

EASB: 16th July 2025

What I wish I knew about
Autistic clients.

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Aim of session

- To understand key autistic traits and differences
- To be more aware of the needs of autistic people
- To feel empowered to make accommodations for autistic people who you encounter through your work
- To understand how the Enfield Autism Hub can assist people in this process
- To signpost towards further resources on Autism so that you can deepen your understanding



Group discussion:

What comes to mind
when someone
mentions Autism?



“If you’ve met one autistic person, you’ve met one autistic person” –

Adapted from
Dr. Stephen Shore

How to talk about autism

Potentially offensive	Autistic preferred
Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)	Autism, autistic ✓
Person-first language (person with autism)	Identity-first language [autistic (person)] ✓
Autism symptoms and impairments	Specific autistic experiences and characteristics ✓
At risk of autism	May be autistic; increased likelihood of being autistic ✓
Co-morbidity	Co-occurring ✓
Functioning (e.g., high/low functioning) and severity (e.g., mild/ moderate/ severe) labels	Specific support needs ✓
Cure, treatment, or intervention	Specific support or service ✓
Restricted interests and obsessions	Specialised, focussed, or intense interests ✓
Normal person	Allistic or non-autistic ✓

Source: Trends in Neurosciences, September 2022

The power of words

- Being inclusive and accepting might mean changing how we talk to and about service users on a day-to-day basis.
- Try moving away from using stigmatising and pathologizing language towards a more positive, inclusive, and accurate language. E.g.,
 - **Autistic**
 - **Neurodivergent** – people with developmental conditions, ADHD, learning difficulties, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia.
- Mental Health, Depression, Anxiety, and acquired neurodiversity (i.e., stroke)
- Respect individual preference:
 - some people prefer to say “I have autism” or “I have Asperger’s Syndrome”.
- If you slip up... try saying “thank you” rather than “sorry” when corrected

Autism is:

