2 Day Parent Carer Workshop

Participant Guide

positive partnerships
Working together to support school-aged students on the autism spectrum

Foreword

For most of my life I assumed I had culture shock, my family moved around the world and I observed a variety of cultures and learnt to speak several languages. I was always an outsider or a foreigner, whether at home, school or work. It is an interesting way to be, being on the outside always peering in, trying to make sense of what you see. Now I understand my semipermanent culture shock was a result of my neurodiversity: I am from a different culture to many of those I have observed, my sense of belonging, of a place among my own, is within the autistic community.

As an inquisitive child, I begged my parents to send me to school, aged three, as I could read and I wanted to learn to write and had it fixed in my head that school was where you learnt this skill. I still remember the large wooden half-barrel filled almost to the top with sand where I learnt how to form individual letters. The way the sand moved beneath my finger and a letter appeared on the surface of the sand. If it wasn't quite right, it was easy to remove and replace with a new letter that was closer to what I wanted.

I went to eight schools in total and some of them were much easier than others. At a small boarding school in the Lake District in England, the teachers provided me with work at or just above my level, insisting that I continue to learn in-depth as well as across a range of subjects. This resulted in me doing high school Latin and Maths and English alongside my peers. I struggled with biology and excelled in physics, with no understanding of how I could find some areas so easy and others so difficult.

Making friends is incredibly hard, although saying goodbye is very easy, a gift when you move home, school and country so much as a child. My educational successes were driven by a family and teachers who believed in my educational abilities and skills and challenged me to improve in all areas. In contrast struggles at school nearly all led to being viewed as challenging, rude, inappropriate or obnoxious. A literal understanding of language combined with a difficulty in interpreting social situations and social norms created a myriad of problems.

In the primary years, I usually only had one or two friends at each school, often losing touch as soon as I moved school. In high school I became part of the group created by all the people who did not belong to any other friendship group. I learnt how hard it is to understand whether people are good friends or using you and how much of authority is a social construct that I could not comprehend. My literal understanding of language continued though I learnt how to understand idioms, slang and other non-literal language, it all depended on context. I continued to get into trouble and to get my friends into trouble too. It took me about ten years to understand why we were given detention after a maths class when I had been laughing in response to the teacher's comment that: "that table will get detention if it doesn't stop talking."

When I left school, I decided to train as a teacher – a pragmatic response to high unemployment that resulted in a rewarding and enjoyable career. I found out that I love teaching as much as I love learning and have collected a number of diverse qualifications over the years, from massage therapy through to business management, Montessori teaching, special education and general education, culminating in a PhD looking at the context of teaching autistic spectrum students in the mainstream in New Zealand.

Along this pathway, I discovered that the most effective teaching of students on the autism spectrum is that which is based in respect and value of the skills and strengths inherent in the autism spectrum and collaboration between schools and families and other support agencies and professionals. Support that is strengths and interest-based fosters joy in learning and harnesses the hyperfocus that can be both beneficial and constraining for learning at school.

I discovered that large numbers of 'mini-me's' were perceived to have less potential than their classmates because teachers, parents and other professionals assumed that the difficulties of the autism spectrum outweighed the benefits in both the short and long-term. This drove me to seek assessment and evaluation, and a diagnosis of Asperger's followed swiftly.

I have three pieces of advice for parents/carers, teachers, other professionals, support staff and school leaders of children and students on the autism spectrum;

–   Believe in the potential of your students, with nurture and the right environmental supports and strengths-based teaching, the potential of children and young people on the autism spectrum is phenomenal; no matter their speech or written communication level
–   Always say what you mean, mean what you say and really hear what the children and students on the autism spectrum are trying to communicate through their bodies, art, music, words and more
–   Value and accept our autistic reality is different to the experiences of non-autistics, we can experience great joy from the tiniest thing, but also great suffering from something that may not affect you at all.

I am pleased that autistic voices are becoming more prevalent in the conversation about the best ways to support children and young adults on the autism spectrum to achieve their potential. It is only through open and honest collaboration that we can ensure the next generation of autistic children will be able to live happily in ways that maximise their achievements across a range of areas.

Dr Emma Goodall

Autistic, author, blogger, daughter, education advisor, educator, parent, partner, sister.

We at Positive Partnerships value and recognise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage and their proud part in Australia's national identity. We acknowledge and continue to learn about Australia's colonial past and the historic and ongoing impacts on Australia's First Nations people. We believe in and strongly support the Truth-telling of Australia's colonial history and in moving forward as a nation we must encourage open, honest dialogue and build relationships built on respect and trust.

Disclaimer

Every attempt has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented at the time of publication. If you are aware of any information that requires updating please contact Positive Partnerships on 1300 881 971 or positivepartnerships@positivepartnerships.com.au

Overview of Workshop: Day One

Time	Topic
9:30 am – 10:00 am	**Session 1** Welcome and introductions
10:00 am – 11:00 am	**Session 2** Diversity of autism
11:00 am – 11:20 am	Morning tea
11:20 am – 12:45 pm	**Session 2 continued** Diversity of autism
12:45 pm – 1:15 pm	Lunch
1:15 pm – 2:25 pm	**Session 3** Sensory Processing
2:25 pm – 2:30 pm	Feedback

Day Two

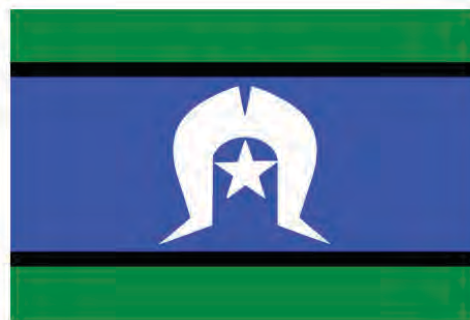| Time	Topic
9:30 am – 10:00 am	**Session 4** Welcome back and reflections
10:00 am – 11:30 am	**Session 5** Understanding behaviour
11:30 am – 11:50 am	Morning tea
11:50 am – 12:45 pm	**Session 6** Working in partnerships
12:45 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm – 2:25 pm	**Session 6 continued** Working in partnerships
2:25 pm – 2:30 pm	Questions, Feedback

Session 1

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Working together to support school-aged students on the autism spectrum

Parent / Carer Workshop

Acknowledgement of Country

Statement of reconciliation

We at Positive Partnerships value and recognise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage and their proud part in Australia's national identity. We acknowledge and continue to learn about Australia's colonial past and the historic and ongoing impacts on Australia's First Nations people. We believe in and strongly support the Truth-telling of Australia's colonial history and in moving forward as a nation we must encourage open, honest dialogue and build relationships built on respect and trust.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this presentation may contain images or voices of deceased persons.

House keeping

Tea / Coffee   Exits   Facilities   Phones
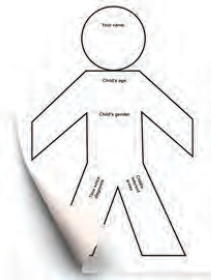
No Smoking / Vaping   Workbook   Other Information   Evaluation

Introductions

Everyone is welcome at this workshop. We want you to feel that it is ok to be authentically yourself.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do that helps to include you in the workshop.

Everyone is welcome to use their own strategies to help them engage and to participate effectively.

What will the workshop be like?

It will look like...
- movement
- use of visual supports and film clips

It will sound like...
- a sharing of participants knowledge, skills and experiences
- experiences and opinions being respected
- large and small group discussions

It will feel like...
- a safe place
- learning from and with each other

Our learning agreement

- Be confidential
- Be supportive
- Be respectful

Notes:

Key information:

- The range of conditions that affect cognitive functions such as thinking, attention, memory and impulse control are collectively known as neurodiverse conditions or neurodiversity.

- Neurodiversity refers to differences in people's skills and abilities. For example some people have an outstanding memory but find comprehension difficult.

- Autism is a type of neurodiversity.

- The language used around autism has changed in the last few years.

- Most adults on the autism spectrum prefer to describe themselves as autistic or neurodivergent. Neurodivergent means a person with a neurodiverse brain.

- Some autistic individuals prefer the term on the autism spectrum.

- It is always good to ask your young person what they prefer.

- We do not use the term ASD unless referring to a diagnosis as the D has been dropped by most people and organisations.

- We do not use the term 'with autism' as many autistic individuals have explained that they find this problematic.

- Autistic community refers to individuals who are autistic and autism community refers to non-autistic people who work with, parent or otherwise support autistic people.

- You may have heard of the term masking. Autistic masking (also described as camouflaging, compensation, and most recently "adaptive morphing") is the conscious or unconscious suppression of natural autistic ways of being and the use of alternatives across a range of domains including social interaction, sensory experience, cognition, movement and behaviour.

References/Links:

- Bottema-Beutel, K., Kapp, S. K., Lester, J. N., Sasson, N. J., & Hand, B. N. (2021). Avoiding ableist language: Suggestions for autism researchers. *Autism in Adulthood, 3*(1), 18-29.

- Bradshaw, P., Pickett, C., van Driel, M. L., Brooker, K., & Urbanowicz, A. (2021). 'Autistic' or 'with autism'?. *Australian Journal of General Practice, 50*(3), 104-108.

- Hull L, Petrides KV, Allison C, et al. "Putting on my best normal": Social camouflaging in adults with autism spectrum conditions. J Autism Dev Disord. 2017;47(8):2519–2534. DOI: 10.1007/s10803-017-3166-5 Crossref, Medline, Google Scholar.

- Kenny, L., Hattersley, C., Molins, B., Buckley, C., Povey, C., & Pellicano, E. (2016). Which terms should be used to describe autism? Perspectives from the UK autism community. *Autism, 20*(4), 442-462.

- Lawson WB. Adaptive morphing and coping with social threat in autism: An autistic perspective. J Intellectual Disability Treat Diagnosis and Treatment. 2020;8(8):519–526. Crossref, Google Scholar.

- Livingston LA, Happé F. Conceptualising compensation in neurodevelopmental disorders: Reflections from autism spectrum disorder. Neurosci Biobehav Rev. 2017;80:729–742. DOI: 10.1016/j.neubiorev.2017.06.005 Crossref, Medline, Google Scholar.

- Pearson, A., & Rose, K. (2021). A conceptual analysis of autistic masking: Understanding the narrative of stigma and the illusion of choice. Autism in Adulthood, 3(1), 52-60.

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Workshop overview

Day 1	
9:30 - 10:00	Introduction
10:00 - 11:00	Diversity of autism
11:00 - 11:20	M O R N I N G T E A
11:20 - 12:45	Diversity of autism continued
12:45 - 1:15	L U N C H
1:15 - 2:25	Sensory processing
2:25 - 2:30	Questions, feedback

Day 2	
9:30 - 10:00	Welcome back and reflections
10:00 - 11:30	Understanding behaviour
11:30 - 11:50	M O R N I N G T E A
11:50 - 12:45	Working in partnerships
12:45 - 1:30	L U N C H
1:30 - 2:25	Working in partnerships continued
2:25 – 2:30	Questions, Feedback

What have you learnt on your autism journey that may help someone else?

Being centered around our young people

Key information:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises that children have rights and are entitled to be involved in decisions that affect them in accordance with their evolving capacities.

- Article 12 highlights that all children are capable of forming a view- no matter their age or their disability. They just might need help to express their views. All children have their own life experiences, fears, ideas and concerns which can contribute to decision making.

- This article states that in order to be able to express their views, children with disabilities must be provided with:

  - information which is relevant, accessible, appropriate and presented in formats and at a level they understand, including through Augmentative and Alternative Communication systems.

  - the space, time, encouragement and support to express their views.

  - safety to express their views without fear of criticism or punishment.

  - this article also states that children have a right, not an obligation, to express their views.

  - for children of school age, this includes the student's right to express their perspective about their school experience.

- The Disability Standards for Education (2005), often referred to as the DSE, says that educators are required to consult with a student to ensure reasonable adjustments are made to enable the students to access learning.

- This article also states that children have a right, not an obligation, to express their views.

- Consultation is when someone is asked to share their thoughts, feelings and opinions. When students are consulted this is often called student voice.

- Some children and young people will be able to tell the school what will help them. Some students will need support to tell the school what will help them.

- All children and young people need to be provided with the opportunities to have a say about their education in a way that meets their needs.

References/Links:

- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (2012). *Engaging children with disabilities in decisions affecting their lives* guidelines, available from https://www.unicef.org/disabilities/files/Take_Us_Seriously.pdf

- Tancredi, H (2018). Adjusting language barriers.

- Tancredi, H (2020). *Meeting obligations to consult students with disability: methodological considerations and successful elements for consultation.* The Australian Educational Researcher, 47:201-217.

Notes:

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From How I Learn program - https://www.howilearn.com.au/

Key information:

- Children and young people provide unique knowledge, insights and perspectives into their own lives- they are experts on themselves and can often tell you want they want and need (UNICEF, 2012).

- Research shows that children with disabilities are often offered less opportunities for choice than their peers without disabilities.

- Young people with disabilities also often have more adult intervention in their lives.

- It is documented that professionals may have lower expectations of individuals with disability.

- If your child does not communicate using speech, you might like to consider using picture representations, using their technology supports or supporting them to communicate their choices through gestures.

References/Links:

- How I Learn – student perspectives https://vimeo.com/358596812 website: https://www.howilearn.com.au/

- NCCD Introduction to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Disability Standards for Education 2005 https://www.nccd.edu.au/tools/introduction-dda-and-standards-presentation

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Session 2

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Working together to support school-aged students on the autism spectrum

The diversity of autism

Session Overview

Build upon your understanding of autism and the diversity of the spectrum within our community.

Explore what being autistic means for young people and explore some of the characteristics and impacts of autism on daily life

Learn to use a tool that may support deeper understanding of a young person, including their strengths and interests.

Investigate ways to implement individualised strategies to support your child at home.

Understandings of autism

Diversity wheel is adapted from Rebecca Burgess' https://the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/

Key information:

- Autism used to be thought of as a linear spectrum as represented on the left.
- It is now known that autism is more complex than this.
- Our knowledge about the autism spectrum reflects an everchanging experience, with research changing our understanding continually.
- Individuals will be at different parts of the Diversity Wheel at different parts of the day and in different contexts.
- The Diversity of Wheel that Positive Partnerships is currently using is adapted from the cartoon by Rebecca Burgess, an autistic cartoonist.

Resource/Link:

- https://the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/

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Diagnosing autism – Medical Model

DSM-V-TR (2022) Autism Spectrum - dyad of difficulties
1. Social communication
2. Restricted, repetitive and/or sensory behaviours or interests

Key information:

- Autism is diagnosed using observations and gathering information about an individual's behaviours and characteristics across a range of environments.

- Professionals diagnose autism spectrum disorder on the basis of difficulties in two areas – 'social-communication' and 'restricted, repetitive and/or sensory behaviours or interests'.

- The way autism presents is different for everyone and each individual can also present differently depending on where they are, what is happening, who is around and how they are feeling.

Resources/Links:

- https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/learning-about-autism/assessment-diagnosis/autism-diagnosis

- https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/learning-about-autism/assessment-diagnosis/dsm-5-asd-diagnosis

- https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/autism-crc-national-autism-guideline

- https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/reactions-to-diagnosis

- https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/girls-on-the-autism-spectrum

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Neurodiversity and Neurodiversity affirming

Key information:

- Neurodiversity is defined by the AutismCRC as: The perspective that people experience and interact with the world in different ways. Inherent in this view is that there is no one 'normal' way of thinking, learning and behaving and therefore differences in behaviours should not be seen as 'deficits'. In the context of autism, a neurodiversity perspective views brain-based and behavioural differences observed in autistic children as reflecting natural human variation and is valued accordingly.

- Neurodivergent refers to a person who has a brain that is different from the majority of people.

- Neurodiversity affirming is defined by the AutismCRC as: Practices that seek to affirm the child's neurodivergent identity. In the context of autism, this term refers to providing supports that embrace each child's unique understanding of other people and the world around them, rather than seeking to 'cure' autism.

