

Keys To Understanding & working with the spectrum of Autism

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What to expect from this talk:

- We will explore how keys to positive outcomes depend upon:
 - Understanding
 - Self
 - Other
 - The differences between us
 - The differences between the AS & TS
 - Personal differences & impact upon Learning styles
 - What to do about all of the above

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Building for the future

- Understanding is first step towards a positive future.

next step is:

- Acceptance
 - Of Self
 - Of Other
- Exploring how to use strengths-do I value who I am?
- Valuing Self will mean motivation
- Motivation key to good outcomes



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Transition

Autism is: "I like it here, please do let me stay".

Autism is: "I know it here, please don't take me away".

If and when I leave this place to travel to another space,
I need to know it right away. I need to know that I'm OK.

Transition is so fleeting, it leaves not time to stay.
Will I have time to settle, or will I be whisked away?

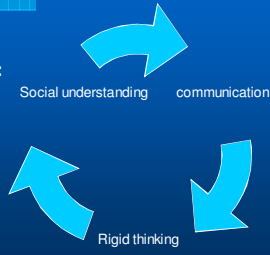
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I know that change can happen.
I know it can take time.
But how can I know what this will mean?
What this will mean for mine.
Transition is about moving, "to where or what" one asks?
This is my very question, from present or the past.
Time for me is all the same,
I know not of its future.
I only know I trust in 'now'... tomorrow can come, I just need to know how.

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Background

- Kanner & Asperger
- Psychological Theory: Triad of impairments eg. Impaired social understanding, communication and imagination.
- Autism is an 'Attention' issue (Connection)



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Typical Spectrum TS

- **Polytropism, Dinah Murray, (1992) (dividing attention) at the sensory level using several channels simultaneously, eg. Visual, auditory and spatial; at the cognitive level having many interests simultaneously aroused.**

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(TS: non-autistic)

- **Non-literality: understands incomplete sentences, incomplete concepts, metaphors and the non-literal sense of every day life. Reads a person's intention, context and the scale of the event.**

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TS (non-autistic) experience:

- **Thinking in open pictures/concepts. This means being able to connect experiences, often visually, in an open and ongoing manner.**
- **This process informs awareness, aids the understanding of social cueing, helps with the sorting of priorities and appropriateness.**

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TS: experience

- **Social priorities. For example, social norms, rules, expectations and being sociable are seen as a priority. Helps with collating information about self, other and society. A tool used in social relating.**

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TS experience

- **Generalised learning. Having the ability to transfer skills, knowledge, and social understanding across differing situations.**

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TS: experience

- **Limited issue with time and motion. Can appreciate length of time, timing and sequencing. Can negotiate stairs, personal space, crowds and so on.**

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TS: experience

- Little issue with consequences.
- Is able to understand and predict outcomes.

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TS: experience

- Possesses a 'theory of mind'. Understands the concept of 'other'.

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AS: experience

- Monotropism, Dinah Murray, (1992) (single channelling). For example, only able to focus on one thing at any one time, or only comfortable with using one channel at any one time, such as the visual channel).
- Cognitively, only able to have one interest concurrent at any one time.

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AS: experience

- Literalism (or taking things literally).
- For example: sentences, concepts, metaphor, simile, words, expressions).
- Situations and People

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AS: experience

- Thinking in closed pictures:
- not connecting ideas or concepts in an open and ongoing manner.
- hard to 'read' others, anticipate needs, be spontaneous.
- hard to work/relate without schedules/refocus after interruption

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AS: experience

- Non-social priorities (NSP). For example, preferred clothing versus fashion; own company versus being with others.
- NSP can cause conflict of interest; non-appreciation, or opposite, of appearance, hygiene, timing, tidyness and social niceties

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AS: experience

- **Non-generalised learning:**
- **Not transferring social skills, or knowledge across differing situations.**
- **Difficulty with discernment, appropriateness, learning from mistakes/misadventure**

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AS: experience

- **Issues with time and motion. Problems with sequencing, timing and/or motor coordination. In every day life social concepts, such as being prompt, being organised, being apt, being appropriate in conversation and being generally coordinated are difficult.**
- **only relate to own interest therefore can't 'share' interest of 'other'. Makes conversational timing/interaction hard.**

