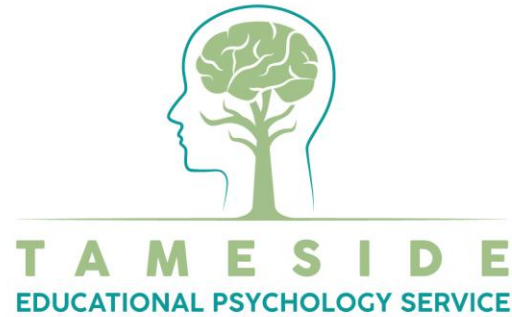


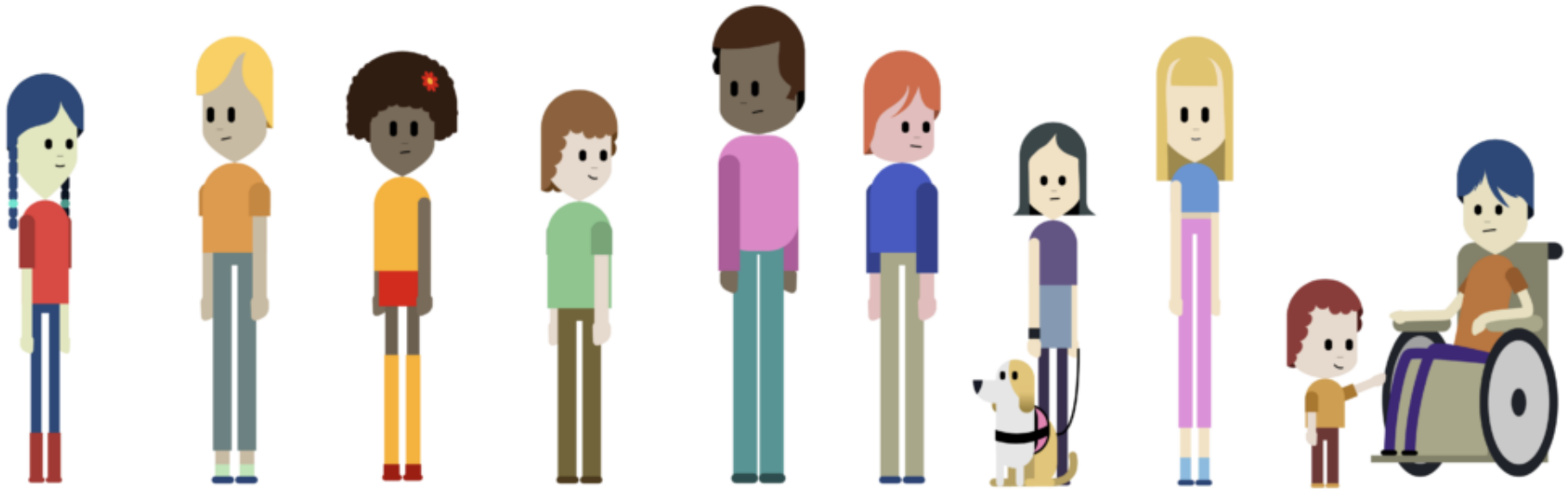


Introduction to Autism

Our mission: Applying psychology collaboratively to facilitate change through hope and creativity.

What is autism?

- A neurodevelopmental difference
- A unique way of processing the world, including sensory, cognitive, and social information. This can impact the way they develop.



*#difference**not**deficit*

Autism Spectrum

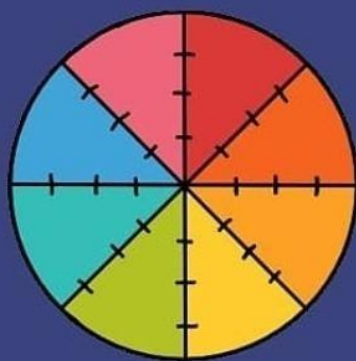
The Autism Spectrum is **NOT** linear



less autistic

very autistic

The Autism Spectrum looks more like:



- Social differences
- Interests
- repetitions
- sensory sensitivities
- emotional regulation
- perception
- executive functioning
- other

Terms like "high functioning", "low functioning" and "Asperger" are harmful and outdated.