Resource/Link:

AutismCRC - https://www.autismcrc.com.au/knowledge-centre

Notes:

The Diversity Wheel

Diversity wheel is adapted from Rebecca Burgess' https://the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/
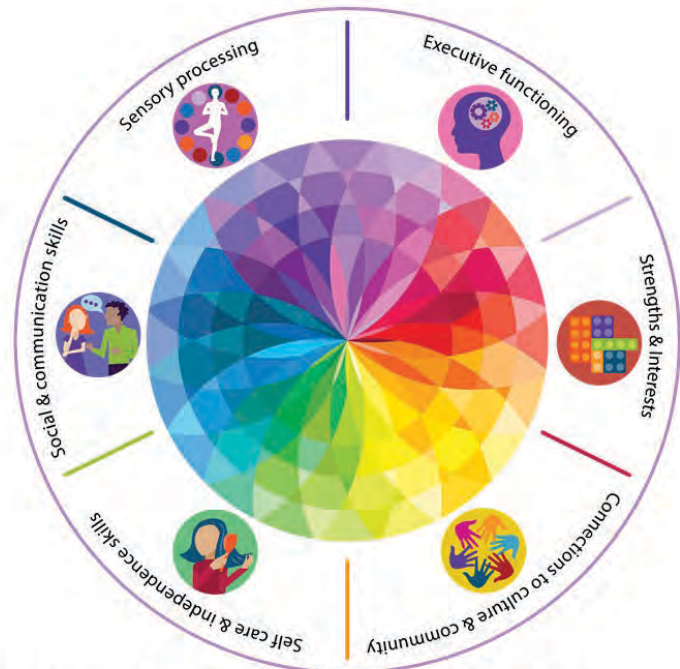
Key information:

- The areas of the Diversity Wheel are not characteristics of autism. They are key areas of functioning that are required for success in school and in the community. The wheel can be used with any learner and not just those with a diagnosis of autism.

- It can be helpful to consider each of these areas to ensure that others are able to get to know your young person, their skills, strengths and support needs. We need to consider these areas independently and how they relate to each other and interconnect.

- The headings and colour coding on the Diversity Wheel match a Planning Tool we will be using throughout this workshop.

Link:

- https://the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/

References:

- Frost, K. M., Koehn, G. N., Russell, K. M., & Ingersoll, B. (2019). Measuring child social communication across contexts: Similarities and differences across play and snack routines. *Autism Research, 12*(4), 636-644. https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.usq.edu.au/doi/epdf/10.1002/aur.2077

- Kaliukhovich, D. A., Manyakov, N. V., Bangerter, A., Ness, S., Skalkin, A., Goodwin, M. S., ... & Pandina, G. (2020). Social attention to activities in children and adults with autism spectrum disorder: effects of context and age. *Molecular autism, 11*(1), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13229-020-00388-5

- Williams, E. I., Gleeson, K., & Jones, B. E. (2019). How pupils on the autism spectrum make sense of themselves in the context of their experiences in a mainstream school setting: A qualitative metasynthesis. *Autism, 23*(1), 8-28. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1362361317723836

Diversity Wheel

The areas of the Diversity Wheel are **not** characteristics of autism. They are key areas of functioning that are required for success in school and in the community. The wheel can be used with any learner and not just those with a diagnosis of autism.

It can be helpful to consider each of these areas to ensure that others are able to get to know your young person, their skills, strengths and support needs. We need to consider these areas independently and also how they relate to each other and overlap.

The headings and colour coding on the Diversity Wheel match a Planning Tool we will be using throughout this workshop.

The outside of the circle indicates the individual may need less support in that area.

The middle of the circle indicates the individual may need more support in that area.

Strengths and support needs when:

⬤ **they are at their most independent**

◯ **they need the most support**

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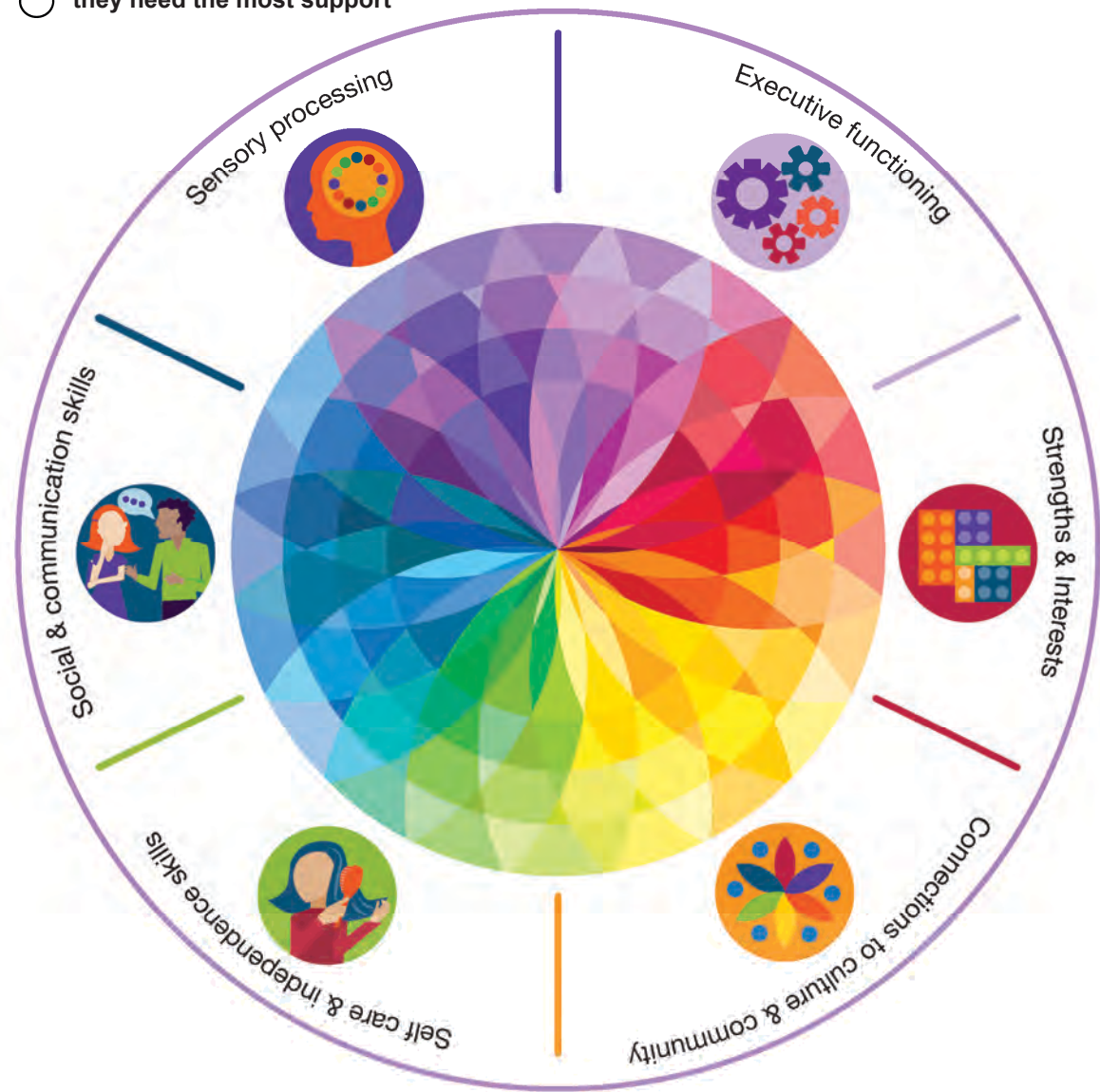
The Diversity Wheel

The **outside** of the circle indicates the individual may need less support in that area.

The **middle** of the circle indicates the individual may need more support in that area.

Strengths and support needs when:

⬤ they are at their most independent

◯ they need the most support

Sensory processing

Executive functioning

Strengths & Interests

Connections to culture & community

Self care & Independence skills

Social & communication skills

Diversity wheel is adapted from Rebecca Burgess' https://the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/
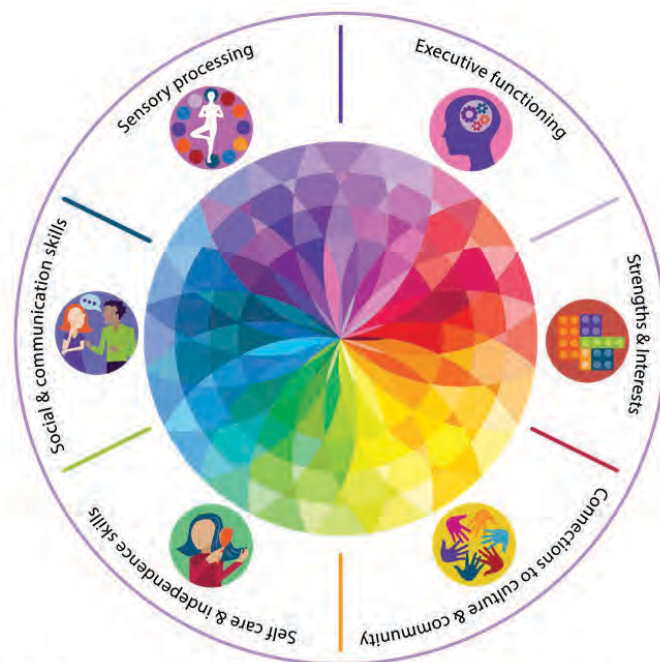
Key information:

- Autism is highly complex.
- How autism presents is impacted by context, including time of day, environment, activity, health, stress, cognitive load etc.
- It can be helpful to consider each of the areas in the Diversity Wheel to ensure that others are able to get to know your young person, their skills, strengths and support needs.
- We need to consider these areas independently and how they relate to each other and interconnect.
- The outside of the circle indicating lower support needs and the centre of the circle indicates high support needs for each segment.
- The headings and colour coding on the Diversity Wheel match a Planning Tool we will be building upon throughout this workshop.

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Planning Tool

	Observations and examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?	What are the helpful and unhelpful impacts on the child and others?	What strategies and adjustments might help the child?
Strengths and Interests			
Connections to culture and community			
Social Skills and Communication			
Sensory Processing			
Self Care and Independence			
Executive Functioning Skills			

Key information:

- The Planning Tool corresponds to the Diversity Wheel. The different areas are in the column on the left-hand side. These are the same as the different areas on the Diversity Wheel.

- The observations/examples column is designed for you to record exactly what you see or hear the child doing. How do they communicate? How do they interact with family and peers? How do they best learn new things?

- The helpful and unhelpful impacts column is where you consider and record the impacts of those observations on the child themselves or those around them.

- The strategies and adjustments column records what might be in place to support the young person and what may help in the future.

- This tool can be completed by a team of people including schools, family members and the individual themselves, remembering the importance of the young person being able to have their say.

Resources/Links:

- Online interactive Planning Tool
  https://planningtool.positivepartnerships.com.au/

- Fillable PDF Planning Tool Template
  https://tinyurl.com/pp-planningtool

- Planning Tool with prompts and examples
  https://tinyurl.com/pp-planningtool

This Planning Tool can support the team, including the student, to work together effectively to improve student outcomes.

Child's name: **D.O.B:**   **Class / Year Level :**

The team supporting the child:
Names and roles

Who attended this planning meeting:
Names and dates

How the child's voice was or will be included:
Description

Date completed: **Review date:**

	Observations and examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?	What are the helpful and unhelpful impacts on the child and others?	What strategies & adjustments might help the child?
Strengths and interests			
Connections to culture and community			
Social and communication skills			
Sensory processing			
Self-care and independence skills			
Executive functioning skills			

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Working together to support school-aged students on the autism spectrum

This Planning Tool can support the team, including the student, to work together effectively to improve student outcomes.

Child's name: **D.O.B:**   **Class / Year Level :**

The team supporting the child:
Names and roles

Who attended this planning meeting:
Names and dates

How the child's voice was or will be included:
Description

Date completed: **Review date:**

	Observations and examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?	What are the helpful and unhelpful impacts on the child and others?	What strategies & adjustments might help the child?
Strengths and interests	*The activities, things, places and people that the individual enjoys spending time on or with and/or is good at.*	*How the individual, their peers and others around them are impacted by their strengths and interests.*	*Supports, strategies and adjustments that will utilise their strengths and interests and help others to understand the benefit.*
Connections to culture and community	*The activities and places that the individual engages in/with e.g. place of worship, language group, sports etc*	*How the individual, their peers and others around them are impacted by their connections to community and culture.*	*Supports, strategies and adjustments that will help the individual to strengthen their connections to culture and community.*
Social and communication skills	*The individual's interactions with others and the way they communicate, e.g. gestures, words, signing etc.*	*How the individual, their peers and others around them are impacted by their social interactions and communication.*	*Supports, strategies and adjustments that will help the individual to interact with others and communicate effectively.*
Sensory processing	*The individual's reactions to and likes and dislikes for the external environment and their internal body signals, including emotions and feelings.*	*How the individual, their peers and others around them are impacted by the external environment and their internal body signals, including emotions and feelings.*	*Supports, strategies and adjustments that will help the individual cope with and respond to the environment and their internal body signals, including emotions and feelings.*
Self-care and independence skills	*How the individual takes care of themselves and manages their daily life.*	*How the individual, their peers and others around them are impacted by their self-care and independence skills.*	*Supports, strategies and adjustments that will help the individual to develop and/or maintain self-care and independence skills.*
Executive functioning skills	*What you notice about how the individual manages planning, organising and carrying out tasks and activities, their short and long term memory and how they notice and refocus.*	*How the individual, their peers and others around them are impacted by how the individual manages planning, organising and carrying out tasks and activities, their short and long term memory and how they notice and refocus.*	*Supports, strategies and adjustments that will help the individual manage planning, organising and carrying out tasks and activities, develop and/or improve their short and long term memory and their ability to refocus after distraction/switching tasks.*

This Planning Tool can support the team, including the student, to work together effectively to improve student outcomes.

Child's name: **D.O.B:**   **Class / Year Level :**

The team supporting the child:	This example is from a female year four student who has high skills in expressive verbal communication, sensory processing difficulties and significant support needs in the area of executive functioning. She has a diagnosis of autism.
Names and roles	

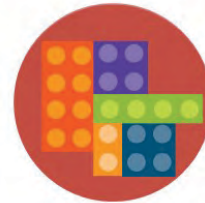**Who attended this planning meeting:**
Names and dates

How the child's voice was or will be included:	Leah attended the first part of the 3 way conference to share her thoughts and ideas to be included in this form.
Description	

Date completed:		**Review date:**	

	Observations and examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?	What are the helpful and unhelpful impacts on the child and others?	What strategies & adjustments might help the child?
Strengths and interests	1. Likes horses and dragons, she talks about them and all her imaginative play is about dragons. 2. Carries her dragon soft toys around at home.	1. Gives Leah something to interact and connect with peers. Enjoys learning and writing about dragons. 2. Finds it challenging to access things not relating to dragons.	1. Use dragons as task, conversation and play stimulus. 2. Introduce new dragon stories from a variety of sources; mythology, Komodo dragons.
Connections to culture and community	Has horse riding lessons and visits the park with her mum and brother.	Provides opportunity to learn and practice social interaction skills.	Set up other opportunities to connect to community based activities.
Social and communication skills	1. She is very verbal and understands single step verbal instructions with picture and word visual supports. 2. Leah has said she is unsure if peers will be nice.	1. People assume she understands more than she does, this can be frustrating for everyone. 2. Leah can struggle to understand complex play, which can annoy her peers.	1. When giving verbal instructions with 2 steps, continue using picture and word visual supports. 2. Leah is more confident when she controls the play as this minimises misunderstandings and increases her enjoyment. Gradually encourage her to take turns.
Sensory processing	1. Puts hands over ears in class when people are using quiet voices. 2. Goes to her calm space when there is a loud noise in class (without prompting), uses the hammock at home when the tv is loud. 3. Restricted diet, starting to explore new foods.	1. Doesn't meet her own writing goals when her hands are over her ears, which frustrates her. 2. Not engaged with tasks/misses when in her calming space. 3. Difficult for family to eat out at the moment.	1. Have access to headphones during desk tasks. 2. Organise an OT assessment to identify when/why she puts her hands over her ears and explore her diet. Use a class noise'o'meter. 3. During family time, family to make sure tv volume is quiet to minimise sensory input.
Self-care and independence skills	1. Able to move to a calming space/activity in the home & school independently 2. Leah gets easily distracted when asked to undertake self-care skills.	1. Recovers from being overwhelmed within ten minutes and is able to re-join the family or class then. 2. Unable to complete self-care tasks independently currently, requires adult 1:1 support.	1. Ensure Leah learns where the calm space is on her transition to a new class. 2. Use gesturing to prompt the following of sequenced picture and word visual supports.
Executive functioning skills	1. Leah likes to set a goal of how many sentences she will write. 2. Leah does not yet follow routines independently. 3. Leah notices lots of things, especially new things that are happing around her. 4. Leah does not remember who is picking her up from school each day.	1. Leah is happy when she achieves her goal of how many sentences she wants to write. 2. Leah doesn't get ready for school in the morning. Family are late for events and school. 3. Leah is easily distracted and finds it hard to get back to what she was doing before. This is frustrating for her family and teacher. 4. Leah can be distressed if she doesn't know who is picking her up or can go to after school care on the wrong day.	1. Provide concrete time frames for tasks/activities. 2. Provide sequenced visual instructions with pictures and written words. 3. Minimise distractions e.g. visitors to the classroom. 4. Use visual schedules for individual tasks and prompt Leah as to where she is up to. 5. Have an end of day daily visual of who is picking her up or if it is after school care today and place this on her backpack and her daily schedule.

