

Thrive 22

Helping schools to become thriving places for
Autistic pupils

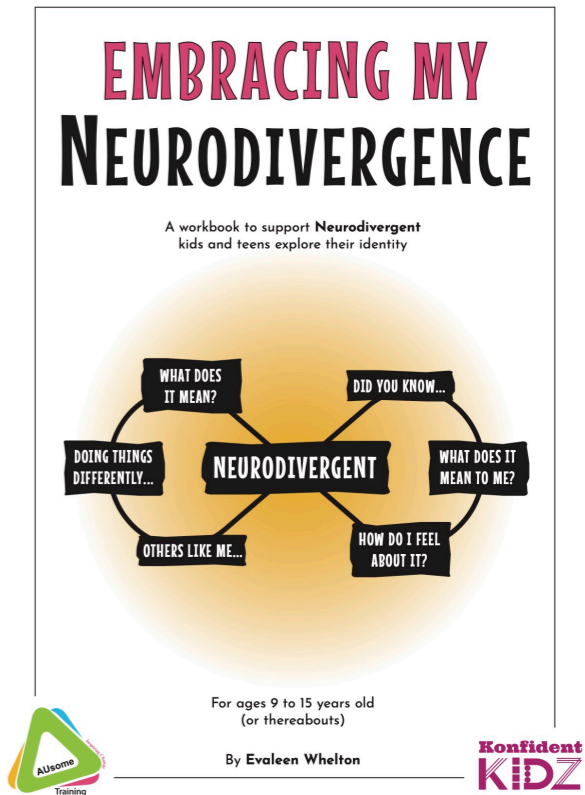
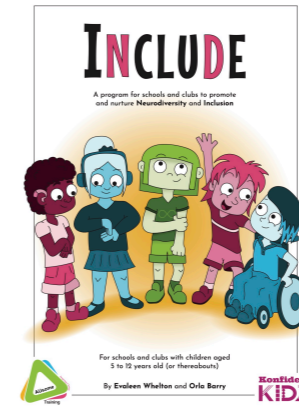
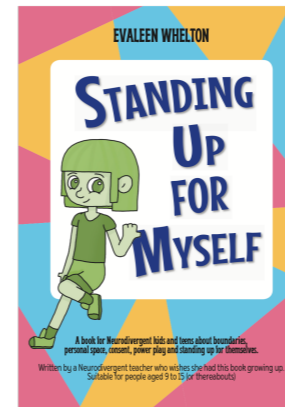
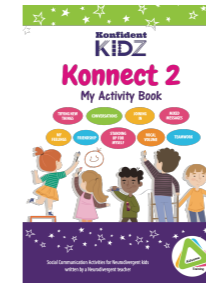
Evaleen Whelton



Hello..

A little bit about me...

- Autistic since 2014
- My journey
- Working with kids
- Konfident Kidz
- AUsome Training



AUsome Training

- Will be different to average autism training
- Will challenge your thinking
- Will ask you to look at Autistic people from a new perspective
- Will ask you to be part of positive change



Course Outline

1. An introduction to Neurodiversity

2. What autism is and is not, a look at co-occurring mental health and medical conditions.

3. Sensory Processing

4. Stimming: Movement and Learning

5. Behaviour



Module 1

1. An introduction to Neurodiversity



A little bit about language

- With autism v Autistic
- Disorder/ condition / way of being/
identity
- Neurodiversity
- Neurodiversity affirming



The burning
question...

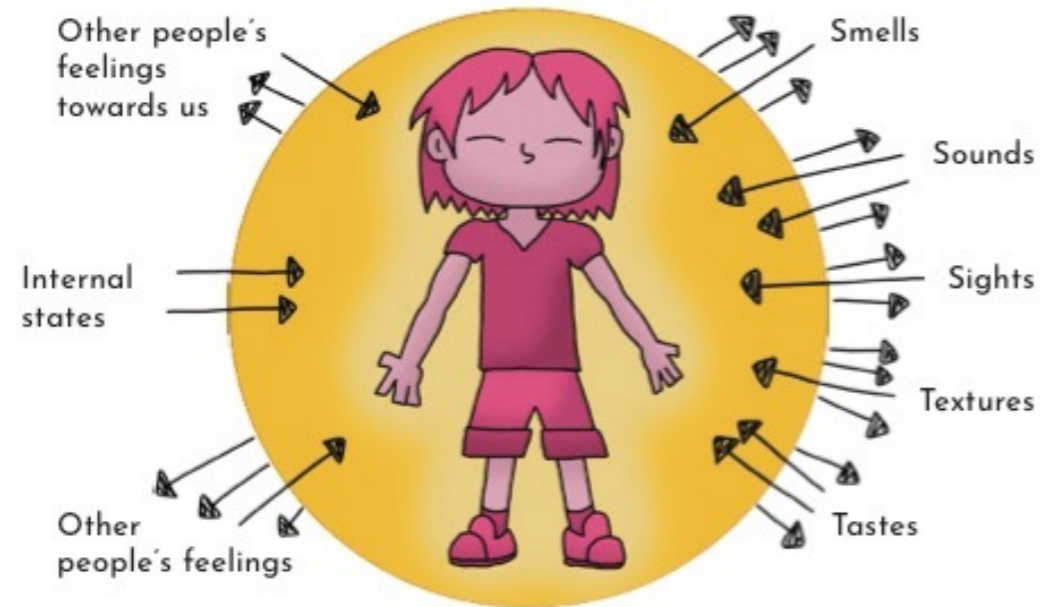
What is autism?



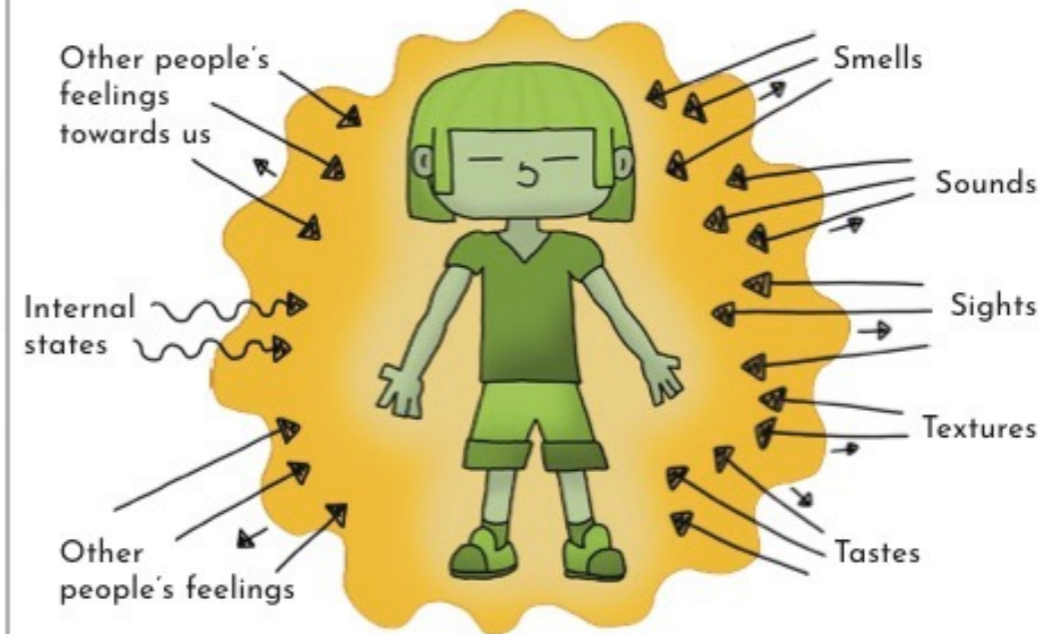
“Autistics are human beings who have a different sensory system to non-autistic human beings. We interact with our environment differently to non-autistic people. We have our own language and culture which we are only beginning to explore as a community. We communicate in our own language with other Autistics but our language is often misinterpreted by non-autistics. Autistics have an ability to hyper focus and to become experts on a subject because learning for us is an emotional experience. ”



NON-AUTISTIC



AUTISTIC



Past and Present

Autism	Autistic
Deficitis in social communcation	Highly effective peer to peer communication just like non-autistics.
Lack empathy	Hyper empathy
Restricted interests	Experts & Creatives
Inappropriate Play	Autistics play Autistically
Inability to read social cues	Double Empathy
Repetitive Movements	Human Behaviour
Adversity to change/ loves routine	Human behaviour + anxiety
Inappropriate interests in sensory aspects of the environment	Sensitive
Sensory Processing Disorder	Sensitive
Difficulty making friends	Excluded
Non-verbal	Person who communicates in plenty of ways
Levels of autism	Autistic people who may medical conditions which complicate their lives
Executive Dysfunction	Anxiety, stress and depression
School Refusal, demand avoidance	Trauma
Difficulties with emotional regulation	Trauma
Inflexibility of behaviour	Trauma



