

An Introduction to Autism

What is autism?



Myths and Facts

Defining autism

Clinical diagnostic perspective

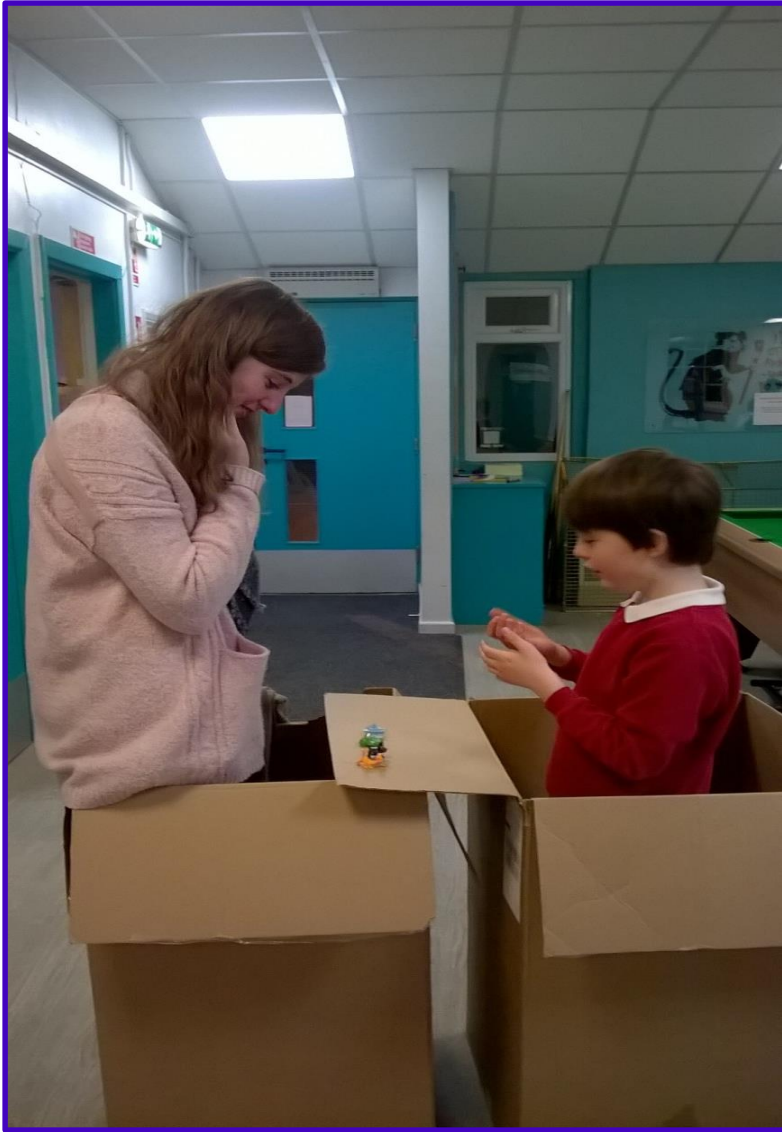
**Social communication
and interaction**

**Restricted and
repetitive behaviours,
activities and interests**

**Sensory
differences**



Appearances and Experiences



“I know we’re not supposed to judge people by their appearances. But people tend to make exceptions for autistic people.

I know this because whenever you tell me I “*don’t look autistic*”, what you’re saying is I’m not matching your expectations of what an autistic person is *supposed* to look like”

