

Dealing with Autism in Gozo 2



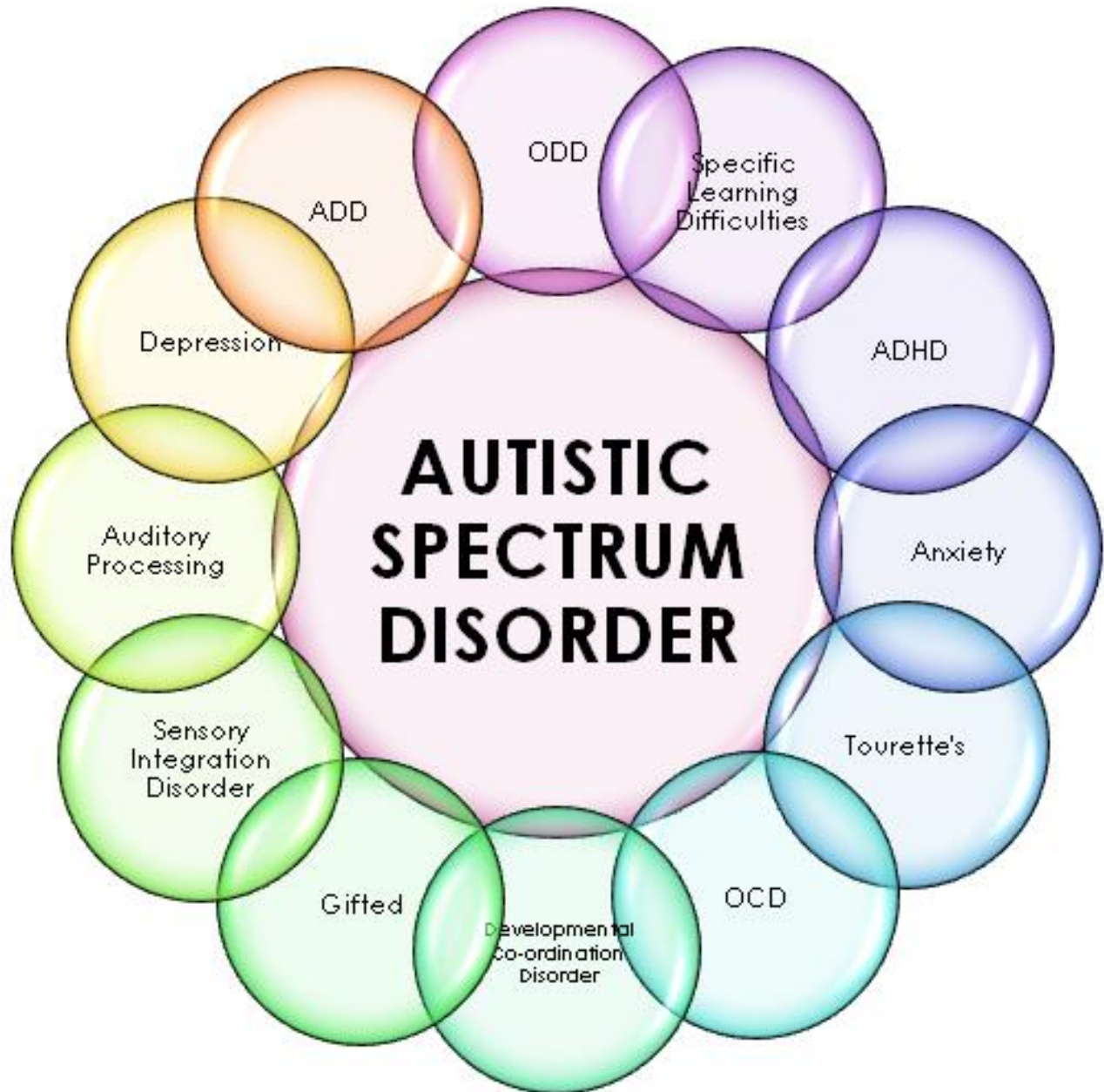


Understanding Autism and Sensory Differences



Myth or Fact

1. There are cures for Autism. **Myth**
2. You can grow out of Autism. **Myth**
3. Autism is linked to over-connectivity in the brain. **Fact**
4. Autism can be caused by the MMR vaccine. **Myth**
5. Asperger Syndrome is on the Autism Spectrum. **Fact**
6. Autism often coexists with other disabilities. **Fact**
7. More males are diagnosed with Autism. **Fact**





Triad of Impairments

Autism Spectrum

Low

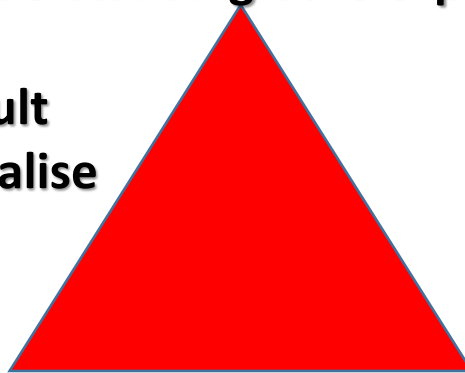
High

Functioning

Functioning

Flexibility of thought and behaviour

- Taking things literally
- Repetitive and rigid behaviours
- Empathy – not understanding others' point of view
- Need for routine
- Find change difficult
- Difficulty to generalise



Sensory Processing Difficulties

Communication

- Repetitive questions
- Difficulty in interpreting meaning
- Finding social nuances of communication and pragmatics difficult
- Difficulty in having a conversation

Social and Emotional Understanding

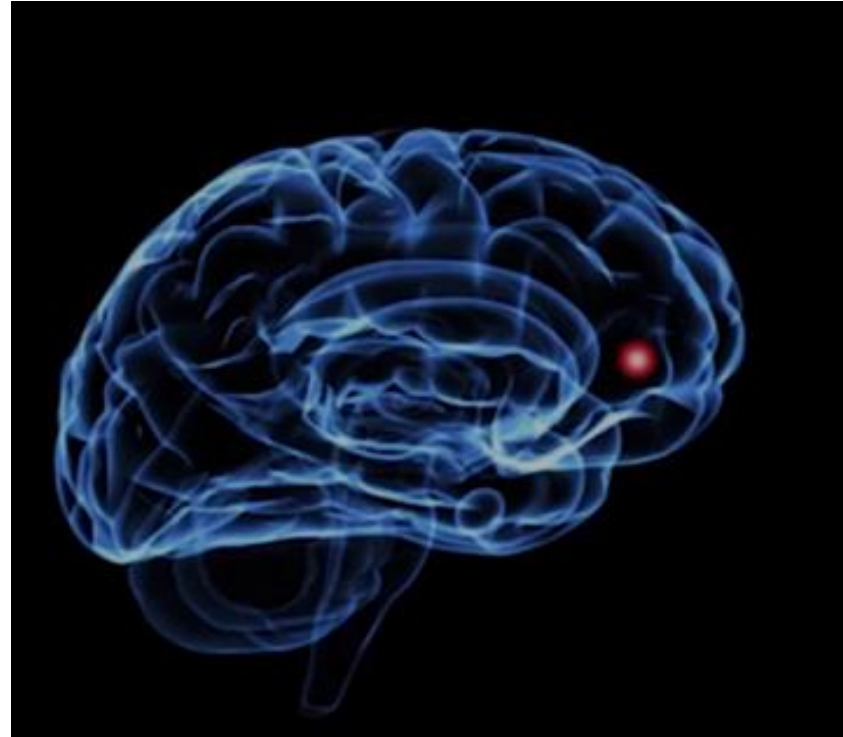
- Difficulty with friendships and initiating communication
- Difficulties with non verbal communication
- Personal space
- Inappropriate touching



For children with autism, the part of the brain that is responsible for receiving, sifting, sorting, processing, organizing, coding and retrieving information coming in through the senses, is to differing degrees and in different ways and for different reasons impaired in its functioning.