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AS: experience

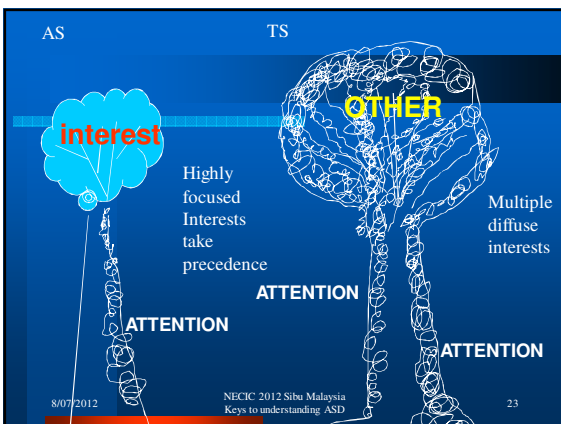
- **Issues with predicting and/or understanding consequences.**
- **For example, not learning from mistakes. Having difficulty with 'forward thinking' and predicting outcomes. Might mean missing social cues (turn taking, rough play, manners) or/and not comprehending importance of 'special occasions' eg. Awards, ceremonies, birthdays, church services.....**

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AS: experience

- **Theory of Mind:**
- **Understanding the concept of 'Other' and 'Others' wants, needs, desires, dreams, hurts and hearts can be difficult.**
- **Lots of empathy lacks and empathy gaps, but good at sympathy if made aware.**

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Behavioural difficulties

- **TS cognition and cognition in autism are different**
- **Because one culture doesn't understand the other we have confusion, fear and high levels of stress**

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Aggression

- What am I feeling?
- How can I express my feelings?
- How can I make people listen?
- What gets things to change?
- What 'tools' do I have at my disposal?
- What have I learnt?

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manipulation

- Change is terminal, I must prevent it.
- The unknown is scary, I must stay with what and who I know.
- I don't understand that there are other ways to know and do things, (I am not polytropic) I must always do things the same way and make others do the same.
- I lack connections, unless someone helps me to build them

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Anxiety

- I am anxious because I don't know what will happen
- How can I be sure that I am OK?
- My feelings are stronger than the words people give me. Which are true?

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Stress

- I am very uncomfortable. Stimming might help make me feel comfy again.
- I am over loaded, I need to avoid all demand.
- I cannot learn any new task or complete my usual activity when I feel this way.
- I need space, quietness, decreased demand and familiarity.

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All Behaviour is Functional

- If you want my behaviour to change, you must teach me how to behave differently.
- I may need pictures/photos to help me understand the procedure and process that you want me to take.
- I am happier when you are calm and happy. I may depend upon you to be confident, where I am not.

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Positive self-esteem

- I need to understand & accept myself
- I need you to understand and accept me
- We need to work together understanding and accepting our differences
- I need us each to use this information in all of the events we plan together

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Love

- I need to feel accepted, respected and protected.
- I cannot 'play' or 'work' when I am scared.
- I will not 'behave' if I cannot access the desired behaviour in a calm and relaxing environment.
- You are part of my environment.
- You can help our lives be less fearful and less stressful

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The Future is in our hands

- Confidence
- Confidence is the end result of a lot of hard work
- Confidence can be built up or torn down
- Confidence is not dependant upon success; rather success depends upon confidence
- I am confident in you, please build confidence in me.

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The Future

Life on earth is but a moment caught within the crease of time,

The seasons come and go again,
You have your life, and I have mine.
The seed that's planted within the ground
Cannot choose what to become.
A potato, an apple or a rose for some.
However, for it to be the very best,
It needs rich soil, not poor.
The sun and the rains must come,
To open that seeds door.

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The Future

I may be born to nourish others,
I may delight the senses.

I may grow tall,
I may grow small,
I may stay stunted beneath wire fences.

My future may not depend on my stock,
So much as it does upon sources.
Sources of warmth, sources of care
I depend on the nurture to be for me there.

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The Future

Then I can blossom and sing with the birds,

Then I can grow my potential.

So plant me in goodness and all that is fine,
Please keep the intruders away.
Give me a chance to develop, in time,
To become who I am, in life's future, one day!

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Resources

- www.mugsy.org/wendy
- Wendy's Books & DVD:
- Understanding and working with the spectrum of autism (Guide to autism and family)
- *Life behind glass (autobiography)
- Build Your Own Life (self-help guide)
 - Sex, sexuality and the autism spectrum
 - ASPoetry
 - Friendship: The Aspie way
 - www.jkp.com
 - Your Autism Society/Support Group
 - Autism Support on the Web
 - Most good book shops

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Further Training/Education

- **Hope For The Future Courses**
 - Practical strategies/application
 - Own manual/certificate
- **Professional Development**
 - Half/full day
- **Parent seminars**
 - Eve. Half/full day
- **Contact: wenbe@bigpond.com**

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Speaking engagements

- **To engage Wendy Lawson:**
- **wenbe@bigpond.com**
- **lawson_wendy@hotmail.com**
- **PO Box 5033, Warrnambool, Victoria, 3280, Australia.**

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- **Wendy's email address:**
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