

Life & Learning With Autism Spectrum (AS)

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That's typical!

**"That's typical" I heard her say.
I wondered what she meant?
"You always want it your way"
She echoed without relent.**

**I waited, silent as a bird,
And pondered on her words.
She just kept talking,
I kept walking,
What was it that I heard?**

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What to expect from this talk:

- **An explanation of what might lead to 'The scripts' neurologically typical (NT) individuals have that inform their learning styles.**
- **A response to the idea that Autism spectrum (AS) is a deviation from 'the norm' and, therefore, is deviant and dysfunctional.**

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That's typical

**"I always want it my way?"
What other way could there be?
I only know the proper way,
The way that's there for me.**

**If we do it her way,
It wouldn't be right at all.
It would be wrong and all along,
I'd know it's wrong and not OK!**

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That's typical

**So, why can't she understand?
What is it she doesn't get?
I must firmly stand my ground,
I mustn't give in yet!**

**If I give up she'll never learn.
She'll never know the way.
She calls it "being stubborn",
But, I'm scripted for this play.**

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Typical and ASD development

To understand ASD we must first look at typical development

- Typical children divide their attention to accommodate the changing world around and within themselves (physical, emotional and social world).

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ASD Developing Individuals

Because children with ASD are not typically developing, they and the typical world are confused by one another



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Typical development

- doing certain things at certain times. We call these 'mile stones'.
- Shared attention (follows direction of adult's gaze/finger pointing etc)
- Language (develops words uses them appropriately)
- Shared interests (turn taking, listening to others, understanding other points of view etc)
- Social priorities (social norms, morality, social conscience, being social is a priority)

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Attention & Learning

- learning requires attention, interest and the inter- play between senses and cognition.
- With respect to attention and interest, NT and ASD individuals are wired up differently.
- But, is this deviation or simply an aspect of neural diversity?

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What informs typical development?

- Nature and nurture (genes and upbringing) inform development.
- Cognitively, however, the ability to divide one's attention is critical to NT development.
- Having a diffuse/diverse interest system and being able to access multiple interests (one's own and others) relies upon the ability to divide one's attention and build connections.

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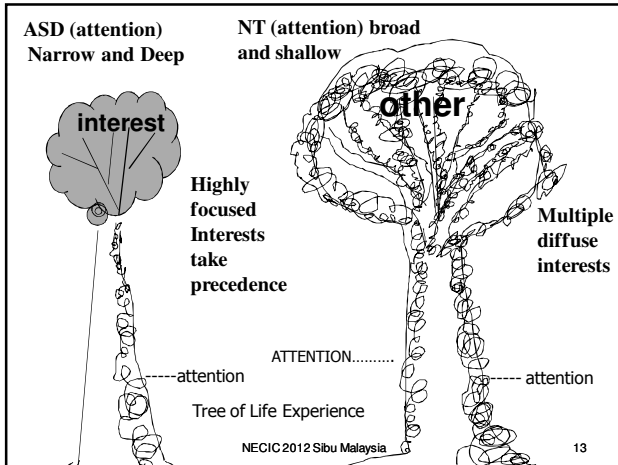
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Attention & Learning

- In ASD single attention (monotropism) requires one's 'senses' to work more independently than they might together.
- In NT development integrated sensory function is primary to typical growth and development (Bogdashina, 2003).
- Therefore, in NT development the Interest System is informed by 'divided attention' (Polytropism).

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Primary School

- Found school very confusing
 - Didn't understand 'the rules'
 - Didn't relate to the other children
 - Didn't like the games or the social activities
 - Slow to read
 - Couldn't keep up with the expected pace of learning.

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Wendy & Autism: As a small child:



- Considered to be
- Intellectually disabled
- Went to main stream schools
- Loved to run freely around the playground and class room
- Unaware of 'others'
- Not connected to the world going on within me or around me

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Teenage Years

- Began to recognise that I was different
 - Beginnings of despair
- Started to form over attachments
 - Obsessive behaviours increased
- Sent off to the Guides and Youth Group
 - Obsessed about earning badges, but couldn't form friendships
 - Age 17yrs. first attempt at suicide

Beginning of history with the mental health system!

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Family life




- Unaware of siblings
- Scared of sudden noise
- Scared of thunder storms... but intrigued by them
- Loved to play in the garden with the gravel
- Loved the seaside

Bit of an escape artist!

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Delayed development

- primary school: detached
- Secondary School: over attached



School was a nightmare and I lived with constant fear. This lead to my having an 'upset tummy' fairly often.

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Differing design for different jobs?

- **Neuro-typical design fits with the ability to divide attention and accommodate multiple interests in the chaotic world we all live in.**
- **ASD design fits with focused attention, single interest (great in the creative world of arts, & vocations needing focus i.e. engineering)**

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Whose Time is This?

Whose Time Is This?

**It's 7am. and the alarm clock beckons,
"time to wake up" my little clock reckons.
"Oh just a few minutes more,
Then I'll get up and be out of the door."**

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I'm not naughty or stupid, just autistic

- **AS individuals often literal, black & white, and appear stubborn.**
- **Using visual timetables to explain time & expectations helps us adjust and understand what to expect.**
- **Using our 'interest' to motivate and reward, great way to create a positive experience of expectations.**

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Whose Time is This?

**Knock, knock and knock once more,
"come on sleepy head, get out of your bed"
But, I just need more time,
My clothes then I'll find"
I'll be down for breakfast, just a little more time.**

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Discussion

- **I don't want anyone to change who I am but, just like you, I do want to be heard, understood and accommodated.**
- **Dismissing who I am or trying to see me as part of a tragic disaster, is not the way to go. As people with ASD we have so much to give back to our communities.**

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Whose Time is This?

"I'm sorry; I'm late," my friend rushes by. "I ran out of time, can't stop and chat."

The rain and the wind heave a big sigh, As I get to sit and talk with my cat.

**"Why are people always in a rush?"
"They tell me that time waits for no-one." So they queue, push and shove.**

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Whose Time is This?

But isn't it true, time's on our side?
We do not know this, so, from time
we hide.
We take our time deciding whose
time,
Will it be yours or will it be mine?

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We are in this together.

Sometimes AS
individuals are happy
to be involved with
others, as long as we
understand the
concepts. Sometimes
We like time alone.



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Whose Time is This?

I don't know what time will bring,
But I do know a couple of things.
Time is our slave and not our boss,
There is time to prosper,
There's time to be lost.

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Resources

Web pages: www.mugsy.org/wendy
– www.autismandcomputing.com

- www.autistics.org
- Getting The Truth Out
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnylM1hI2jc> (In my language)
- www.youtube.com (Posautive)
- Wendy's BOOKS & other resources:
- National or local autism society

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Whose Time is This?

Whatever the time and for whomever
we call,
There is time for one and there is
time for all.
Knowing which is whose time to be,
Knowing there's time, for you and
for me.

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Further workshops

- Hope For The Future Program
– An 8hr. Course with manual &
certificate
- Whole or half day Professional
development
- Half day & eve.
Seminars
- Contact:
- Wendy Lawson
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