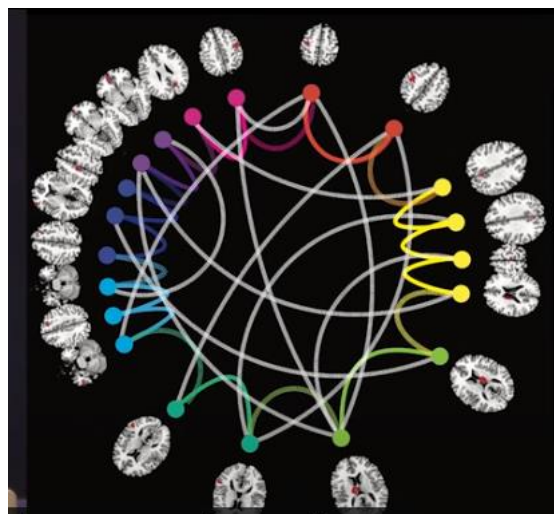
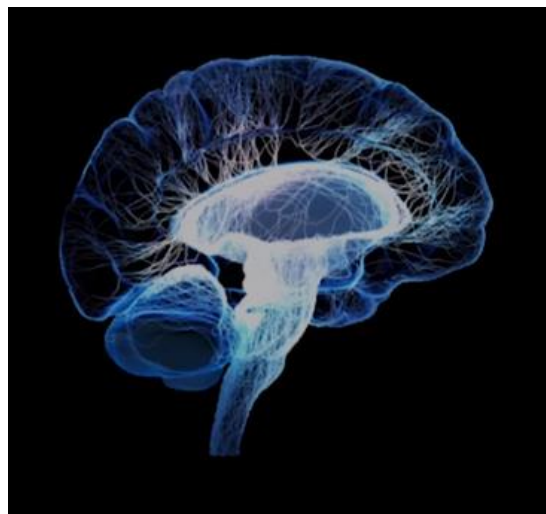


Motion-sensitive brain areas show differences in autism



Swath of cortex behind left and right ear is different in the autistic brain.
It shows that cells are sensitive to dynamic motion and are unable to process fast-moving information such as facial expressions and eye-gaze.
This may impact understanding of the social world, which is very dynamic.

Differences in connectivity across brain regions in autism

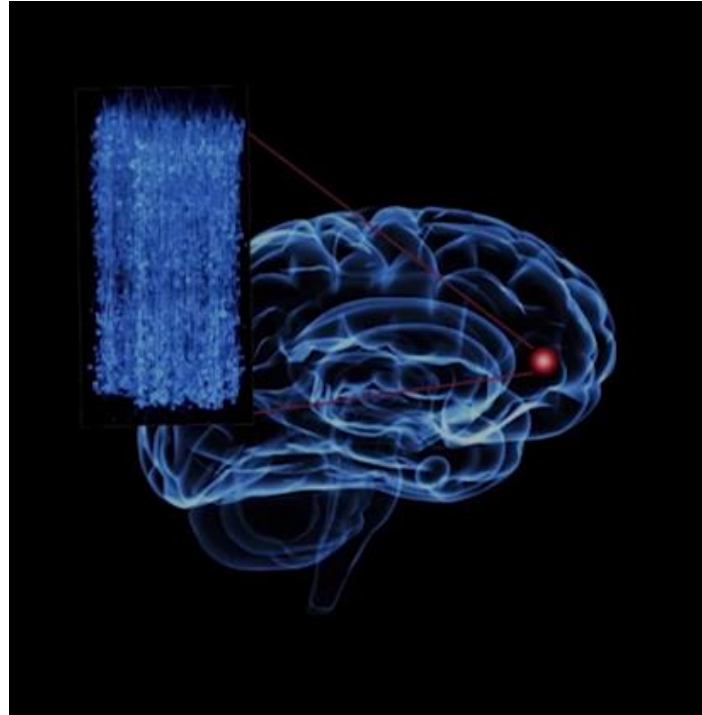


This imaging shows how different regions of the brain are connected to each other. The typical brain shows both local connections (nearby regions) and global connections (opposite regions).

The autistic brain shows overabundance of local connections and a reduced number of global connections. This explains their ability to have a highly accurate local representations but difficulty to integrate them together. 'Seeing the trees but not the forest.'



Inhibitory neural pathway in the brain is altered in autism



Molecular composition of the brain is different.
Impacts the ability to filter sensory information.
Glutamate and GABA molecules control activity of information flow in the brain.
GABA acts differently in parts of autistic brain contributing to sensory sensitivities in people with autism.

Sensory integration is the ability to sort out, process and make use of information from the world around us.

Sensory Integration dysfunction is – The inability to sort out, filter, organise and make use of sensory information.

The information from the brain is not flowing and integrating efficiently like a traffic jam.



Different Sensory Experiences



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lr4_dOorquQ





Theory of Mind

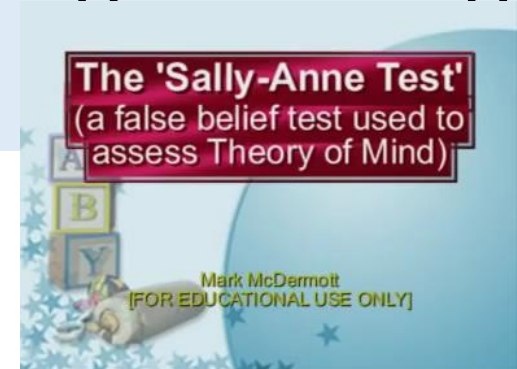


Refers to the ability to make accurate guesses about how someone is thinking or feeling and predict what they are going to do.



People with ASD have a poor **theory of mind**, which means that they find it difficult to guess what someone is thinking or feeling, or predict what they are going to do.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjkTQtgLH4>





The 'Sally-Anne Test'

(a false belief test used to assess Theory of Mind)

Mark McDermott
[FOR EDUCATIONAL USE ONLY]



Central Coherence



Refers to the ability to:

- Remember the 'gist' or the headlines of a conversation or story
- See a whole picture, rather than individual parts
- Pull together all information from our senses and our memory, to help us to understand what is going on in a social situation



People with autism often have weak central coherence, they may see lots of different unrelated part, rather than the whole picture.



Definition of Challenging Behaviour

‘Behaviour is challenging when its frequency and severity make it dangerous, destructive...’

*Sigafoos, J., Arthur M. & O'Reilly (2003) Challenging Behaviour & Developmental Disability.
Whurr Publishers*



Manifestations of Challenging Behaviour

Common manifestations of challenging behaviour include:

- Aggression - hitting, kicking, biting
- Property destruction
- Self-injury - head banging, self-biting
- Tantrums



What makes a behaviour “challenging”

- Where it occurs (location)
- How often it occurs (frequency)
- How severe it is (intensity)
- How long it continues (duration)

Location, frequency, intensity and duration combine as factors for each challenging behaviour (CB)



Manifestations of Challenging Behaviour

- Episodes begin in early life
- In the absence of effective intervention challenging behaviour is likely to persist into adulthood and can therefore have long-term effects
- Possibly life-threatening
- Treatment of challenging behaviour is a priority in the service towards people with disability.
- Early intervention is essential for it to be effective and impact behavioural change



Understanding Challenging Behaviour

To support individuals with challenging behaviour it is important to have a systematic approach to defining what is and what is not challenging behaviour.

We need to:

- Develop an understanding of challenging behaviour
- Develop better understanding of process of assessment and intervention
- Provide support to persons with disability and their carers



Possible Causes of Challenging Behaviour

- Health
- Change
- Function of behaviour:
 - attention
 - specific, tangible needs
 - escape, avoidance
 - sensorial/self-rewarding



Communication

- To understand
- To be listened to
- When children are stressed, their ability to understand is reduced, At these times we need to **SIMPLIFY** our language.