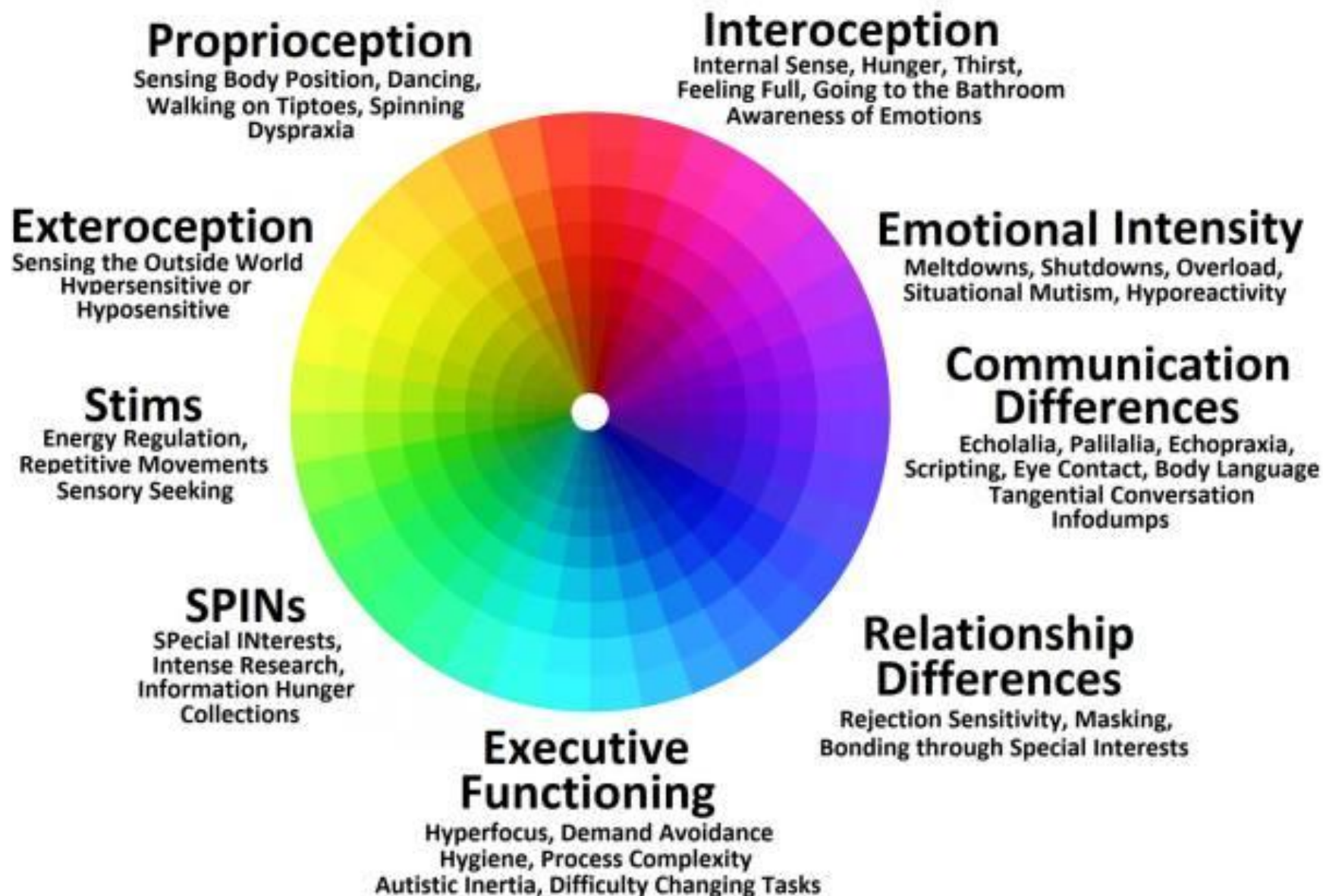


- **A lifelong neurodevelopmental condition.** Approximately 1% of the population are autistic.
- **Characterised by social interaction, communication and behaviour differences**, which may include differences in language use, motor skills, executive functioning (carrying out tasks), perception, and sensory processing.
 - Many autistic people have repetitive behaviours which may be comforting and bring a feeling of safety. Autistic people may experience their emotions differently: more intensely or not at all. Some have difficulty with transitions between tasks, a preference for routine and predictability, and intense interests.
- **A spectrum:** Autistic characteristics vary between individuals, and while two people may have similar features, they may have different experiences of how those impact their life. Any individual's sensitivities, skills, and ability to cope with stress may fluctuate over time or in response to changes in environment or circumstances.

The Autism Spectrum

Child & Adolescent Psychological Evaluations, LLC

Matt Lowry, LPP



Masking

- What is masking?
- Why do people mask?
- Can everyone mask?
- When and where might it be hard to mask?
- What are the impacts of masking?





Tylan Grant – actor, Hollyoaks



Greta Thunberg – climate activist



Hannah Gadsby - comedian

Famous autistic people



Elon Musk



Jameela Jamil –
actress, The Good Place



Bill Gates



Jessica-Jane Applegate
- paralympian



Unlocking support

- A significant proportion of autistic adults across the whole autistic spectrum experience social and economic exclusion.
 - Just 21.7% of autistic people are in employment (2021, www.autistica.org.uk)
- Autism is often overlooked by healthcare, education, and social care professionals, which creates barriers to accessing the support and services people need to live independently.
- Accessing a diagnosis can unlock support within these services, in employment, and in the community at large.





Autistic truths

Co-occurring Anxiety and Depression:

- Anxiety can be a real problem for autistic people of all ages, particularly in social situations/when facing a challenge.
- Depression is very common in autistic people due to a lack of support and understanding, social exclusion, health inequality and huge variety of wider factors.
- Disproportionate suicide rates - Studies have shown that up to 66% of autistic adults have thought about taking their own life, and an alarming 35% have attempted suicide.
- Around 1% of people in the UK are autistic, yet up to 15% of people hospitalised after attempting suicide have a diagnosis of autism.ⁱ
- Masking – delay in reaching out for support



Meltdowns, Shutdowns, and Situational Mutism

When everything becomes too much for an autistic person, they can go into **meltdown** or **shutdown**.

- These can be intense and exhausting experiences.

A **meltdown** happens when someone becomes overwhelmed by their current situation and temporarily loses behavioural control.

- This loss of control can be verbal and/or physical.