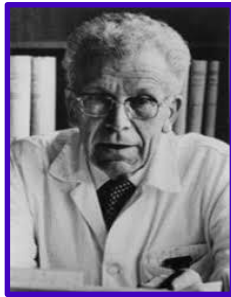
Chris Bonello

Inside and Outside

A history - different perspectives

OUTSIDE

GPs
psychologists
psychiatrists
parents
teachers
advocates



1940

INSIDE

autistic people



2020

Describing autism



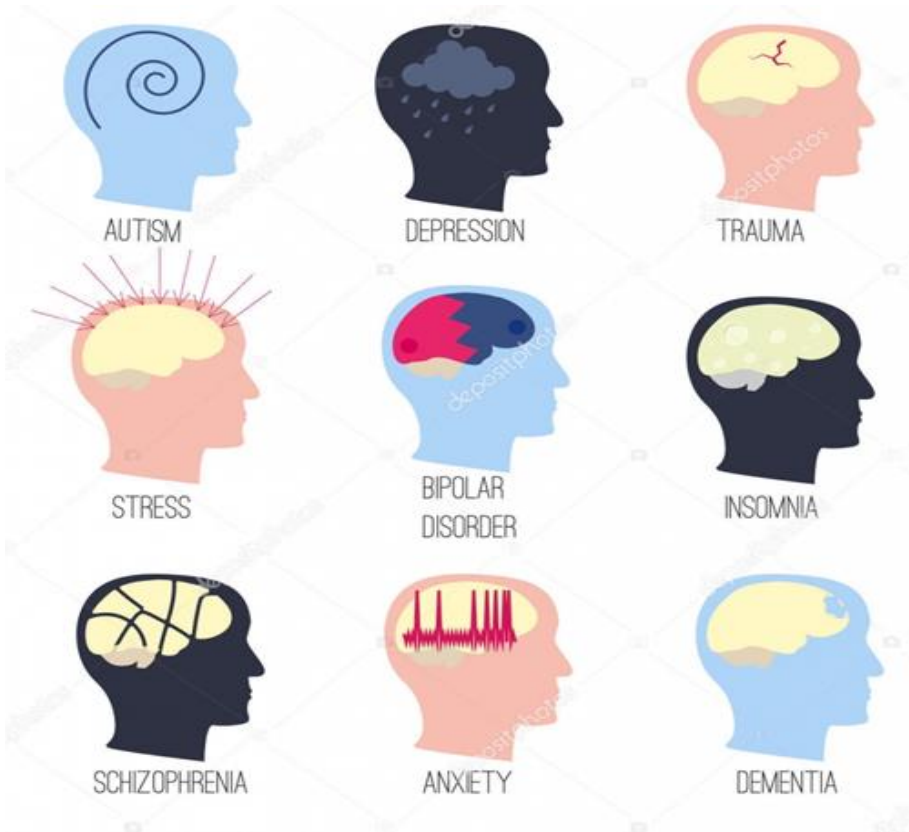
Autism is a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them.