"Autistic people are individuals.
We are not all math geniuses,
we don't all like trains. I am hopeless
with technology and much prefer
painting. There is no 'typical Autistic.'
But I think we probably all like being
respected and validated."

Yenn Purkis

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Key information:

- Not all people on the autism spectrum will be famous, but all will have strengths and interests that may help them to feel valued and respected, engage in leaning and support their wellbeing.

- Long term strengths and interests can often lead to a career and/or a great deal of enjoyment.

- Neuroscience research indicates that all children learn better when they are interested as this increases engagement. With research also suggesting that autistic students can only learn effectively when they are interested.

- Motivation is the engine of growth and the largest factor in a child's learning and progress. If a child is following their own interests and motivations, learning occurs at a faster rate.

Link:

- Positive Partnerships' Interest based learning webpage.
  https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/interest-based-learning

References:

- Davey, L. (2020). Using the special interests of autistic children to facilitate meaningful engagement and learning. *Good Autism Practice (GAP), 21*(1), 43-64.
  https://www.bild.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Davey-GAP-May-2020.pdf

- Lawson, W. (2013). Sensory connection, interest/attention and gamma synchrony in autism or autism, brain connections and preoccupation. *Medical hypotheses, 80*(3), 284-288.
  http://www.brainmaster.com/software/pubs/brain/Lawson_2012_Sensory%20connection%20interest_attention%20and%20gamma%20%20syn.pdf)

- Prata, J., Coelho, R., & Lawson, W. (2018). How the attitude of acceptance, enthusiasm and learning through motivation affects brain development in children with autism: A literature review. *Journal of Intellectual Disability-Diagnosis and Treatment, 6*(1), 14-24.
  https://doi.org/10.6000/2292-2598.2018.06.01.3
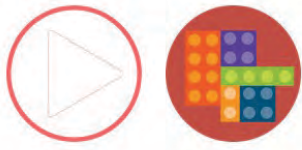
Key information:

- All individuals have strengths and interests that may help them to feel valued and respected, engage in leaning and support their wellbeing.

- Some interests can be short lived, whilst others may last for many years. Note that long term strengths and interests can lead to a career and/or a great deal of enjoyment.

	Observations & examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?	What are the helpful & unhelpful impacts on the child & others?	What strategies & adjustments might help the child?
Strengths & interests	1. Xander is interested in the Titanic	1a. Xander is eager to share his knowledge about the Titanic 1b. Xander may have challenges connecting with school work not linked with the Titanic	1a. Provide Xander the opportunity to present his knowledge on the Titanic to the class 1b. Teaching staff to link activities to some aspect of the Titanic where possible. For example, spelling lists, numeracy tasks

10 minutes

Key information:

- Using numbers in the Planning Tool helps keep track of what strategy is addressing which impact.

Link:

- Fillable PDF Planning Tool form.
https://tinyurl.com/pp-planningtool

Movement break

1 Stand with shoulders in usual position for 10-30 seconds.

2 Now lift-up shoulders towards ears and hold for 30 - 60 seconds, then drop them down, with elbows in and shoulder blades pulled back.

3 **Repeat 1 & 2, focusing on how your neck feels:** Stand with shoulders in usual position for 10 - 30 secs, lift-up shoulders towards ears and hold for 30-60 secs, then drop them down, with elbows in and shoulder blades pulled back.

Key information:

- Interoception is the conscious perception of your internal body signals.
- We connect to ourselves, our feelings and emotions through our interoception.
- Interoception activities are useful to both develop interoception and to support self-regulation. When doing an interoception activity, unless the person is overloaded, the activities can help a person self-regulate.

Resources/Links:

- Goodall, E., & Brownlow, C. (2022). *Interoception and Regulation: Teaching Skills of Body Awareness and Supporting Connection with Others.* Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Goodall, E. (2021). *Facilitating interoceptive awareness as a self-management and self-regulation tool to increase engagement in learning and education* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern Queensland).

Notes:

Connections to culture and community

Key information:

- Connections to culture and community can support wellbeing and quality of life.
- Different people will have a different number of connections to people, places and cultural contexts.
- Connecting with culture can have a positive impact on your sense of belonging and identity – and in turn, on your mental health and overall wellbeing.
- Community relationships are important because they provide people with a sense of connectedness. These relationships extend beyond a person's family and friends and are based on principles of reciprocity, where people both give and receive from the community. For example, some of you might be connected to a sporting club, others might be active within an autism group. These are all communities.
- We can create our own communities and our own sense of culture within our own families or friendship groups.

Resources/Links:

- Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia, Connections to community and culture Connection to community, culture and support | Commissioner for Children and Young People, Western Australia. (ccyp.wa.gov.au)

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Connections to culture and community

Interviewer: What do you enjoy doing?

Key information:

- Connections to community and culture, that is; people, places and cultural contexts, can support wellbeing and quality of life.

- Connections can provide a sense of belonging and purpose, whether that is to sporting, language-based groups or any other kind of group.

- Connections can be easier to form for autistic individuals if they are interest based.

- It can be difficult to form connections due to communication differences or due to being outside of peer group norms.

- Being able to communicate with a cultural group is one type of cultural connection.

- Other types of cultural connections can be based on sharing rituals, foods and cultural knowledge.

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Connections to culture and community

	Observations & examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?	What are the helpful & unhelpful impacts on the child & others?	What strategies & adjustments might help the child?
Connections to culture & community			

Key information:

- Impacts can be for the student, their peers, teacher or environment.
- Unhelpful impacts may relate to either connections and/or a lack of connections.
  - E.g. A parent may bring in hot food daily to eat with their child at lunch as this is a cultural norm.
  - This can have both helpful and unhelpful impacts.
  - The young person feels valued by their family whilst losing connection time with peers.
- Strategies and adjustments:
  - Use helpful impacts to support other areas.
  - Minimise unhelpful impacts and may be for the student, others and/or the environment.
  - In the above example, a lunch group could be formed where the parents connect after spending a shorter time with their young person, enabling their child to connect to peers over the break.
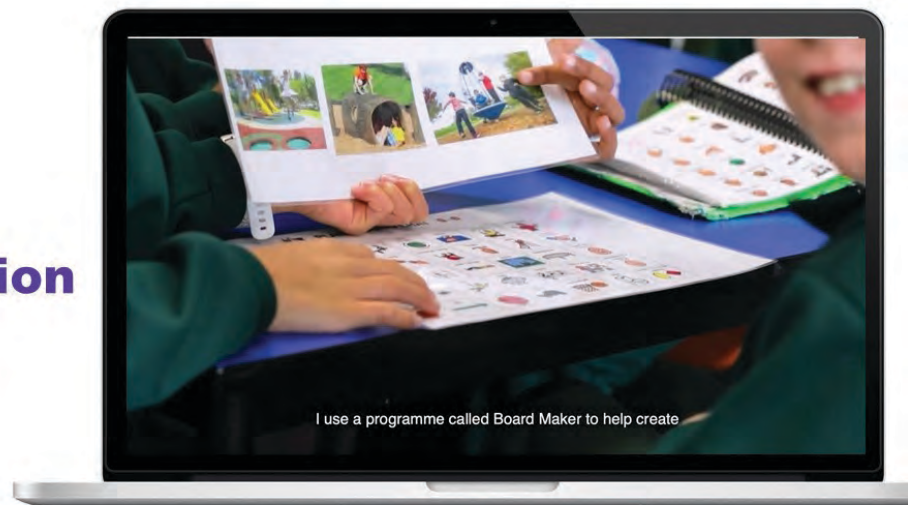
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Morning Tea

Communication

I use a programme called Board Maker to help create

Key information:

- Individuals on the spectrum will have varying strengths and support needs in their use of communication.

- Repetitive behaviours or body movements, often called stimming, can be both communicative and self-regulatory.

  - For example, some stims may be intentional communication, such as showing excitement. It can be easy to misunderstand what a stim is communicating.

- Trying to reduce or stop stimming can lead to children and young people having more negative experiences, be unable to calm themselves and unable to communicate intense emotions (Kapp et al., 2019).

- Quiet hands refers to keeping hands still. e.g. not flapping.

Resources/Links:

- Chen, R. S. (2021, June). Embodied design for non-speaking Autistic children: the emergence of rhythmical joint action. In *Interaction Design and Children* (pp. 648-651). https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1362361319829628

- Kapp, S. K., Steward, R., Crane, L., Elliott, D., Elphick, C., Pellicano, E., & Russell, G. (2019). 'People should be allowed to do what they like': Autistic adults' views and experiences of stimming. *Autism, 23*(7), 1782-1792.

- Leadbitter, K., Buckle, K. L., Ellis, C., & Dekker, M. (2021). Autistic Self-Advocacy and the Neurodiversity Movement: Implications for Autism Early Intervention Research and Practice. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 782.

Key information:

Expressive & receptive components of communication and echolalia

- There may be a mismatch between expressive and receptive language skills which can mean that communication challenges are not always obvious.

- Some young people use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) some or all of the time.

- Echolalia is the use of speech in a repetitive way and can be imitated from people in the child's environment, as well as from TV shows, commercials, movies etc.

- Echolalia can be a step during language development. Echolalia can decrease as more spontaneous language is incorporated (Davidoff, 2018).

Link:

- Positive Partnerships' Webinars: https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/communication-and-autism

Reference:

- Davidoff, B. E. (2018). Characteristics of the Spoken Language Interactions of Young Beginning Communicators with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Their Mothers: A Preliminary Investigation. https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/17272

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Key information:

- Autistic children and young people will have their own social preferences and these should be respected.
- These social preferences can change according to context and over time.
- Friendships for autistic individuals may look different to friendships for non-autistic individuals.

Resource/Link:

- Positive Partnerships Webinars on friendship: https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/friendships
- Positive Partnerships Webinars on communication: https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/communication-and-autism

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	Observations & examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?	What are the helpful & unhelpful impacts on the child & others?	What strategies & adjustments might help the child?
Social & communication skills			

10 minutes

Notes:

Key information:

- We may use some or all components of executive functioning skills to complete a task.

- This is an example as there are still gaps in the research on exactly which cognitive skills are executive functioning skills.

- Context significantly impacts executive functioning skills, either helpfully and/or unhelpfully.

Resources/Links:

- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2014). *Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children from Infancy to Adolescence*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

- MacKenzie, H. (2019). Thinking and Learning. In R. Jordan, J. M. Roberts & K. Hume (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Autism and Education* (1st ed., pp. 167-185). Sage Publications ltd.

Notes:

Executive Functioning

Executive functions are skills performed by our brain that help us to control and manage our thoughts and actions. Having the skills to organise and plan, shift attention, be flexible with thinking and self-regulate can all have an impact on how a young person copes with daily tasks. Some individuals on the autism spectrum may have difficulties with some or all areas of executive functioning.

There are two main areas for executive functioning skills:

Choose goals & achieve them

- **Planning**: This includes deciding on what's important (and not important) and then making a plan to get a task done. It includes the ability to sequence sections of the tasks in order, to best achieve the overall task.
- **Organisation**: This is about staying on task and the preparation of what is needed to undertake the task. For example; collecting equipment at the end of a lesson in preparation for a transition to another lesson.
- **Time management**: This involves understanding how important time is and how to get jobs done on time.
- **Working memory**: This is being able to remember information while working on other tasks.
- **Thinking about our own thinking**: This includes checking on how things are going for ourselves.

Guide behaviour

- **Response inhibition**: This is about stopping ourselves from doing something so that we can think through what we should do next.
- **Emotional control**: This is about managing emotions so that we can finish a task.
- **Attention**: This involves being able to pay attention to a task we need to do, even if we're bored or tired.
- **Task initiation**: Being able to start a job when needed.
- **Flexibility**: Being able to change plans.
- **Persistence**: This is about being able to keep going to finish a job and re-visiting the job if necessary.

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Executive functioning

Key information:

- Each individual has their own set of strengths and support needs across the domains of executive functioning.

- Support needs will vary across the day and over a lifetime and will usually increase when the individual is stressed/distressed.

- Executive functioning difficulties are helpfully and unhelpfully impacted by context.

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Planning Tool activity

	Observations & examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?	What are the helpful & unhelpful impacts on the child & others?	What strategies and adjustments may support the child
Executive functioning skills			

5 minutes

Key information:

- Strategies to support executive functioning are not quick fixes. They are work arounds and life hacks.

Resources/Links:

- Tip-Sheet-Executive-Functioning-1-1.pdf (icannetwork.online). https://icannetwork.online/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Tip-Sheet-Executive-Functioning-1-1.pdf

Notes:

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Key information:

- Many self-care skills require a range of skills including fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, sensory processing and executive functions.

- Physical disabilities, developmental delays and learning differences can impact on self-care skills.

- People with physical support needs can still be independent with choice and control.

- Self-care activities can include dressing, cleaning teeth, eating, showering etc.

- Other areas of the Diversity Wheel may impact on someone's ability to engage in self-care independently and they may need support to do so.

- Physical disabilities (e.g. cerebral palsy), developmental delays and learning differences (e.g. ADHD) can also impact on a person's ability to engage in self-care activities.

- Some people on the autism spectrum may require some self-care skills to be explicitly taught. However, it is important for young people to have choice and control over their own bodies.

- Different cultures may have different expectations of the young person's development of self-care and independence skills. For example, some families may encourage independent eating from an early age whereas others may feed their child for longer.

- This is the section of the Planning Tool where you can record motor difficulties and/or physical disabilities that impact on movement.

Link:

- https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/health-hygiene-in-the-home

References:

- Langøy, E. E., & Kvalsund, R. (2018). Vulnerable Youth–Dependency or Independence? School Experiences, Transitions and Adaptation to and within Adult Life. S*candinavian Journal of Disability Research, 20*(1). https://www.sjdr.se/articles/10.16993/sjdr.34/

- Mlinac, M. E., & Feng, M. C. (2016). Assessment of activities of daily living, self-care, and independence. *Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology, 31*(6), 506-516. https://academic.oup.com/acn/article/31/6/506/1727834

Self-care and independence skills

It is funny how when you can't talk, people think you can't understand. In fact, they

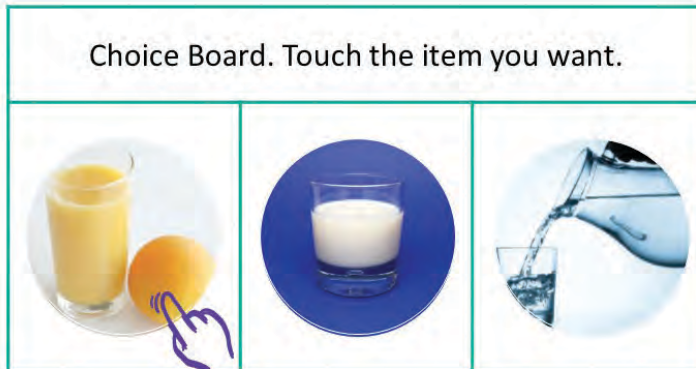## Key information:

- Each individual has their own set of strengths and support needs across the domains of self-care and independence skills.

