

act for autism

educate • empower • embrace

Autism generalisations

- no empathy
- no imagination
- no sense of humour
- don't like people
- can't focus
- can't make eye contact

Autism myths

- can be cured
- poor parenting
- is an intellectual disability
- is a mental illness
- Is just boys
- Is just bad behaviour

First 3 Results On Google

Noun: autism

A **mental condition**, present from early childhood, characterized by great difficulty in communicating and forming relationships with other people and in using language and abstract concepts.

What is autism? - NAS

www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is.aspx 14 Apr 2016:

Autism is a **lifelong, developmental disability** that affects how a person ...

Autism - NAS

www.autism.org.uk › About autism › What is autism?

3 Oct 2017: Some **autistic** people also have **learning disabilities**, mental health issues or other conditions, **meaning** people need different levels of support.

Deficit based thinking

Thinking about the lack/problem/challenge

Diagnostic criteria

Medical model

How it is talked about

Where does this leave us?

Confused

Where does this leave autistic individuals?

Struggling

Intervention. 2 extreme perspectives:

1. BEHAVIOUR BASED

ABA , normalising, cure,

DEFICIT BASED

what they can't do, problems

2. RELATIONSHIP BASED

acceptance, empathy, adjusting our perspective, changing the environment

ASSET BASED

what they can do, opportunities, potential

Autism spectrum DISORDER	Autistic spectrum CONDITION
FIXATED interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus	Very FOCUSED and careful with our passionate interests
POORLY INTEGRATED verbal and non-verbal communication	Very HONEST
RIGID thinking patterns, greeting rituals	Keen on social justice and FAIRNESS
RIGID thinking patterns of verbal or non-verbal behaviours	More MORAL , on average, than non-autistic individuals
Persistent DEFECTS in social interaction and communication	LOYAL CARING friends
DIFFICULTY adjusting behaviour to suit various social contexts	Often fantastic sense of HUMOUR

So what is Autism?

- Autism is a lifelong developmental condition that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others.
- Autistic people see, hear and feel the world differently. If you are autistic, you are autistic for life

