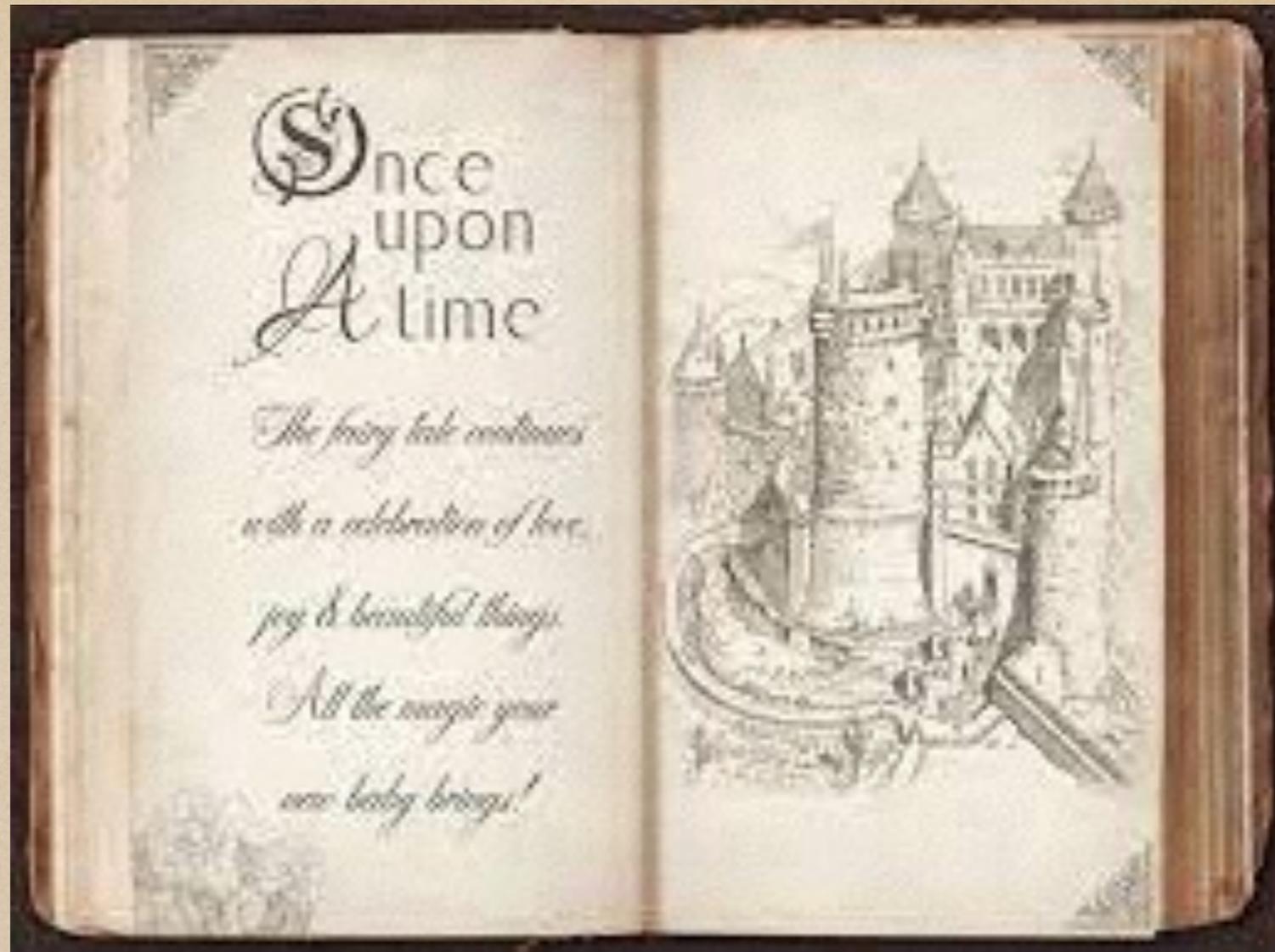


Communication is a two-  
way thing

a look at the stories we are told in our social world with  
Evaleen Whelton

There once  
was a little  
girl..