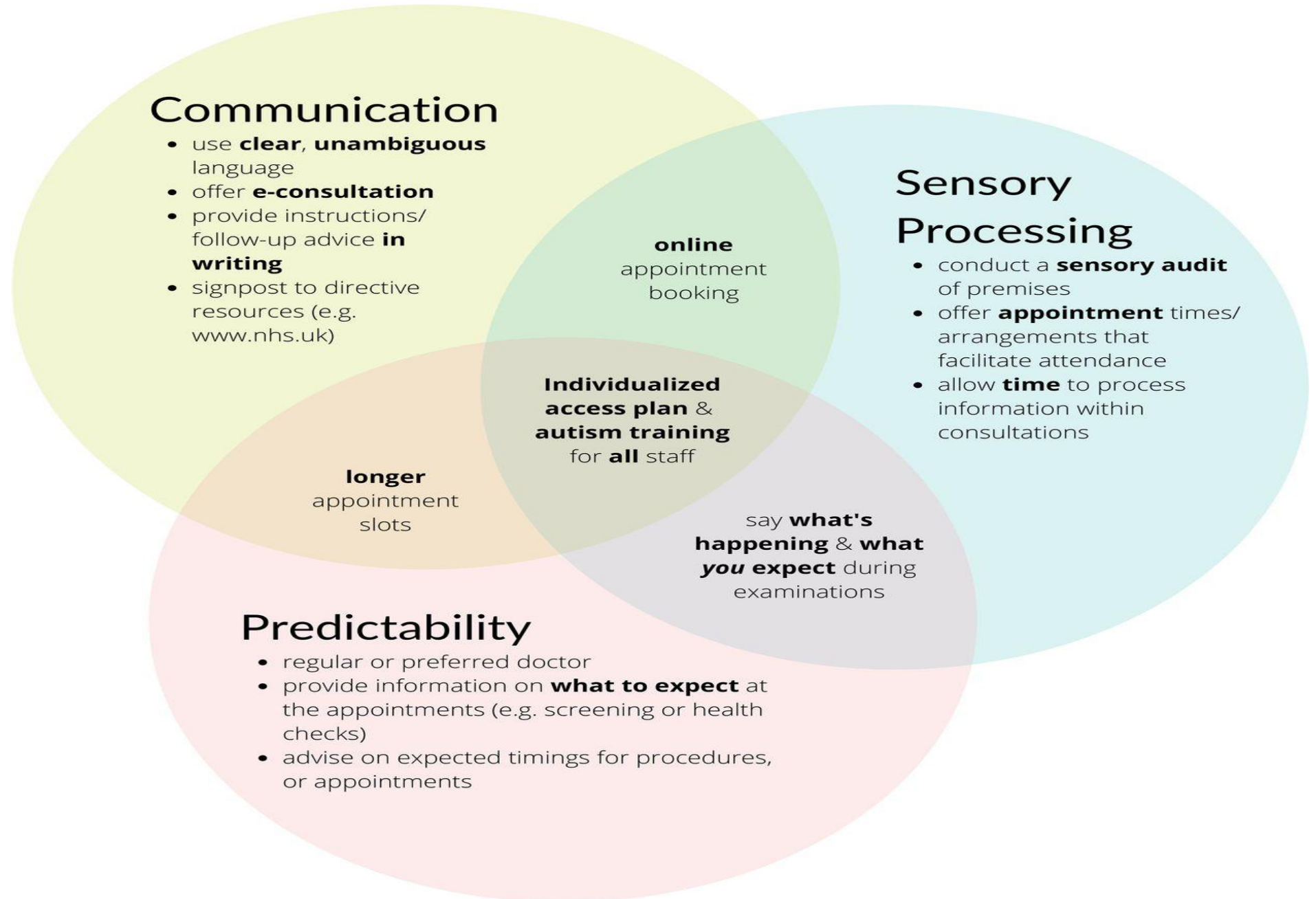
A **shutdown** appears less intense but can be equally debilitating for the individual.

- Shutdowns can also be a response to being overwhelmed,
- The person may appear more passive, quiet or 'switching off'.

Situational mutism

- Stopping talking, going quiet, might mean someone needs some processing time
- This is an extreme behaviour, not at all autistic people experience these.