Autism_sketches

Four Key Areas of difference

- Developed by Autism Education Trust with young people and parents of autistic children
- Areas of difference may mean the child or young person has educational needs in this area.

Interacting

...the way they interact, play and develop relationships



Processing Information

...their attention, interests and how they learn.



Sensory Processing

...taking in and perceiving sensory information. This may include hyper (high) or hypo (low) sensitivity to the 5 senses, as well as balance and body awareness.



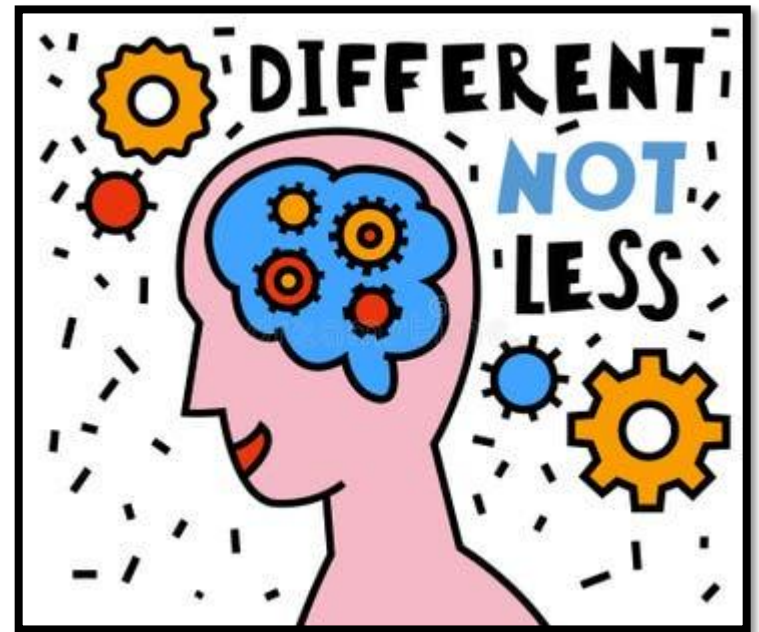
Communication

...the way they communicate, understand and use language.