Environmental barriers to Communication

Ecological Factors

- Service philosophy,
- Staff attitude,
- Noise levels,
- Visual distractions,
- Availability of communication resources,
- Degree to which person's communication methods are used by others;
- Opportunities for communication;
- Consistency of approaches and responses from others;



Total Communication



Total communication is using any means of **communication** —

- body language,
- facial expression,
- signing,
- objects of reference,
- photographs,
- drawings,
- symbols,
- written words,
- vocalisation,
- intonation,
- technology AAC



Providing a total communication environment

- All communications are valued and encouraged;
- Staff communication must respect everyone's needs;
- Less is more;
- Staff take time to communicate;
- Choice is the norm;
- Passivity is discouraged;
- The learner is allowed to be in control;
- AAC is used all the times, not just as an add on;
- Learners have their own communication targets.



Behaviour Difficulties due to Sensory Origin

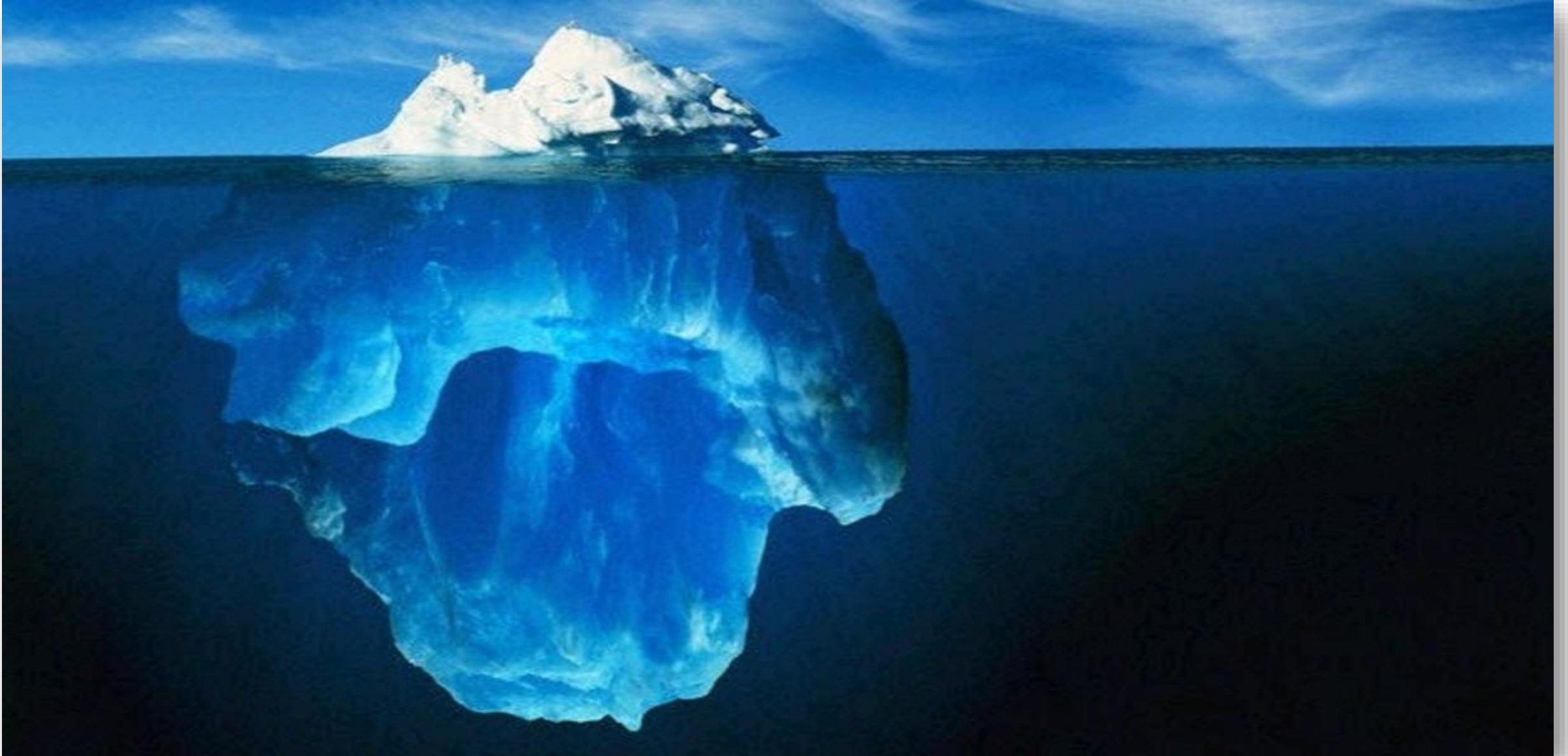
Aware of Student's threshold and how s/he responds to stimuli.

Hyper-sensitive: over-responsiveness, active

Hypo-sensitive: under-responsiveness, passive



The Iceberg





Use the Iceberg

WHAT?

Specific Behaviours

WHY?

