The National Autistic Society

“Leave me alone I am aloneing”
Understanding and Supporting the Communication Differences and Challenges of People with Autism.

Joanne Neill
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A Different Perspective

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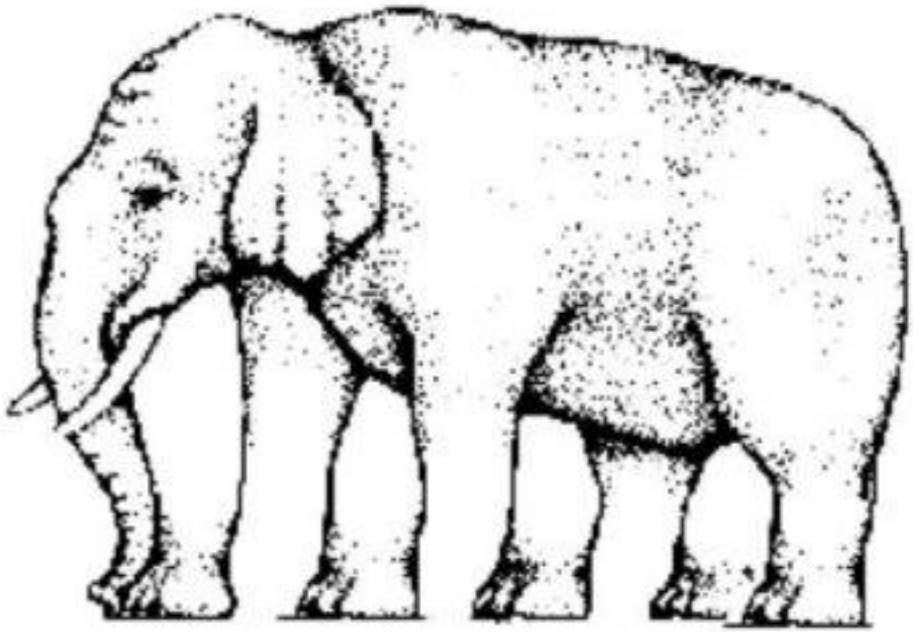

Musician or Lady's Face?

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Different Communication

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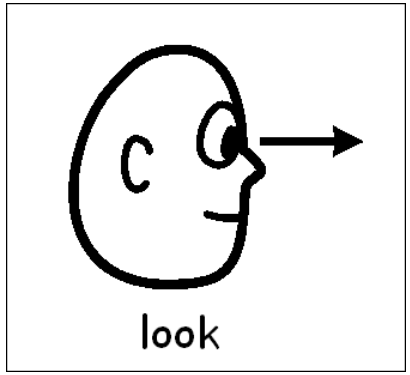
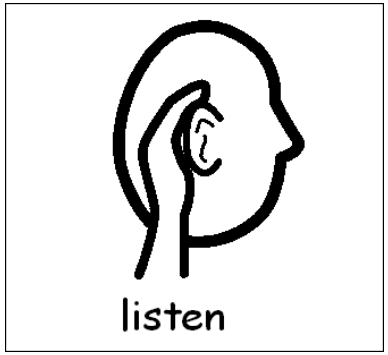
Differences in Interaction

- Communicative intent
- Shared attention
- Looking
- Listening
- Turn taking
- Reciprocal conversation





For some Sociability is <u>not</u> the default position!

