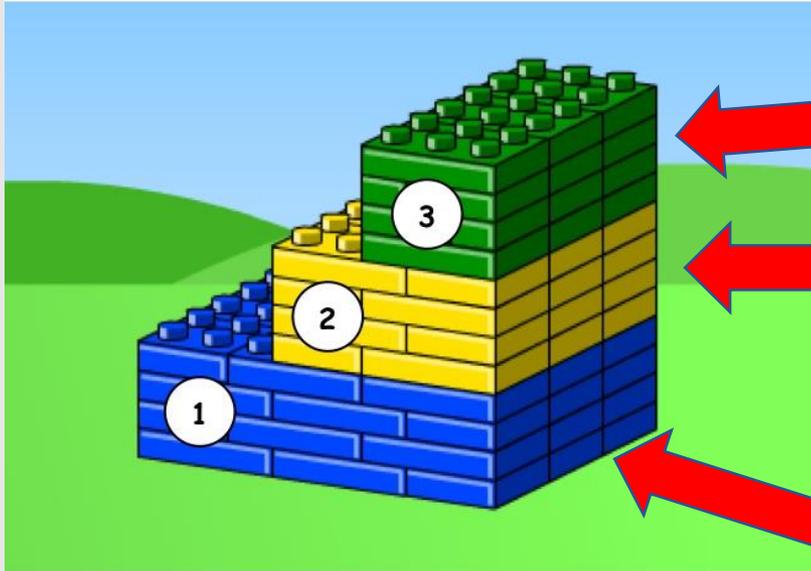
# Define Expectations

*Define the task before you begin*  
*Clearly identify the beginning and end*



ASD

# Break Complex Tasks Down



3. *Bring the red cup to the table*

2. *Pick up the red cup*

1. *Go to the cupboard*

Verbal build ups and break downs

“Shower, go shower, go shower now, shower, now”

# Chaining

- Breaking a task down into small steps – as each step is learnt, the next step is taught.
- Chaining can be done backwards or forwards e.g. putting on your socks you get the child do the very last action – pulling them up, or the very first action placing them over the toes

# Limit Choices

Use real objects

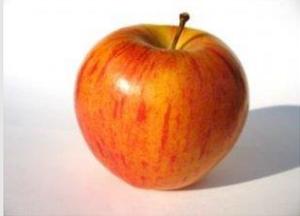


Image: pontuse

**OR**



Image: Whizzy



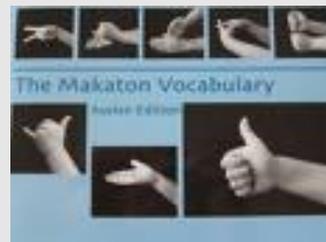
**TV**



**computer**



Use photos or pictures



Use verbal instruction  
and prompts

Limit of 2  
choices

Limit of 2-3  
choices

3+ choices



**ASD**

# Set Time Limits



## Timetable

8-9pm: TV

9- 9.15pm:  
Computer

9.15pm: Shower



ASD

# Use Clear & Simple Language

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN and MEAN WHAT YOU SAY

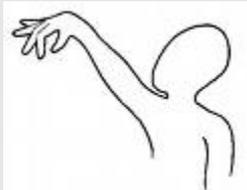


Timetable



**Checklist**

- 1. Get towel
- 2. Go to bathroom
- 3. Get undressed



Signing  
'shower'

