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CHANGES LIVES

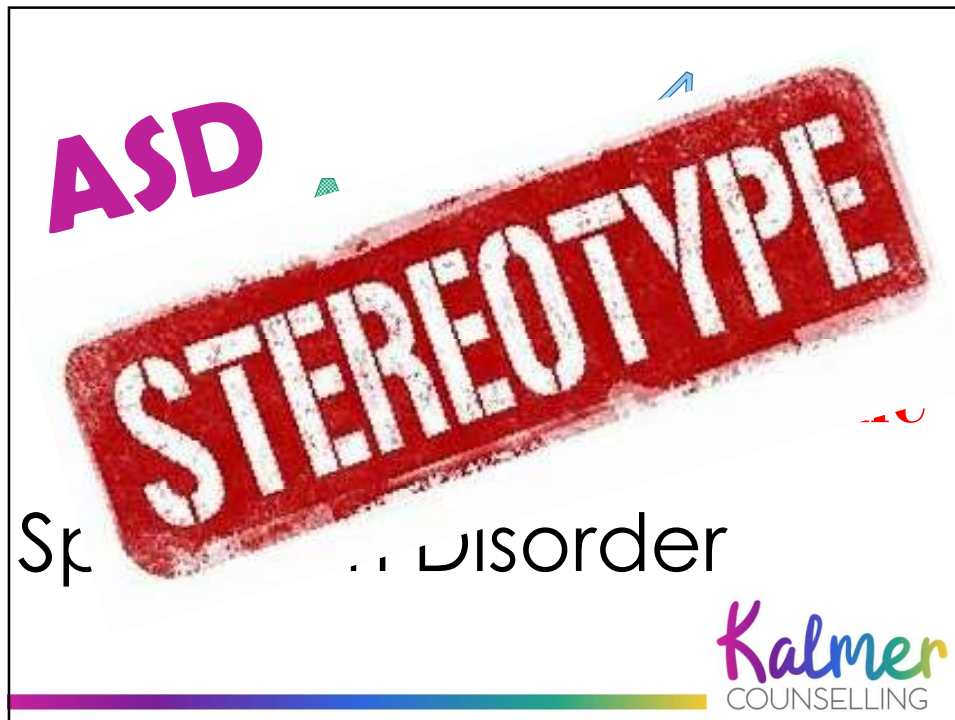
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Key Areas

- Understand more about Autism
- The hard hitting facts
- Briefly explore the common areas that autistic individuals find challenging
- Reflect on schools inclusive environment
- Coping strategies
- Gender and Autism





Debunking the Common Stereotypes of Autism

Individuals with Autism Can't have Relationships

Individuals with Autism often have difficulty communicating and reading social cues so relationships can be more challenging. They can have meaningful relationships.

Individuals with Autism Look Different

Autism doesn't affect physical appearance. It can be challenging for individuals to identify as Autism affects how the brain functions.

Individuals with Autism become Obsessed with Certain Things

Autistic individuals can have intense interests. However, that doesn't apply to every person with Autism.

Individuals with Autism Cannot Communicate

Autism doesn't always limit a person's ability to speak but it can make it more challenging to communicate.

Individuals with Autism are Aggressive

Autistic individuals can experience emotional outbursts just like any individual can.

Individuals with Autism Don't Have Emotions

Individuals with Autism experience a whole range of emotions. They might express them differently but they are not emotionless.