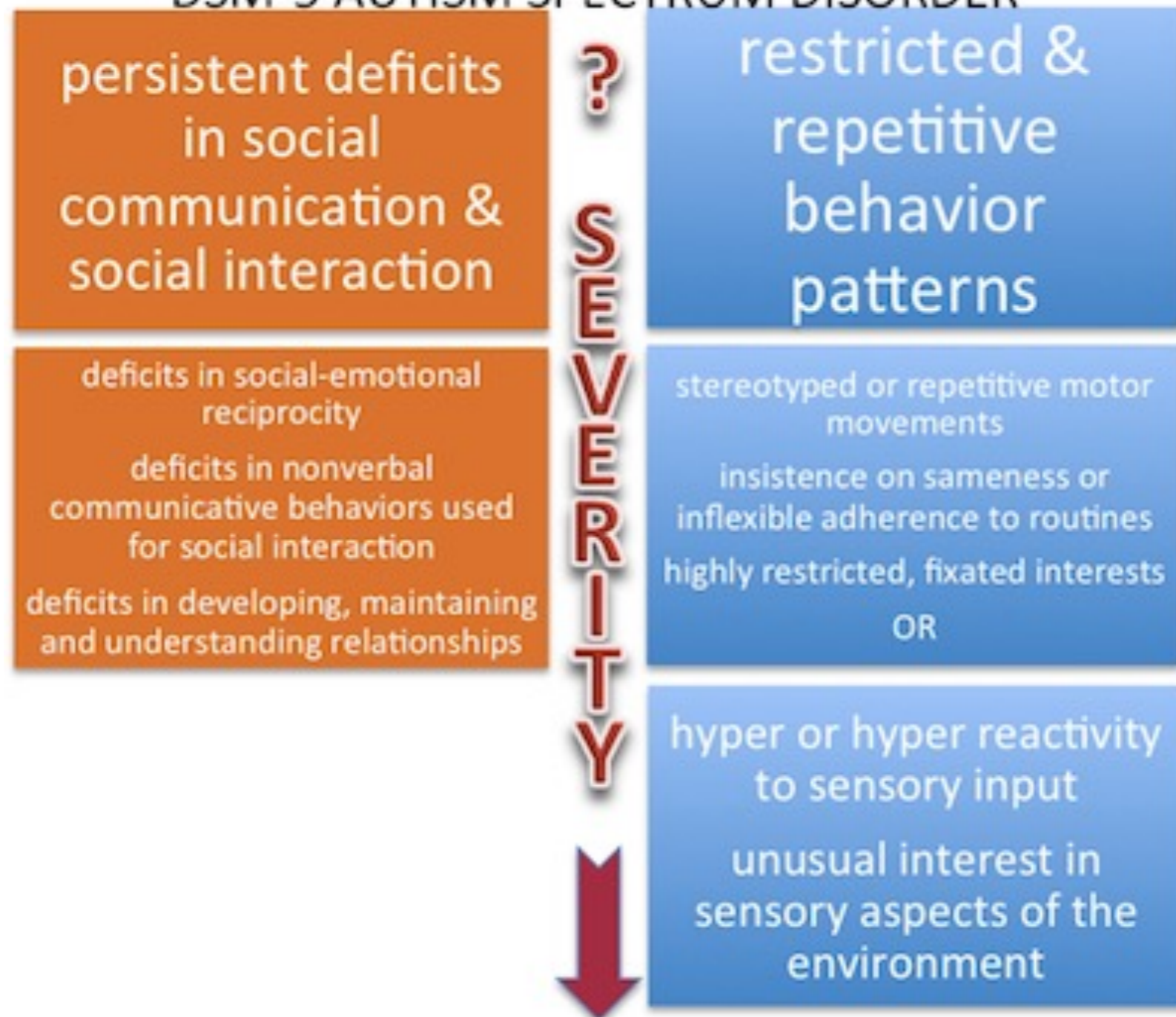
Module 2

What autism is and is not

-a look at co-occurring mental health and medical conditions.



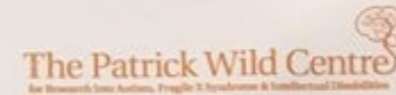
DSM-5 AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER



Efficiency during information transfer between autistic and neurotypical people



Catherine J Crompton & Sue Fletcher-Watson



Background

- Social cognition refers to behaviours thought to be necessary for successful interactions with others.
- Most social cognition research in autism focuses on apparent deficits on traditional laboratory tasks, which in theory underpin difficulties in real world interactions with others.
- If social cognition is impaired in autism, interactions between two autistic people should be especially challenging.
- Despite this, autistic people often highlight feelings of comfort and unique ways of engaging with others in exclusively autistic company.

This research

- In this research, we investigate whether performance on information transmission tasks varies depending on the diagnostic status of a social partner.
- We address the possibility that autistic people might have strengths in social interactive behaviours that are particularly beneficial when interacting with other autistic people.
- We adapted a cultural learning paradigm used widely in comparative psychology to explore transmission of information between individuals, contrasting autistic, neurotypical, and mixed neurotypical/autistic pairs.

Method

- 9 Research Days each involving 8 participants, that were either all autistic (n=24), all neurotypical (n=24), or mixed autistic/neurotypical (n=24), matched for age and gender.
- Information was shared using a diffusion chain technique, a controlled, experimental form of "Telephone". The researcher initially told a story with 30 details to the first person in the chain, who was then paired with the next person in the chain and instructed to tell the story to them, who then passed it on to the next individual, and

We found that both autistic and neurotypical people benefit from having an interaction partner with the same diagnostic status when performing an information transfer task.

1. Autistic people share information with other autistic people as effectively as non-autistic people do
2. Information sharing breaks down when pairs are mis-matched: from different neurotype

Results

Chains of autistic and neurotypical people shared similar amounts of information, but mixed chains alternating between autistic and non-autistic people shared and passed on less information (Fig 1). Multiple regression analysis tested whether type of chain and position in chain predicted the amount of information passed on, and found these two variables account for 88% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.88$, $F(5,66) = 77.05$, $p < 0.0001$). Being in a mixed chain significantly predicted score ($B = -6.04$, $p < 0.0001$) though being in either the autistic or neurotypical did not ($B = 0.13$, $p = 0.93$), indicating that these groups shared a similar amount of information.

Crucially, an interaction between chain type and chain position indicates that the mixed chain followed a significantly steeper decline in number of details remembered ($B = -0.57$, $p < 0.01$). Even when controlling for the amount of information shared by the first person in each chain and therefore partialling out the effect of the first person in the mixed chain sharing less information, the mixed chain still shared proportionally less information than the autistic and neurotypical chains (Fig 2). Regression of chain type and score ($R^2 = 0.87$, $F(5,66) = 94.50$, $p < 0.0001$) showed being in the mixed group significantly predicted the proportion of details recalled ($B = -11.41$, $p < 0.05$), though no significant effect of being in the neurotypical or autistic groups ($B = 5.66$, $p = 0.32$).

Figure 1 Mean number of story details passed through the diffusion chain by autistic, neurotypical, and mixed groups

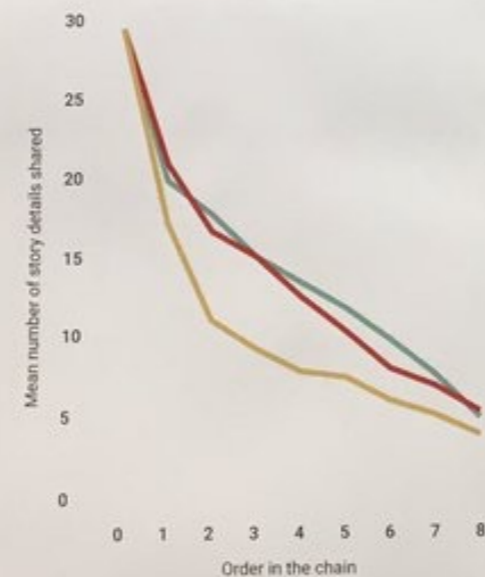
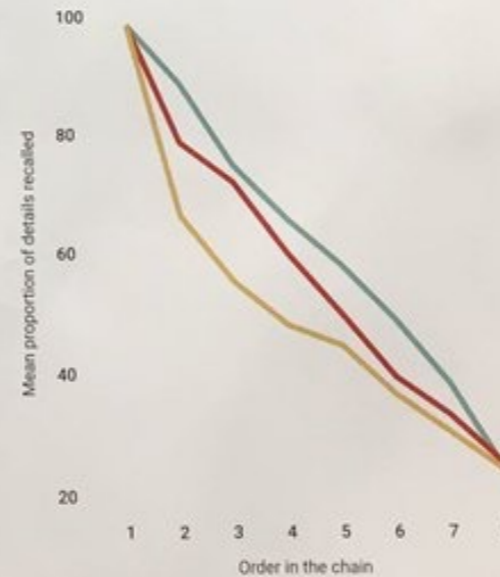


Figure 2 Mean proportion of the first person in each chain details recalled by autistic, neurotypical and mixed groups



Participants

Groups were matched by age, gender, years of education and IQ as assessed by the Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (1) (Table 1). Chains were ordered by increasing age, and had minimal gender switches. All neurotypical participants scored below 32 on the AQ (2). All autistic participants had a clinical diagnosis, or self-identified and scored above 72 on the RAADS-R (3).

Table 1 Mean (SD) of key demographic variables for each of the groups

	Autistic	Neurotypical	Mixed
Age	37.33(13.13)	37.92(14.39)	35.25(10.76)
Gender	F=18, M=3, NB=3	F=21, M=3	F=18, M=6
Y/Education	17.44 (2.8)	17.83 (1.52)	17.12 (1.98)
WASI IQ	114.42(16.89)	115.04 (11.78)	117.79(13.62)

Theorised explanations

This finding provides some support to the Double Empathy Theory: a theoretical framework which emphasises a mismatch between autistic and non-autistic social partners, rather than a social cognitive deficit within the autistic person (4).

Implications & Future work

In essence, what we are demonstrating for the first time is that autistic people's social behaviour includes effective communication in direct violation of the diagnostic criteria for autism.

- We are in the process of coding performance on two other tasks using the diffusion chain method to explore whether a similar pattern of findings emerge.
 - Participants rated rapport with their diffusion chain partners, so we are coding that to explore whether self-rated interactional rapport differs depending on matched/mismatched diagnostic status.
 - Videos are also being coded to investigate objective markers of interactional rapport.
- Future work may work on replicating this finding in other tasks and with other groups (e.g. with children), and on related questions, such as:
- How do autistic people from different cultures (nationalities, ethnicities) relate to each other?
 - Does autistic identity transcend international borders?
 - What are the implications of this research for other psychiatric and neurodevelopmental conditions?