The National Autistic Society 2020

The Autism Spectrum



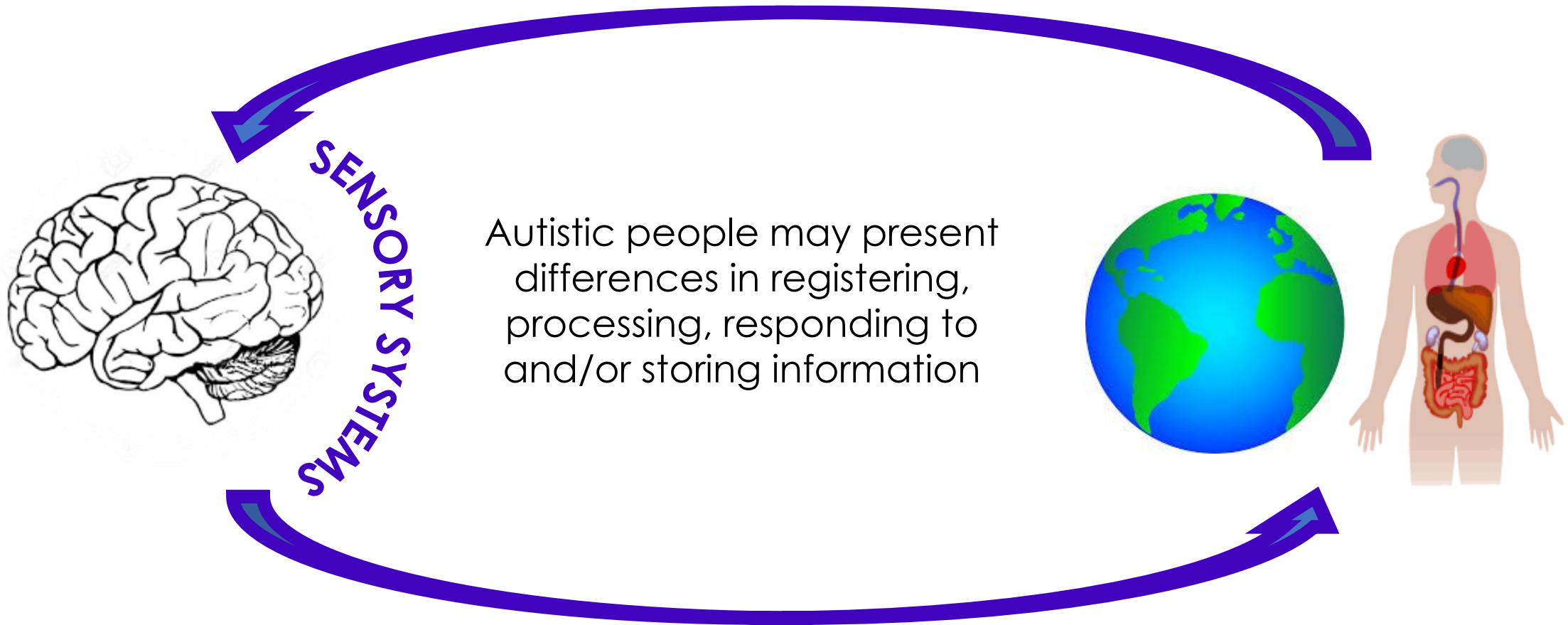
A different way of understanding autism



“In many ways it may be argued that it isn’t a disorder, or a disability, but a different style of processing information. Simply speaking our brains are wired a little differently”

Bill Nason, 2014

Differences in processing information



Processing information



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- Sensory information
- Cognitive information
- Social information