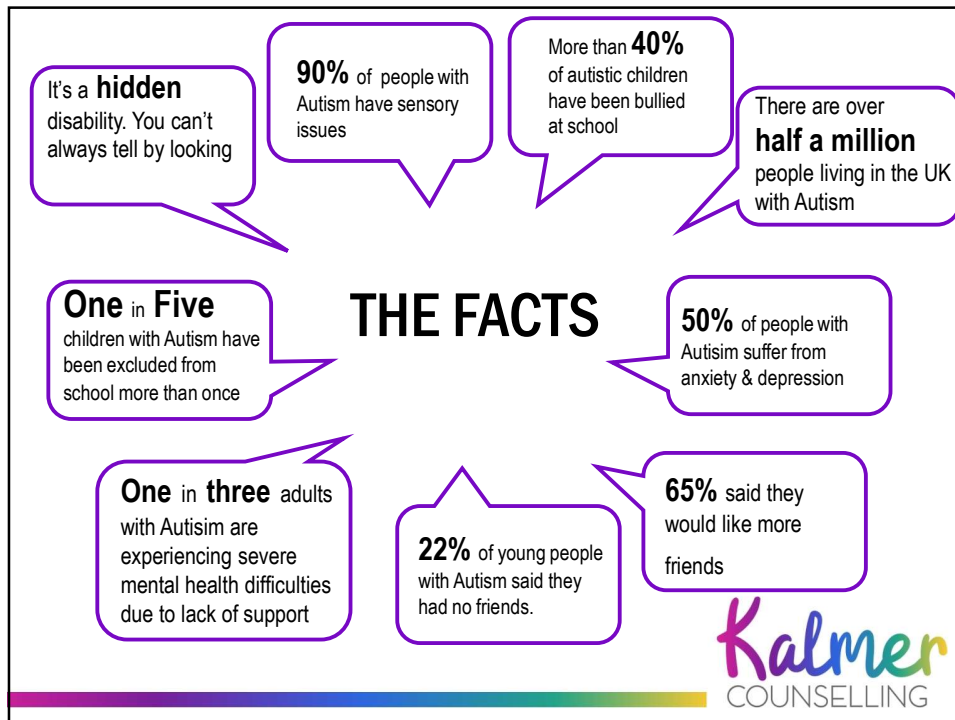
Individuals with Autism are Really Smart

Autistic individuals fall within a range of ability. Low or high functioning autism.

Being autistic presents its own unique set of challenges and strengths for each individual, but stigma from stereotypes is by far one of the largest hurdles that people in the autistic community encounter.

'If you've met one person with Autism you've met one person with Autism'

Dr Stephan Shore



Areas Of Challenge For A Person With ASD

- **Communication**
Both verbal and nonverbal, speech articulation and processing information
- **Social skills**
Socialising, building and maintain relationships.
- **Emotional Regulation**
Sensory overload, perceiving others emotional states and understanding their own



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Communication



Communication comprises of **7% verbal and 93 % nonverbal**

It isn't just the ability to speak, read and write, it's also the subtleties of communication (the unspoken).

Autistic people can find some aspects of communication difficult such as:

- Understanding non-verbal communication
- Taking things literally
- Processing what's said
- They can have an unusual conversation style/phrases or have a monotone voice
- They may speak for a long time about their passion topic
- Struggle with the mechanics of conversation so have difficulty with turn taking and knowing when it is their turn to speak

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Difficulty Understanding Non-verbal Communication

- As 93% of communication is nonverbal (voice tone and body language) autistic individuals can miss a huge amount of what's being communicated.
- They may not pick up that your arms are crossed and you are tapping your toe or any sarcasm you may use.
- Eye contact can be extremely uncomfortable so looking away helps them to focus more on what's being said.
This does not mean that they are not listening or engaging in conversation.

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Literal Understanding

- Sarcasm, metaphors and figures of speech are very difficult to follow. As it's a spectrum not everyone will be the same.
- Some may not be able to understand sayings like "has the cat got your tongue".
"pull your socks up and get on with it"
- They may actually do what was said for e.g. "if you wait 5 mins I'll be over"
- Others may not understand the sarcastic use of phrases like "Good luck with that" or "yeah right"

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Rigidity of Thought

- Rigid thinking occurs when we are unable to consider alternatives to the current situation especially when things don't go to plan.
- The rigidity of thought gives that structure and routine needed in order to stay calm.
- For those individuals who are autistic this can mean the need to employ rigid behaviours, routines and rituals.
- Times without structure, coping with expected and unexpected change can be very stressful and anxiety provoking.

There are four things an autistic person needs to know:





- What am I doing now?
- How long will I be doing it for?
- What will I be doing next?
- When will I be doing something, I really enjoy?



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Processing Delay







-  For some people it may take longer to take in and process information.
-  Processing delays can vary from a few seconds to minutes. It's really important to give time to process information and respond to what's been asked.
-  It's important not to repeat what's said/or asked as they'll need to start processing all over again.
-  Repeated questioning will trigger their stress and anxiety which will heighten the difficulty in communication.

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Obsessions or Passion's



-  Children with Autism develop all kinds of passions talking endlessly on topics that they love.
-  Their passions enable them to have a sense of control, security, predictability, in a world of uncertainty.
-  By dismissing their passions you take away a strategy developed to help with self-regulation and a sense of happiness.
-  Use their passion as a doorway into their world but also to expand their outlook and improve their lives.