Being an Autism friendly service



<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/12/2/e056904>

Some user experiences

1. **Early 20s male, ongoing problems with homelessness.**
 - a. The housing team wrongly believed he had moved out of the borough; they labelled him homeless and offered to assess his needs in a hotel.
 - b. He had moved out of the family home and was staying with friends. He was distressed and would not engage. Which resulted in him being discharged.
2. **Woman late 20s, found the social assessment process too complicated.**
 - a. The SW didn't understand her need to have it explained in a way she would understand and may to have more than one appointment.
 - b. The assessment was incomplete and led to her not receiving services she required.
3. **Female 30s, unsure of where to live and how to care for herself**
 - a. has never had an assessment and doesn't know what it would entail.
 - b. This is common as not all users know how to get assessments and support
4. **Mid 50s female showing signs of neglect following death of mother.**
 - a. Didn't want a mental health referral or SW
5. **Mid 30s male living at home distressed and aggressive to family**
 - a. Brother has new wife
 - b. Father 76
 - c. Member wants to move out

Autism Support Hub: What is it?

- One-to-One has been commissioned by LBE to provide a local peer support hub for autistic adults (aged over 18) who are resident in Enfield. As part of UCAN partnership.
 - They can be diagnosed, self-identified, considering or waiting for a diagnostic assessment.
- The Hub offers an initial appointment, followed by the option to access a peer support group.
- We focus on signposting, guidance, self-management strategies, coping mechanisms, and support with wider goals.
- The Hub also provides training workshops to the wider community of Enfield and promotes the service to primary care.
- Peer Support Groups are running across the month as a way of self support and guidance.



Autism Support Hub: How can I refer?

- Self referral – email or call us
- Professional referral – email admin@one-to-one-enfield.co.uk
- For more information, please look at our website www.one-to-one-enfield.co.uk
- One-to-One office 2 Farm Road, N21 3JA, phone **020 3971 3984**



Our Top Tips

Expectations and limiting uncertainty:

- Try to be clear as to Who, What, Where, When, Why? How long for?
- Give more time:
 - Allowing longer for appointments.
 - Allowing more than one appointment to break up the assessment into smaller chunks.
- Sharing information about the space you will be using if not at home:
 - the seating, the lighting, how to get there.
- If the appointment start time is going to be late, letting the individual know as soon as you can.

Our Top Tips

- Let the individual know that it's ok to fidget. Maybe get some fidget toys.
- Understand that they might want a parent, carer or support worker to be present and possibly speak on their behalf.
- Equally they may not want a parent present.
- Seeing the same person is very important for autistic people. Building rapport and trust will help. If you cannot see them every time explain who, when why etc.
- If they have a negative experience they may write off interacting with the service or your entire organization.
- Be clear about information you need, forms that need to be completed, next steps for the person and what they can expect.

Our Top Tips

Be aware autistic people may take things literally. So, be clear on what action you need them to take.

- If you say, can you stand? They may stand up, when you were asking in general can they stand.
- “Will you wait there for a minute?” they may only wait there for a minute then leave.

Use clear simple language with short sentences.

- Do not use idioms, irony, metaphors and words with double meaning. Avoid jargon.

Use verbal instructions rather than body language; gestures or facial expressions or sarcasm as they can be misunderstood.

Don't be surprised if an autistic person doesn't make eye contact. It does not necessarily mean they are not listening to what you are saying. However, it maybe a que they are getting distressed.

Our Top Tips

- Allow the person extra time to process what you have said. Double check that they have understood.
 - Some autistic people may speak clearly but can lack full understanding.
- Don't assume that a someone who is non-speaking cannot understand what you are saying.
- Autistic people may not understand personal space.
 - They may get closer to you than comfortable or need more personal space than other people.
 - Ask before touching someone.
- Be aware that some autistic people will be hyper (over) or hypo (under) sensitive to the different senses and this can affect how they experience symptoms of illness. Pain perception may be heightened or lowered.



Useful resources:

- Our website <https://www.one-to-one-enfield.co.uk/>
- National Autistic Society <https://www.autism.org.uk/>
- Enfield branch of National Autistic Society <http://enfieldnas.org.uk/index.html>
- Aucademy <https://aucademy.co.uk/>
- <https://the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/>
- Neurodivergent Lou https://www.instagram.com/neurodivergent_lou/?hl=en