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References

- (1) Wechsler, D. (2017) Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence. (3rd Edition). San Antonio, TX: The Psychological Corp.
 (2) Baron-Cohen, S. (2011) The autism spectrum condition. In: Baron-Cohen, S., Golan, O., Ashwin, E., eds. Social cognition in autism: Theory and research. London: Sage.
 (3) Baron-Cohen, S., Ashwin, E., Ashwin, E., Ashwin, E., eds. Social cognition in autism: Theory and research. London: Sage.
 (4) Baron-Cohen, S., Ashwin, E., Ashwin, E., Ashwin, E., eds. Social cognition in autism: Theory and research. London: Sage.

What does it mean to be Autistic?

- **Sensitive**
- **Intense**
- **Logical**
- **Truthful**
- **Direct**
- **Natural Problem Solver**
- **Strong sense of justice**
- **Emotional**

But yet we see...

- **Meltdowns**
- **Anxiety**
- **Stress**
- **Isolation**
- **Social difficulties**

Because...

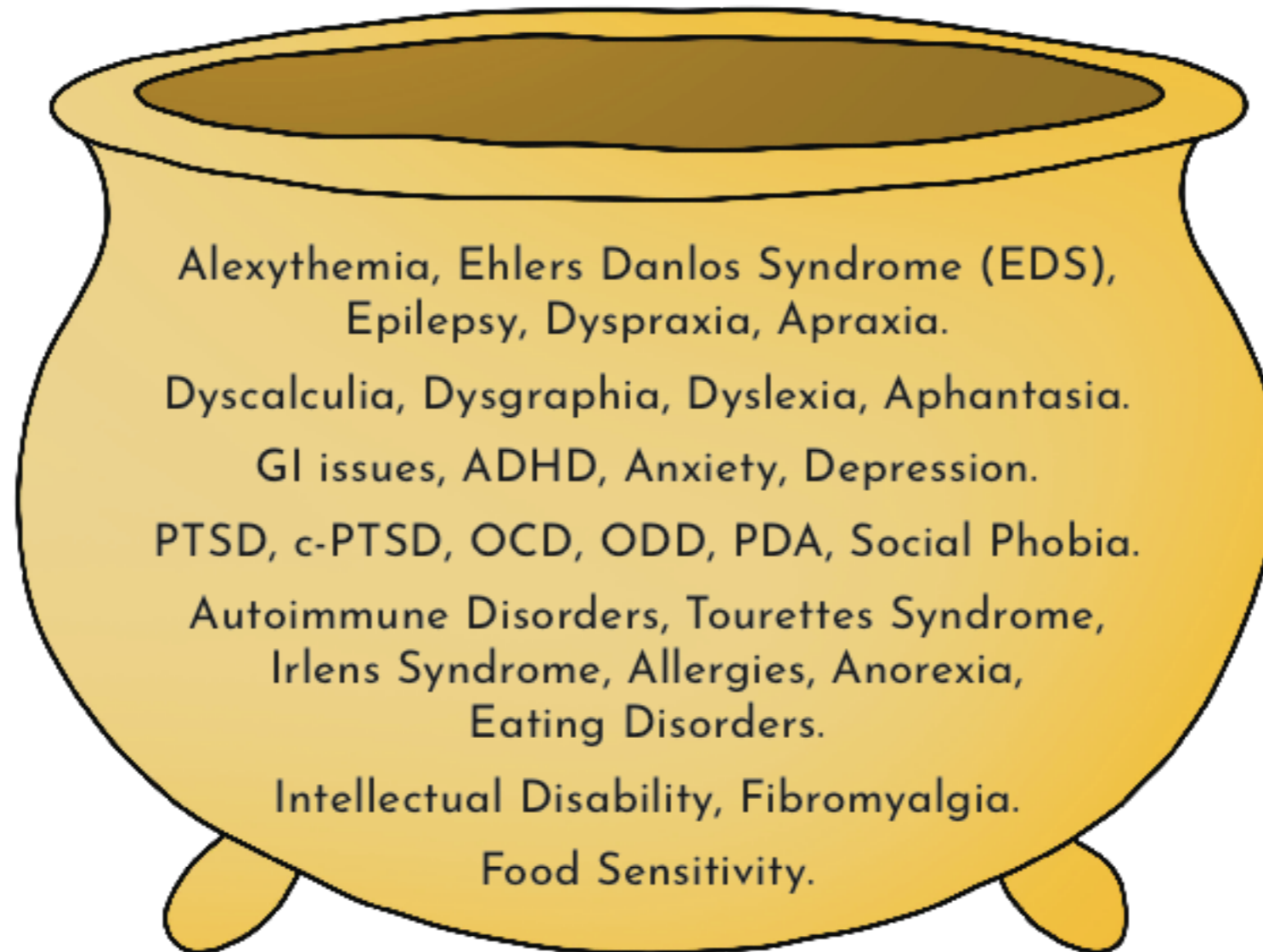
- **The world tells us we are wrong**
- **How we think is wrong**
- **What we say is wrong**
- **How we feel is wrong**
- **How we play is wrong**

And all those bad feelings...

- **Create Our problems**
- **Low self esteem**
- **“Behaviours”**

What is NOT autism

THE AUTISM POT



Module 3

Sensory Processing

- the physical and
social environment





**AN APPLE
IS NOT
AN ORANGE**







Mixed Signals

When an **Autistic person** is listening to someone we might do these things:

- **Look away** from the person so we can concentrate on what they're saying.
- **Stare** which is a type of stim we do to concentrate.
- **Stim with our hands** as we think about what they say.
- **Stim by pacing up and down** in the room so we can take in what they are saying.

Did you know that an **Autistic person** who is listening really hard actually looks like a **non-Autistic person** who is not listening at all? That can be really confusing!

A person who is **not Autistic** and is listening might do these things:

- Look at the person.
- Make eye contact.
- Nod and smile.
- Give friendly comments and compliments.
- Sit still and not move about.



Because we can look like we are not listening it's important that other people understand **Autistic body language** and that we listen best when we are moving.

Tips for communicating

- Eye contact is not part of Autistic Communication
- Avoid Vague Phrasing, be specific to build the picture
- Some of us are visual, not all of us are
- We are literal interpreters and communicators.



Tips for communicating

- Be conscious of our social anxiety
- Get to know their stims and what they communicate
- Communication is two-way and so is miscommunication
- A Processing Delay is really a translating delay and pauses can be cues to rephrase.



My Sensory-Emotional Jug



My Sensory-Emotional Jug



“The little boy is kicking the wall every morning.”

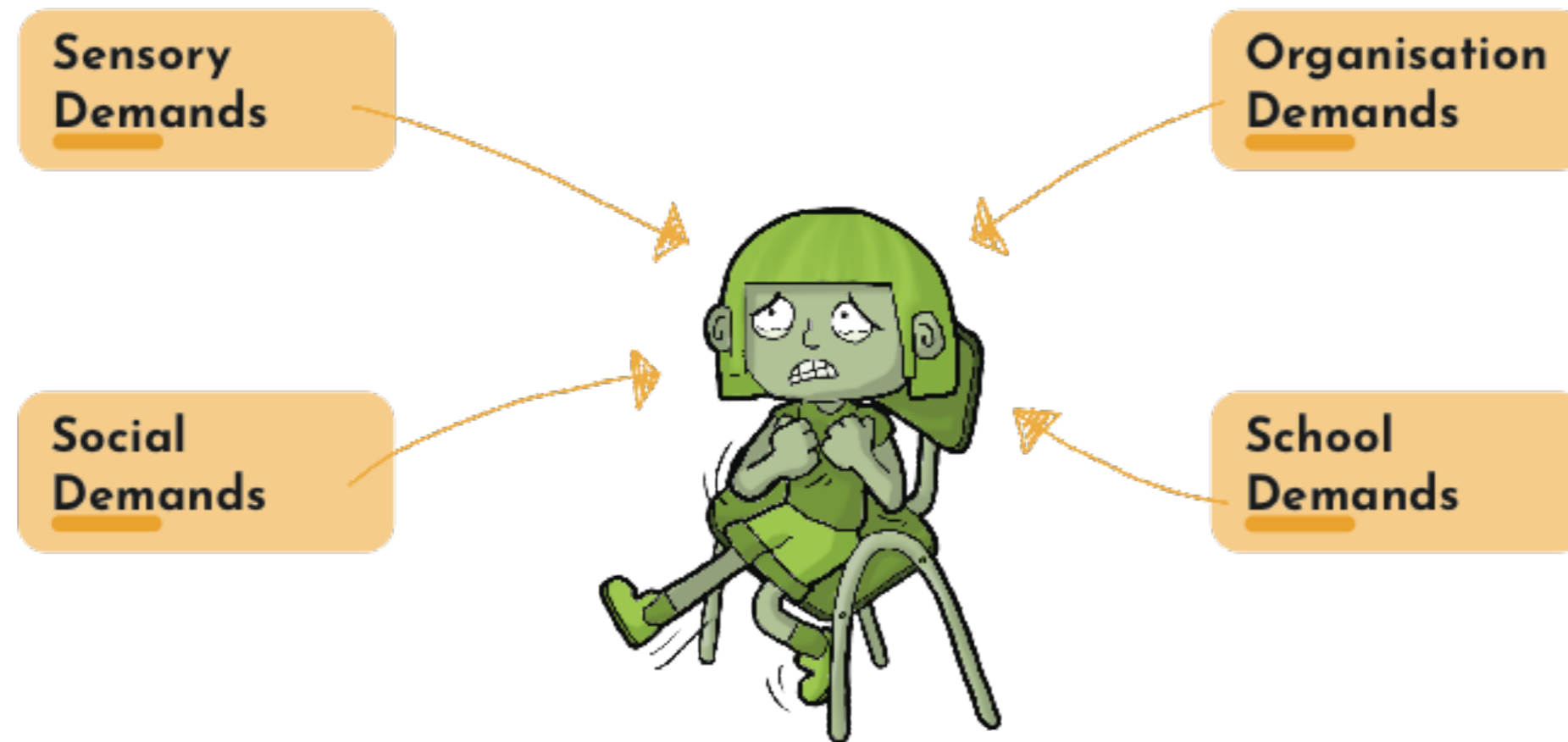
“That’s sensory”