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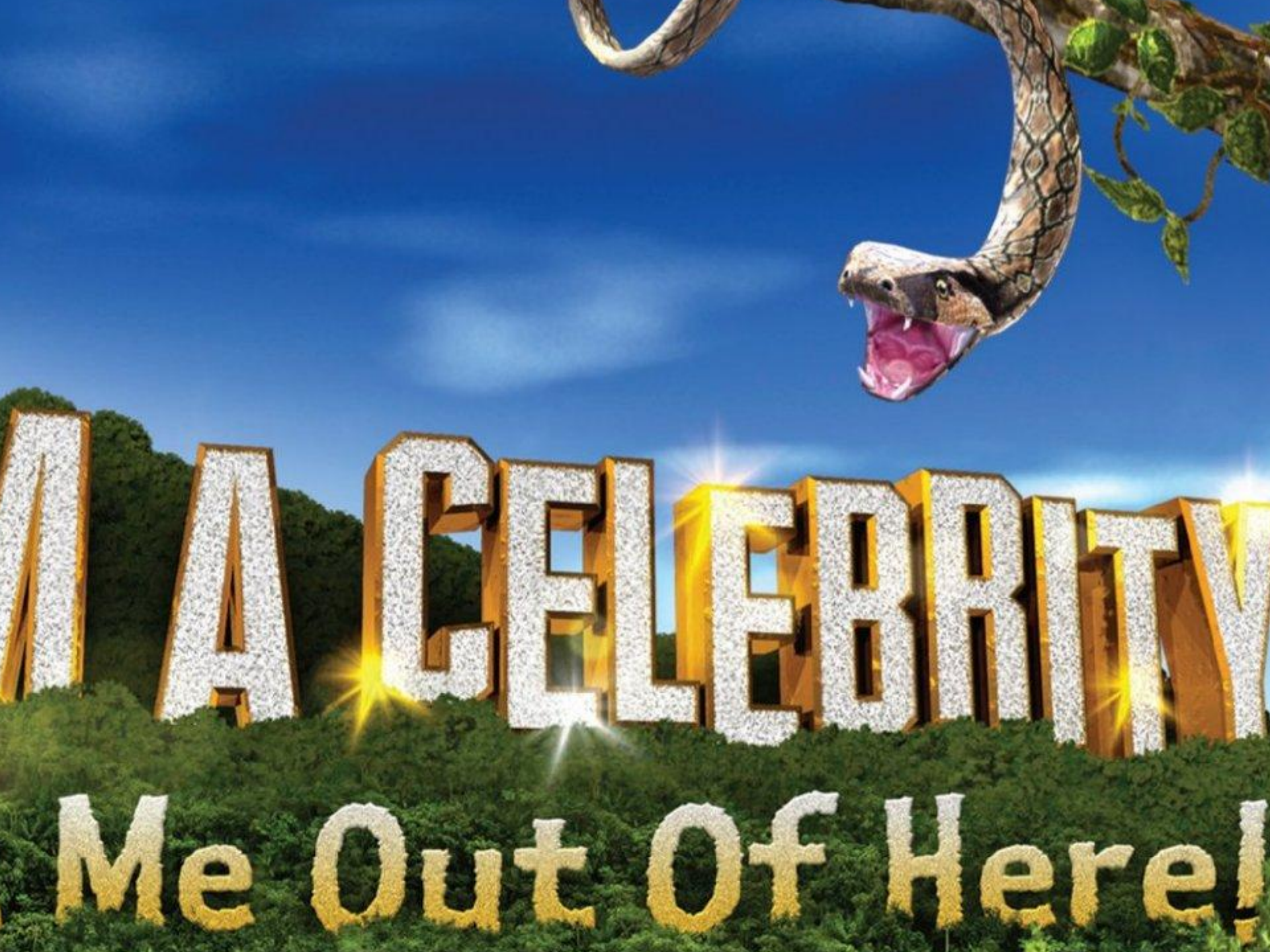
Differences unique to autism

Echolalia:

- immediate
- delayed
- appropriate
- inappropriate


A CELEBRITY
Me Out Of Here!

Useful phrases: Borrowing others' Language!

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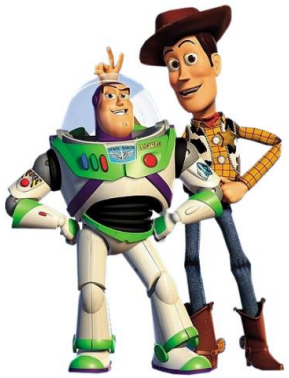

- "Goodnight"
- "Game over"
- "Ready Steady Go"
- "nice to see you - to see you nice"
- "My heart is broken"
- "Rewind"
- "Its your starter for 10"……

Not being able to say what you mean or mean what you say!

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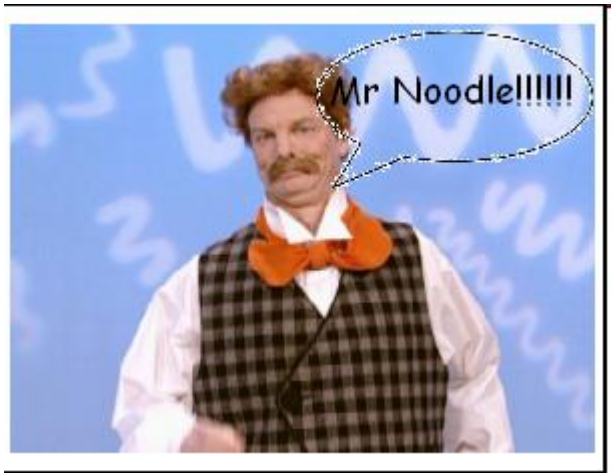

Different Communication

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- Over literal interpretation:

--- Of Language

---- Of Situations

Different Communication

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Compulsive Questioning:

This may serve different functions

- Sociable
- To convey anxiety
- Interest led

Communication Challenges

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An impairment of Social Understanding will impact on Communication Competence

- Awareness of self and others
- Motivation to please
- Choices
- Sequencing and planning
- Problem solving
- Flexibility
- Emotions- self
- Emotions- others
- Friendships

Communication Challenges

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- Eye contact
- Facial expression
- Intonation
- Receptive and expressive language differences
- Talks incessantly about own interests
- Reading social cues
- Understanding inference
- Understanding Idiomatic meaning

Personal Perspective

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"I can't listen to too many words. It makes my brain feel electrocuted and feels like I'm going to explode".