Use verbal instruction  
and prompts



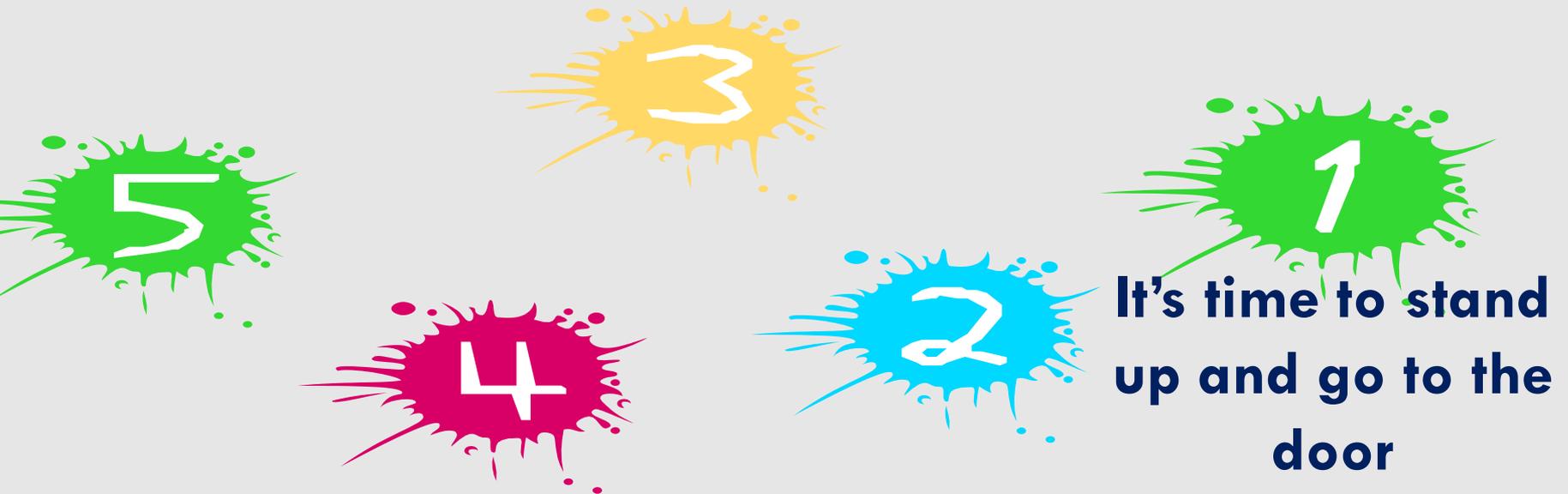
Shower



ASD

# Ending A Task

- Have warning prompts
- Make use of count downs
- Avoid using the word 'FINISH'



# Reinforcements

Reinforcements are given to reinforce a behaviour and improve the chance of the behaviour occurring again.

They should be:

- Immediate
- Specific
- Contingent
- Motivating



Objects

Tokens

Contracts

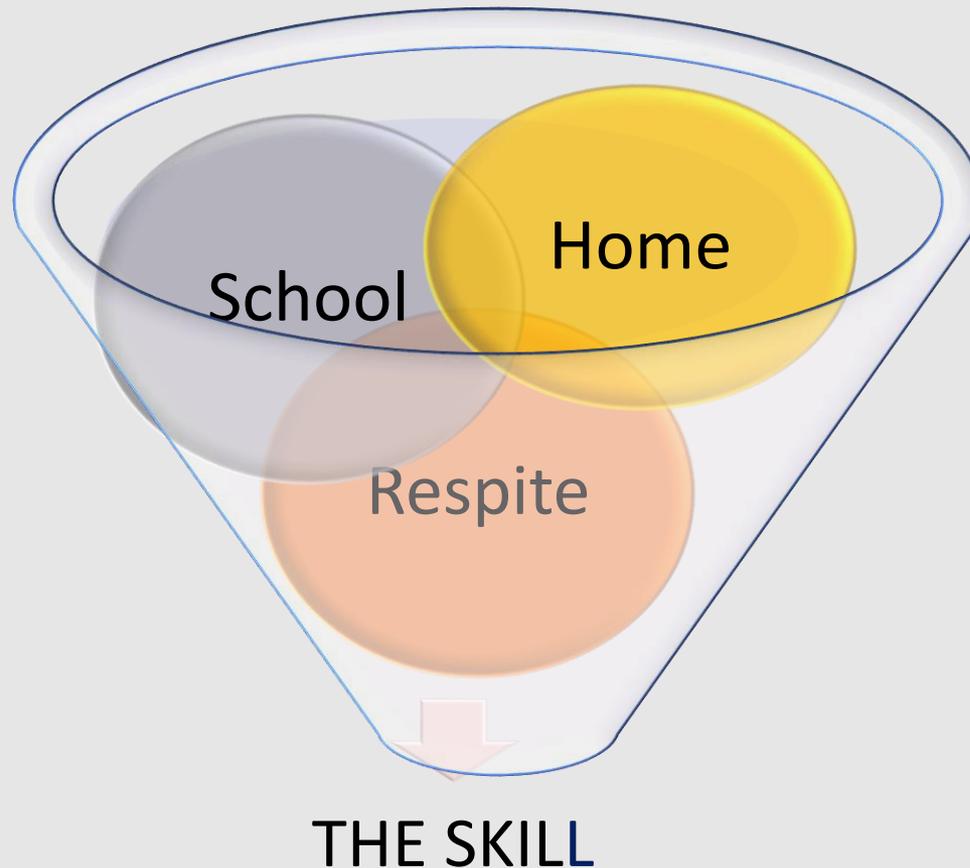
Verbal



ASD

# Generalisation Skills

*Teach the same skill in many different environments, in different situations and involve different people*