Replace with “it’s emotional”

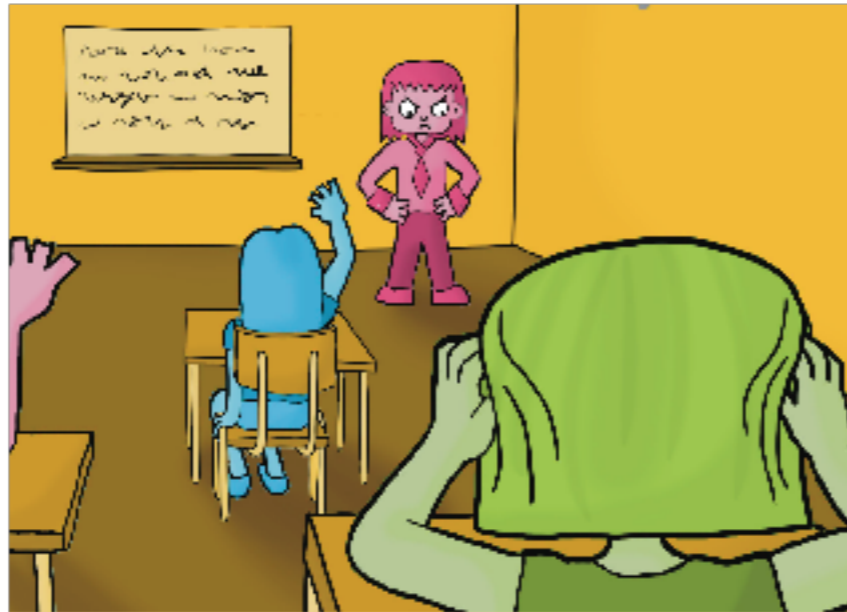
Input v Output



ENVIRONMENTAL DEMANDS

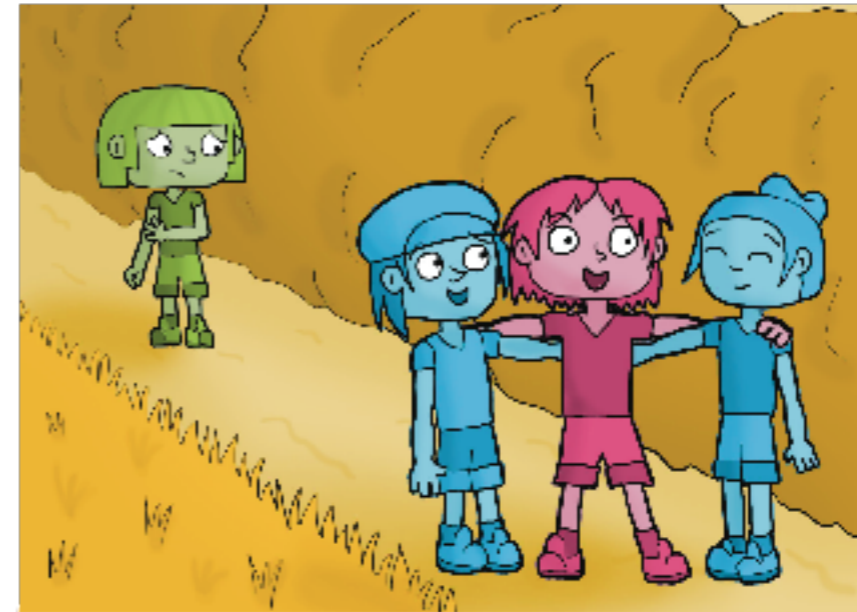


HOW AUTISTICS LIVE



SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT DEMANDS

follow all instructions from the teachers, make eye contact, communicate verbally, listen, do not stim, look at the board!

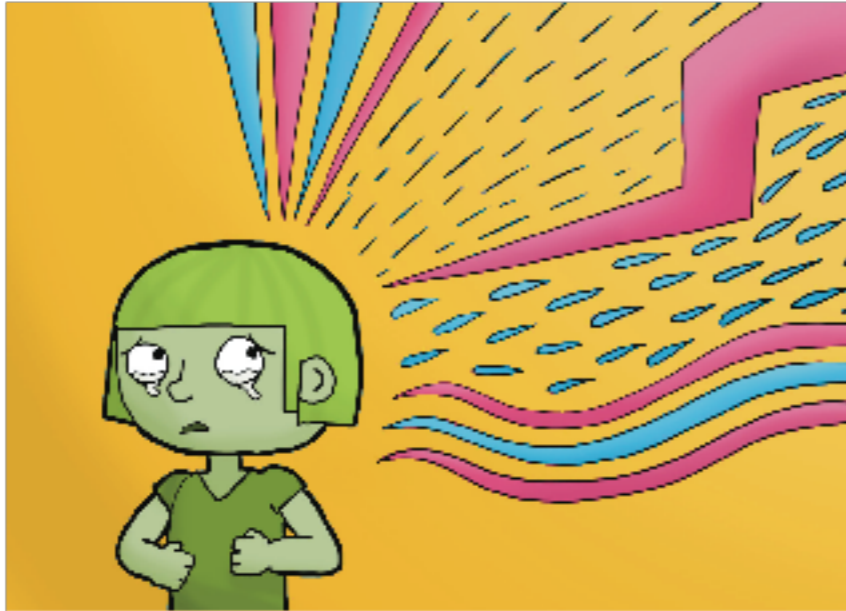


SOCIAL DEMANDS FROM PEERS

fit in, have common interests, socialize, understand jokes, make conversation!

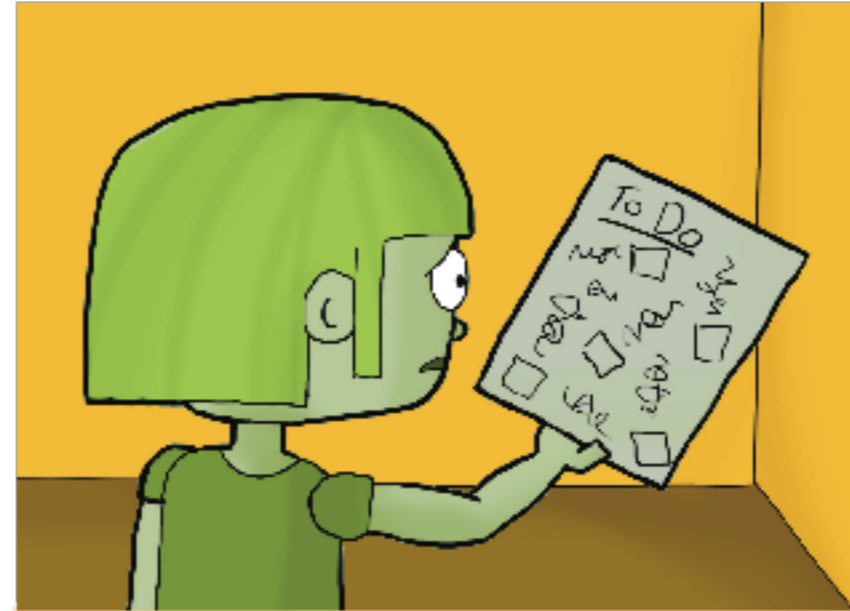


HOW AUTISTICS LIVE



SENSORY DEMANDS

cope with noises, smells, electricity, textures, furniture, visual clutter such as posters, temperatures, air quality, lighting, synesthesia, clothing!