"In class when there's too much noise, too much stuff going on, too many people, I feel like screaming or doing something really naughty to get sent out of the classroom because I can't take it".

"Too much explaining makes me forget everything"

11 year old female with Aspergers Syndrome

So what can we do to help?

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- Visual supports

Objects of reference, photographs, symbols, drawings, written word Timetables, calendars, diaries, social stories, rules

- Use of language

Restrict language, match communication level, avoid abstract concepts, open questions, use person's name

- Identify emotions

Use of traffic lights, awareness bands, feelings thermometer.

- Augmentative and alternative communication

PECS; communication books, voice output communication aids

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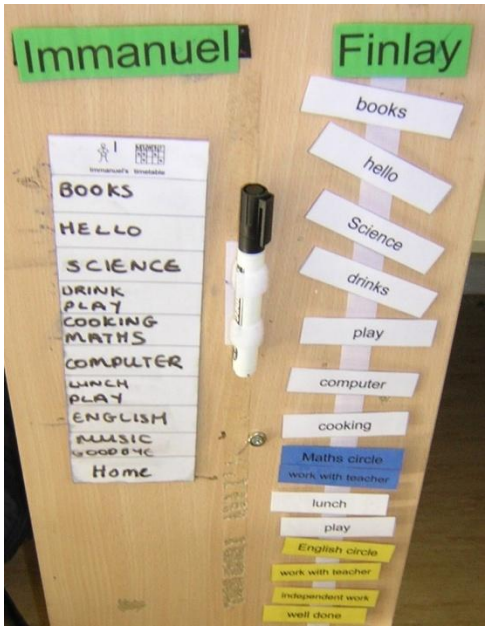
Make it Visual



Watch your Language!

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Metaphors and Idioms

- To spill the beans
- To open a can of worms
- To drive someone up the wall
- Raining cats and dogs
- Cry your eyes out
- Butterflies in your stomach

Some Language Activities

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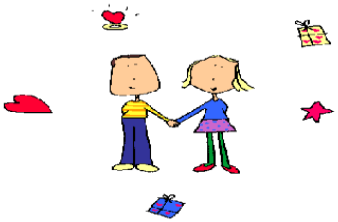
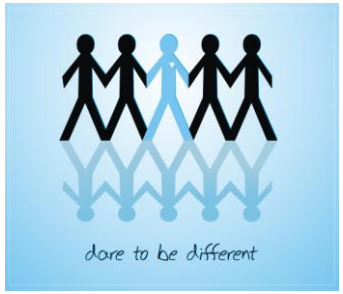
- Same/Different.The beginning of social understanding

- Individual Differences.Physical concrete differences; abstract concepts- likes/dislikes; different thoughts and ideas.





- Whats' wrong?/Silly sensible. Learning to understand what is not right. Impact on behaviour – stating a fact rather than relying on a social clue.

What’s different?

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Language Activities

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- Problem solving. why/because; cause and effect relationships. Use of “because” important as links to how behaviour affects others.

- Thinking skills. Use of prediction and guess what? Helpful to teach reasoning and appropriate rationale.

- Homonyms; double meanings & jokes

- Idioms; inference and metaphor.

Odd One Out

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Accept difference. Not indifference.

Social Skills Activities

- Teaching of emotions. Increase awareness of thoughts and feelings of others.
- Friendships. Rules of friendship; what is a friend? Maintaining relationships.
- Non verbal behaviour.How others see us, what this can communicate.
- Fact/opinion. Negotiation/compromise. Essential skills for positive relationships.

Idiomatic Meaning

Accept difference. Not indifference.

A Poem

Leave me alone I am aloneing

What does who and how and when mean
What is right and write and wrong
Why do words sounds the same
And mean different things in different places?

How can I be me and you and ewe
Why is eye and I the same and different too
Two biscuits, too loud, and you come to
Why does my head hurt when I do not hit it and it does not bleed?

Is a pain in my stomach like a pane of glass that will smash
Will I explode and break as well
Like a well of water or feeling well
Or unwell or unhappy or sad ?

Why does the sun light shine and where does the sun go to when it is dark
What happens when you die and what is heaven
Which rhymes with seven and is lucky for some or sum
Awesome! Cool! Brilliant! Shiny? No – not that.

My skin is red, which means I am hot
My hair is wet, but I have not had a bath or shower
My skin is leaking and fizzing like coke
I have things in my stomach, which are butterflies
But not really butterflies or even insects
Leave me alone
I am aloneing

Joanne Neill January 2002