Corrective Behaviours
Underlying Factors



Agression Iceberg

**Specific
behaviour**

**Corrective
behaviour**

Spitting
Pushing
Hitting
Throwing
Biting

Unaware of Social
Rules

Unaware of others'
feelings

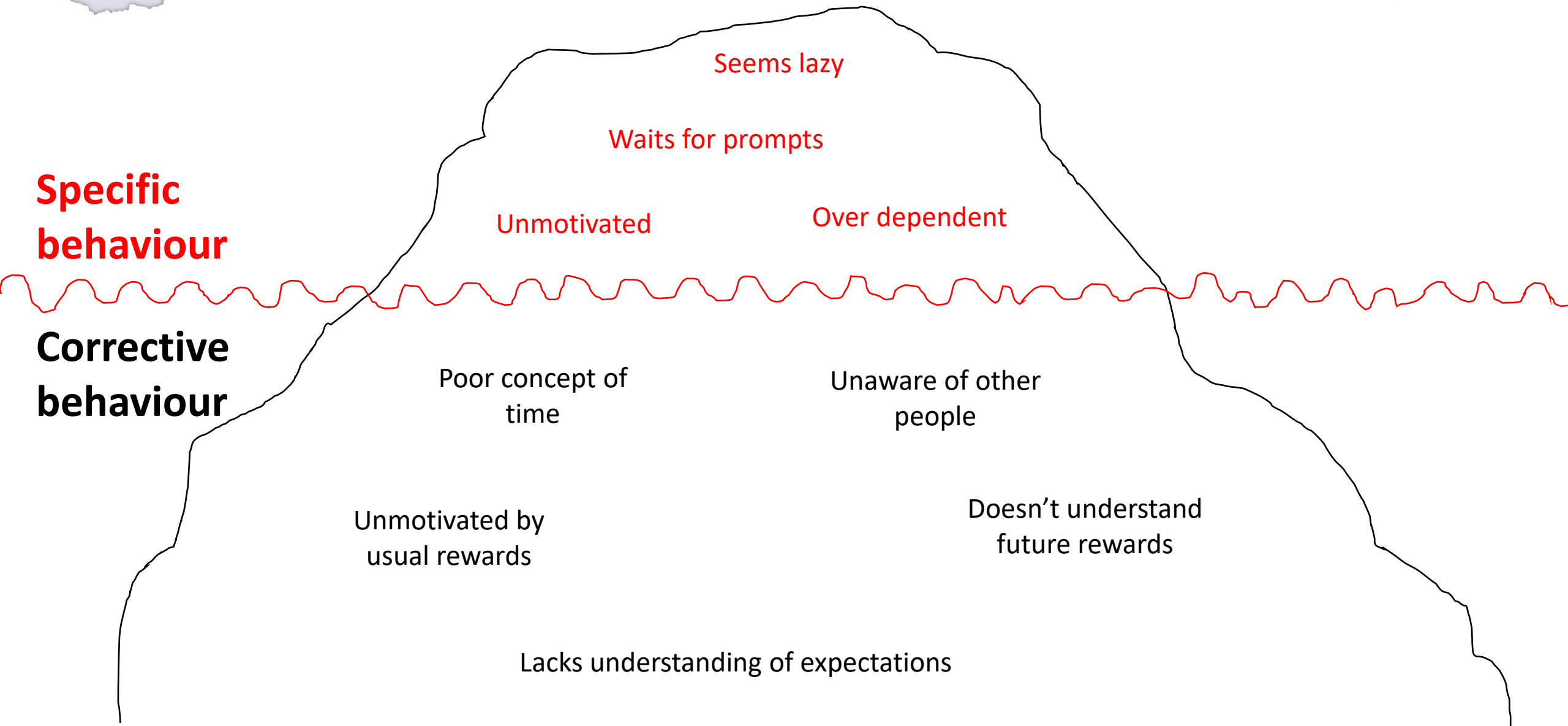
Frustration

Sensory sensitivities

Inappropriate social response

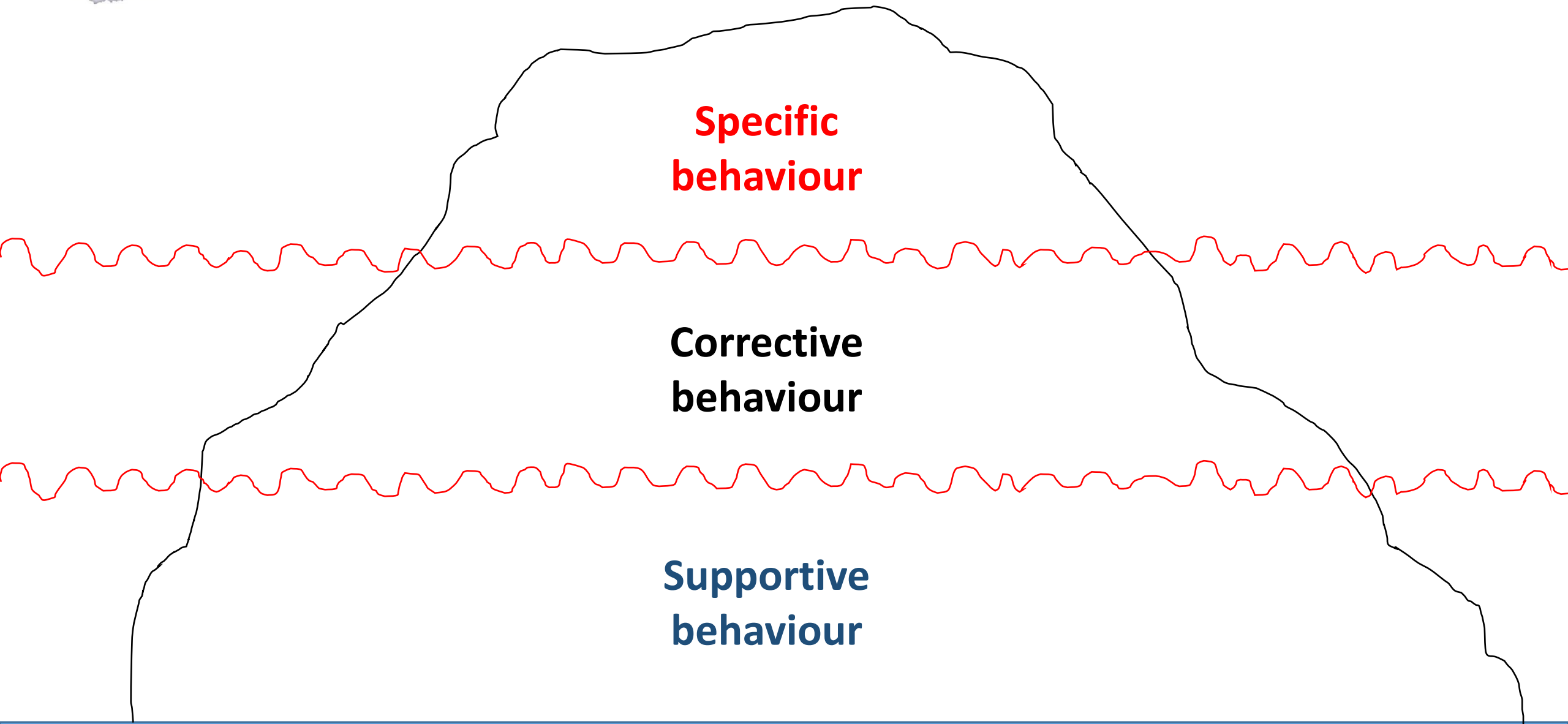


Over Passive Iceberg





How can we help?

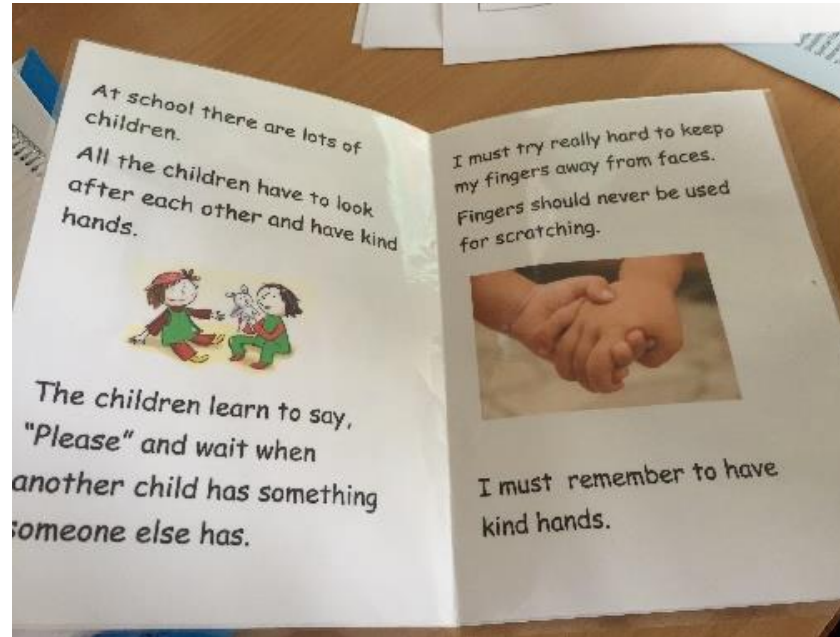


**Specific
behaviour**

**Corrective
behaviour**

**Supportive
behaviour**

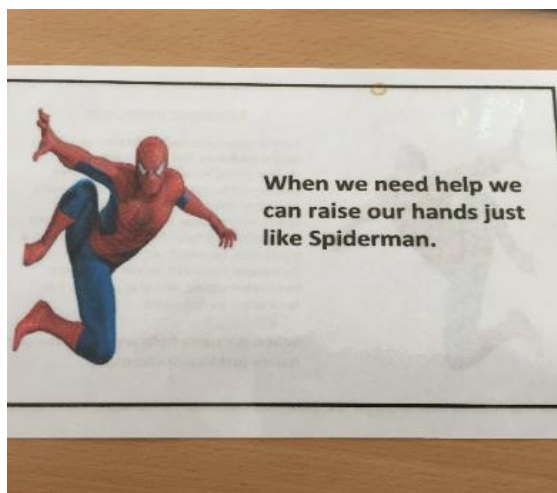
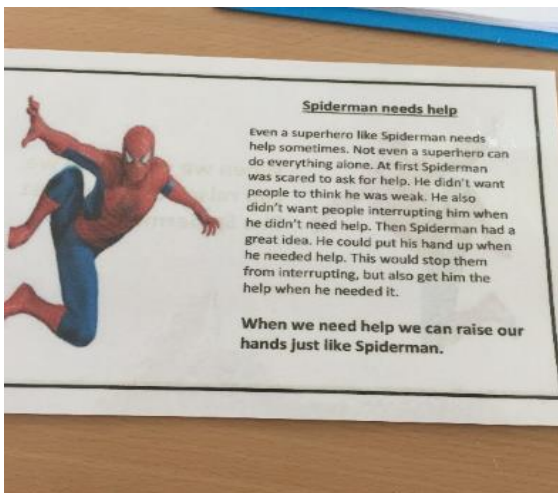
Social stories