4 Areas of Difference

INTERACTING

Play, developing relationships

PROCESSING

Attentions, interests, learning

COMMUNICATION

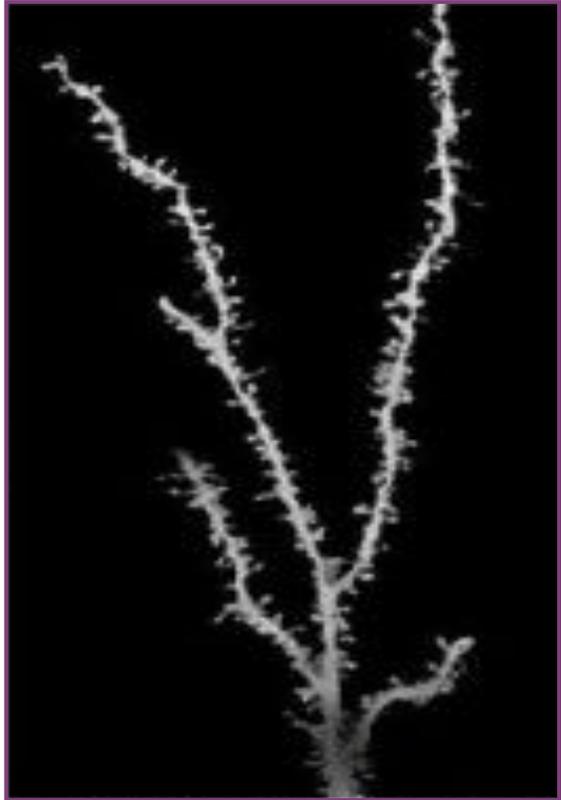
Speech, comprehension,
use of language

SENSORY

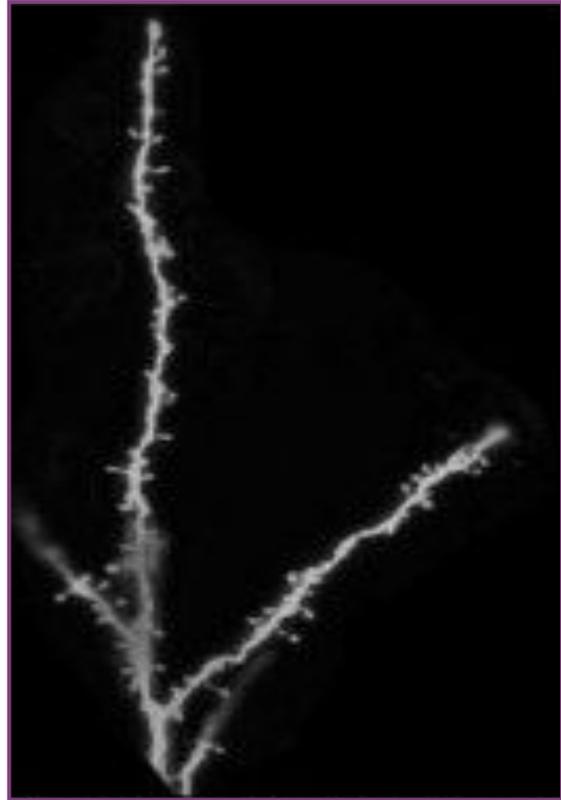
Experiencing, regulating

- At birth an explosion of synapses – nerve endings that help shape how the baby interprets and interacts with the world
- Brain scans in autistic infants show there is an oversupply of synapses - too much information to be able to understand and respond appropriately
- Due to overload, reciprocal communication becomes harder – basic connections are not made to enable child to relate, interact and react like peers

With autism



Without autism



Researchers found higher synapse formation in the brains of children with autism



Image credit: Guomei Tang, Mark S. Sonders, CUMC

*“Impairments that we see in autism seem to be partly due to different parts of the brain talking too much to each other, you need to lose connections in order to develop a fine-tuned system of brain networks, because if all parts of the brain talk to all parts of the brain, **all you get is noise.**”*

Ralph-Axel Müller
Neuroscientist at San Diego State University

Reciprocity

speech

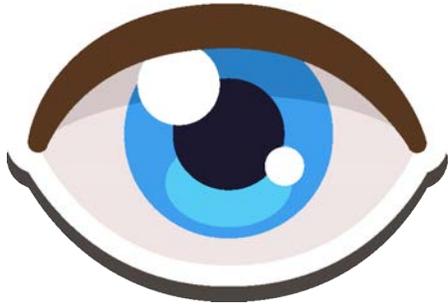
social
confidence

Vital in the
development of

self worth

peer
relationships

See what we need to see and filter out what we don't.



Recognising something by the way it **smells**, influences taste.



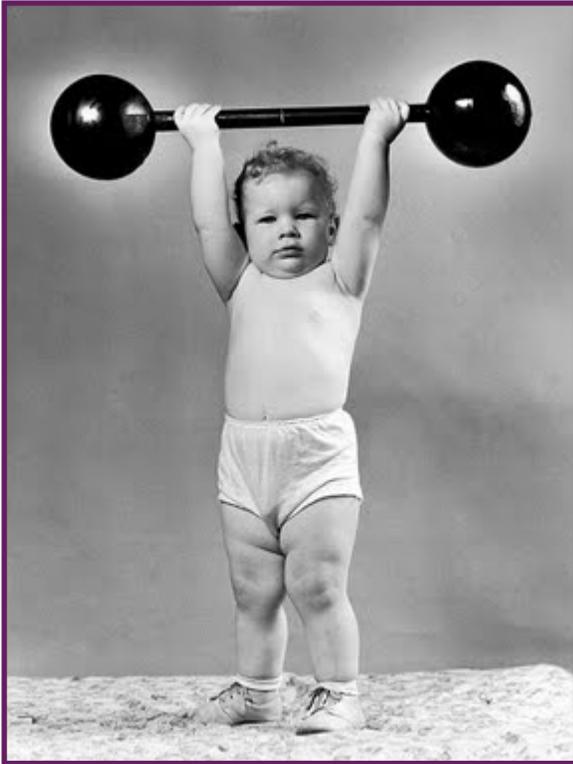
What **sounds** are important and where are they coming from?