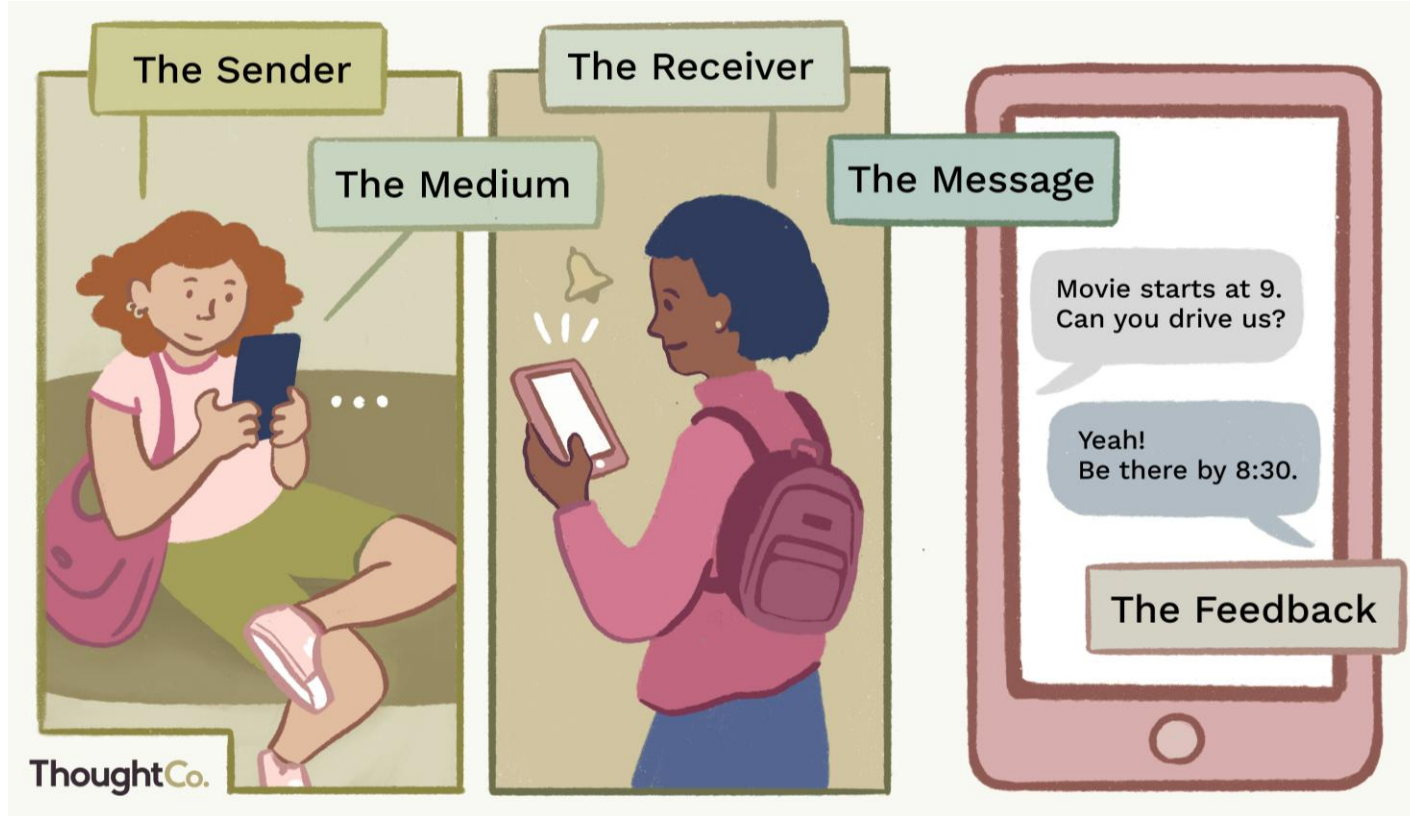


Bit of context when considering autistic interaction difference...

- Social model vs medical model of disability
- Neuro-affirmative social skills practice → Not all differences mean there is a need e.g. lacking eye contact
- Double empathy problem (Milton, 2012)