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What Inspires Passions



- Why do autistic people develop strong passions?
Why are they greater?
- We all have interests and passions that fill a need in us:
 - Gives us pleasure and a sense of relaxation and calm.
 - Creates a positive emotional reaction within us that feeds & nurtures
 - Triggers the feel-good part within our brain releasing our happy hormones.
- For autistic individuals due to the social challenges they experience the energy they project into their passions can feel good on a sensory and physiological level.
- These passions can become ways to connect socially with others, become a life long hobby or even a career.

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When You Enter A Social Situation For The First Time How Do You Know What To Do?

You learn the unwritten rules by observing others.

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Social Understanding



-  We are hardwired to be social intuitive and autism affects this. The social world to autistic individuals has hidden rules and unspoken expectations.
-  As we learn we use our listening and observation skills to develop our knowledge of language and also social rules.
-  For those who are autistic its hard to survey the social landscape and understand the rules. It can feel a bit like having to learn a second language and not having the ability to achieve the same fluency.


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-  When you are autistic unwritten rules are invisible. Unspoken subtle rules pose the biggest challenge. They can be learnt but support is needed as it doesn't come naturally.
-  Due to the difficulty in reading social situations behaviour can seem rude, inconsiderate and odd.
-  Explicit social rules can be heaven for autistic children. They can easily identify those children that don't follow them too.
-  Language can be a big barrier to social understanding. At times we don't say what we mean and we use metaphors, sarcasm and nonliteral use of language. This causes many misunderstandings and miscommunications


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 Its important to be direct and to the point and check out their understanding.

 Eye contact can also be difficult and even excruciating.
How many time do hear look at me when I'm talking to you?

 Many autistic people find it easier to focus on what the person is saying without the extra stress and anxiety of watching the persons face.

 Autistic individuals who struggles with social interaction may

- not pay attention to others
- appear aloof, distant and uninterested
- lack some social skills
- not understand relationships

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How do you think your autistic children experience your school setting?

Is it supportive and inclusive for autistic children?

Is there more you could do?

What reasonable adjustments can you make in school ?

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Emotional Dysregulation Meltdown/Burnout/Shut down



- A core feature of Autism is a struggle to stay emotionally and psychologically regulated.
- They can easily become overwhelmed with life's emotional and psychological challenges.
- Experience heightened levels of anxiety, feelings of discomfort, confusion and a difficulty in knowing how to cope and manage.
- We also have to add they're developing emerging children/young people just learning about themselves.



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autistic meltdown

when our surroundings becoming too overwhelming, our sensory structure becomes triggered and we need to escape from the situation

autistic shutdown

when we have suppressed our natural reactions within environments or have been triggered by a situation and have yet to mentally deal with it

autistic burnout

when our brain shuts down because of continual stress which can last from days to years

The Senses



Sensory integration/processing is the process of receiving information through our senses, coming from outside and inside our bodies.

An autistic person can have a number of different sensory issues which can be over-sensitive and under-sensitive

How many senses do we have?

1. Sight (Vision)
2. Hearing (Auditory)
3. Smell (Olfactory)
4. Taste (Gustatory)
5. Touch (Tactile)
6. **Body position (Proprioception)**
7. **Movement (Vestibular)**
8. **Internal states (Interoception)**

Sensory issues can have a huge impact upon their lives. When a person is stressed, the sensory issues can be heightened.

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What can Affect Regulation?

- Problems communicating
- Unexpected change
- Worry
- Overstimulated environments
- Touch
- People



Challenges are harder for a person with Autism due to their Neurobiology:

- They may have less innate coping strategies
- Have sensory processing difficulties creating a hypersensitivity or under sensitivity.
- Emotional reactions can happen quite quickly creating a major behaviour shift which can be seen as naughty behaviour.

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Coping Strategies and Regulating Behaviour



What do you do when your feeling emotionally overwhelmed?

What routines do you have?

- Everyone employs rituals and habits to help regulate and self-soothe. This calms our bodies, minds and helps to ground us.
- For people with Autism comforting rituals and coping mechanisms come in many ways. Stimming/Objects/people

People as regulating factors

Myths of children with Autism is that they are loners and don't need or seek out relationships. For many the presence of another is the key to their emotional regulation.

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When your feeling stressed, worried or anxious what behaviours do you use to self soothe?