- Executive functions are needed for many self-care and independence tasks.

- Social and communication support needs can drive assumptions about a student's ability to be independent.

- Support needs will vary both across the day and over a lifetime.

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Planning Tool activity

	Observations & examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?	What are the helpful & unhelpful impacts on the child & others?	What strategies and adjustments may support the child
Self-care & independence skills			

Notes:

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Strategies

Key information:

- Strategies and supports need to be individualised for each young person.
- They should be evidence informed, practical and safe.
- Guides to therapies, supports and strategies from independent organisations are helpful (see links).

Resources/Links:

- Raising Children's Network: Autism – therapies guide.
  https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/therapies-guide
- Autism CRC early intervention report on evidence-based supports for autistic children.
  https://www.autismcrc.com.au/interventions-evidence
- AutismCRC - https://www.autismcrc.com.au/knowledge-centre

Notes:

The Positive Partnerships initiative is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training through the Helping Children with Autism package and is delivered by Autism Spectrum Australia.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government or the Department of Education and Training.

Strategies

Notes:

Where to next?

Consider:

- Who needs to be informed and taught how to use the strategy?
- What materials do we need?
- What environments do the materials need to be available in?
- Does your young person need to be taught something?
- Trial and observe their response.

Key information:

- Strategies can be extremely simple or very complex.
- A strategy can be for the individual young person, their family/other people, the environment or a combination of these.
- It is important to know the answers to the following questions before implementing a strategy.
    - Who needs to be informed and taught how to use the strategy?
    - What materials do we need?
    - What environments do the materials need to be available in?
    - Does your young person need to be taught something?
- Strategies should be trialled first to give the family time to observe if the strategy is helpful or harmful to the young person.

Resource/Link:

- Autism CRC Early Intervention Guidelines https://www.autismcrc.com.au/interventions-evidence

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What works?

- What was the purpose of the strategy?
- Did the strategy work or not work for your young person?
- Why?
- Was the strategy easy to implement safely?
- Did the strategy cause you or your young person stress, anxiety or discomfort?

Key information:

- Strategies that work for one young person may not work for another.
- Strategies can become more or less effective over time.
- There is no one strategy for autism.
- When trialling and/or using strategies, it is important to reflect on:
  - what is the purpose of the strategy?
  - is the strategy working or not working for your young person?
  - why?
  - is the strategy easy to implement safely?
  - did the strategy cause you or your young person stress, anxiety or discomfort?

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Be mindful

- Some products can be harmful
- Choose products with the support of an Occupational Therapist (OT), speech pathologists or other allied health professionals

Key information:

- Strategies and supports can be chosen with the support of a professional to help ensure they are safe.
- If you are not comfortable with a suggested support or strategy, ask for the evidence base.
- Only use supports and strategies that you and your child are comfortable with.
- If a support or strategy distresses you or your child, it is probably best to move on to a different support or strategy.

Resources/Links:

- Raising Children's Network: Autism – therapies guide.
  https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/therapies-guide
- Autism CRC early intervention report on evidence-based supports for autistic children.
  https://www.autismcrc.com.au/interventions-evidence

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Session 3

positive partnerships
Working together to support school-aged students on the autism spectrum
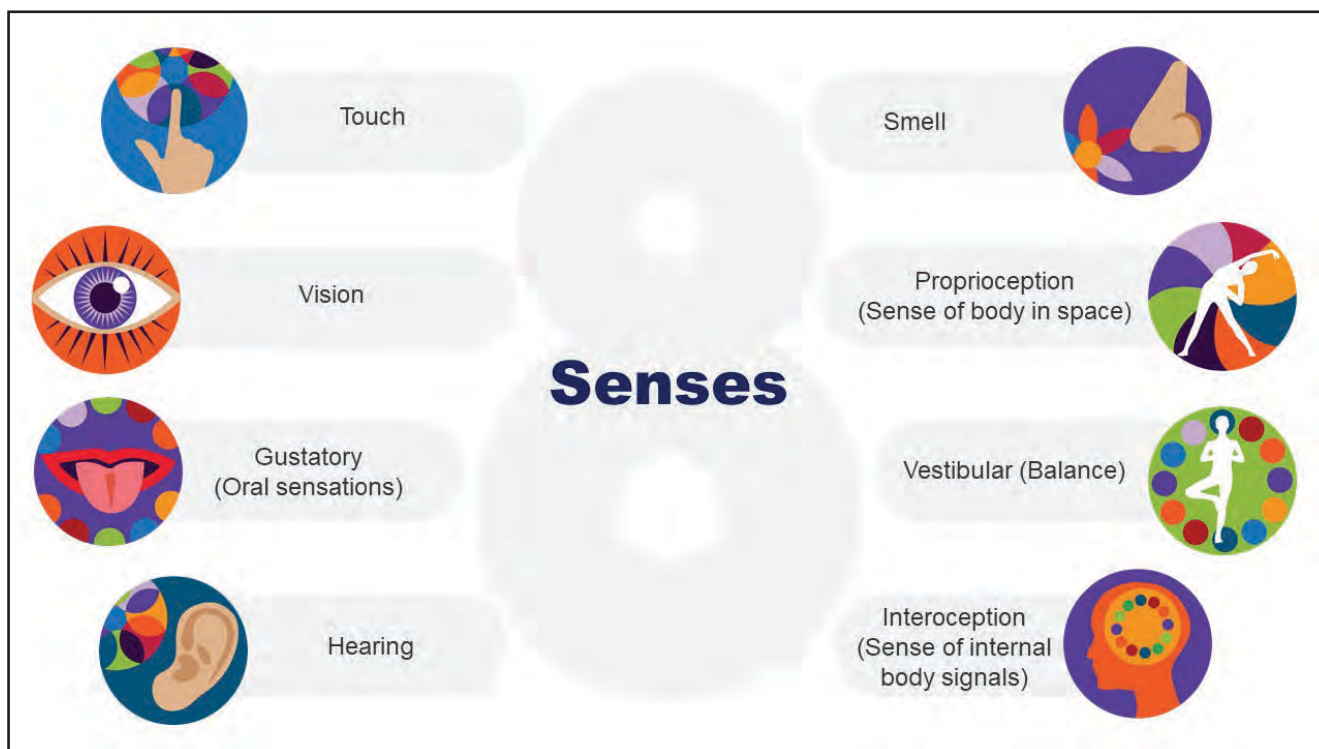
Session 3
Sensory processing

Session overview

- Explore sensory processing and the unique differences individuals on the autism spectrum may have with processing information from their senses.

- Share some strategies that can assist people to cope with sensory input and meet their sensory needs.

All of this information is applicable to adults as well as to children and young people and not just individuals on the autism spectrum.

Key information:

- We all react to the world around us in different ways as we interpret it through our senses.
- Individuals notice and experience things differently using a variety of senses throughout the day.
- Mindful body awareness activities are also known as interoception activities. They can help us calm down and/or increase our focus and attention.

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positive partnerships

Key information:

- **The tactile system** is our sense of touch. This input is mostly received through our skin and includes multiple types of sensations, including texture, pain, pressure and temperature. It is not just registered through our hands, but all over our body.

- **Our visual system** tells us about depth perception, the colour, size and shape of objects and where they are in space.

- **Our gustatory system** is our sense of taste, but also includes other oral sensory receptors, for example the jaw, teeth and other parts of our mouth. This allows us to feel textures, temperatures and taste different flavours including sweet and sour.

- **Our auditory system** provides us with information about sounds, including how far away a sound is, how loud it is, whether it is high or low and whether it is familiar.

- **Our olfactory system** provides information about smells around us. Some people experience strong links between smell and their emotional memory, which means that certain smells can trigger emotions more quickly than other senses.

There are three more senses that are less well known. These additional senses are proprioception, vestibular and interoception.

- **Our proprioceptive system** tells us where our body is in space. This system provides information about where our body parts are and what they are doing. We receive this information through our joints, muscles, ligaments and deep within our skin. This allows us to feel where our body, arms, legs and head are even when we can't see them. We can then coordinate our muscles to be able to complete the task at hand.

- **Our vestibular system** is our movement sense. These sensors are located in our middle ear and tell our brain things like, how fast and in which direction our head is moving (including whether we are upside down or upright, or even standing still). This system is also responsible for balance.

- The eighth sense, which is often less talked about is **Interoception**. This is the awareness of our body's internal physical and emotional states. This system helps us answer the question "how am I doing?"

- Interoception is needed for functions such as:
  - knowing when to go to the toilet
  - being aware that you are becoming angry or upset and being able to manage your emotions
  - knowing when you are tired, hungry, thirsty
  - knowing if you are hot or cold.

Resources/Links:

- Positive Partnerships | Sensory Webinar Resources
  https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/sensory-resources
- Positive Partnerships | Interoception
  https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/interoception

Notes:

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What do you think sensory processing is?

Key information:

- Sensory processing is the way in which the brain receives, integrates and regulates the information received from all eight senses, to produce a response. It is a neurological process.

- For example, if you think about what is involved in moving your hand away from a hot iron:

  - First you **receive** the input from the sensory receptors in your hand to tell you the iron is hot.

  - This information is **processed** and related to previous experiences.

  - A **response** is generated - in this example it is pulling your hand away from the hot iron.

- Research shows that more than 70% of children on the autism spectrum display sensory processing differences. [Esposito, et. al., (2019)]

- Sensory processing differences are included as a core characteristic of autism in diagnostic criteria.

- Sensory processing differences can contribute to other characteristics of autism, such as a preference for sameness. For instance, individuals on the spectrum might like to follow a certain route to school because their sensory experience is then more predictable and easier to manage.

- It is important to note that not all individuals on the autism spectrum will have sensory processing differences. Likewise, not all individuals with sensory processing differences are on the autism spectrum.

Resource/Link:

- Esposito, M., Janette, S., Raffaele, N., Fadda, R., Francesca, F., Luigi, M., ... & Stefano, V. (2019). Sensory processing, gastrointestinal symptoms and parental feeding practices in the explanation of food selectivity: clustering children with and without autism. *Psychology*. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Raffaele-Nappo/publication/348907213_Sensory_ Processing_Gastrointestinal_Symptoms_and_Parental_Feeding_Practices_in_The_ Explanation_of_Food_Selectivity_Clustering_Children_with_and_Without_Autism/ links/60157707299bf1b33e35a114/Sensory-Processing-Gastrointestinal-Symptoms-and-Parental- Feeding-Practices-in-The-Explanation-of-Food-Selectivity-Clustering-Children-with-and-Without- Autism.pdf

Key information:

There can be both positive and unhelpful impacts of sensory processing differences.

- Some of the positive impacts are that they might be able to:
    - hear things that other people don't
    - notice things that other people might not notice
    - gain pleasure or enjoyment
    - concentrate better than other people in busy environments.
- Some of the unhelpful impacts might be sensory overwhelm, distress from smells, sights or sounds that others may not notice.
- Sensory processing differences can impact on a young person's engagement in daily activities such as eating, sleeping, bathing, school participation and socialisation. They can also increase anxiety and lead to behaviours that can impact on engagement with learning or daily life. (Dunn, 2016)
- Often it can be assumed that a young person is "being naughty" when they may actually be avoiding a certain sensory experience.
- Examples of sensory processing differences are:
    - some young people love to sit by the air conditioner whilst it can make others very uncomfortable (temperature &/or airflow)
    - the sounds of phones ringing or people texting may not be noticed by some young people, whilst these may be very problematic for others
    - textures of clothing can be neutral, nice or physically painful
    - going to the shops can be enjoyable or it can be overwhelming for some young people
    - eye contact can be natural for some individuals, whilst for others it can interfere with their ability to listen and process information and it can even be interpreted as 'feeling like someone is stabbing my eyes' (quote from a 10-year-old autistic young person).

Link:

- Jiron, M. (2012) Sensory Overload (interacting with autism project) https://vimeo.com/52193530

References:

- Aykan, S., Gürses, E., Tokgöz-Yılmaz, S., & Kalaycıoğlu, C. (2020). Auditory Processing Differences Correlate With Autistic Traits in Males. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 14*. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7588834/

- Jones, E. K., Hanley, M., & Riby, D. M. (2020). Distraction, distress and diversity: Exploring the impact of sensory processing differences on learning and school life for pupils with autism spectrum disorders. *Research in autism spectrum disorders, 72*, 101515. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1750946720300052

- Kanner, L. (1943) 'Autistic Disturbances of Affective Contact', *Nervous Child2*: 217–50.

- Pastor-Cerezuela, G., Fernández-Andrés, M. I., Sanz-Cervera, P., & Marín-Suelves, D. (2020). The impact of sensory processing on executive and cognitive functions in children with autism spectrum disorder in the school context. *Research in developmental disabilities, 96*, 103540.

What can sensory processing differences feel like?

Well, I can see that interaction
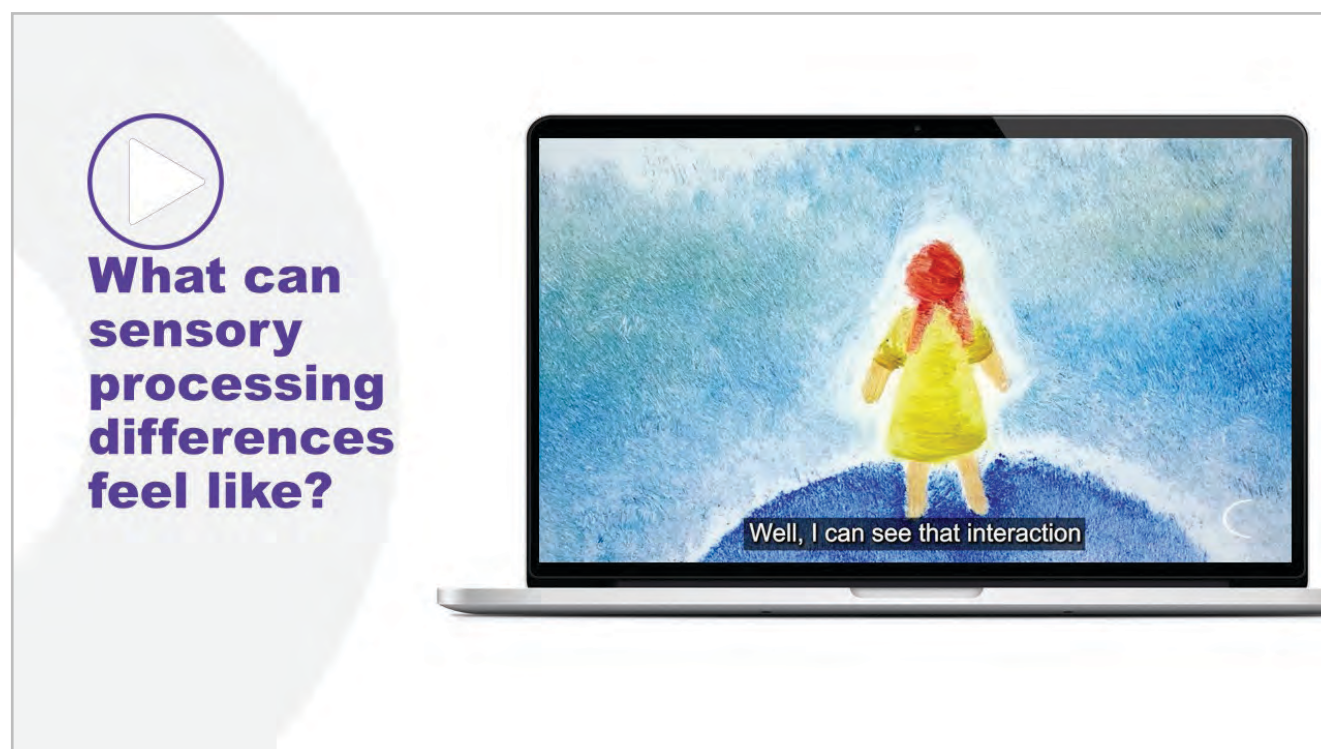
What role does sensory processing play in life?