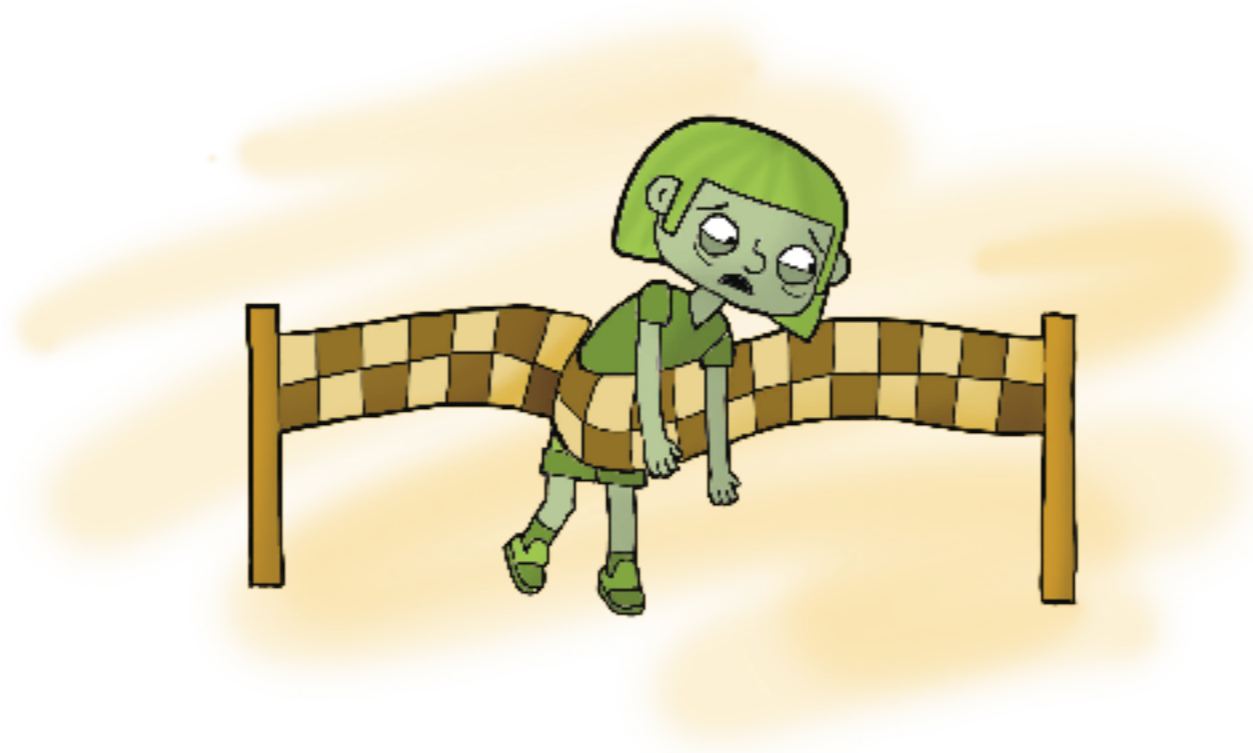


ORGANISATIONAL DEMANDS

have the correct books and materials for each subject, follow instructions, change classrooms, deal with teachers with varying expectations!