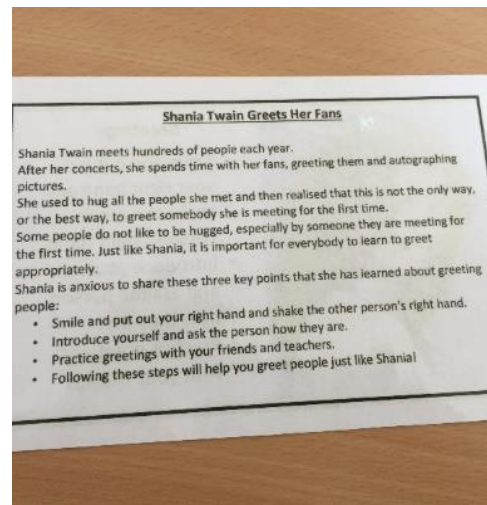
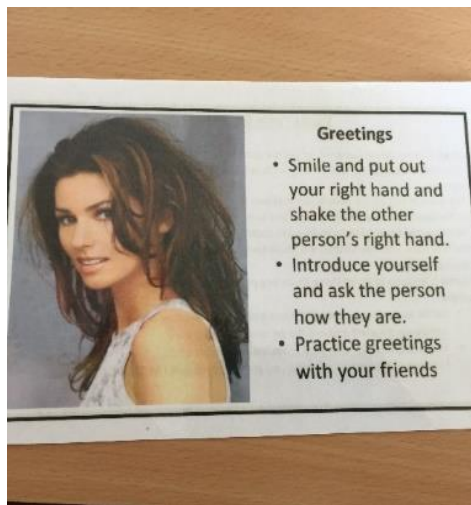
Social Stories are used to teach children with **autism** spectrum disorder (ASD) about the **social** behaviour that's expected in specific settings like the supermarket, doctor's surgery, playground and so on. A **Social Story** can be created for almost any **social** situation.



Power cards

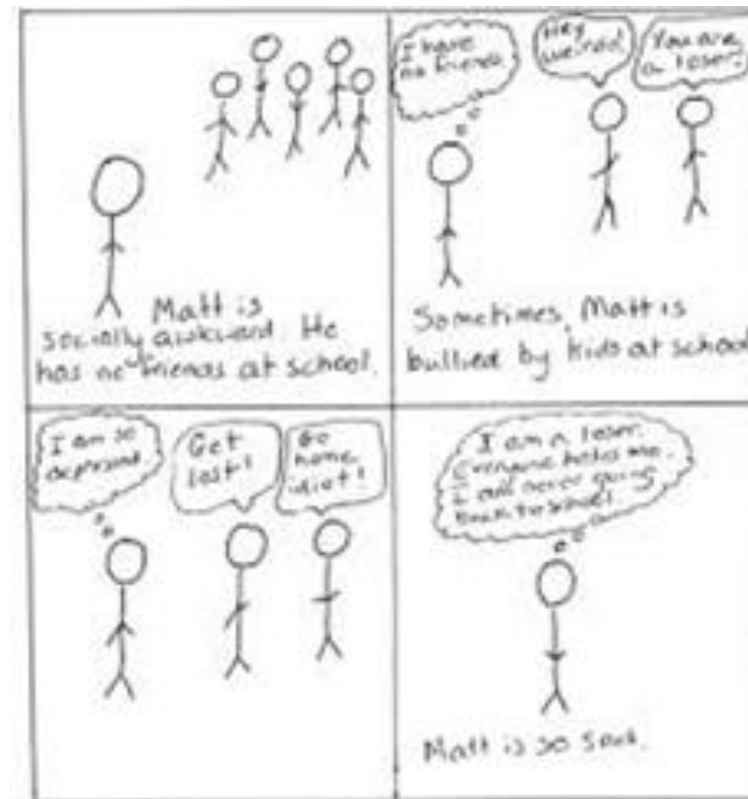
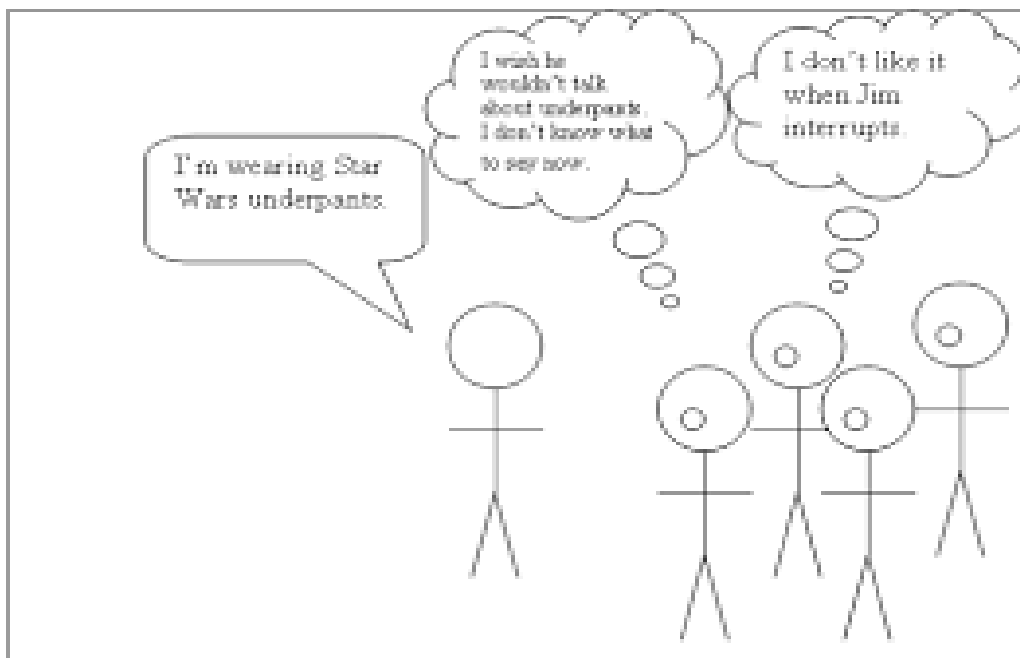


- **Power cards** are cards designed specifically pointing good behaviour of particular character student is interested in.
- One **teaches a concept** through their favourite character.