Key information:

- We process information from all of the senses simultaneously to understand the environment around us.

- The brain and the nervous system have the ability to regulate sensory information in order to focus on what is relevant in that environment and to filter out irrelevant information, although many with sensory processing difficulties struggle to filter.

- Sensory processing:
  - keeps us safe
  - helps us keep track of what our body is doing
  - helps us understand our environment
  - keeps our brains active and enables us to learn
  - filters out information so we can pay attention and engage.

Resources/Links:

- Dunn, W. (2008), *Living Sensationally: Understanding Your Senses*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers London and Philadelphia.

- Pastor-Cerezuela, G., Fernández-Andrés, M. I., Sanz-Cervera, P., & Marín-Suelves, D. (2020). The impact of sensory processing on executive and cognitive functions in children with autism spectrum disorder in the school context. *Research in developmental disabilities, 96*, 103540.
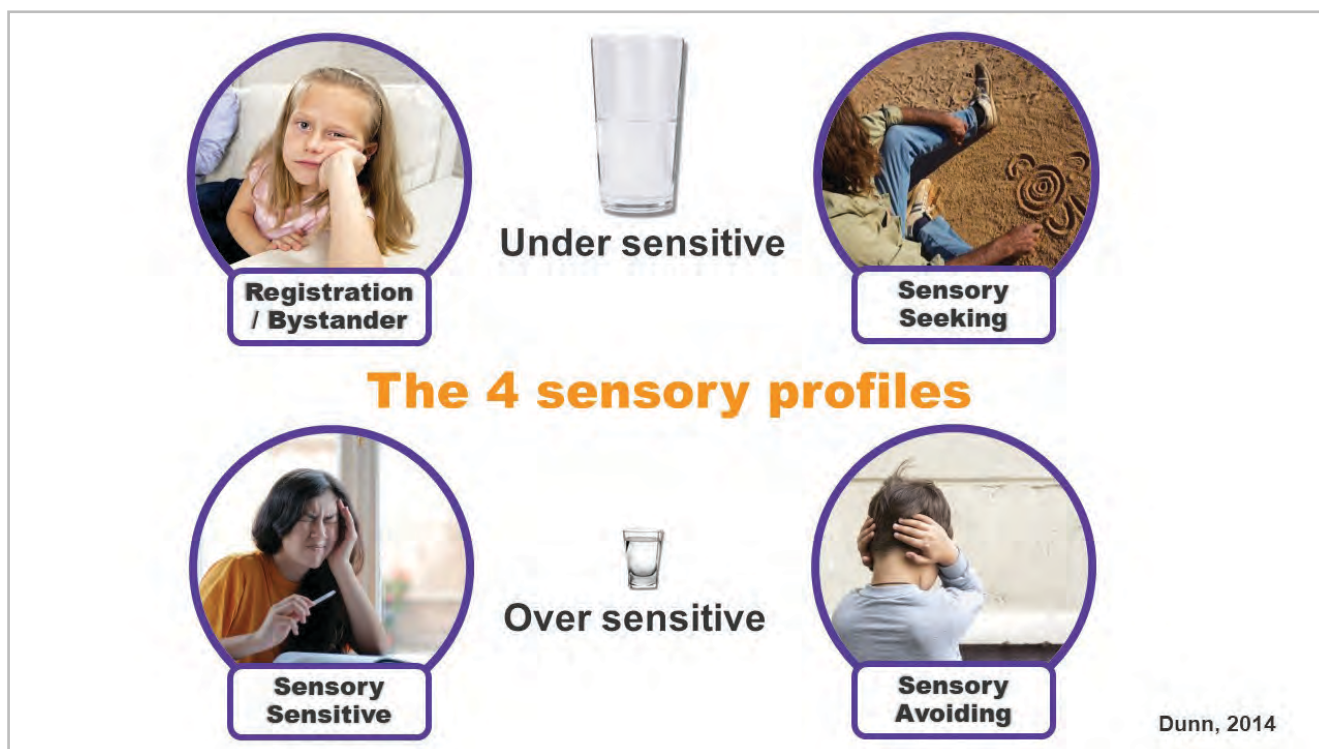
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Over and under sensitive

Key information:

- We all have a metaphorical cup for holding sensory input.

- Some of us have big cup and some have a small cup.

- The size of our cup represents how much sensory information we are comfortable with.

- The water represents sensory information, sometimes called 'input'.

- Those with a big cup need lots of input to fill their cup.

- Those with a small cup only need a little input to fill their cup…and it can be easy for their cup to overflow.

- We can have a different sized cup for different senses.

- This means we can be comfortable with more sensory information from some senses than from others.

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The 4 sensory profiles

Registration / Bystander — Under sensitive — Sensory Seeking

Sensory Sensitive — Over sensitive — Sensory Avoiding

Dunn, 2014

Key information:

- These four profiles may be called other things:
    - sensory seeking (or, seeker)
    - registration (or, bystander), this used to be called low registration
    - sensory avoiding (or, avoider)
    - sensory sensitive (or, sensor).
- Everyone has a different comfort level (or, different sized cup) for sensory input which may lead to a different response. (as referenced in the previous sensory video)
- Our sensory profile is not a choice. It is related to how our brain responds to sensory information.
- Sensory processing differences may impact a person's ability to learn, engage and behave (helpfully and unhelpfully). For example, if a young person is distressed by classroom sounds they will struggle to engage in the learning on offer.
- Understanding how sensory differences impact on students in all environments is critical to supporting success.
- Behaviour can be a way of communicating or responding to a sensory processing difference.

Link:

- http://downloads.pearsonclinical.com/images/Assets/SensoryProfile2/SP2-Infogrfx.pdf

References:

- Jones, E. K., Hanley, M., & Riby, D. M. (2020). Distraction, distress and diversity: Exploring the impact of sensory processing differences on learning and school life for pupils with autism spectrum disorders. Research in autism spectrum disorders, 72, 101515. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1750946720300052
- Pastor-Cerezuela, G., Fernández-Andrés, M. I., Sanz-Cervera, P., & Marín-Suelves, D. (2020). The impact of sensory processing on executive and cognitive functions in children with autism spectrum disorder in the school context. Research in developmental disabilities, 96, 103540.

Under sensitive profiles

A lot of sensory input feels like a little

Registration / Bystander

Sensory Seeking

Key information:

Registration/Bystander

- Bystanders also have a big cup, but they don't actively try to fill it up.
- These are the individuals who might:
    - miss instructions because they hadn't noticed that their parent had started talking or didn't hear their name called because they need lots of sensory input before they can register it
    - not get the support they require because of an assumption that as they are quiet, they are ok
    - need a lot of sensory input to be able to learn and engage. For example, the young person might need to listen to music and draw before they can notice their parent or a teacher speaking.
- The strengths of these individuals are that they often appear easy going and may be less likely to feel overstimulated and stressed in a busy environment.

Sensory seeking (seeker)

- People with this profile seek out lots of sensory information to fill their cup.
- These are the individuals who might:
    - move around in their seat
    - get joy from spinning and jumping.
- The strengths of these individuals are that they are often curious and like to be busy.
- Educators and families can help these young people channel their sensory seeking into an activity.
- For example: these are the young people that might work or listen more effectively by standing at their desk or moving around the classroom.

Link:

- http://downloads.pearsonclinical.com/images/Assets/SensoryProfile2/SP2-Infogrfx.pdf

References:

- Refer to references on previous page.

Over sensitive profiles

Sensory Sensitive

A little sensory input feels like a lot

Sensory Avoiding

Key information:

Sensory sensitive (sensor)

- Individuals who are sensory sensitive have a small cup which can overflow quickly because they can't actively manage how much sensory input they get.

- These individuals can struggle to filter out sensory information that isn't useful. For instance, they might find it hard to concentrate when someone or something is making a sound even if it is a sound that no one else can notice. (e.g the fridge humming)

- The strengths of those that are sensory sensitive are that they have a heightened awareness of sensory input and therefore may be great at or find joy in activities that involve being able to notice subtle differences such as:
  - drawing/painting (e.g. the Judy Endow art video at the start of the session)
  - music
  - cooking.

Sensory avoiding (avoider)

- Individuals with a sensory avoiding profile try to control how much water goes into their cup so that it doesn't overflow (This is an active response). They usually do this by either withdrawing themselves or trying to stop the sensory input.

- These are the individuals who might do things like:
  - avoid situations where particular sensory experiences are usually present e.g. going to toilets with hand dryers, into a room with lots of people etc.
  - may create other sensory input to block out or mask the sensory input that is too intense, e.g. covering their ears, humming and making noise to themselves to block out sound in their environment.

- Sensory avoiders often enjoy routine and order and things that are familiar. They often like to make sure that things are done properly.

Sensory processing and context
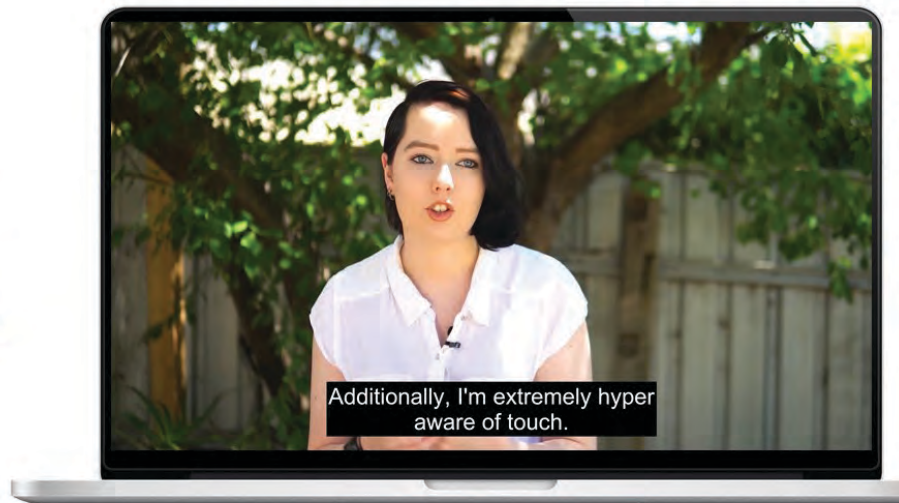
Key information:

- Sensory processing differences are complex and affected by context.
- The Disability Standards for Education (DSE) requires schools to collaborate with families and students to make reasonable accommodations that will enable the student to access the curriculum on the same basis as their peers. Sensory needs are one of the things that many young people require accommodations for.

Activity

Touch

Smell

Vision

Proprioception (Sense of body in space)

Gustatory (Oral sensations)

Vestibular (Balance)

Hearing

Interoception (Sense of internal body signals)

8 minutes

Sensory Seeking

- I like to touch lots of different textures.
- I like to wear clothes that fit me very tightly.
- I rub my fingers together a lot because I like the feel of it.
- I like to sit leaning against others, on the back of my chair or on a wall

Sensory avoiding

- I run away if someone bumps into me in the playground.
- I hide in the library when we are meant to be playing dodge ball – the ball really hurts.
- Sometimes I accidentally hurt (push) people away when they bump into me.

Registration

- I often don't notice whether I am wearing shoes or not.
- I can't tell if my hair is brushed or not.
- When I hold someone's hand, I am not sure if I am squeezing too tight or too soft.
- Sometimes I see my toe is bleeding and I am not sure when I hurt it.
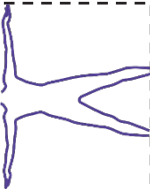
Sensory sensitive

- I jump when someone touches me, even softly
- I find it painful when someone touches me.
- I avoid hugs.
- I don't like wearing clothes.
- I can't sleep if the sheets are scratchy.
- I only wear soft fabrics that are loose.

Sensory Seeking

- I often want big hugs.
- I love jumping on the trampoline.
- I love to do headstands and handstands.
- I love banging and crashing into things.
- I love to play contact sports like footy.
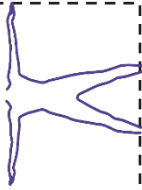- I like to walk on my tiptoes and not on my feet.

Registration

- I often bump into doorways and the corners of the wall.
- I walk into people in the classroom all the time, even though I don't mean to.
- I find it hard to get dressed in the mornings.
- I find it hard to copy actions in dance class.

Sensory avoiding

- I avoid crowds whenever I can because I always end up really upset when people get cross with me for walking into them.
- I tried step class once and I am never going back, I couldn't follow it at all.
- My sister has to help me get dressed as I can never get my arms in the right holes.
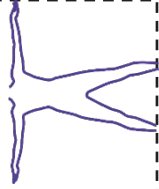
Sensory sensitive

- My family say I am overreacting when I yell or jump after I walk into things.
- I am always spilling my drinks as I can't tell how heavy (or full) they are and lift them up too quickly.

- I like to experience extremes of temperature.
- I like swimming because I can feel all of my body parts moving in the water.
- I like to do lots of physical exercise until my body hurts.
- I like to eat until my tummy feels really full.

Sensory Seeking

- I like to watch the same movies over again so there are no surprises, I like to know what is coming.
- I never do any physical exercise because I start to feel really hot.
- I don't drink water through the day to avoid the feeling of a full bladder.

Sensory avoiding

- I have no idea how I am feeling, so when people ask me, I always say fine.
- I don't know I am cold until my fingers or toes go blue.
- I don't drink water unless the teachers tell me to.
- I don't know that I need to go to the toilet until it is almost too late.

Registration

- I always know when I am getting my period because I get such terrible pain in my abdomen.
- Every muscle that I notice, I experience as pain.
- I hate the feel of my heart beat, it makes me feel ill.
- I can feel my body digesting my food after I eat, it can be distracting.

Sensory sensitive

- I love creating things, drawing and painting in lots of detail.

- I love looking at photographs and taking photos and seeing the differences in the light and shadow.

- I like lots of LED fairy lights all around my bed at home.

- I like bright shiny objects.

- I like to look at sequins.

Sensory Seeking

- I went to a 3D movie and I had to leave, it was so overwhelming.

- Bright lights make me feel like my eyeballs are burning so I avoid local shopping centres.

Sensory avoiding

- My brother is always getting frustrated with me, because I don't notice his new haircut.

- I find it hard to recognise places, so I get lost easily.

- Dad is always telling me to clean my room but I genuinely don't notice the dirt and stuff on the floor.

Registration

- I get headaches from the glare of my laptop screen after about five minutes.

- Patterned carpets make me feel sick.

- The colour orange hurts my body.

- I'm learning to drive and I find it hard to park the car because there are so many things to see, the car colours, shapes, ceiling and floor textures and colours.

Sensory sensitive

Sensory Seeking

- I love science class when we make lots of chemicals that have strong smells.
- I am happy down at the farm or when I am fishing as I can really smell nature.
- I use lots of deodorant because it smells really good.
- I like to smell my hair when I have just washed it.

Sensory avoiding

- If I am shopping on the weekend and there is a bad smell in a shop, I have to leave even if we have only just gone in.
- I never use the toilets at school, I wait until I get home to go, because they smell so bad.
- I never wear perfume, I can't stand the smell.

Registration

- My dad says I need to use deodorant because I smell bad but I can't smell anything.
- I can't tell if I have had a poo in my undies, even though my grandmother says she can tell because it smells.
- I can't tell if milk is off or not before I taste it.

Sensory sensitive

- I worry that everyone can tell when I have my period because it smells so strong.
- We don't have bananas in our house because the smell makes me feel sick.
- The school toilets smell so bad that I feel ill if I try and use them.
- In metal work classes, the smell of metal is overpowering.

Sensory Seeking

- I love singing all the time.
- When I am anxious I play the drums on the table with my pen.
- I listen to really loud music on my headphones.
- I have just joined a band, we practice in my room on the weekends.

Registration

- I find it hard to hear what people are singing.
- I miss out because I don't notice when the teacher is telling us about things.
- In class it just sounds like people are mumbling all the time and I have no idea what they are talking about.

Sensory avoiding

- I don't like to go to sport day because I can hear all the events being started and I can't tell which one I am meant to follow.
- I don't write, I only type because the noise that pencils make on paper really hurts my ears.
- I tap or hum to try and cover up the classroom sounds that are hurting my ears.