Needs Relating to Communication & Interaction

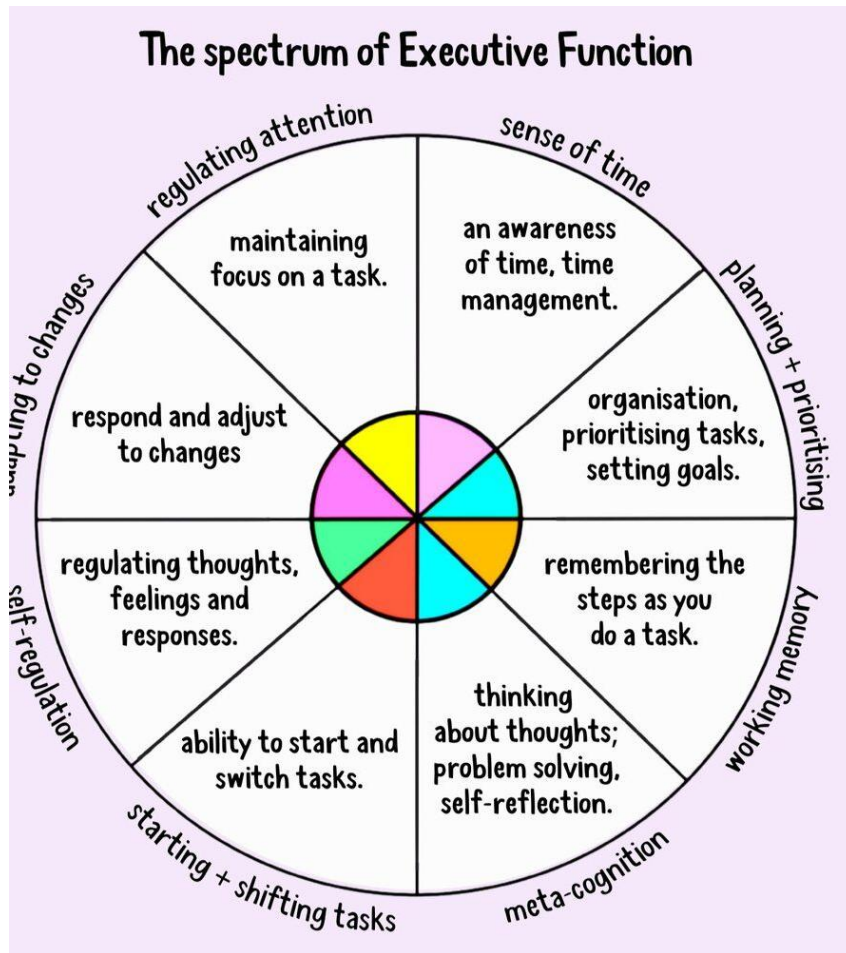


- **Sending the message** → Can they communicate what they want to communicate?
- **Receiving the message** → Can they understand what is being communicated to them?
- **Using all the social information** → Can they integrate these skills in an interaction with others?

What MIGHT this look like?

- Struggles to learn or recall words appropriate for their age.
- Use of the same words or phrases/short sentences/topics repetitively
- Appearing unwilling to expand answer may mean unable to
- Unclear speech
- Struggles to explain events, describe things or tell/write stories
- Difficulty conveying emotions or complex thoughts verbally
- Unable to use alternative mediums of communication if nonverbal
- Limited or irrelevant responses
- Ignoring attempts to communicate
- Avoiding social situations
- More willing to interact with adults, but not with peers
- Taking a long time to respond
- Difficulty initiating or carrying on conversations.
- Become unusually angry in specific or general social situations (often group conversations)
- Unable to adjust communication based on listener's needs or environmental context

Needs related to Processing Information



Executive Function refers to a set of mental processes that help individuals regulate their behaviour and achieve goals. These include:

- Working memory
- Inhibitory control (self-control), including of attention
- Cognitive flexibility
- Planning and problem-solving

What MIGHT this look like?

- **Difficulty Starting Tasks (Initiation)**

- Struggles to begin assignments or projects without external prompts.
- Appears to procrastinate or avoid tasks, even simple ones like opening a textbook or starting homework.

- **Poor Time Management and Planning**

- Frequently late turning in assignments or struggles to estimate how long a task will take.
- Fails to break large projects into smaller, manageable steps, leading to last-minute work or incomplete assignments.
- Often unprepared for tests or quizzes because of difficulty scheduling study time.

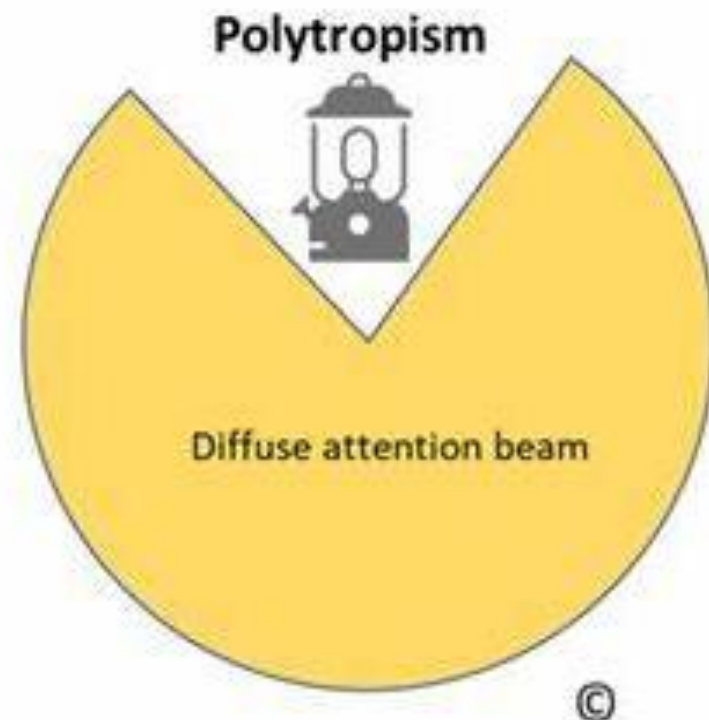
- **Challenges with Flexibility**

- Struggles to adapt when routines change, such as having a substitute teacher or an altered class schedule.
- Becomes stuck on a particular way of solving a problem and resists alternative methods.
- Has difficulty shifting attention between tasks or transitioning between activities.