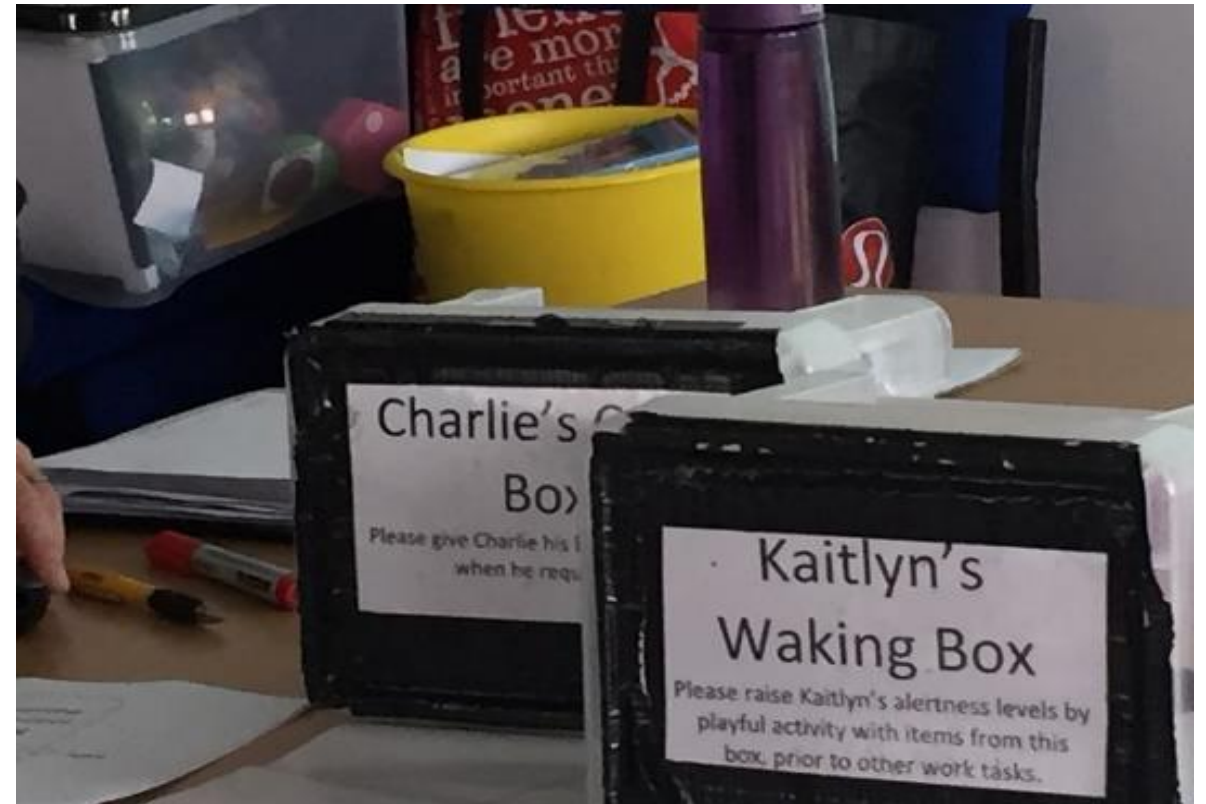
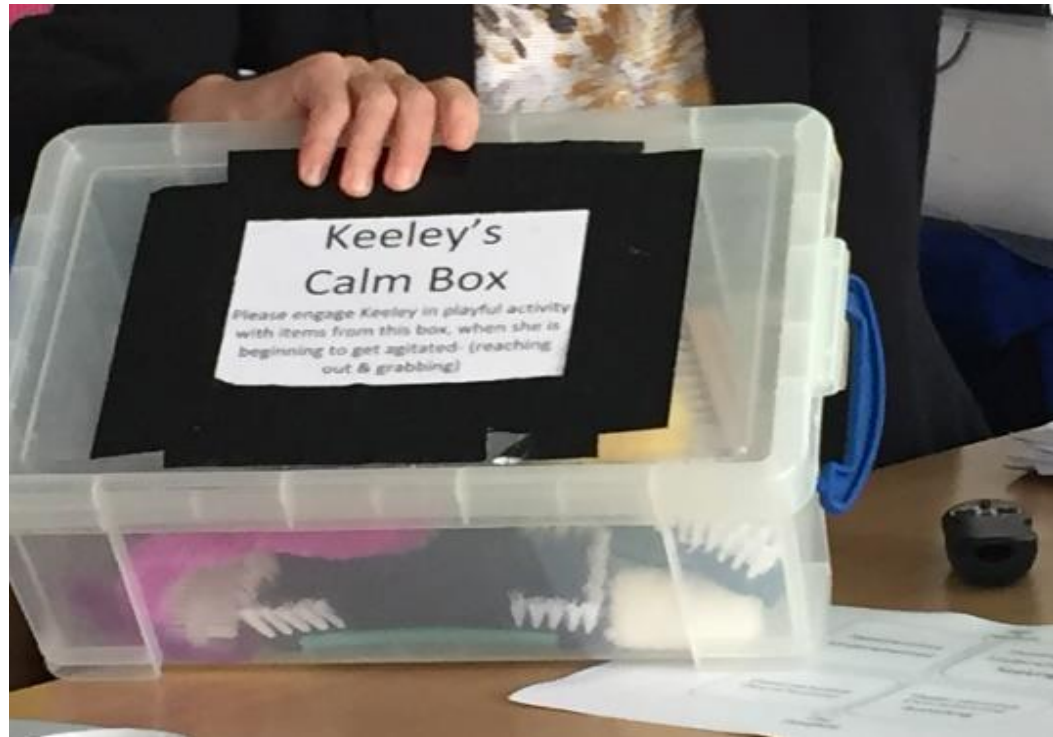
Comic Strip Conversations

- **Comic Strip Conversations** are the use of simple drawings to depict a conversation between two or more people.
- It provides **additional support** to children who struggle to understand information that occur in social situations.



Calming & Waking Boxes

Calm box or Waking box tailor made for individual needs.