Sensory sensitive

- When the adverts come on the TV, the volume increases which really hurts my ears.
- I tend to jump when someone near me starts talking.
- I really hate the sound of other people eating.
- I can hear the class next door just as much as I can hear my class.

Sensory Seeking

- I love crunchy apples, they feel really nice when I eat them.
- I eat lots of frozen food straight out of the freezer, it always tastes so much better and the texture is much nicer.
- I like to chew my clothes and hair.

Sensory avoiding

- I can't eat something unless I know what it is and what texture it will have.
- I only eat soft brown foods.
- I won't eat at Nana and Pop's house because they have different biscuits to my house.
- I drank some off milk last year and I haven't drunk milk since.
- I avoid brushing my teeth because of the way the toothbrush feels.

Registration

- I don't really have favourite foods.
- I can eat spicy food that other people can't eat.
- I can eat lemons.
- My brother gives me milk to drink and then laughs because he says it was off.

Sensory sensitive

- I get surprised by the different textures in food.
- I can taste the chemicals in food that isn't freshly prepared.
- I don't like foods that have strong tastes or hard textures.
- I find foods with lots of different flavours/ingredients are very unpleasant.
- I need to use a flavourless toothpaste.

- I love going on the swings.
- I like to rock back and forth when I have to wait for something.
- When I am standing up to work, I find I am often swaying.
- I love going on rollercoasters and rides.
- I like it when my uncle drives us up and down the hills.

Sensory Seeking

- I avoid car rides as much as I can.
- If I am told to do the balance board in gym, I often fall off and refuse to get back on.
- I never go on the swings at school or in the park.
- I scream and yell if someone pushes me on the swing.

Sensory avoiding

- I don't have a good sense of balance and might fall over unexpectedly.
- I don't understand why people like swings, I always fall off.
- I might not seem interested in the playground equipment.
- I try not to go on car rides unless I have to.
- I find it hard to stand on one foot.

Registration

- I get car sick really easily.
- I get motion sickness on boats or planes.
- I feel sick when we do the balance board in gym.
- I really hate the trampoline.
- I don't like tipping my head back for dad to rinse the shampoo off.
- I don't like rollercoaster and rides.

Sensory sensitive

Key information:

- Some young people will be able to share what works for them in terms of sensory solutions whilst others are still learning to understand their own sensory needs.

- Sensory solutions can be harmful so it's important to think about their evidence base, which we're about to look at.

- Remember that occupational therapists can help with this process.

Links:

- Positive Partnerships sensory webinar:
  https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/sensory-resources

- Positive Partnerships interoception webinar:
  https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/interoception

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Key information:

- There are many sensory solutions and resources available.
- Communication with the young person, families and professionals is vital when deciding on what sensory solutions to trial.
- You can consult with a professional with expertise in sensory processing, such as an Occupational Therapist to help make sensory solution decisions.
- Solutions that are evidence informed may work for some young people and not others.
- It is important to consider what is evidence informed, what is feasible and what is safe.
- Research in the area of autism is fast changing and approaches that were seen as beneficial years ago may now be seen as problematic or unhelpful to autistic young people.
- The recent review of early intervention supports from the Autism CRC (2021) highlights the quality of evidence still needs to improve in the area of autism supports.
- A young person's lived experience of a solution will help them know if that solution is working or not, but this does not tell you if it is evidence informed.

Links:

- Autism CRC sensory-based interventions:
  – https://www.autismcrc.com.au/interventions-evidence/category-overview/sensory
- Raising Children:
  – https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/therapies-services/therapies-interventions
  – https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/therapies-guide

Reference:

- Trembath, D., Varcin, K., Waddington, H., Sulek, R., Bent, C., Ashburner, J., ... & Whitehouse, A. (2021). Non-pharmacological interventions for children on the autism spectrum: An umbrella review. Autism CRC https://www.autismcrc.com.au/interventions-evidence

Planning Tool activity

	Observations & examples. What can you see or hear the child doing?	What are the helpful & unhelpful impacts on the child & others?	What strategies and adjustments may support the child
Sensory processing			

5 minutes

Resources

Under sensitive observations 'A lot feels like a little'

e.g. Sam gets out of his chair to touch the whiteboard when the teacher is reading.

Over sensitive observations 'A little feels like a lot'

Possible strategies

e.g. While the teacher is reading, Sam is given a small whiteboard to draw on while he listens to the teacher.

Tactile (Touch)
Visual (Sight)
Gustatory (Oral Sensations)
Vestibular (Movement)
Auditory (Sound)
Olfactory (Smell)
Proprioception
Interoception
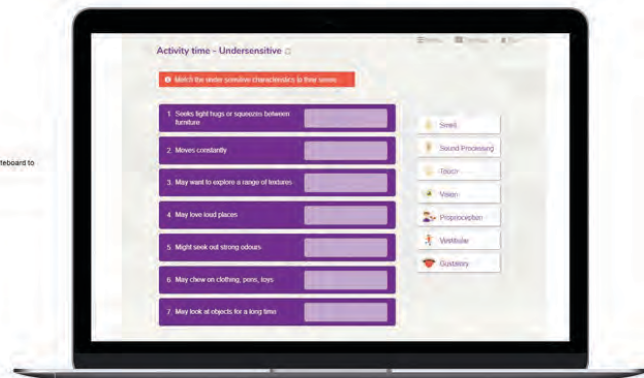
Download the Sensory Action Plan

Watch a pre-recorded webinar or complete our online module

Link:

- Positive Partnerships sensory webinar:
https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/sensory-resources

Feedback

http://tiny.cc/PP-PCfeedback

positive partnerships

Notes:

2 Day Parent/Carer Participant Workbook
Understanding sensory processing

positive partnerships

Session 4

positive partnerships

Working together to support school-aged students on the autism spectrum

Parent
Carer
Workshop
Day 2

Acknowledgement of Country

positive partnerships

Workshop overview

Day 1

9:30 - 10:00	Introduction
10:00 - 11:00	Diversity of autism
11:00 - 11:20	MORNING TEA
11:20 - 12:45	Diversity of autism continued
12:45 - 1:15	LUNCH
1:15 - 2:25	Sensory processing
2:25 - 2:30	Questions, feedback

Day 2

9:30 - 10:00	Welcome back and reflections
10:00 - 11:30	Understanding behaviour
11:30 - 11:50	MORNING TEA
11:50 - 12:45	Working in partnerships
12:45 - 1:30	LUNCH
1:30 - 2:25	Working in partnerships continued
2:25 – 2:30	Questions, Feedback

Welcome back and reflections

25 minutes

Session 5

positive partnerships

Working together to support school-aged students on the autism spectrum

Understanding behaviour

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Interoception activity

1. Relax your hands

2. Stretch out your hands as wide as possible for about 30 seconds

3. Think about where you can feel the difference between your relaxed hand and the stretched hand. Show each other where you felt the difference

4. Repeat 1 & 2 whilst actively noticing where the facilitator instructs you to notice.

Resources/Links:

- Watch https://youtu.be/mXSGUjEQVrM for an illustration of this activity.

- When done regularly, interoception activities help individuals, including autistic young people develop awareness of and be able to self-manage their emotions and feelings.

- Positive Partnerships Interoception web page.
  https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/interoception

- Ready to Learn Interoception Kit, Department for Education, South Australia.
  https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/ready-to-learn-interoception-kit.pdf

- Healthy Possibilities YouTube Channel.
  https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyIovxevV3W2l2WXHDBkKxA

Session Overview

→ Look at what behaviour is

🔍 Explore the functions of behaviour

📝 Identify factors that may impact on behaviour

📋 Consider tools to support making a plan

📖 Share some resources and supports

What is behaviour?

Key information:

- Behaviour is observable, it is everything that we do.

- Behaviours are the things that we do in response to input from our environment, people or the events occurring around us (the context).

- Behaviour serves a purpose, it may achieve something for the person who is doing it.

- Some behaviour is driven by instinct/our brain and is not a choice, other behaviours may be a choice.

- Behaviour can be helpful or unhelpful and which may change depending on the context e.g. spitting. This is helpful when brushing teeth or when we have had hot soup. It is unhelpful when it is spitting on other people with intent.

- Behaviours can be understood as an individual's solution. This can be their best attempt to cope.

Resource/LInk:

- What is behaviour? (nsw.gov.au)
  https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/psychosocial/principles/Pages/behaviour-whatis.aspx

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What behaviours do you want to understand?

Key information:

- To support a young person, we need to understand their needs and then make a plan.
- Some behaviours are harder to understand and support than others.
- Behaviour that is appropriate in one context can be inappropriate in another context.
- To support the young person, we need to always consider the context in which the behaviour is occurring.

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Approaches

BEFORE THE BEHAVIOUR

Minimal planning

BEHAVIOUR

High stress

AFTER THE BEHAVIOUR

More energy and stress required to respond

OR

BEFORE THE BEHAVIOUR

More planning

BEHAVIOUR

Low stress

AFTER THE BEHAVIOUR

Less energy and stress required to respond

Key information:

People approach the managing of behaviours in different ways.

Reactive

- A reactive approach to behaviour is unplanned and occurs after the behaviours that we find challenging have occurred.
- Behaviours that may be challenging for us, may be helpful for the person doing them.
- Common reactive practices may be ineffective for neurodiverse children and young people.
- Often our unplanned and purely reactive strategies are designed to stop the behaviour from happening and also to try to tell the person that the behaviour shouldn't happen again.
- Reactive approaches can be highly stressful for everyone.
- Reactive strategies often take the form of a 'punishment', which is a consequence meant to stop a behaviour from happening again.
- Punishments can be when something is taken away from someone, like a toy or privileges, or free time. It can also be when something is imposed on someone, like chores, or writing lines.
- There may be times when planned reactive strategies are necessary to keep everybody safe.

Proactive

- A proactive approach involves an organised and planned approach that aims to decrease or prevent the likelihood of an identical behaviour occurring.
- A proactive approach is more respectful of the young person involved and less stressful for everyone.
- In this approach you spend 95% of your time and energy on understanding and planning how to approach behaviours you might find challenging.
- This would mean that only 5% of your time and energy will be spent managing behaviour as/after it is occurring.

Resource/Link:

- Reactive vs. Proactive Parenting: Positive Strategies for ADHD Kids (additudemag.com)
  https://www.additudemag.com/proactive-vs-reactive-adhd-parenting/

Dan Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain

Dan Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain (2010)

Key information:

- Dan Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain is a helpful way to model the impact of intensity of emotions and feelings on individuals.

- When students are in panic/survival zone because of inaccurate processing of danger, they are unable to learn, make choices, or helpfully manage their emotions or behaviour and often appear to be highly dysregulated.

- This can present in a number of different ways.

Resource/Link:

- Hand Model of the Brain - Dr. Dan Siegel (drdansiegel.com)
  https://drdansiegel.com/hand-model-of-the-brain/

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Dan Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain

- When people experience intense or extreme emotions, they can lose their ability to accurately process information and choose how to respond.

- Being aware of internal body signals supports young people to notice an increase in emotions and feelings. This allows them to implement strategies that can support self-regulation.
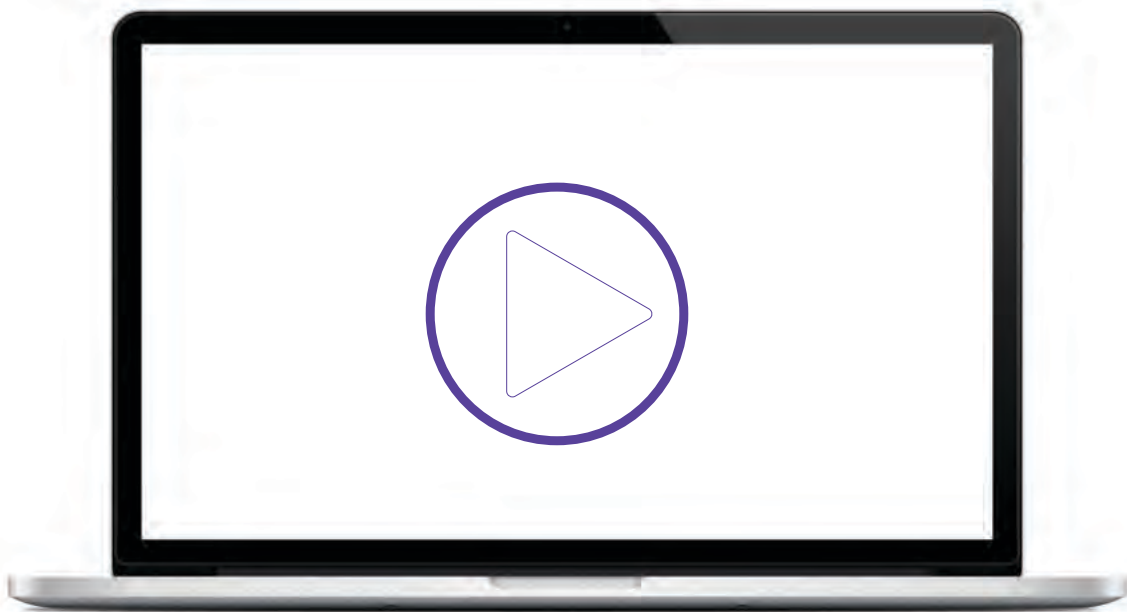
Scan this QR code to watch a video of the hand model of the brain.

Or, you can visit this link:
https://vimeo.com/779822600
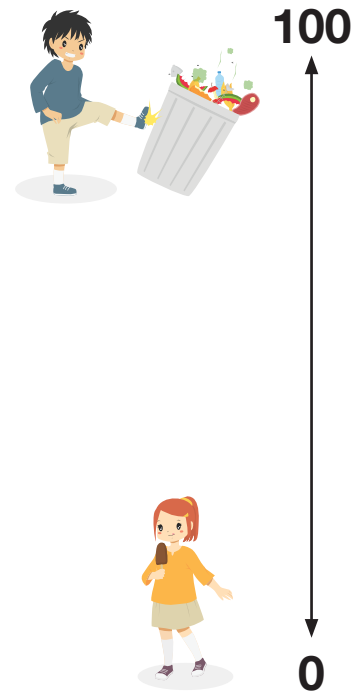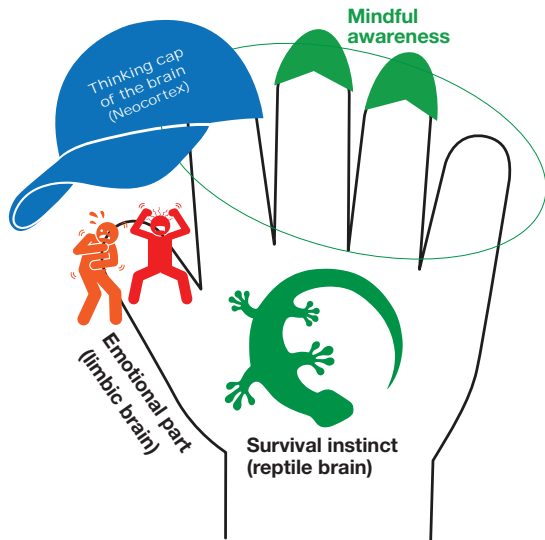
Let's use a behaviour scale that starts at zero (0) and ends at one hundred (100), with zero reflecting a calm and content individual and one hundred reflecting out of control behaviour, driven by survival instinct.

100

0

100

99

0
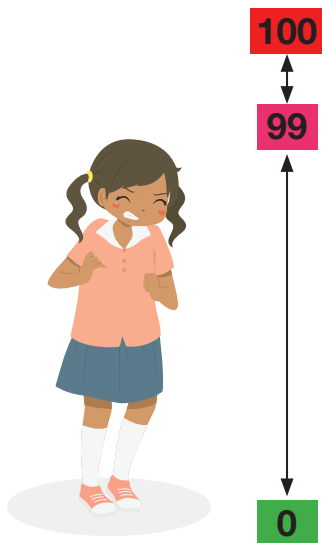
If someone's interoceptive awareness is still developing, they will not notice or understand what their body is telling them.

This means they may start to move up the behaviour scale as a result of internal or external contextual factors, but not notice this escalation and not know they need to make decisions to manage this.