Coping strategies and autism

Aspie-rations



By: Theresa Scovil

Coping strategies

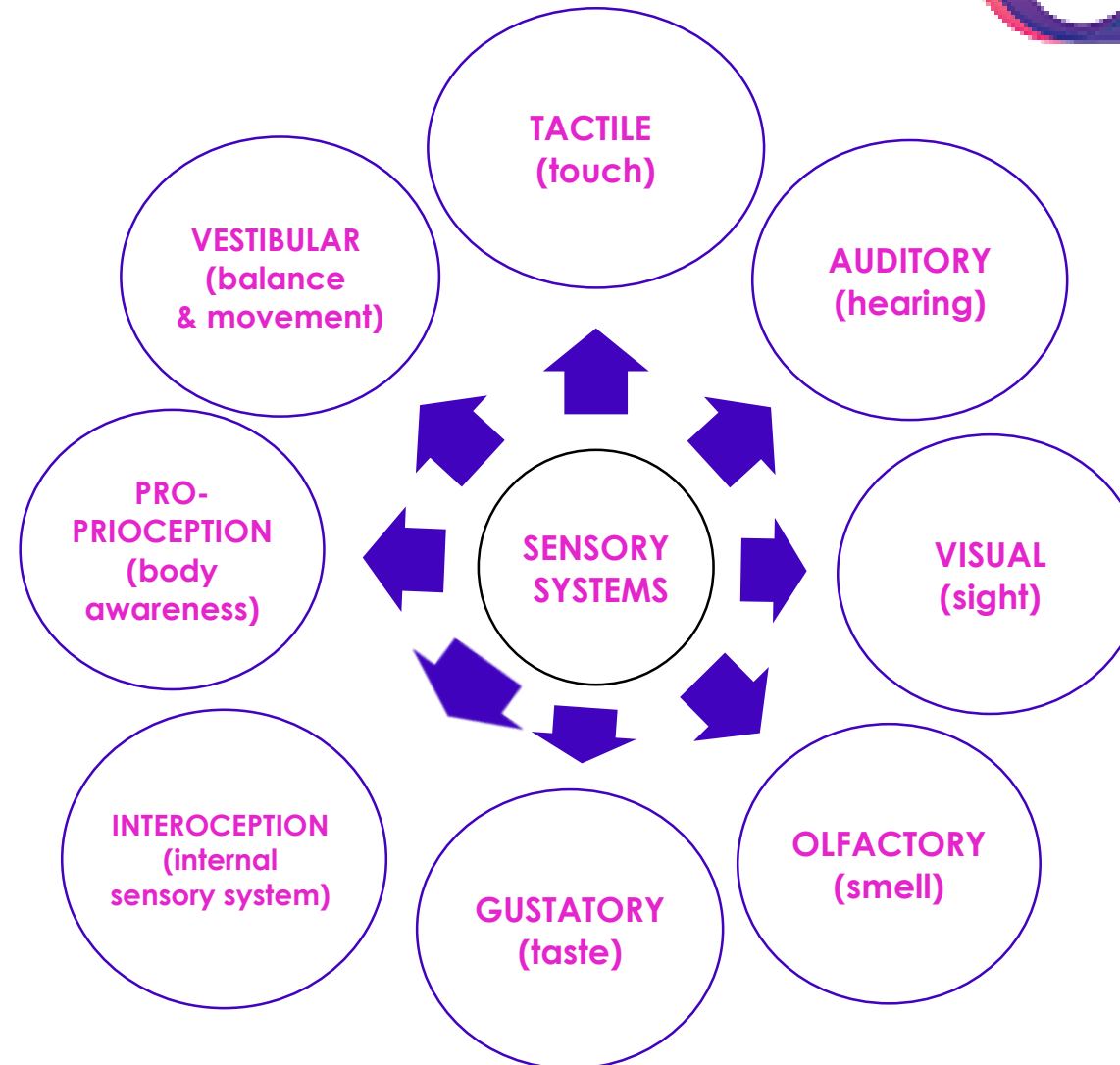
- Stimming
- Avoidance of stressful situations
- Time with comforting objects and/or activities
- Echolalia
- Reliance on routines



...or repetitive and restricted patterns of behaviour, activities and interests?

Sensory Information

Processing sensory information



Potential differences in sensory processing



- Under- or over-sensitivity
- Filtering sensory information
- Registration order of sensory information
- Emotions triggered by sensory stimuli

Extra time needed to process information

Coping strategies



- Using sensory equipment
- Blocking out
- Seeking sensation
- Avoiding sensation
- Changing the environment

Cognitive Information

Processing cognitive information



“Cognition is sometimes described as the mental **process** of knowing, including aspects such as awareness, perception, reasoning, and judgment. In simple terms, **cognition** means thinking.”

Research Autism, 2019

Potential differences in cognitive processing

- Understanding of sequences and consequences
- Understanding of abstract concepts
- Ability to plan
- Ability to make decisions
- Ability to focus

Extra time needed to process information

Coping strategies - examples

- Preference for routines and predictable events
- Use of visual timetables and planners
- Masking
- Stimming
- Hyper-focus



Social Communication

Processing social communication



“Communication is not the same as speech. For many reasons, some autistic people **may not speak, but this does not mean they are unable to communicate.**”

Julie Beadle-Brown and Richard Mills, 2018

Video



Potential differences in processing communication

- Ability to speak
- Understanding and using verbal communication
- Interpreting verbal and non-verbal communication
- Literal interpretation
- Facial expressions
- Eye contact
- Body language

Extra time needed to process information



Social Interactions

Processing social interactions



“Imagine an interaction with an autistic peer that feels awkward.