- **Forgetfulness & Disorganisation (Working Memory)**
 - Frequently forgets to bring or loses necessary materials, like homework, books, or supplies.
 - Loses track of what has already been done in a multi-step task or skips steps entirely.
 - Needs frequent reminders about deadlines or instructions.
- **Struggles with Emotional Regulation**
 - Becomes easily frustrated or overwhelmed by challenges, such as a difficult math problem or unexpected changes to the schedule.
 - May experience meltdowns or withdraw when things don't go as planned.
 - Has difficulty calming down or recovering after a setback.
- **Poor Impulse Control**
 - Calls out in class or interrupts others instead of waiting their turn.
 - Rushes through tasks without checking for errors.
 - Acts without considering the consequences, such as blurting out an answer or throwing objects during a lesson.
- **Difficulty Following Through (Task Completion)**
 - Starts assignments but leaves them unfinished or only partially completed.
 - Gives up on tasks when they become challenging.
 - Rarely double-checks work or finishes tasks to a satisfactory standard.

- **Trouble Staying Focused or Switching Attention**

- Easily distracted during class, especially with long or multi-step tasks.
- Fails to follow through on directions because they lose focus partway through.
- May become engrossed in a task and become distressed when asked to move on.





Working with Monotropic Attention

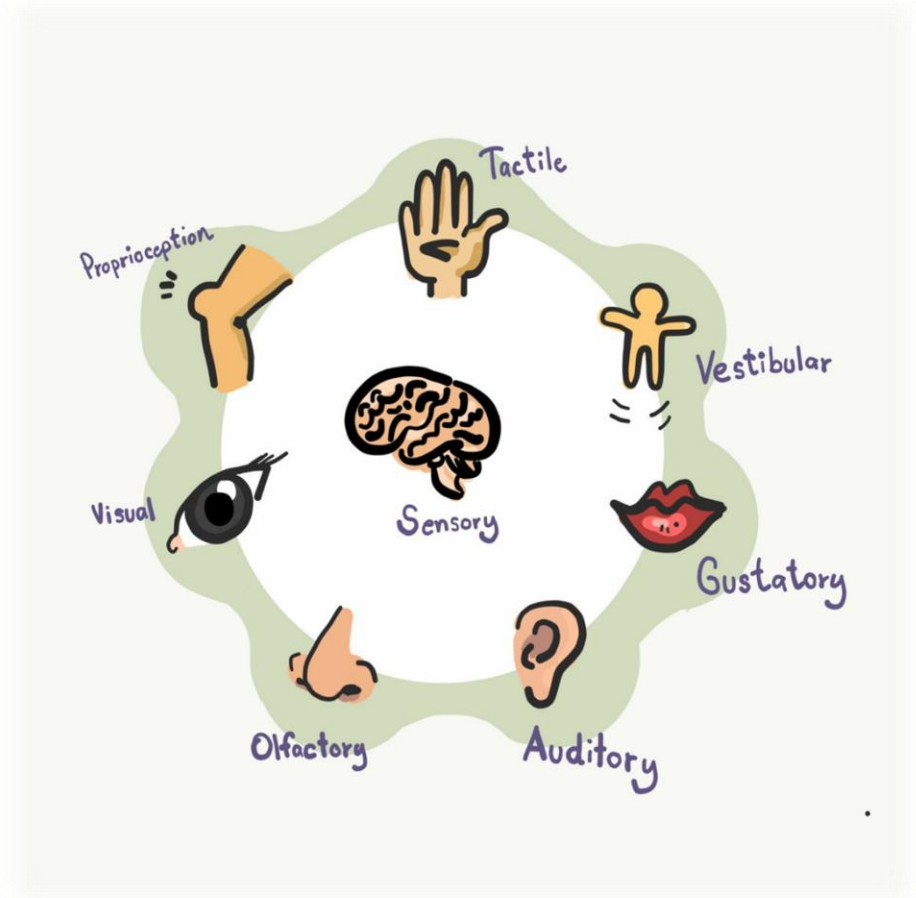
- Use their Interests
- Allow Extra Transition Time
- Minimize Overload
- Value their Intensity

Needs related to Sensory Processing

- Many types of sensory information that you will already be aware of.
- Some you may not...