100

99

0
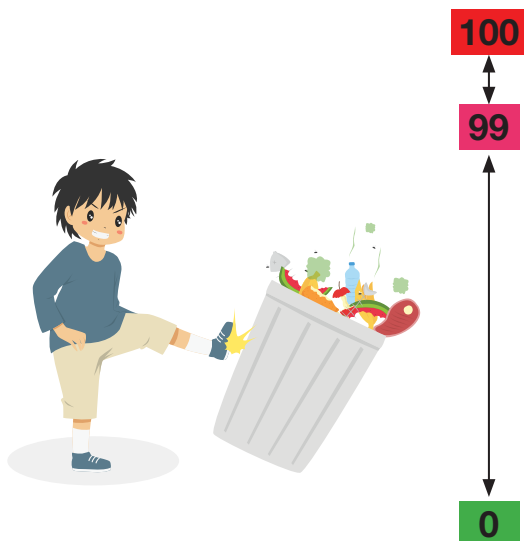
Ninety-Nine (99) is when someone has big emotions and it's hard to learn, think clearly or self-regulate. At 99, your emotions are in control of you and this can easily escalate to 100, when survival instinct takes control.

Neocortex
Thinking cap
of the brain

**Mindfulness
part of the brain**

Thinking cap of the brain
connected - **can think, learn,
make choices**

0   98

**Limbic brain
big emotions**

Big emotions - emotions in
control, **hard to think,
can't learn or make choices**

99

Panic - survival instinct takes
over, **can't think, learn or
make choices**

100

The hand model of the brain can be linked to other resources and tools,
such as Zones of Regulation and Learning.

Children and young people can be co-regulated when they are between 0 - 99.
Co-regulation is when a person is supported to express themselves safely or helpfully.

For example, teachers often co-regulate students who are getting frustrated with
their work by offering support or prompting the student to take a break.
Parents often give cuddles to help co-regulate children who are starting to get distressed.

Individuals cannot be co-regulated when they are in survival mode.

**Limbic brain
big emotions**
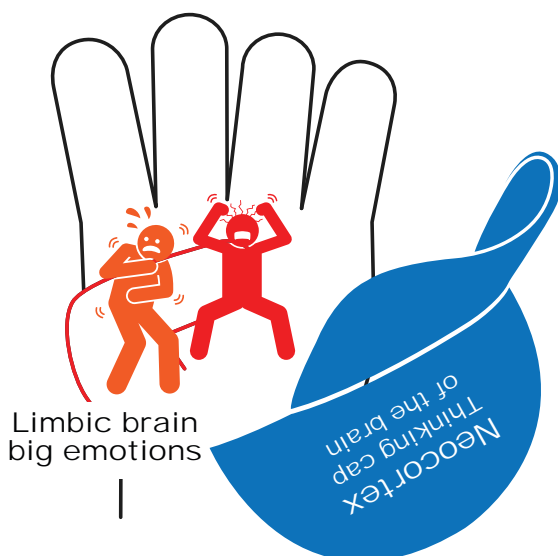
As individuals start to develop interoceptive
awareness, they will begin to feel their
emotions before they are too big and take
control of their brain functions.

Once aware, they can take actions to
decrease the intensity of their emotions,
or at least prevent them from escalating.

This can prevent emotional overload and
avoid someone flipping their lid, which
activates the survival instinct.

positive partnerships

Page 89

Neocortex
Thinking cap
of the brain

Mindfulness
part of the brain
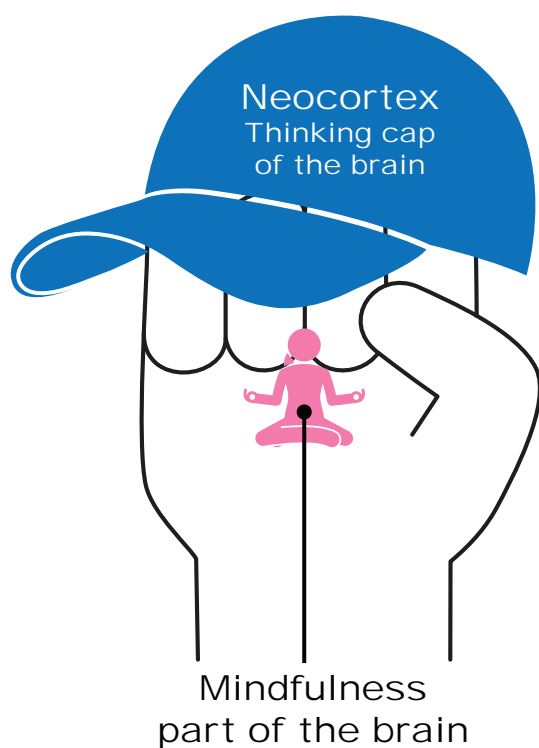
This works because interoception activities activate the mindfulness part of the brain, but can only be activated when the thinking cap of our brain is in charge.

If an individual is in the 100-scale range, the priority is to keep them safe. Calming down and moving below 100 can come later, once the brain and body is no longer in survival mode.

Interoception activities are a way to teach individuals how to become aware of their internal body signals and know when to implement strategies to stay within the 0-98 scale range. This supports them to self-regulate, think, learn and make good choices.

What are these young people doing?

What behaviour do we see?

Key information:

- A behaviour can be observed. It is an action that you can see and/or hear, yourself or someone else doing.

- When we are describing behaviour, it should be an observation, not what we think is happening. An assumption or judgment is what we think is happening. For example, saying a student is not listening is an assumption. Saying that the student is covering their ears is describing the behaviour.

- To support a young person to express themselves helpfully, we need to understand their needs and then make a plan.

- The hand model of the brain is helpful to reference behaviour policies against.

- Research indicates that when students are unable to control their behaviours, they are also unable to make choices. (Goodall, 2021)

Resources/Links:

- Goodall, E. (2021). *Facilitating interoceptive awareness as a self-management and self-regulation tool to increase engagement in learning and education* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern Queensland).

- Positive Partnerships Webinars: Interoception, Sensory Processing, Communication.

Notes:

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Behaviour	Judgement
crying	listening
hand up	angry
standing up	drama queen
hands over ears	attention seeking
running out of room	work avoiding
yelling and screaming	not listening

Notes:

Helpful or unhelpful?

Key information:

- To support a young person to express themselves helpfully, it is important to understand their support needs before planning.

- Assumptions or judgements about behaviour can get in the way of understanding the student's support needs.

- Objective information is required to understand a behaviour.

- The way educators and families talk about behaviours, influences the way they understand young people.

- Talking about behaviour as a meltdown or shutdown does not tell us what behaviour is occurring. These terms are judgements.

- When thinking about what a 'meltdown' looks like for a young person, this would be difficult as a meltdown is not observable or descriptive and may even be totally inaccurate.

- Behaviours that are helpful to an individual student may not helpful to others around them.

- Behaviour policies need to be able to be applied equitably to students who can and cannot control their behaviour due to their developmental age or stage.

Link:

- Positive Partnerships Webinars: Interoception, Sensory Processing, Communication.

Reference:

- Goodall, E., and Brownlow C. (2022). *Interoception and Regulation: Teaching Skills of Body Awareness and Supporting Connection*. Jessica Kingsley Publishing.

Spoon Theory

5 minutes

Key information:

- Spoons theory was developed by Christine Miserandino, as a way to express how it felt to have an invisible illness or disability. She used spoons to provide a visual representation of units of emotional and/or physical energy that a person might have.

- The spoon theory is a way of explaining how it feels to respond to the world in atypical ways, when your physical and emotional energy can be depleted by everyday experiences.

Resources/Links:

- But You Don't Look Sick? support for those with invisible illness or chronic illness The Spoon Theory written by Christine Miserandino.
https://butyoudontlooksick.com/articles/written-by-christine/the-spoon-theory/

- https://ifyoureflappyandyouknowit.blog/2019/06/09/spoon-theory/

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Spoon Theory

Ability to self-regulate

4. Respond helpfully to all of the below – this is self-regulation

3. Accurately understand the **context** you are in – am I in danger?

2. Accurately **understand** what your body is telling you – what are my body sensations, my feelings and emotions?

1. **Notice** what your body is telling you – am I feeling something?

Individual will need co-regulating if any of these are not achieved.
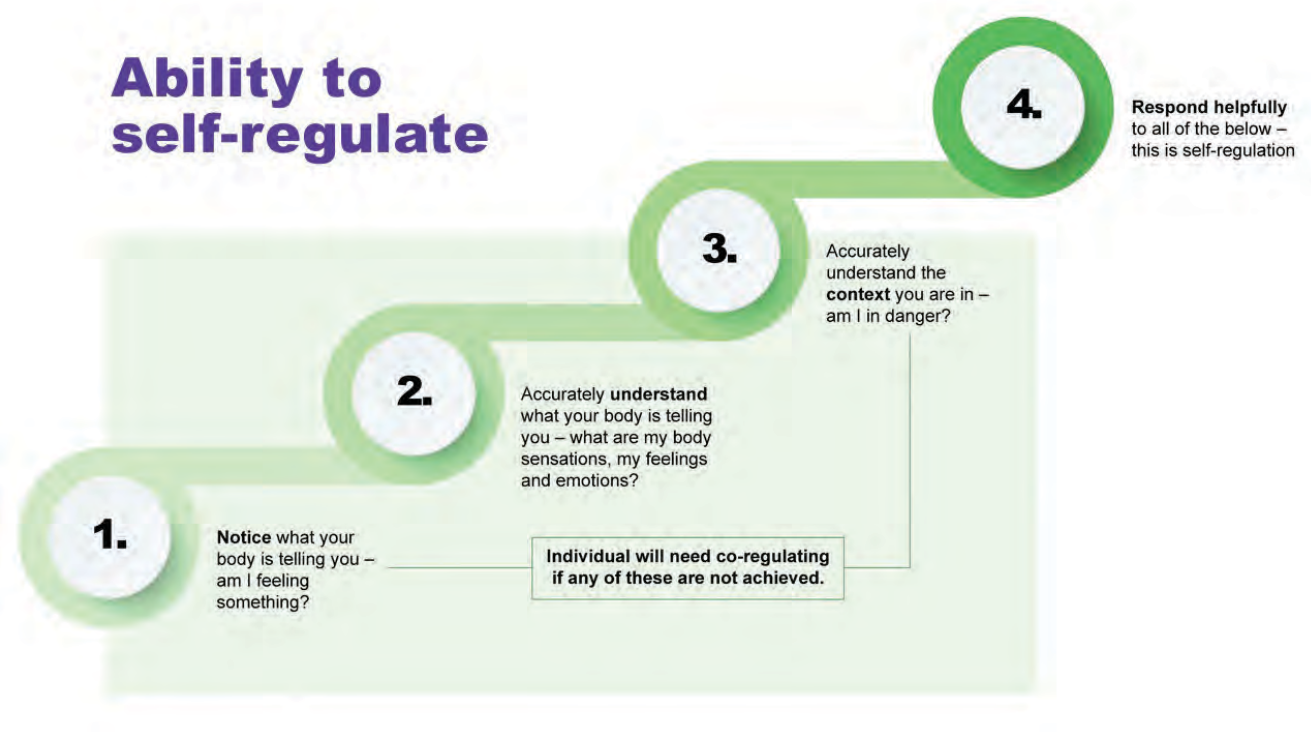
Key information:

- Mental health difficulties can impact the ability to accurately understand the context that the individual is in, e.g. highly anxious young people may perceive danger that is not actually present, although to them the danger is very real.

- Sometimes young people can manage their behaviours in one situation but not in another. This may be due to difficulties in step 1, 2 or 3.

- Remember, if their thinking cap is not connected, then their behaviour is not a choice.

- Self-regulation presents as the ability to manage and express your emotions in helpful ways. It builds sequentially through the development of 3 skills, with each skill reliant on the other.

  - The first skill is to: Notice that your body is signaling something (am I feeling something?),

  - Whilst the second skill is to: Accurately understand what your body is telling you (what are my feelings and emotions?)

  - The third step is to: Accurately understand the context you are in (for example, am I in danger?)

  - The final step: builds on the first three steps/skills and is where the individual is able to respond helpfully (self-regulation).

Resource/Link:

- Goodall, E. (2020). Interoception as a proactive tool to decrease challenging behaviour. *Scan: The Journal for Educators, 39(1),* 20-24. https://search.informit.org/doi/pdf/10.3316/informit.105313572177798

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Impacts of unmet support needs

(Wheel diagram showing: Sensory processing, Executive functioning, Strengths & interests, Connections to culture & community, Self care & independence skills, Social & communication skills)
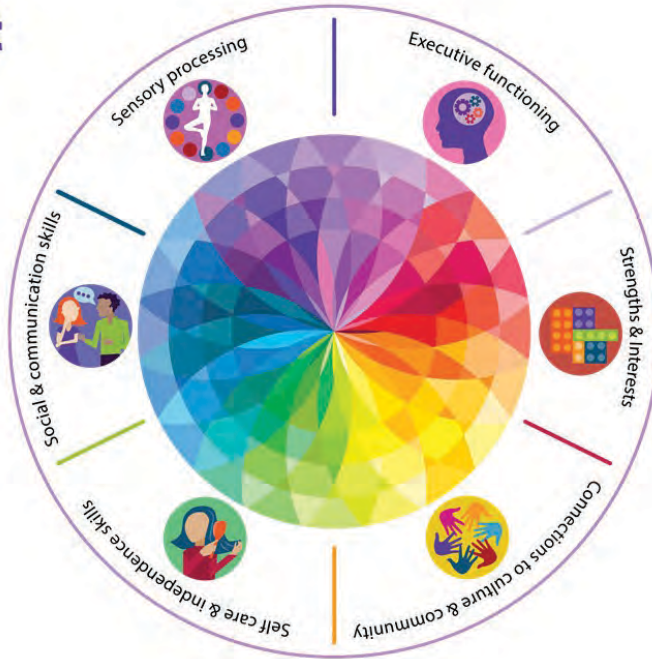
Key information:

- Behaviour is not a stand-alone 'thing'. Unmet support needs can result in behaviour that is unhelpful to others.

- All young people have fluctuating support needs. Autistic individuals may be disproportionately impacted by sensory experiences, emotional experiences and tasks being too hard or too easy.

- Executive functioning challenges can exacerbate difficulties in other areas and vice versa.

- Long term unmet support needs can contribute to long term mental health and wellbeing difficulties as well as impacting behaviour.

Link:

- Student Wellbeing Hub | Home, https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/

Reference:

- Vermeulen, P. (2015). Context blindness in autism spectrum disorder: Not using the forest to see the trees as trees. *Focus on autism and other developmental disabilities, 30*(3), 182-192. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Peter-Vermeulen-2/publication/258432475_Context_Blindness_in_Autism_Spectrum_Disorder_Not_Using_the_Forest_to_See_the_Trees_as_Trees/links/555c64c908ae8f66f3ae0865/Context-Blindness-in-Autism-Spectrum-Disorder-Not-Using-the-Forest-to-See-the-Trees-as-Trees.pdf

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Understand the purpose of the behaviour and respond helpfully

Key information:

- Although all behaviour is a form of communication, the young person is not always consciously choosing what they want to communicate or how.

- As explained in the hand model of the brain and in spoon theory, when in survival mode/having no spoons, the young person is unable to think or make choices about their behaviour.

- Unless you understand the purpose of the behaviour, you cannot choose an appropriate strategy.