Weighted resources

Weighted blanket



Weighted cushion



Weighted shoulder wrap





Supportive Visuals

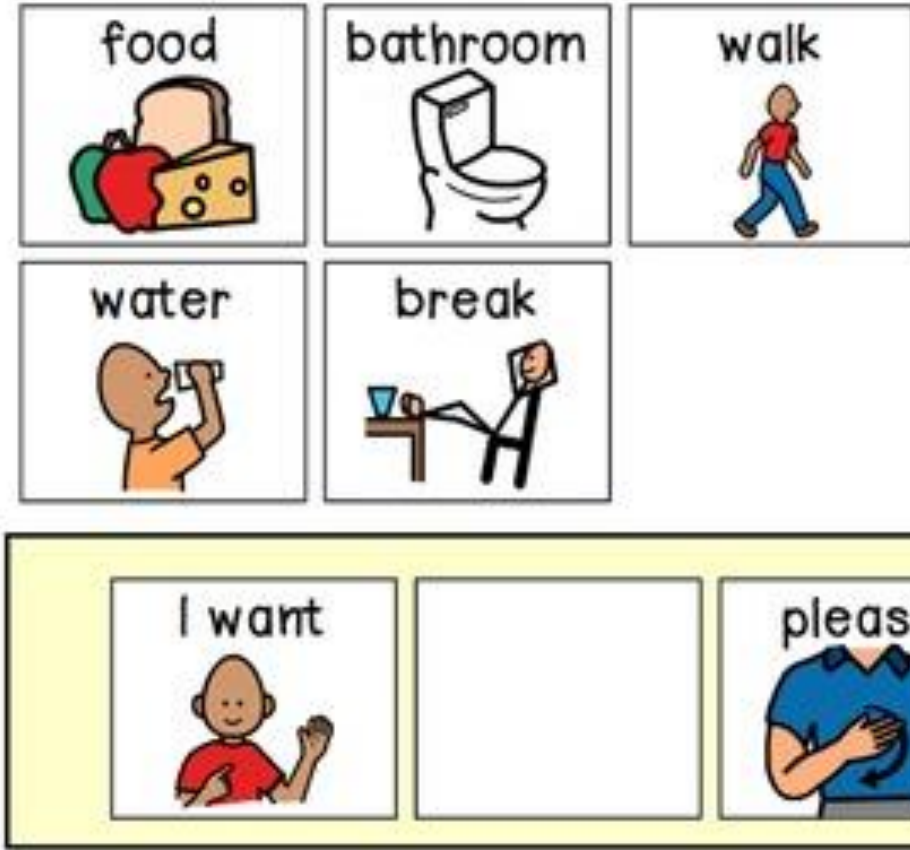


Supportive Visuals

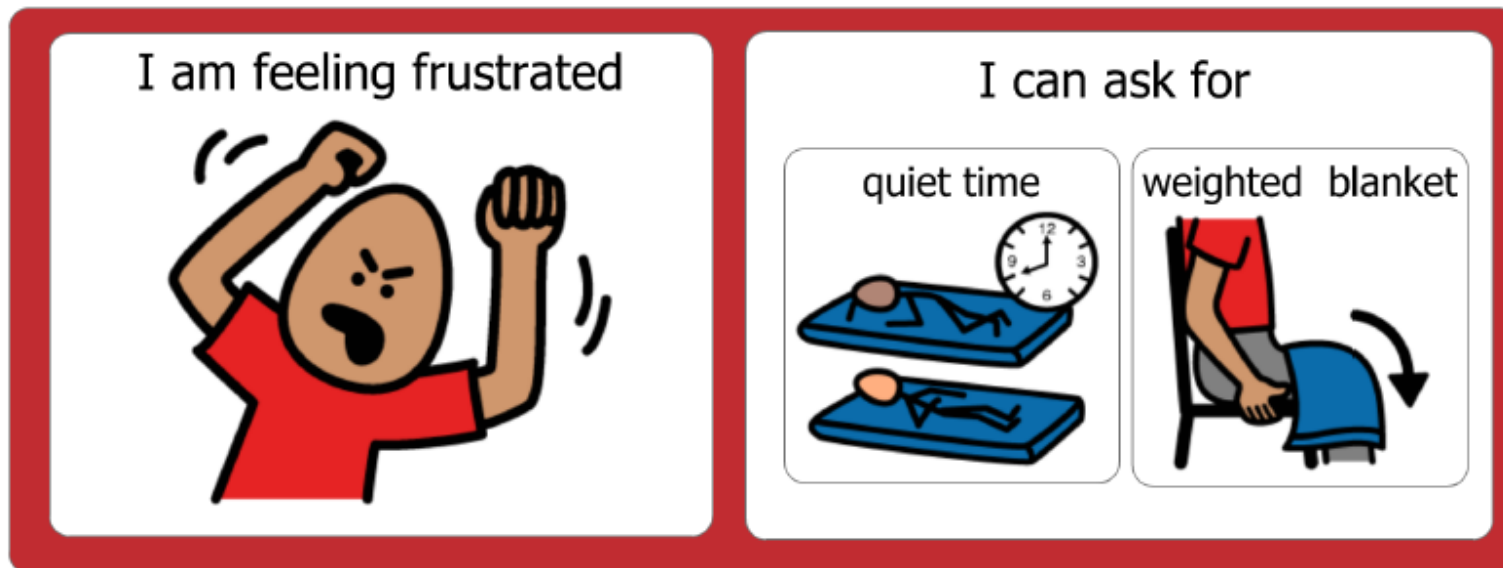




Supportive Visuals



Emotional Regulation Cards



Supports a child's ability to regulate emotional arousal to meet the demands of the environment through self regulation and mutual regulation



Picture Exchange Communication System

The **P**icture **E**xchange
Communication **S**ystem,
or **PECS**, **allows people**
with little or no
communication
abilities to
communicate using
pictures.



People using **PECS** are taught to approach another person and give them a picture of a desired item in exchange for that item.

By doing so, the person is able to initiate communication. A child or adult with autism can use PECS to communicate a request, a thought, or anything that can reasonably be displayed or symbolized on a Picture card.



TEACCH promotes individualized support for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) by creating activities And environments that emphasize ***meaningfulness.***



TEACCH
Autism Program



What is expected of me?
Where do I start?
How long will this take?
How will I know when it is finished?
What will I do next?





Autism: Inclusion Tips for Classroom Teachers

1. Reduce Sensory Overload.
2. Provide a structured routine. Use a schedule.
3. Warn your student ahead of time to expect changes.
4. Use visuals.
5. Talk less, show more. Give oral instructions in as few words as possible.
6. Use concrete, simple wording.



Autism: Inclusion Tips for Classroom Teachers

7. Avoid open-ended questions. Give limited choices
8. Have direct, explicit rules and expectations.
9. Build in breaks.
10. Teach social skills directly.
11. Special interests can be used to motivate your student.
12. Don't sweat the small stuff.



Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on teenagers with ASD and their families

- Change in routine
- Change in family dynamics – parents more present, grandparents were normally absent
- Limited physical space
- Challenges to implement social distance and hygiene related regulations of the pandemic
- Food-sleep related issues
- Virtual lessons – Lack of social interactions
- Lack of services
- Services delivered virtually
- Parents having to play role of parent, educator, service provider.



Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on teenagers with ASD and their families

- Increase in aggressive and self-injurious behaviours
- Group homes restricted visitors, legal guardians and service providers
- Social interactions in group homes are limited to activities with other residents and staff members
- Increasing risk of anxiety, depression or behavioural outbursts
- Success or failure directly related to how parents coped



Strategies to support teenagers and young adults with ASD during Covid-19 pandemic

- Educate about Covid-19
- Keep the routines as much as possible
- Create new routines
- Practice old coping skills and learn new ones
- Increase communication
- Plan something to look forward to
- Seek mental health services/online therapy
- Support system for parents

The pandemic experience may help young people with ASD to tolerate uncertainty, accept what is beyond their control and build resilience



Mil-Lenti ta' Persuna bl-Awtiżmu

Hekk kif ilbieraħ giet iċcelebrata l-Jum Internazzjonali tal-Awtiżmu u peress li qegħdin fix-xahar iddedikata għall-Għarfien dwar l-Awtiżmu, jiena ddecidejt li naqşam xi affarijiet relatati mal-awtiżmu. Personalment naħseb li hija importanti ħafna li għal min m'għandux idea x'inhom jew għal min forsi għandu perċezzjoni skorretta dwar din il-kundizzjoni, wieħed ikun jista jħares lejha b'lenti differenti.

L-ewwelnett, l-Awtiżmu hija spettru sħiħ fejn it-3 karatteristiċi ta' persuna bl-awtiżmu huma diffikulta kbira f'interazzjonijiet soċjali, dewmien fit-taħdit u mgieba mhux normali. Dawn is-sintomi jistgħu jinqalbu għall-aħjar maż-żmien, pero mhux dejjem huwa l-każ minħabba li jkun hemm min jagħmel ftit li xejn progress jew inkella sfortunatament imur lura. Ċertu ostakli li persuni bħali jiltaqgħu magħhom ta' kuljum huma nuqqas ta' 'eye-contact' u d-diffikulta li wieħed jesprimi ruħu u jempatizza mal-oħrajn. Sfortunatament, ikun hemm min tal-ħsieb li għax wieħed ma jirnexxilux jesprimi ruħu kif jixtieq għax huwa 'autistic', dik il-persuna tista' tiġi stigmatizzata bħala insensittiv għal kolli u din hija idea kompletament ħażina!

Id-dewmien u problemi fit-taħdit generalment ikunu preżenti mit-tfulija; dan jinkludi ġesti mhux normali, ħafna tlaqliq u kif ukoll kliem u sentenzi mkissra. Ħafna drabi, persuni bl-awtiżmu jsibuha diffiċli ħafna biex jaqsmu l-ħsiebijiet tagħhom ma' ħaddieħor u anke biex isaqsu lill-oħrajn għaliex dawn il-persuni jippreferu joqogħdu għalihom milli jintegraw ma' persuni oħrajn. Issa, meta ngħidu mgieba 'mhux normali', dawn in-nies iħossuhom mgiegħla jagħmlu ċertu affarijiet b'mod regolari ħafna- speċi ta' ritwali - bl-intenzjoni li jnaqqsu xi ftit mill-ansjeta tagħhom. Mill-esperjenza tiegħi, jiena kelli din id-drawwa minn mindu kont żgħir li ngħid l-alfabett Inġliż mill-a saz-z u kif ukoll bil-maqlub!