The Stories we are told  
and the messages within

“once upon a time there was a  
child who had difficulty fitting in”

The Story

“it is your child’s fault  
that others exclude them”

The message

“once upon a time there was a  
child who needed to learn social  
skills to fit in with the others”

The story

“the excluded child is the one with the communication issues even though others make no effort to understand them and include them”

The message

“once upon a time there was a  
child who needed to learn how  
to behave”

The story

“the way we behave is caused  
by autism and not by the way  
the world responds to us”

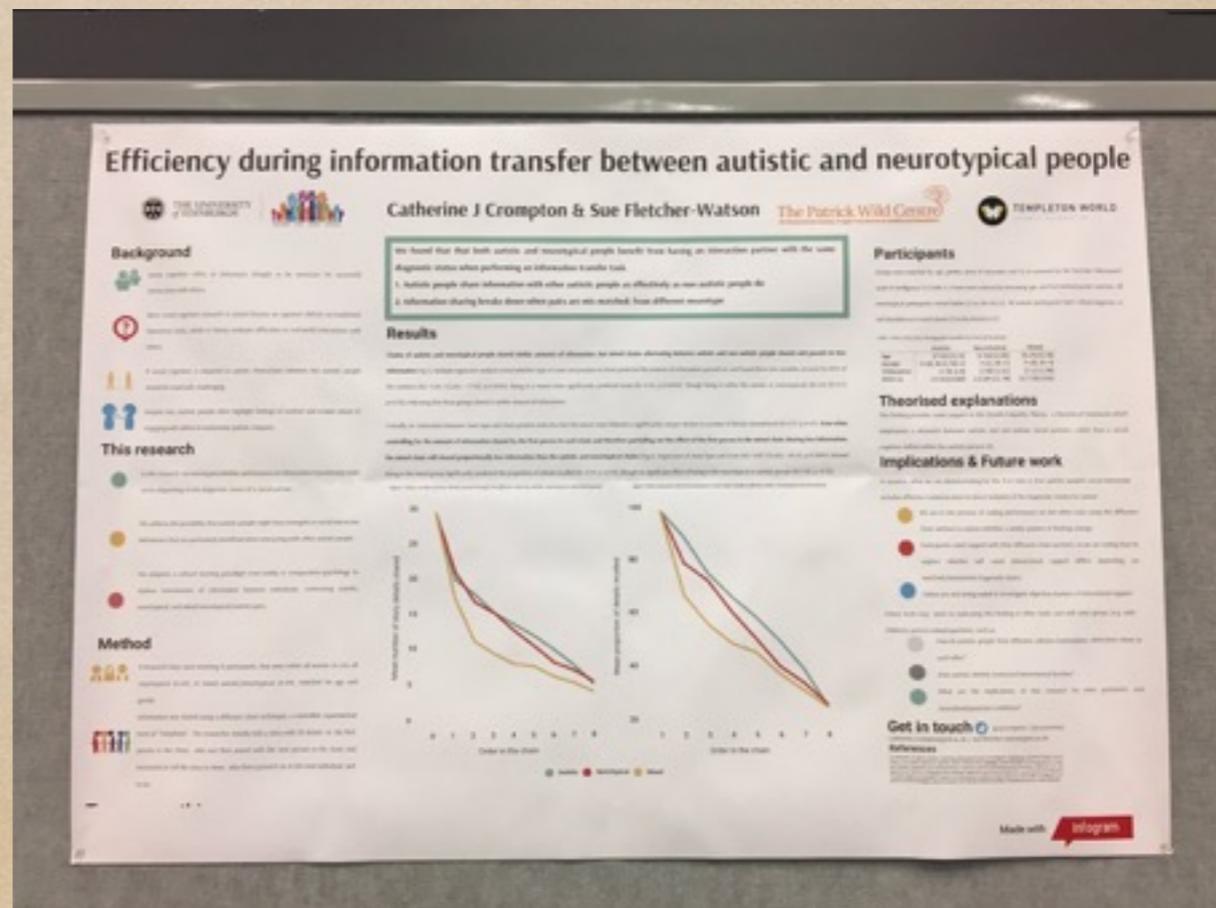
The message



But are these stories true?  
and are these messages really the ones we want to  
send and receive?