HOW AUTISTICS LIVE



FEELINGS

embarrassed

sad

confused

dejected

judged

nervous

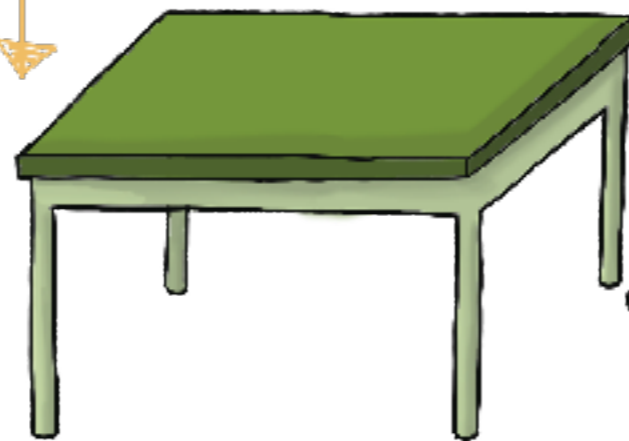
worried

anxious

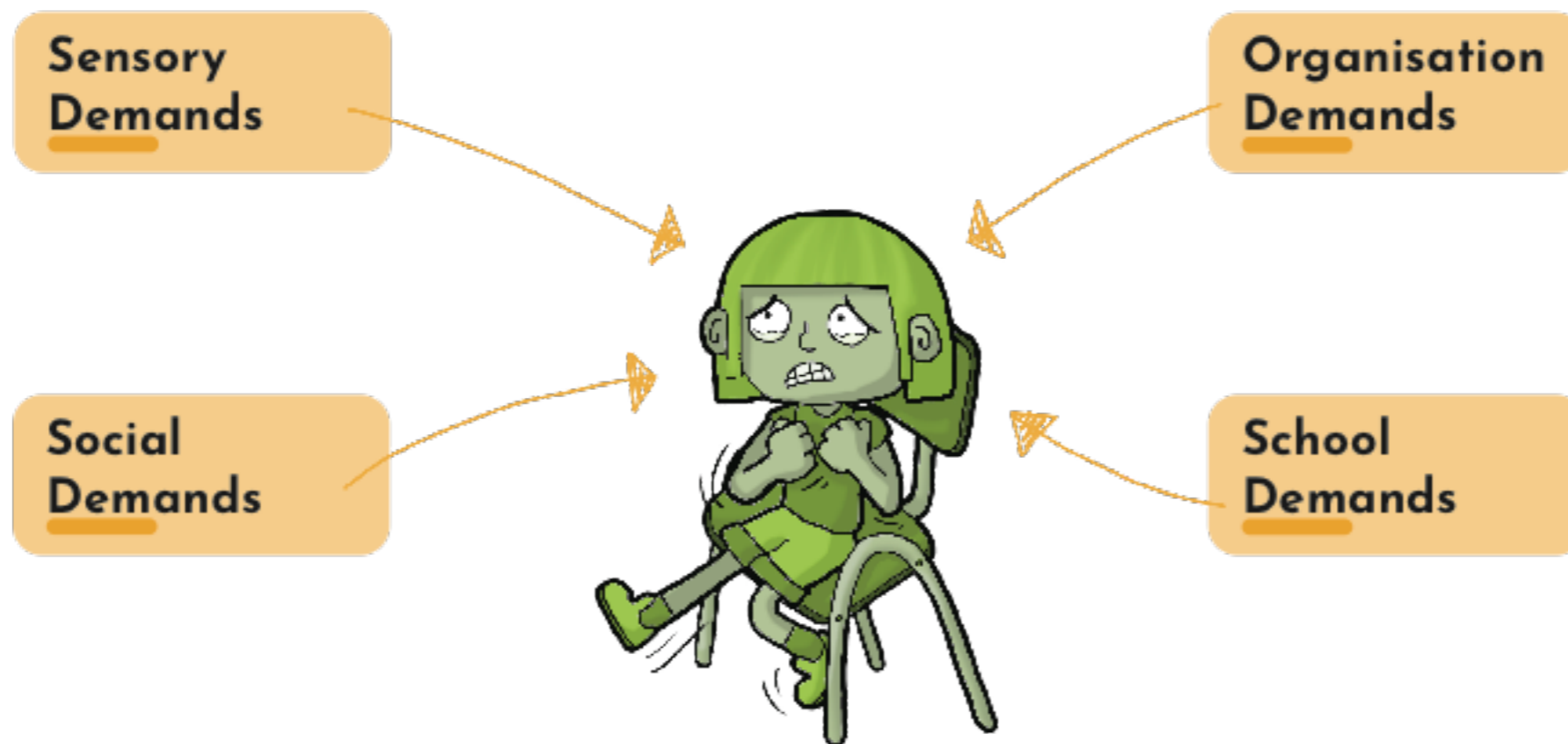
depressed

exhausted

suicidal

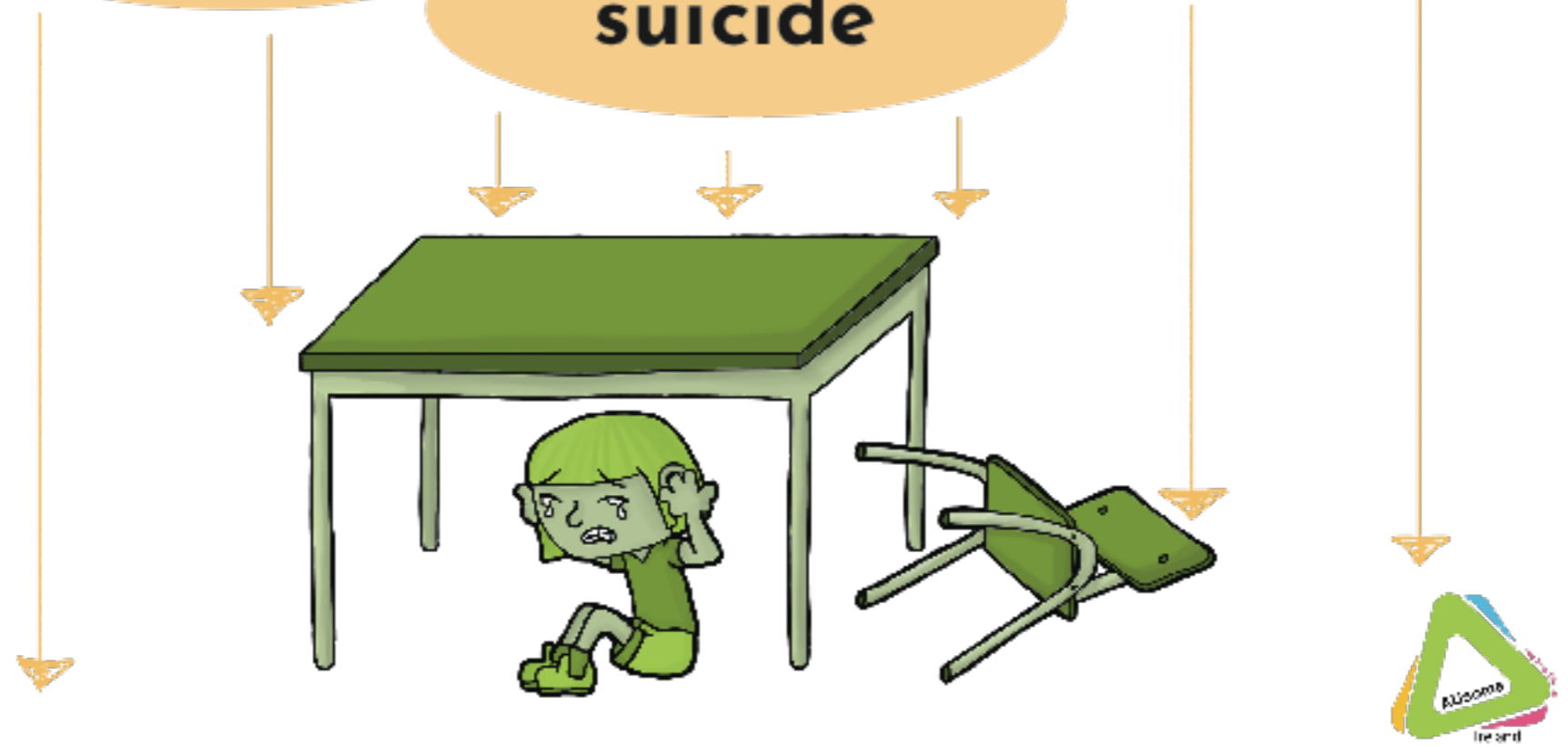


ENVIRONMENTAL DEMANDS

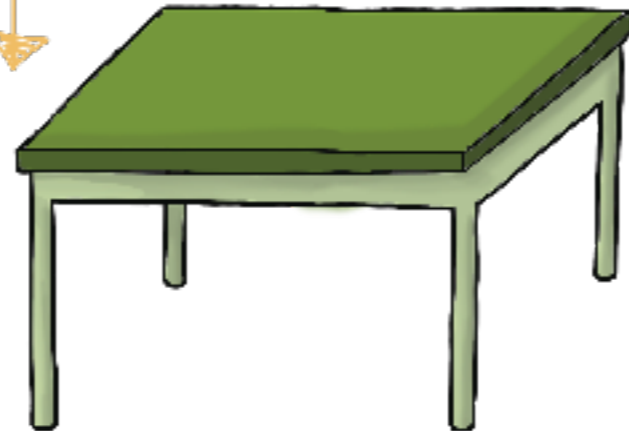


REACTIONS

shouting zoning out attention seeking **meltdown**
crying hiding school refusal **self-harm**
outbursts **defiance** **suicide**



REACTIONS



HOW NON-AUTISTICS LIVE



SENSORY DEMANDS

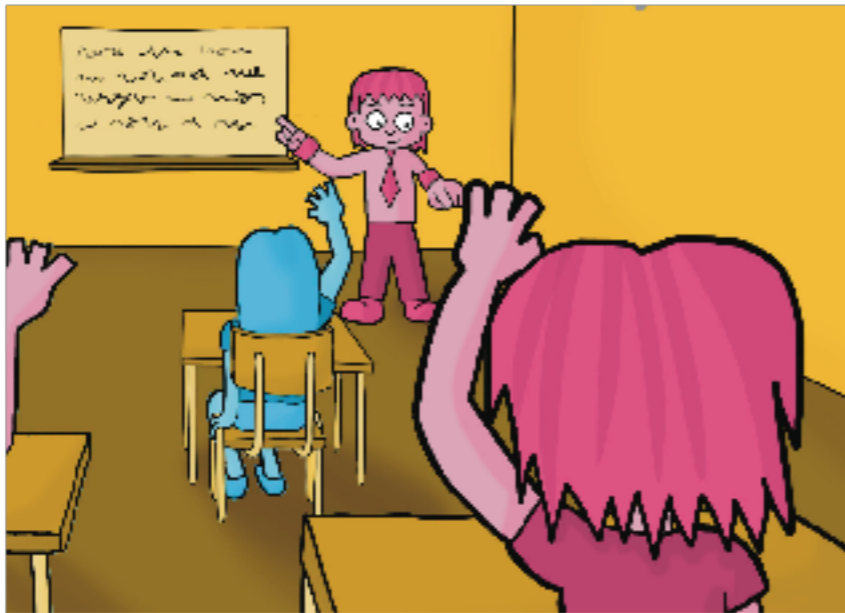
occasionally notice the temperature or a bad smell.



ORGANISATIONAL DEMANDS

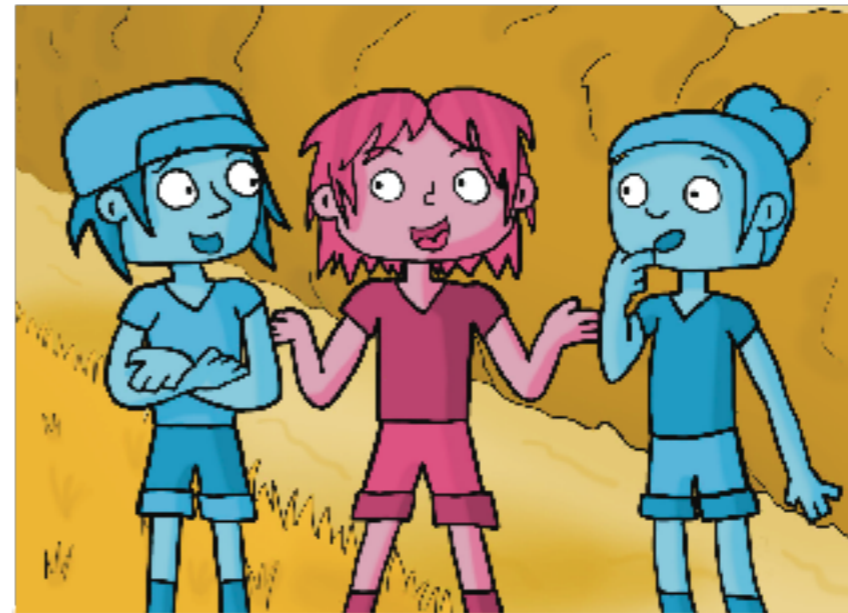
remember where to go and what supplies to have.

HOW NON-AUTISTICS LIVE



SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT DEMANDS

learn and follow instructions from the teachers.



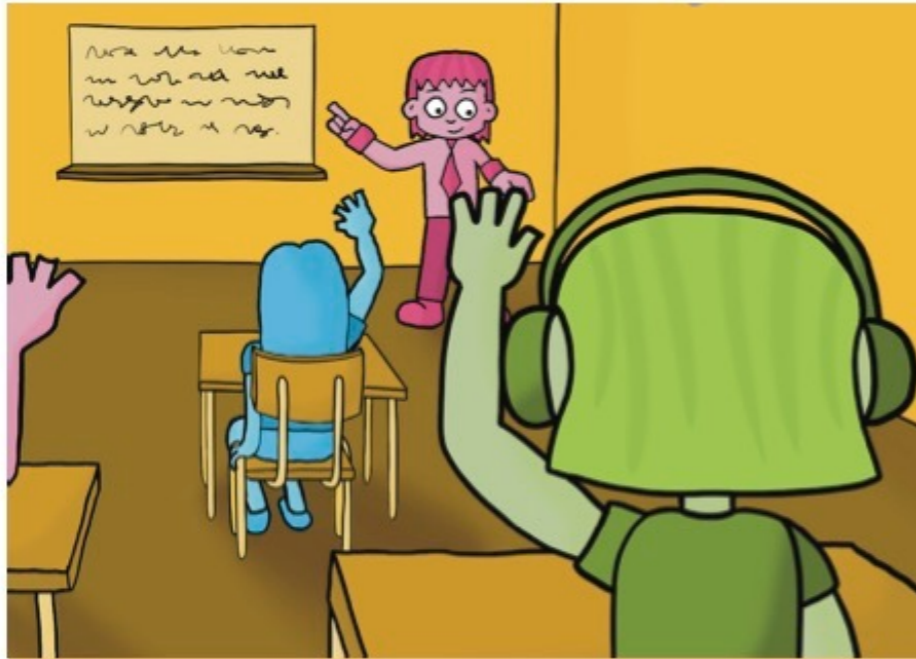
SOCIAL DEMANDS FROM PEERS

catch up with friends at lunchtime.

HOW NON-AUTISTICS LIVE



HOW WE COULD LIVE



SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT DEMANDS

breaks from class are allowed, eye contact is not expected, non-verbal communication is recognised.



SOCIAL DEMANDS FROM PEERS

kids have been educated about Autistic people, unique interests are encouraged, games are inclusive.

HOW WE COULD LIVE



SENSORY DEMANDS

ear defenders are welcome, smells and temperature are regulated, visual clutter is minimised, overstimulated kids can leave the situation.

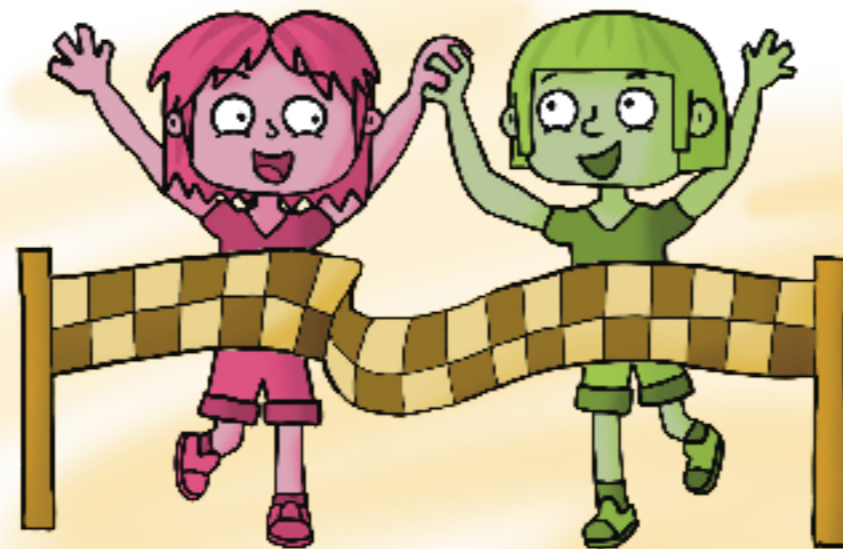


ORGANISATIONAL DEMANDS

visual schedule shows classroom changes and supplies needed, sna is provided to help kids with organisation, teachers allow extra time to prepare.