Proprioception is our ability to sense things happening inside our body. E.g. the feeling of nausea caused by anxiety or unwell

Vestibular senses relate to our ability to sense our body's positioning in our surroundings. E.g. bumping into other people/objects



Needs related to Sensory Processing

Seeking

Actively seeking out intense sensory input
e.g. seeking loud noise, lots of movement

Avoidance

Avoiding or reacting strongly to sensory input
e.g. avoiding bright lights

Sensitivity

Becoming easily overwhelmed or distressed due to sensory input e.g.
becoming upset due to clothing tags

Registration

Showing little or a delayed reaction to sensory input e.g. not noticing when
name called, appear clumsy

What MIGHT this look like?

Sensory Seeking

- **Classroom:** Fidgeting, moving around, or needing breaks for physical activities.
- **Social:** Seeking physical contact or making loud noises.
- **Learning:** Preferring to be in motion, like bouncing on a yoga ball.

Sensory Avoiding

- **Classroom:** Avoiding noisy or crowded areas, covering ears, or refusing activities with loud sounds.
- **Social:** Avoiding large groups or physical contact.
- **Learning:** Not using materials with uncomfortable textures or smells.

Sensory Sensitivity

- **Classroom:** Becoming overwhelmed by noises, bright lights, or changes in the environment.
- **Social:** Distressed by noisy social settings like the cafeteria or hallways.
- **Learning:** Easily distracted or upset by sensory stimuli.

Low Registration

- **Classroom:** Not responding to instructions or unaware of their environment.
- **Social:** Missing social cues, such as body language or facial expressions.
- **Learning:** Failing to notice changes in the environment or sensory signals.