Waħda mill-ikbar sfidi li kelli matul ħajti hija l-problemi sensorji. Il-ħafna storbju u l-ħsejjes splussivi kienu xi ħaġa tal-biża' għalija, speċjalment il-parties u l-murtali tal-festa. Minkejja l-isfidi li persuna bl-awtiżmu taffaċċja, magħha ġgib ċertu vantaġġi ukoll. Fl-iskola, pereżempju, tfal li jkollhom l-awtiżmu jaffaxxinaw ruħhom immens f'ċertu suġġetti li fihom javvanzaw b'ritmu aktar mgħaġġel.

Jekk ikolli nsemmi l-ikbar differenza bejn dan iż-żewġ tipi ta' persuni hija fil-mod ta' kif jaħdem il-moħħ ta' persuna bl-awtiżmu u l-moħħ ta' persuna li m'għandux. Eżempju ċar ta' dan huwa 2 mowbajls ta' żewġ kumpaniji differenti - minn barra kważi kollox l-istess: tista' ċċempel, tibgħat messaġġi, tara vidjos minn fuqu etc. Id-differenza ma tidhirx fl-apparenza, imma minn ġewwa - kif jaħdmu l-"imħuħ" tal-mowbajls, il-programmi differenti li jintużaw sabiex jilħqu l-iskop tagħhom. U l-istess aħna. Żewġ imħuħ kompletament differenti li kapaci jagħtu żewġ riżultati simili ta' xulxin. Illum il-ġurnata qegħdin f'soċjeta fejn hemm bżonn li naċċettaw iż-żewġ dimensjonijiet ta' kif il-moħħ għandu jiżviluppa biex is-soċjeta tkun tista' tagħmel progress. Wara kollox, l-Awtiżmu mhijiex biss kundizzjoni - hija mod differenti ta' kif persuna bħali tara d-dinja.

Fl-aħħarnett, nixtieq niringrazzja lil dawk kollha li kienu u għadhom miegħi biex għinuni nsir il-persuna li jiena illum. Il-battalja tkompli minn ġurnata għal oħra, imma aħna kollha qegħdin hawn biex, bħall-mowbaljs, nilħqu l-iskop principali tagħna f'ħajjitna billi nesprimu min aħna verament permezz tal-ħiliet u l-kapaċitajiet tagħna - aħna min aħna.



Autism in Gozo facebook page

Page Messages Notifications 5 Insights Publishing Tools Settings Help ▾

Dealing with Autism in Gozo



Erasmus+ Project
2016 - 2018

Autism in Gozo
@sannatspecialunit

Home
Posts
Videos
Photos



Enhancing the wellbeing of students with Autism

Erasmus+

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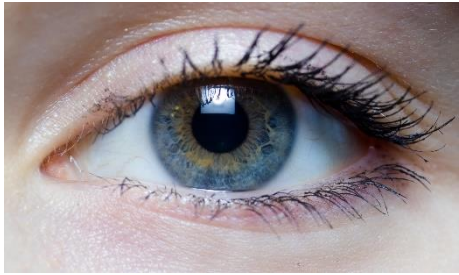
+ Add a Button



Thank
you!

Sensory Differences

What are our 7 senses?



Visual



Auditory



Olfactory



Gustatory



Tactile



Vestibular



Proprioceptive



Vestibular system



Proprioreceptive system

Sensory Awareness

We can create a supportive environment





Top 10 Things an autistic student in a mainstream classroom wants you to know

1. Eye contact isn't necessary for listening.

Sometimes it can feel necessary to a teacher to insist on eye contact, however this can be distressing for some students with autism, who may actually focus better when allowed to look away.

2. Glare from sunlight/ artificial lighting can be painful.

Glare on a board can be distracting for all students, for some students with autism bright lights can be overwhelming to the point of pain. Consider student workspace placement carefully.



Top 10 Things an autistic student in a mainstream classroom wants you to know

3. Buzzing/electrical noises can be a major distraction.

If your student appears distracted or unfocused, consider if there are auditory distractions in the room.

4. Adjust the workload and expectations.

Especially at the start of the school year it is important not to overwhelm, it's better to start simple and build up to a full workload, rather than dive in and have meltdowns



Top 10 Things an autistic student in a mainstream classroom wants you to know

5. Give options for taking space.

Many students won't ever need it, however make sure your students know there is always an option to take space by providing a quiet corner somewhere in the classroom.

6. Use a visual timetable.

A visual timetable in your classroom is beneficial to all students, and once created can continue to be used by you for many years to come.



Top 10 Things an autistic student in a mainstream classroom wants you to know

7. Advance notice of routine changes.

Wherever possible, let the student know of any changes to the structure of the day, eg an extra assembly, change in library time etc, well in advance.

8. Use the buddy system

For yourself ;) Ask last years teacher if there's anything you should know, or for a new student try to have a talk with your student's parents.



Top 10 Things an autistic student in a mainstream classroom wants you to know

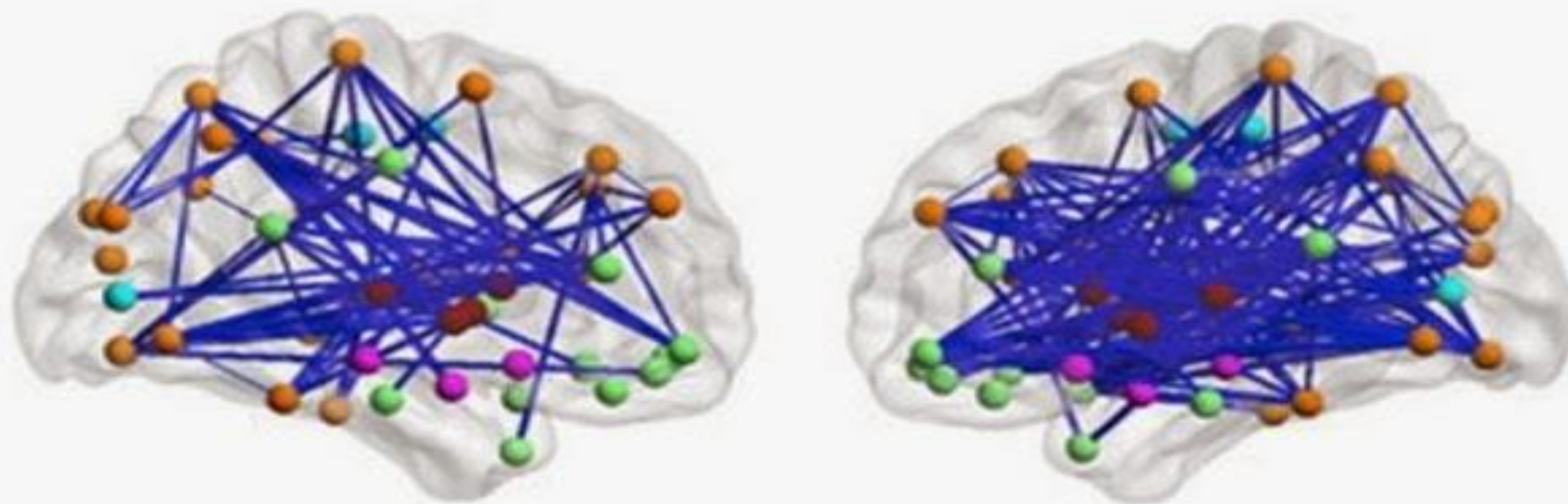
9. Be flexible

What works one day might not work the next, just remember each day you are gaining skills that will help you the next day.

10. We are all unique and special in our own way.

No two students are ever exactly the same, an autistic student is first and foremost themselves, a complex person who is a far more than a diagnosis or a label.

Over-connectivity in the brain



Overly connected: Many pairs of brain regions — including those involved in sensory processing, emotion and motivation — are more tightly synchronized in children with autism (right) than in controls (left).