Sensing and discriminating **tastes** and flavours.



Sensing and discriminating
*"I have **touched** something – what is it?"*





Proprioception

The **senses** of position and movement of our limbs and trunk, the **sense** of effort, the **sense** of force, and the **sense** of heaviness.

The **vestibular** system includes the parts of the inner ear and brain that process the sensory information involved with controlling balance and eye movements.



INTEROCEPTION: The Eighth Sensory System

Sit back and close your eyes

- What do you *feel* inside your body?
- Is your heart beating fast or slow?
- Are you breathing deeply or shallowly?
- Do you have to go to the bathroom?
- Are your muscles tense or loose?
- Are you hungry?

Most of us are able to *feel* all of these sensations with the help of our little-known, but very important, eighth sensory system, Interoception

When sensory systems have difficulty talking to each other (integrating) every day situations take a lot of energy.

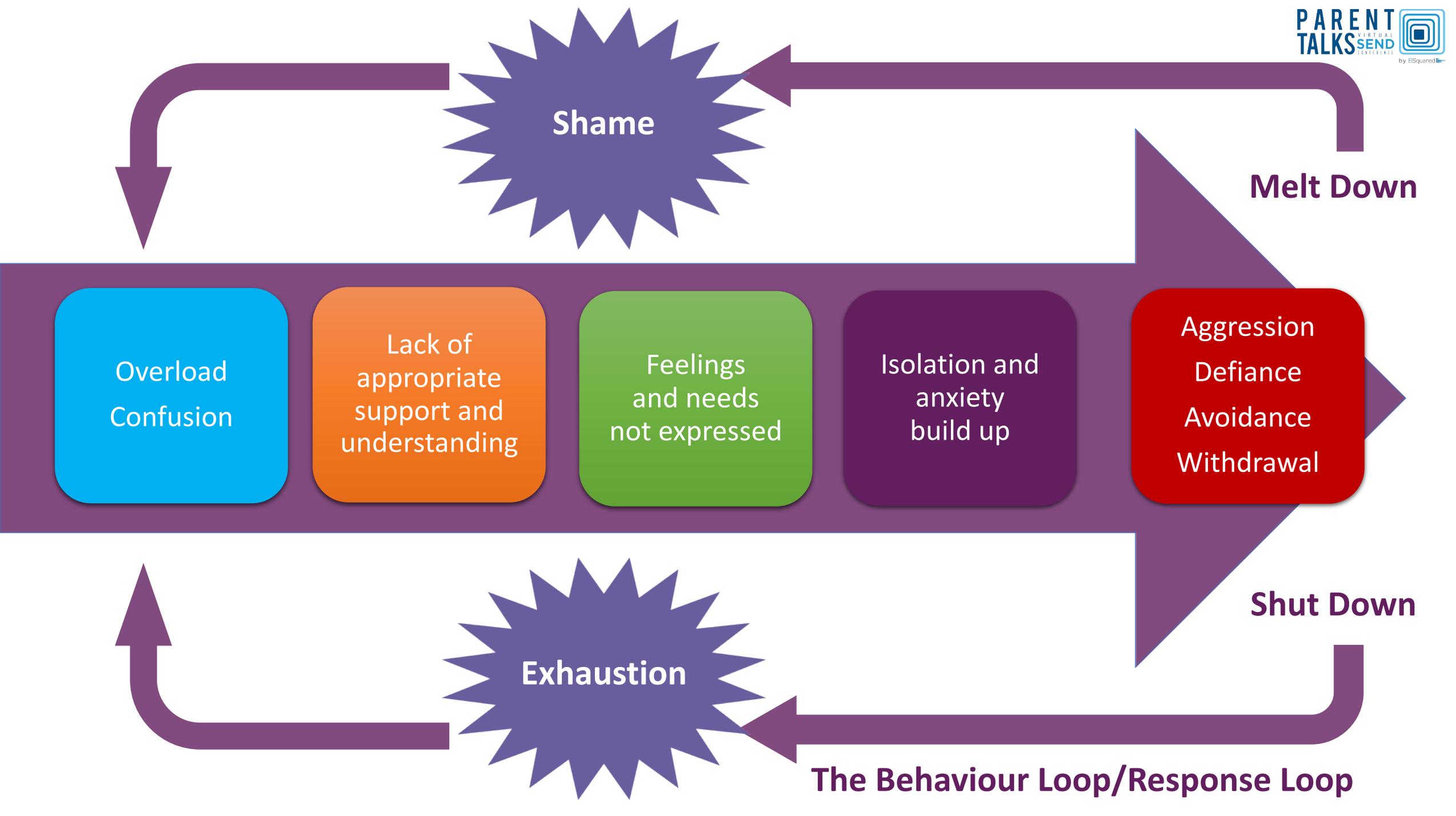
This can be exhausting for the child.