You walk away thinking, *'that was awkward, they didn't have the social skills I expected', or, 'I really felt like they really didn't understand me.'*

But what if they are thinking the exact same thing about you? What happens when we listen to the autistic perspective? ”

Dr Damian Milton, 2020

Potential differences in processing social interactions



- Understanding and using verbal and non-verbal communication
- Understanding non-written social rules and spontaneous interactions
- Understanding dynamics and expectations of social interactions

Coping strategies



- Preference for routines and predictable events
- Rehearsing
- Controlling details
- Masking
- Stimming
- Camouflaging
- Preference for structured interactions

Empathy

Empathy

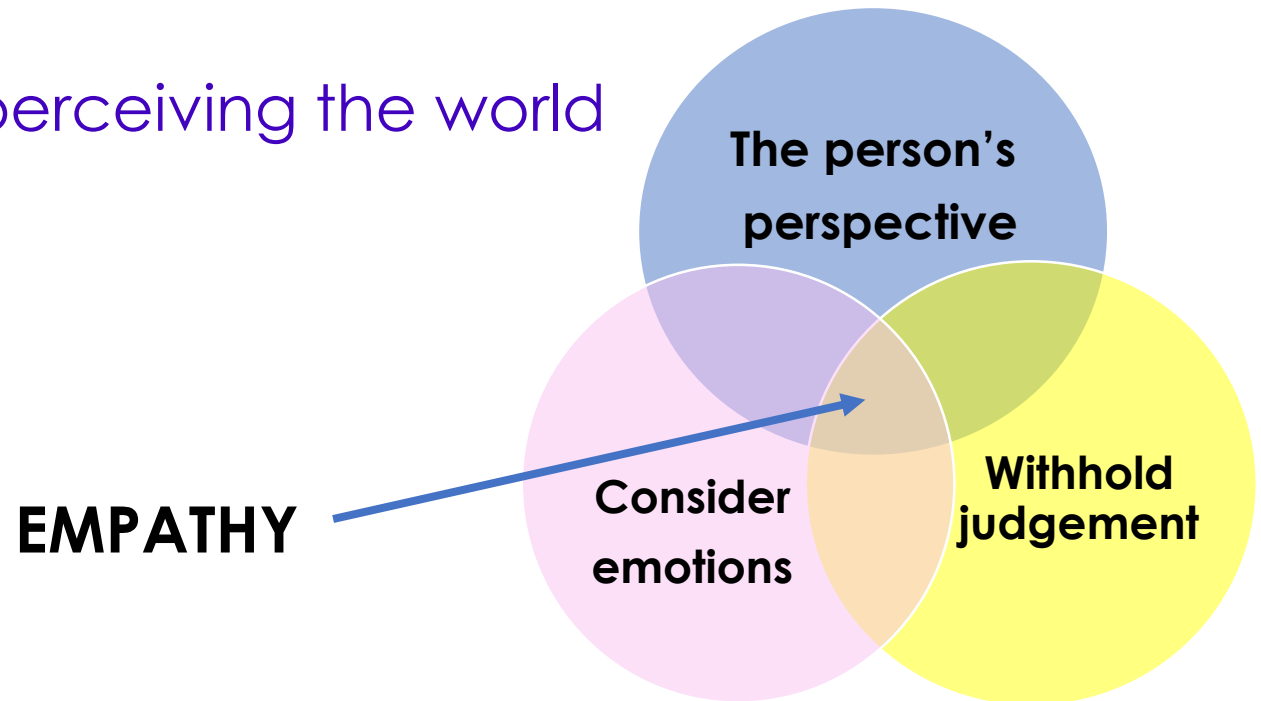


Autistic people spend a great deal of time, energy and effort trying to work out how “neuro-typical” people think, what their actions mean and how best to respond in an acceptable and appropriate way.

Anyone interacting or meeting an autistic person needs to be able to do the same, to be able to see things from their perspective, to listen and understand what may upset, confuse, excite or engage them.

Strategies - embracing empathy

- Listen
- Observe
- Explore the person's way of perceiving the world
- Adjust your approach



Questions!!!!

Video