HOW WE COULD LIVE



Action plan

**What can you do right
away to
neurodiversify your
school?**

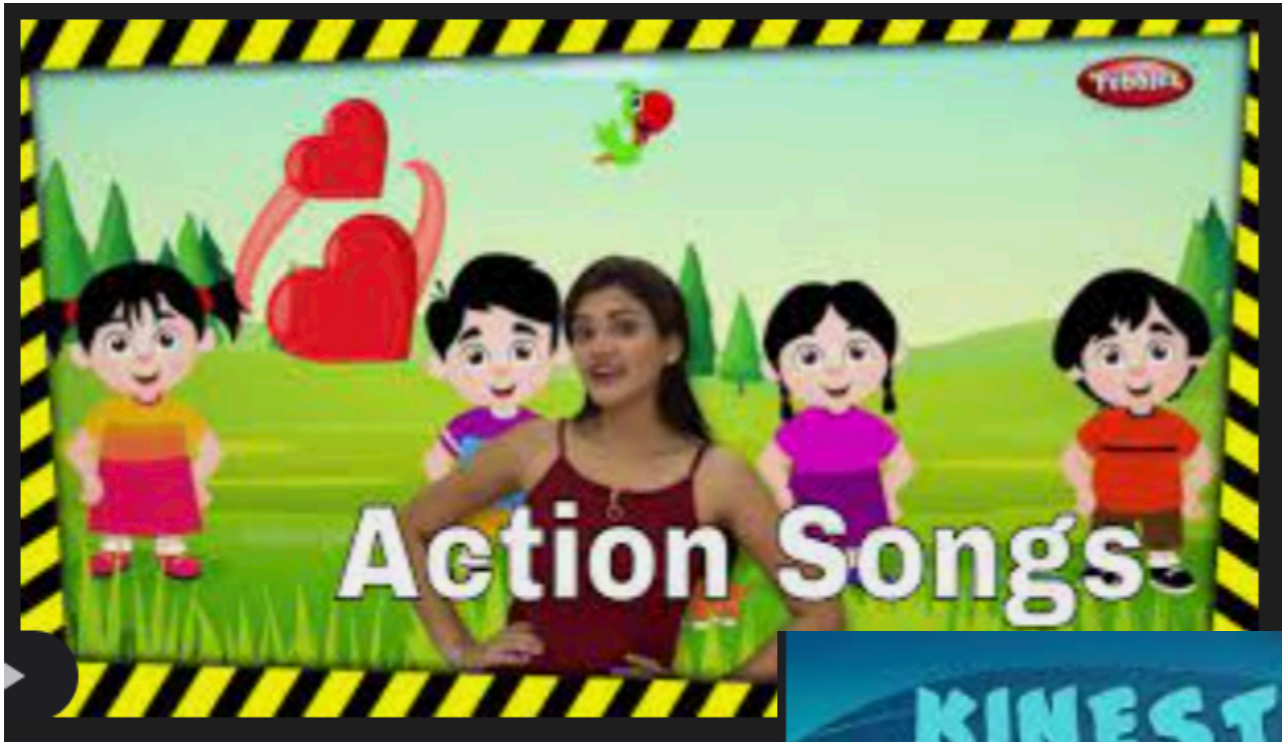
**What can you do long
term?**



Module 4

Stimming
- movement and
learning







The fields of Athenry

By a lonely prison wall
I heard a young girl calling
Michael they are taking you away
For you stole Trevelyn's corn
So the young might see the morn.
Now a prison ship lies waiting in the bay.

Chorus

Low lie the Fields of Athenry
Where once we watched the small free birds fly.
Our love was on the wing
we had dreams and songs to sing
It's so lonely 'round the Fields of Athenry.
By a lonely prison wall
I heard a young man calling
Nothing matters Mary when you're free,
Against the Famine and the Crown
I rebelled they ran me down
Now you must raise our child with dignity.

Chorus



STIMMING

Human Response to Environment

TYPES



Vocal



Physical



Mental



Auditory



Tactile



Visual



Olfactory



STIMMING

Human Response to Environment

FUNCTIONS

- Soothe
- Stimulate
- Express emotions
- Communicate
- Take in information
- Process information
- Store information
- Recall information



EXTREME STIMS

Extreme Stims are not for pleasure or any processing info etc.

They are a sign that the Autistic is suffering and needs are not being met.

Every single human being would have the same response.



Scenario 1

Sam rocks back and forth during class. He also rocks when he cries in his room while no one is watching.

He gently rocks as teacher gives the lesson. Sam does really well academically.

At lunchtimes Sam rocks back and forth in a quicker

fashion especially as the bell rings and the children run out to play.

What are the different purposes or functions behind his stims?



Scenario 2

Teacher asks the class to open their geography books on page 12. Jane opens the book on page 12. The class get to work on page 12. But ten minutes later teacher sees Jane looking out the window with no work done.

Why has Jane not carried out any of the work on page 12?



Module 5

Behaviour



So, do you think the way other people view us, think about us, talk about us, respond to us, respect us and accept us has an effect on how we behave?

So, what is behaviour?

Behaviour is...

- What we see on the outside
- An outward expression of inward responses
- A response to stimuli
- A response to environment
- A reflection of the environment

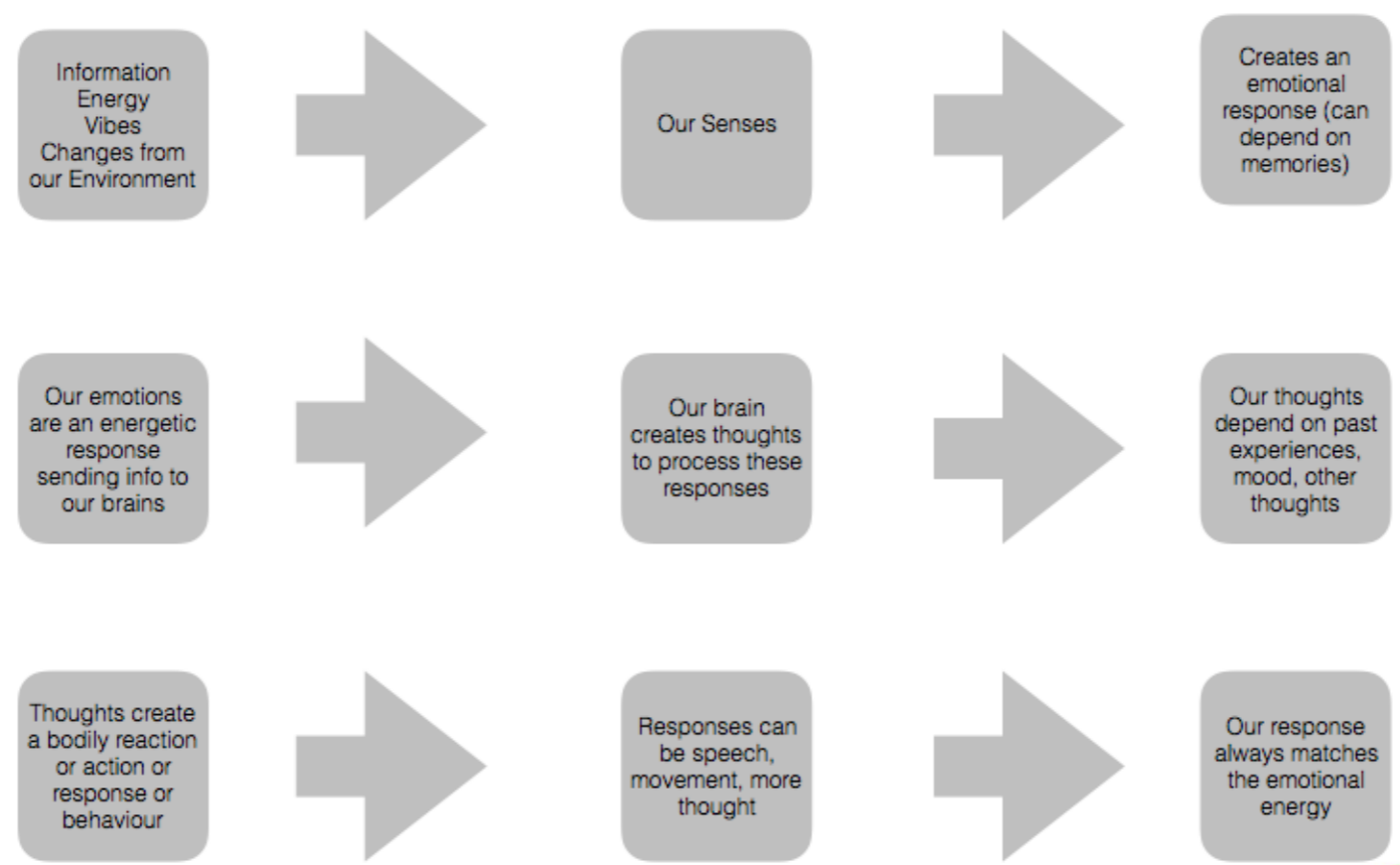


Is behaviour good or bad?

Underneath behaviour is emotion

Let's break it down visually...

The internal Process



What others see as “over-reactions” are...