# Organisational Skills



**Checklist**

1. Get towel
2. Go to bathroom
3. Get undressed



Colour Coding	
Swimming	
Home Weekend	
Excursion	
Day Placement	



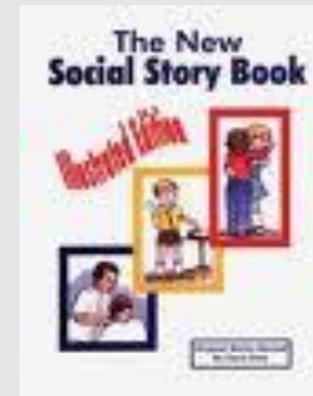
Photo of socks on drawer



ASD

# Preparing For Change

- Individuals with ASD find it hard to manage change
- Aim to prepare well in advance
- Give a reason for the change



Visual and verbal warning



ASD



# Be Consistent



*It's the key to success!*





# Intro by Carol Gray





## WE LIKE TO DRAW

Sam and Isabel - November 2011

It works best if there are big sheets of paper to draw on- we have a big roll, that we can use on the dining room table. Then, we can use the really nice markers - some of them are permanent.

Tonight, Sam was making funny drawings of aliens and strange ninjas. He was also making dot-to-dot drawings, of spirals and funny faces. When Sam started making dots, Isabel worked on making dots too. When Sam made lines or circles, Isabel worked on lines or circles. Then, Isabel thought it would be even funnier to draw on Sam's face. Sam didn't think it was a good idea, because it was too close to his eye. Isabel said she was sorry, and Sam accepted the apology. Then there was more time to draw before dinner.

# Writing a Social Learning Story

- **Three Step Process**

- 1) What will the story be about? ( research and observe the child)
- What is the behaviour that needs to be established?
- What is the desired behaviour outcome?

- 2)What is the student's interest?

- Is the student able to read and understand what is read?
- Write at the student's reading/ understanding level.

- 3)Do a task analysis...break it down to small, specific steps

- Write the steps into a story
- Use pictures/icons for cuing (visual reminders)

# Activity: Write your stories and share them

- Using the example and resources provided write a social learning story for one of these scenarios:
- Sharing a taking turns in class
- Making friends
- Asking for help with school work

# Conclusion

Working with Autism requires compassion and understanding.

Tony Atwood says Autism is a gift.

When you plant lettuce, if it does not grow well, you don't blame the lettuce. You look into the reasons it is not doing well. It may need fertilizer, or more water, or less sun. You never blame the lettuce. Yet if we have problems with our friends or our family, we blame the other person. But if we know how to take care of them, they will grow well, like lettuce. Blaming has no positive effect at all, nor does trying to persuade using reason and arguments. That is my experience. No blame, no reasoning, no argument, just understanding. If you understand, and you show that you understand, you can love, and the situation will change.

-Thích Nhất Hạnh

[WWW.LIVELIFEHAPPY.COM](http://WWW.LIVELIFEHAPPY.COM)

# References

- Aspect Australian Autism Alliance
- Aspect Autism In Education Conference 5 May 2017
- Victoria State Government; Autism Friendly Learning
- Creating an Autism Friendly Environment
- National Centre Against Bullying
- OAR Organization for Autism Research, Arlington, VA, USA
- 
- Life Journey Through Autism: An Educator's Guide to Asperger Syndrome
- Synapse-Reconnecting Lives Autism Spectrum Disorders-Fact Sheets
- Mark Hutton, MA: My Aspergers Child... 'Teaching Social Skills and Emotional Management
- <http://www.andnextcomeL.com>
- Social Thinking by Michelle Garcia Winner
- [www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)

## Practical Autism Resources: free printables

- [www.practicalautismresources.com/print-ables](http://www.practicalautismresources.com/print-ables)
- do2Learn subscribe/free printable
- Indiana Resource Center for Autism./resources/Articles/Education/Programming
- Transition Time: Helping Individuals on the Autism Spectrum move successfully from One Activity to Another by Kara Hume, PhD
- Alannah & Madeline Foundation, National Centre against Bullying
- Asperger's and Bullying-An Inclusive Education Resource
- Government of South Australia, Quality Educational Practices For Students with Asperger Syndrome
- Little Black Duck Different Ways to Increase Communication  
[www.thelittleblackduck.com.au](http://www.thelittleblackduck.com.au)
- Philip Smith, PhD Using Social Stories to Teach Replacement Skills
- [www.child-autism-parent-café.com/how-to-write-a-social-story.html](http://www.child-autism-parent-café.com/how-to-write-a-social-story.html)
- free printable worksheets Help Kids Build Critical Skills with Fun
- One place for special needs
- [www.oneplaceforspecialneeds.com/main/resources.htm-category=46&text=schoolsocialstories](http://www.oneplaceforspecialneeds.com/main/resources.htm-category=46&text=schoolsocialstories).
- Kari Dunn Buron, When My Autism Gets too Big
- [www.5pointscale.com](http://www.5pointscale.com)