# But are these stories true?

- ◆ Dr. Catherine Crompton and Sue Fletcher Watson tested this story in Edinburgh University



# But are these stories true?

- ◆ We cannot evaluate “social skills” of one person on their own without evaluating the way others interact with them.
- ◆ We cannot make friends on our own
- ◆ We cannot make connections where we are feared, othered or considered odd and weird.

# But are these stories true?

- ◆ If we interact naturally and are told we are cheeky for taking something literally ...
- ◆ Or we are told that we are asking too many questions...
- ◆ How will this effect how we feel about ourselves the next time we interact with someone?

# What other stories have been told?

- ◆ Eye contact
- ◆ Empathy
- ◆ Making friends
- ◆ Playing
- ◆ Turn taking
- ◆ Sharing

# What messages does the world send Autistic children and adults?

- ◆ You are rude
- ◆ You are blunt
- ◆ You can't communicate
- ◆ You are cheeky
- ◆ Sit still
- ◆ Stop moving
- ◆ Stop embarrassing me
- ◆ You're not concentrating
- ◆ You don't know what it's like

# What messages does the world send Autistic children and adults?

- ◆ Don't be so dramatic
- ◆ It's not loud
- ◆ It's not cold
- ◆ Good listening
- ◆ You need to concentrate

# What do we need to remember?

- ◆ We are sensitive, “sensory” input includes the messages we get from others in our social world.
- ◆ The sensitive child will feel more shame, more embarrassment, blame themselves...

# What do we need to remember?

- ◆ We communicate literally. Words have a purpose outside of the social context.
- ◆ Not only is our communication different but the purposes for our communication differ to non-autistics because there is no social hierarchy. Chit Chat etc
- ◆ Everyone is equal, no social hierarchy, respect rather than authority. Can be misinterpreted as “cheeky”.
- ◆ Movement is our first language , speech is our second. (Stimming)
- ◆ Eye contact is not part of our communication. We can look away so we can visualise, translate. Eye contact is very intimate and can be painful, uncomfortable or intrusive.
- ◆ We are in constant communication with our world, not just the people in it. (In my language)
- ◆ We are often forced to mask who we really are, to hide our pain and discomfort so that other people feel comfortable around us.



# What do we need to remember?

- ◆ Eye contact is not always part of Autistic Communication
- ◆ Avoid Vague Phrasing, be specific to build the picture
- ◆ Some of us are visual, not all of us are
- ◆ A Processing Delay is really a translating delay
- ◆ We are literal interpreters and communicators
- ◆ Our responses need to be validated and not dismissed
- ◆ We cannot “over-react”, we can only react.

# What do we need to remember?

- ◆ Be conscious of our social anxiety
- ◆ Get to know their stims and what they communicate
- ◆ Communication is two-way and so is miscommunication
- ◆ Pauses can mean you need to re-phrase
- ◆ We pick up on the emotional energy in a room
- ◆ What “messages” is your child receiving in school, from peers, family etc and how do you balance these?

# What do we need to remember?

- ◆ Time with other Autistics
- ◆ Access to AAC, ISL etc
- ◆ Meeting us half way: Learning, teaching and adapting
- ◆ Acceptance and Understanding
- ◆ Respecting our communication
- ◆ A non-hostile sensory environment

# We are human

So we respond to human stimuli and human interactions in human ways.  
If our social environment is good then we will feel good

Then we can live happily ever  
after...