WHAT HAPPENS THEN?

CLASSIFICATION APPREHENSION MEANING PRESENT IRRATIONAL DISTINGUISH NORMA RESTLE NIGHTMARES/BAD AL WITH DETERMINES UNCONTROLLABLE TRIGGERING
HEART INCREASED SWEATING REAL
SIGNALS FLOW RELATED ANXIETY MUSCLE
WORD STRESS DIVIDES PERSON COME PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS
EITHER LIKE CONSIDERED ERSON INCLUDE BLOOD
PALE STATE DREAD CHARACTERIZ







Melt down

- Temper
- Physical agitation
- Repetitive movements
- Physical aggression
- Verbal aggression
- Rampage
- Dogmatic
- Inflexible

Shut Down

- Physical tension
- Hide
- Bolt
- No expression
- Non verbal
- Ridged
- Moaning
- Stimming
- Passive acceptance
- Masking

Melt downs and shuts downs are scary and exhausting for the child.

Do:

- Get **CLEAR**
- Remove physical obstacles
- Stay close, stay calm
- Wait till it is over to approach
- Explore what happened when all is calm.
- Be kind

Don't:

- Over stimulate with talking and touching
- Expect the child to be rational
- Panic
- Think the child is just seeking attention
- Blame and punish

Triggers

- Unkind people
- Stressed people
- Confusing demands
- Ambiguous rules
- Sensory overload
- Queues
- Waiting for no reason – unstructured time
- Change in plan
- Too much information
- Too many demands

Clear Time

Time spent with the child to build a secure base for their social and emotional wellbeing.

You must be:

Clear

of anxiety

Clear

of distractions

Clear

of expectations

3 C pathway — your part in this

Connect

Empathetic connection.

Calm

Create a safe space, be a safe person.
Use strategies to reduce anxiety.

Communicate

Build a person centered, secure base for communication of feelings and needs.

Connect

- Moments of conscious connection – ‘Clear Time’
- Validation with no expectation of response
- Shared moments led by the child
- Being present
- Being the secure base for your child

Calm

- Yourself first – modeling calmness/low and slow. Heartbeat rhythm.
- Normalise anxiety – *“its normal to worry, lots of people worry about this”*.
- Share calming strategies with them.
- Managing the sensory environment.
- Safe places, safe people.

Communicate

- Communication is 93% non verbal, what are you communicating, what are they communicating?
- Create a system with them that works for them, *pictures, thumbs up...*
- Encourage communication in any form and validate it.
- Modifying your communication style.
- Communicate about feelings and emotions.
- Talk about their autism with them if they are willing.

Clear Time

This all to be done with :

CURIOSITY

CARE

Reasonable adjustments need to
be personal not just practical.

“the caregiver/practitioner in the field of autism is ideally a mental adventurer, someone who does not require a thank you and is open to adapting their mode of communication and social interaction, you must “empty yourself” to “tune in”

- *Dr Kerstin Whitemyer ACER*

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