Signs of distress

Signs of overwhelm

Trauma responses or triggers

High anxiety

Feeling unsafe

Cries for help



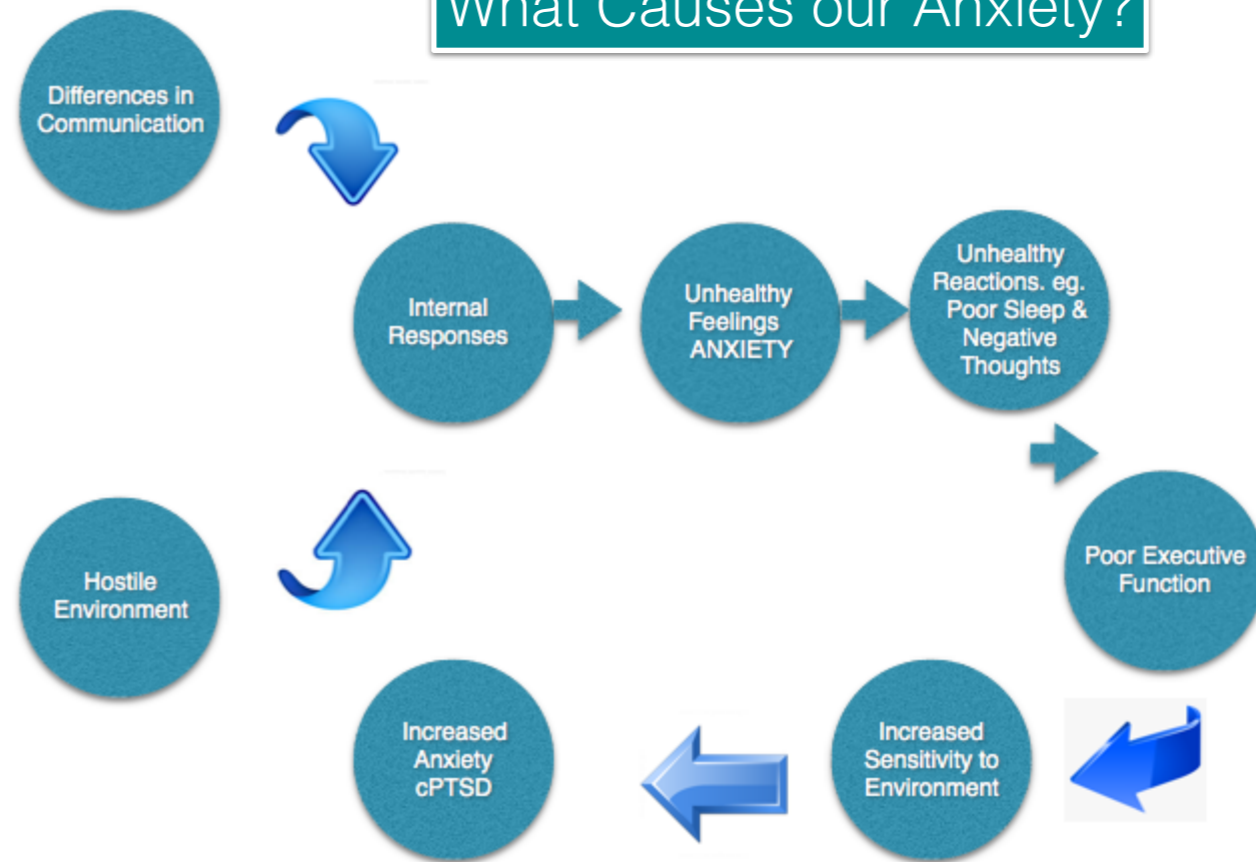
Understanding Behaviour



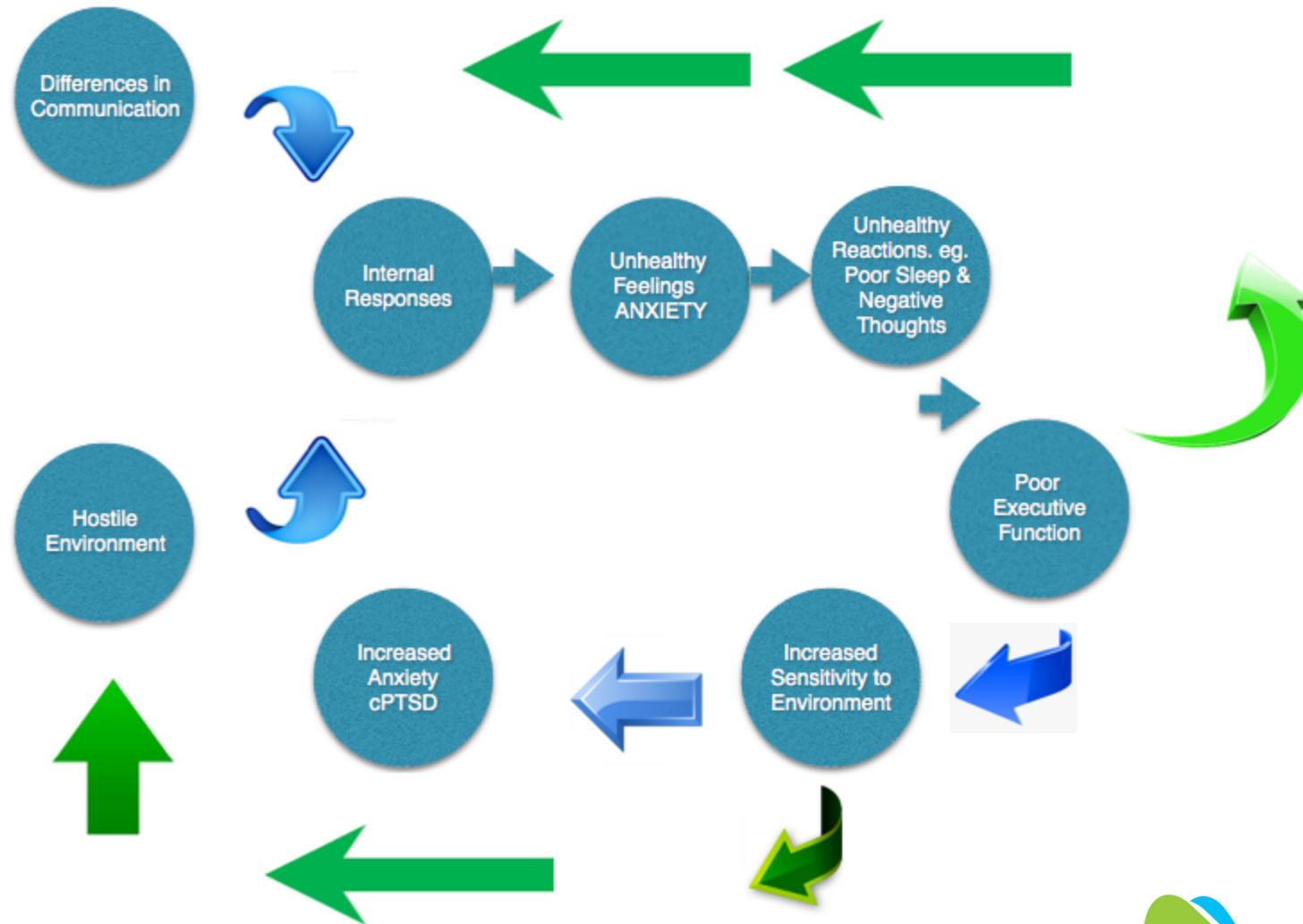
**There is no Autistic Behaviour, only human
behaviour.**

Once we start here understanding Autistics is much easier.

What Causes our Anxiety?



The Anxiety Cycle



**Autistic sensitivity + an unsafe world=
Anxiety+ Trauma**



Autism	Autistic
Deficitis in social communcation	Highly effective peer to peer communication just like non-autistics.
Lack empathy	Hyper empathy
Restricted interests	Experts & Creatives
Inappropriate Play	Autistics play Autistically
Inability to read social cues	Double Empathy
Repetitive Movements	Human Behaviour
Adversity to change/ loves routine	Human behaviour + anxiety
Inappropriate interests in sensory aspects of the environment	Sensitive
Sensory Processing Disorder	Sensitive
Difficulty making friends	Excluded
Non-verbal	Person who communicates in plenty of ways
Levels of autism	Autistic people who may medical conditions which complicate their lives
Executive Dysfunction	Anxiety, stress and depression
School Refusal, demand avoidance	Trauma
Difficulties with emotional regulation	Trauma
Inflexibility of behaviour	Trauma



10 things to remember:

1. Autistic children are not defective versions of non-autistic children. They are wonderfully and perfectly Autistic.
2. Autistic children play and learn from their environment the same way other children do. It may just look different because we are learning about different aspects of that environment.
3. Autistic children develop Autistically and should not be measured off non-autistic developmental paths nor forced to develop in ways not natural to them.
4. Autistic children do not lack social skills. Autistic children and adults have a social communication specific to us just in the same way non-autistic people do. Our way of communicating is not faulty and non-autistic social goals should not be inflicted on children. It is better to bridge the gaps in communication through mutual respect, appreciation and understanding.
5. There is no such thing as Autistic behaviour. There is only human behaviour.



10 things to remember:

6. Anxiety responses are responses to the environment and not to “autism”.
7. Trauma responses are responses to the environment and previous experiences and not to “autism”.
8. Autistic pupils are sensitive and so the whole school environment needs to accommodate this sensitivity.
9. Stimming is a collection of movements that connect body and mind. It allows children to filter naturally through sensory input, helps them to learn and absorb information. Stimming is something they do to regulate their emotions so you can find communication in their stims.
10. Presume competence is a mantra in the Autistic Community. It means that you must presume that the Autistic child is just as competent as their peers. It's important to remember that speech is a motor skill and not a sign of intelligence.



Thank you!

Don't be a stranger!

INCLUDE

A program for schools and clubs to promote and nurture **Neurodiversity and Inclusion**

For schools and clubs with children aged 5 to 12 years old (or thereabouts)

By Evaleen Whelton and Orla Barry

AUsome Training

Konfident KIDZ