Classroom Strategies

01

1. Provide predictability

02

2. Foster communication

03

3. Support sensory needs

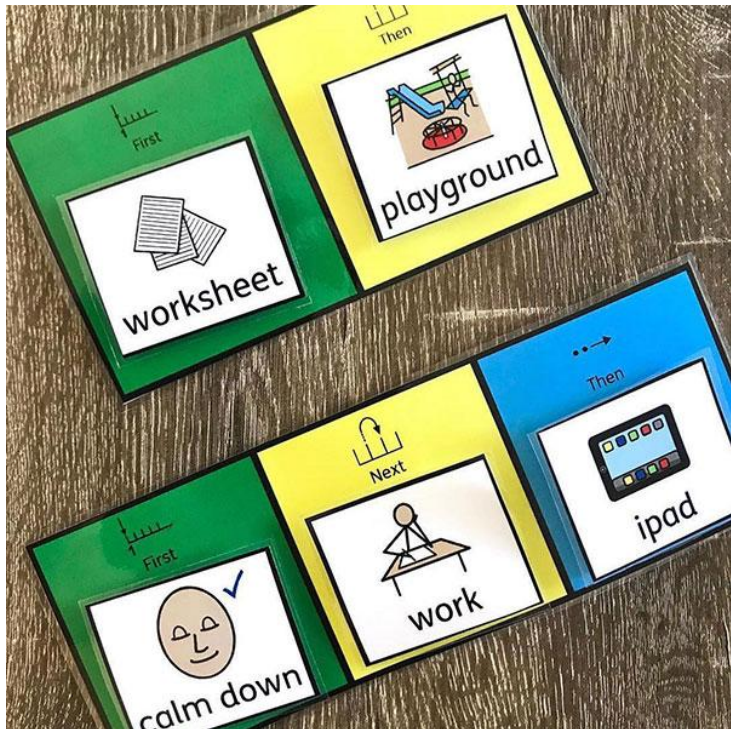
04

4. Support emotional regulation and wellbeing

1. Provide Structure

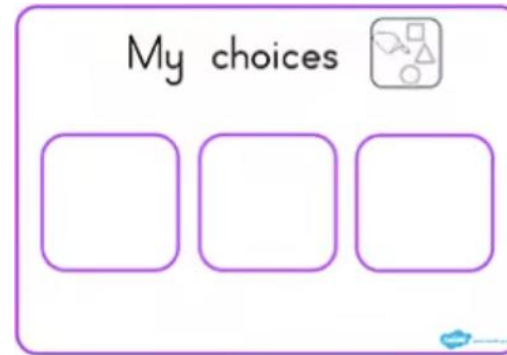
Students must always know

1. Where should I be?
2. What am I doing?
3. How much do I have to do?
4. How do I know I've finished?
5. What will I need to do next?

[illegible]

2. Foster Communication

Use clear, simple language or alternative communication methods and use of visuals. Promote social inclusion and support connections in ways that respect individuals' comfort and style.



3. Support Sensory Needs

- Create sensory-friendly environments and support children and young people's preferences.
- Consider completing a sensory checklist to identify needs.
- Incorporate regulating activities throughout the day.
- Allow for learning aids that are not a distraction for others.



national autism standards

Supported by:
**Department for
Education**

Sensory assessment checklist

(based on the sensory profile checklist from Bogdashina, 2003 and included in the IDP autism spectrum)

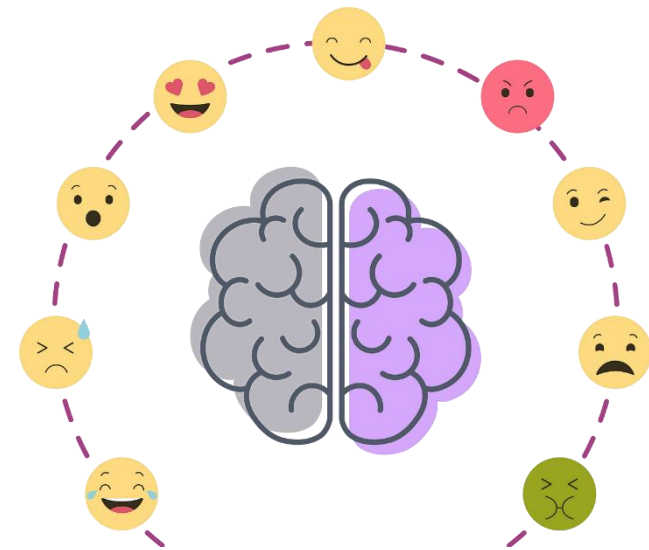
Tick which apply and then consider which teaching staff need to know this information.

Where possible, complete this in discussion with the parents or carers and the pupil.