Importance of Understanding Behaviours

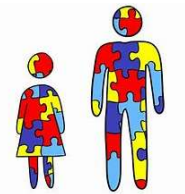


-  Need to understand the true motivations underlying behaviours.
-  Some behaviours are strategies to manage and cope and not to manipulate and to be non complaint.
-  To eliminate certain behaviours without understanding their purpose is not only unhelpful and triggering but also shows a lack of respect for the individual.

How many of you can hand on heart say you know what behaviours your autistic children employ to regulate themselves?

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Autistic individuals may :



- Be anxious about contact with other people
- Not be motivated to communicate
- Not learn from, and about, other people
- Not see any reason to please others (so may not do what they are asked)
- Cause offence without being aware
- Find it difficult to make friends
- Not know how to react to other people's feelings
- Appear insensitive or egocentric.
- Be vulnerable to bullying, abuse and people taking advantage of them.

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Gender And Autism



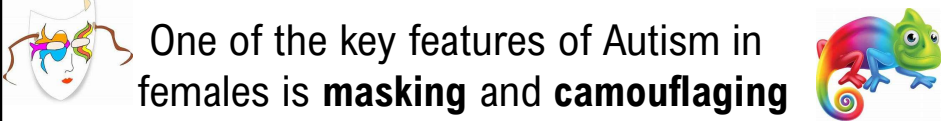
- Ratios for Autism **male to female 4/1** however increased awareness has brought to **light the ratio at 2/1** (McKenzie & Johnson 2016)
- Autism will present differently within gender akin to the stress response. Women tend to befriend so pursue safe relational bonds and seek close proximity to others. Men engage in more fight or flight behaviours in self-defence.
- Females often go undiagnosed as they don't fit autistic stereotypes and the model that we have for a classic autism diagnosis is very male focused.
- They can be overlooked as they mask symptoms better than boys do.
- Tend to have a quieter presentation, with not necessarily as much of the repetitive and restricted behaviour.
- They are masters at the art of camouflage and masking

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What situations do we naturally use masking?

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One of the key features of Autism in females is **masking** and **camouflaging**


- Masking and Camouflaging means changing your personality and persona whilst hiding any indication of anxiety or discomfort.
- Way of hiding your natural personality to socially conform
- Suppress any thoughts and feelings in order to perform.
- Constantly monitoring social performance and critically reviewing it.
- Males can mask
- Parents can experience their children as *'The Jekyll & Hyde Character'*



Key Points



- ✓ Individuals who are autistic struggle with communication, skills and emotional regulation.
- ✓ They struggle to understand non-verbal communication, can be rigid in their thinking, may suffer with process delay and may have strong passions
- ✓ Have difficulty in social awareness in particular understanding the unwritten rules of society
- ✓ Emotional regulation can be a challenge and need to employ strategies such as stimming and routines to help regulate.
- ✓ **Autistic individuals are unique, interesting, inspiring and long to have real friendships and acceptance from others.**



My YouTube Channel

Purple Ella

The Toby Henderson Trust

The Toby Henderson Trust
6.7K followers · 306 following

Learn More Message

Follow

Autistic Girls Network
Autism, Girls, & Keeping It All Inside

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A Graphic Explaining Autism to Children
@neurodivergent_lou

Everyone is different to each other. Sometimes these differences are...

Sometimes people have differences which you can't see, like having a brain that works differently...

It is thought that at least 1 in 100 people are autistic.

Autistic people might know lots about the topics we are interested in. We are interested in...

Autistic people become things you might not expect.

Autistic people are sensitive to smells, touch or texture.

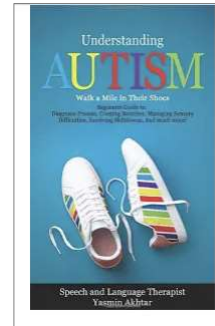
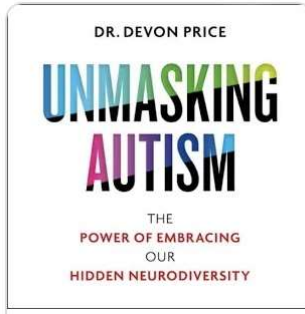
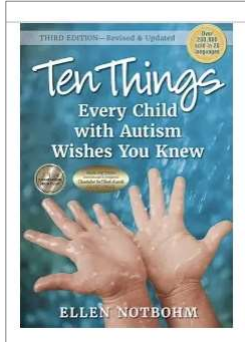
Autistic people are able to communicate with friends.

Autistic people have meltdowns. We might... pace up and down, tap our feet, and more...

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Books



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