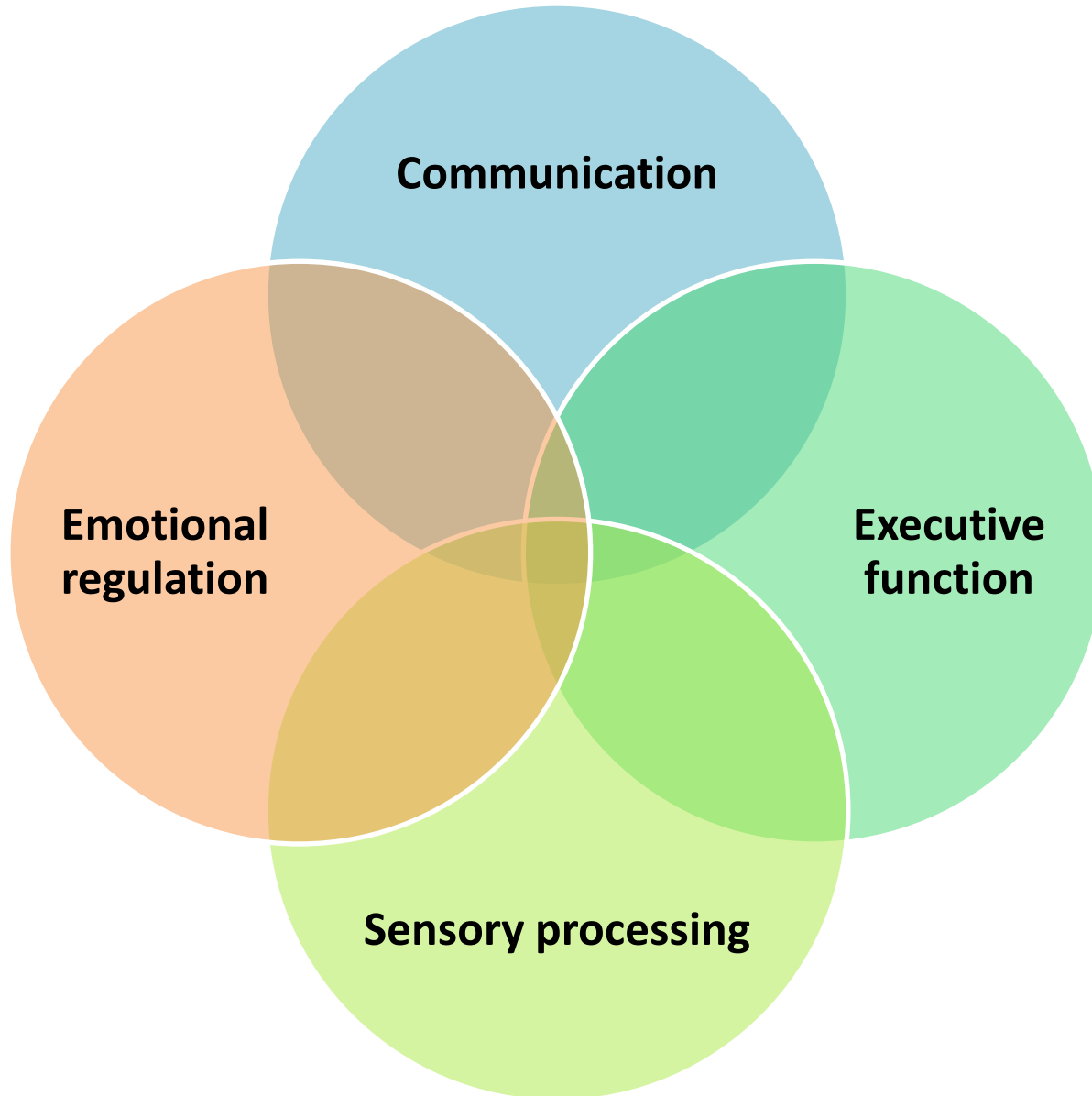
No.	Item	Yes	No	Don't know	Action required
1	Resists changes to familiar routines				
2	Does not recognise familiar people in unfamiliar clothes				
3	Dislikes bright lights				

4. Support Emotional Regulation and Wellbeing

- Recognise and accept that all emotions are valid and meaningful to the young person.
- Remember that when a person is feeling emotionally dysregulated, they will have difficulty carrying out some everyday tasks.
- Be aware that self-regulation strategies can be both healthy and unhealthy: unhealthy strategies may include self-harm or high-risk behaviour. Teach replacement or distraction techniques that young people can use when they are feeling a certain way.
- Understand that some autistic people may have a real difficulty connecting their feelings. Help the young person to identify and label their emotions.
- Use social stories to break down emotions into an accessible format.
- Be consistent.



Model of Neuroinclusion



Jake is a 14-year-old autistic boy attending your provision. A year ago, he was placed in a care home following long-term concerns about the family home.

When at your school, Jake regularly keeps his hood up and can seem angry when he is completing group work with peers. When asked why this is the case, he will often reply 'I dunno' or 'it's stupid'. Jake's emotional state can seem quite inconsistent and intense; for example, he spent the morning settled in class with his teacher, but when she left to take her break, he refused to stay in the classroom and shouted at other staff.

Jake's attendance at school can be inconsistent, but this has recently been better following the introduction of visits to the gym as part of some school days. He seemed to enjoy going around the machines and learning how to use them. He gets on with a particular staff member who has started to introduce circuit training. Jake has suddenly stopped going to the gym sessions and, when asked why, said he finds it 'stupid'.

Thinking about Jake...

1. Which areas are relevant?
2. What could you do to support him?