Working out how to respond to behaviour

1. Help people understand and get to know your child

2. Understand the context and purpose of the behaviour

3. Consider if the behaviour is:
   - harming the person or others
   - interrupting their learning or the learning of others
   - affecting their quality of life such as relationships

No:
Accommodate the behaviour

Yes:
- Make environmental changes
- Teach self-regulation skills
- Use reactive strategies – co-regulation
- Teach replacement behaviour

Functions of behaviours

Express or communicate feelings or emotions

and / or

GET
- Person or place
- Object or activity
- Sensory
- Help, connection or attention

GET AWAY

All of these may be conscious or subconscious behaviours
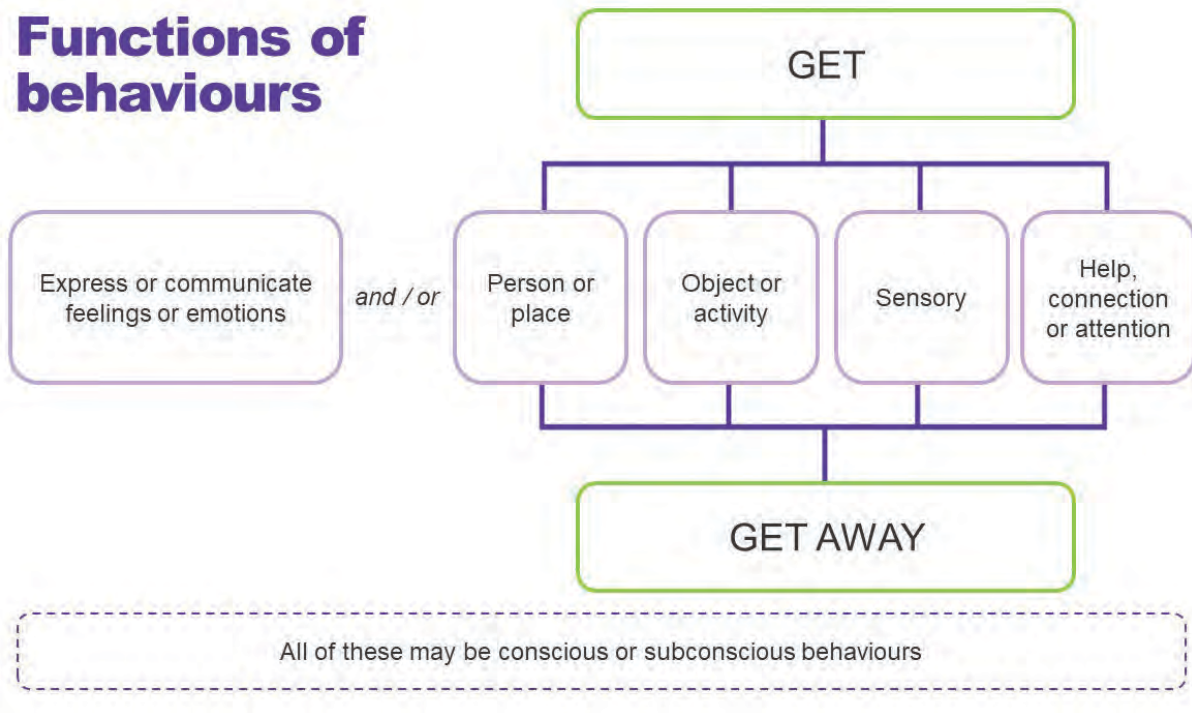
Key information:

Behaviour is used to express or communicate feelings or emotions and/or to:

- Get or get away from:
  - a person/people or place
  - an object or activity
  - sensory input/experiences
  - help, connection or attention.
- All of these may occur with conscious or subconscious behaviour.

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The WHY of a behaviour
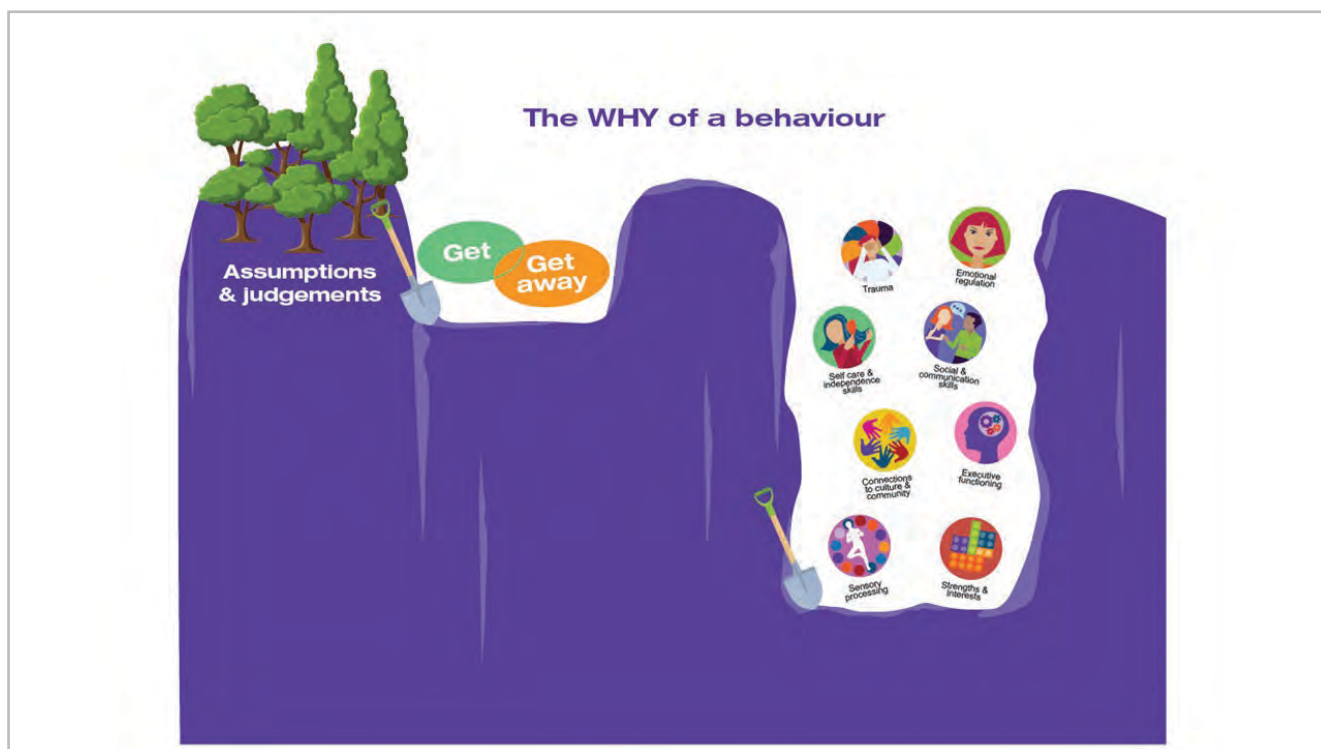
Key information:

- Functions of behaviour are much deeper than just getting or getting away from someone/ something.

- Looking at what the young person is doing whilst thinking about their unmet needs in the areas of; sensory processing, social and communication, executive functioning, self-care and independence, connections to culture and community and strengths and interests can help to uncover what might be leading to specific behaviours.

- Past or current trauma and the young person's skills in emotional regulation also need to be considered when thinking about behaviours.

- Everything in the young person's context can contribute to how a young person behaves, both in the present and in the past. Spoon theory is one way to think about this.

Resources/Links:

- Santucci, G. (n.d) The Why of a Behaviour.
- Goodall, E., and Brownlow,.

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Most Likely / Least Likely Tool

What is the observable behaviour you want to know more about? ▨▨▨▨▨

Complete the table by clicking on the grey boxes and then typing into them. Put as much detail as possible into the table by working together; school, parents / carers and where appropriate, the student.

People involved in completing the tool: ▨▨▨▨▨

	People	Place	Activity	Time	Think about:
	Who is usually around when the behaviour occurs? You can write as many names as is relevant;	*Where does the behaviour usually occur? You can write one or more places;*	*Think about activities that the person is engaged in when the behaviour typically occurs. You can write one or more activities;*	*Is there a time of day, day of week, etc. when the behaviour is most likely to occur?*	*This column is optional. Is the young person making choices about their behaviour or are they being driven by their brain or biology?*
Behaviour is MOST likely to occur when:					
	Who is around when the behaviour rarely or never occurs? You can write as many names as is relevant;	*In what places does the behaviour rarely or never occur? You can write one or more places;*	*What activities rarely or never result in this behaviour?*	*Is there a time when the behaviour is not likely to occur? Write down times other than when the individual is sleeping.*	*This column is optional. Is the young person making choices about their behaviour or are they being driven by their brain or biology?*
Behaviour is LEAST likely to occur when:					

Key information:

- Using detective skills, you can gain a greater understanding of the environments, people and times of the day and activities that can impact on the young person helpfully and unhelpfully. This helps to ensure that you interpret their behaviour as accurately as possible.
- The Most Likely / Least Likely Tool is a template that can help you record what you find out using your detective skills.
- This tool may be used to understand a behaviour, by gathering additional information about when the behaviour happens and under what circumstances.
- This tool needs to be completed in collaboration with the whole team around the young person, including the young person themselves where appropriate.
- It is equally as important to identify information about when the behaviour does NOT happen.
- The difference between when a behaviour does and does not happen can highlight the contextual things that are unhelpful and helpful for the young person.

Resource/Link:

- Positive Partnerships: Most Likely / Less Likely videos and downloadable tool
  https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/most-likely-least-likely

Notes:

Making observations

Most Likely – Least Likely

Uncovering why behaviours are occurring

pp positive partnerships

Notes:

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Most Likely / Least Likely Tool

What is the observable behaviour you want to know more about?

Complete the table by clicking on the grey boxes and then typing into them. Put as much detail as possible into the table by working together; school, parents / carers and where appropriate, the student.

People involved in completing the tool:

	People	Place	Activity	Time	Think about:
	Who is usually around when the behaviour occur? You can write as many names as is relevant;	Where does the behaviour usually occur? You can write one or more places;	Think about activities that the person is engaged in when the behaviour typically occurs. You can write one or more activities;	Is there a time of day, day of week, etc. when the behaviour is most likely to occur?;	**This column is optional.** Is the young person making choices about their behaviour or are they being driven by their brain or biology?
Behaviour is MOST likely to occur when:					
	Who is around when the behaviour rarely or never occur? You can write as many names as is relevant;	In what places does the behaviour rarely or never occur? You can write one or more places;	What activities rarely or never result in this behaviour?	Is there a time when the behaviour is not likely to occur? Write down times other than when the individual is sleeping.	**This column is optional.** Is the young person making choices about their behaviour or are they being driven by their brain or biology?
Behaviour is LEAST likely to occur when:					

Resources/Links:

- Positive Partnerships:
  - Sensory Webinar Resources.
    https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/sensory-resources
  - Understanding Behaviour webinars.

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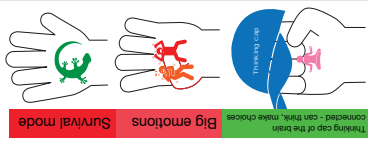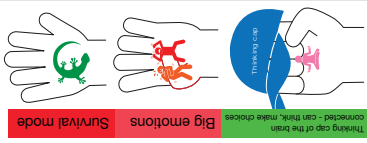Working together to support school-aged students on the autism spectrum

Most Likely / Least Likely Tool

What is the observable behaviour you want to know more about?

Complete the table by clicking on and then typing into the boxes. Put as much detail as possible into the table by working together; school, parents/carers and where appropriate, the student.

People involved in completing the tool:

	People	Place	Activity	Time	Think about:
Behaviour is MOST likely to occur when:	*Who is usually around when the behaviour occurs? You can write as many names as is relevant:*	*Where does the behaviour usually occur? You can write one or more places:*	*Think about activities that the person is engaged in when the behaviour typically occurs. You can write one or more activities:*	*Is there a time of day, day of week, etc. when the behaviour is most likely to occur?*	***This column is optional.*** *Is the young person making choices about their behaviour or are they being driven by their brain or biology?* Survival mode / Big emotions / Thinking cap of the brain - connected - can think, make choices
Behaviour is LEAST likely to occur when:	*Who is around when the behaviour rarely or never occurs? You can write as many names as is relevant:*	*In what places does the behaviour rarely or never occur? You can write one or more places:*	*What activities rarely or never result in this behaviour?*	*Is there a time when the behaviour is not likely to occur? Write down times other than when the individual is sleeping.*	***This column is optional.*** *Is the young person making choices about their behaviour or are they being driven by their brain or biology?* Survival mode / Big emotions / Thinking cap of the brain - connected - can think, make choices

![pp positive partnerships]

2 Day Parent/Carer Participant Workbook
Understanding behaviour

Does all behaviour need changing?

1. Help people understand and get to know your child

2. Understand the context and purpose of the behaviour

3. Consider if the behaviour is:
   • harming the person or others
   • interrupting their learning or the learning of others
   • affecting their quality of life such as relationships

No:
Accommodate the behaviour

Yes:
– Make environmental changes
– Teach self-regulation skills
– Use reactive strategies – co-regulation
– Teach replacement behaviour

Key information:

• Some behaviours may be annoying but they are not harming anyone, nor interrupting learning and are not decreasing quality of life.

• These behaviours, such as stimming, need to be accommodated.

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positive partnerships

Yes: Environmental Change

3. Consider if the behaviour is:
- harming the person or others
- interrupting their learning or the learning of others
- affecting their quality of life such as relationships

No:
Accommodate the behaviour

Yes:
– Make environmental changes
– Teach self-regulation skills
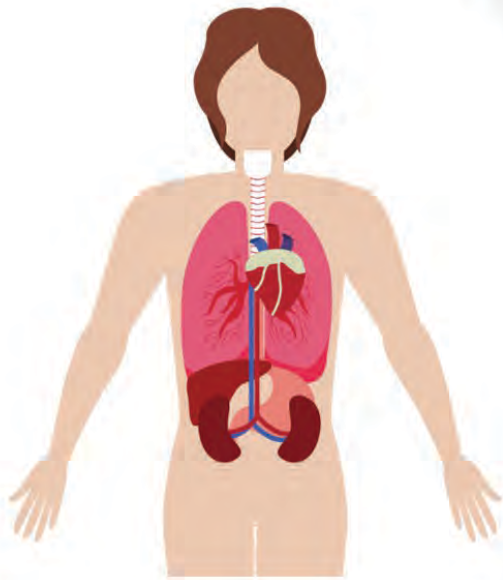– Use reactive strategies – co-regulation

Key information:

- Environmental change is the easiest and fastest support strategy.
- It is only effective when the change either meets an unmet need or removes an unhelpful context for the young person.

Resources/Links:

- Positive Partnerships:
  - Sensory Webinar Resources.
    https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/sensory-resources

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Yes:

Teach self-regulation skills

- Engage in interoception activities 2-3 times a day

- Use clear vocabulary to describe body parts, feelings and emotions

- Use co-regulation to support the developing ability to self regulate

Key information:

- Engage in interoception (mindful body awareness) activities 2-3 times a day.

- Use clear language to help the young person to notice and understand what their body is telling them as well as to describe body parts, feelings and emotions.

- Use co-regulation to support the developing ability to self-regulate.

- Interoception activities engage the mindfulness part of the brain which can only be accessed when the thinking cap of the brain is connected.

- This neurologically and biologically calms the individual down.

Resources/Links:

- Positive Partnerships:
    - Interoception webinars.
    - Finger pull interoception activity https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGFWWZg8JlI

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Yes:

Responding & co-regulation

- Planned responses may be needed to keep everyone safe

- In addition we need to plan how to co-regulate the young person as they are developing their self-regulation skills

Remember: with proactive support these strategies are less likely to be needed

Key information:

- Responding to complex behaviours needs to be planned. These supports will aim to keep everyone safe and keep both you and your child regulated.

- Co-regulation is a type of responding.

- Another type is a planned response such as holding your child's hand to stop them running across the road.

- Some responses do not involve your child at all. For example when you say to your child, "I am just going to the kitchen to calm down and I will come back to this later."

- What works for one child may not work or may even makes things worse for another. For example, one child may feel calmer when hugged but this may be distressing for another.

- What works for a child in one context may not work for them in another, for example a trampoline at home may be helpful but this is not possible in the supermarket.

- Different people co-regulating the same young person may need different co-regulation strategies.

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Next steps:

Access resources on the Positive Partnerships website

Plan collaboratively between school, home and the young person

Access further support from other sources

Key information:

- There are free supports available nationally to help families with autistic children and young people.
- Working together with the school can support both the young person and the family.

Resources/Links:

- Positive Partnerships website https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/
- Disability Gateway 1800 555 677
- Raising Children Network https://raisingchildren.net.au/
- Autism Connect 1300 308 699
- Carer Gateway 1800 422 737

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Morning Tea

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Session 6

Working in partnerships

Session Overview

Increase understanding of ways to strengthen the partnerships between home, school and community

Explore rights and responsibilities under the Disability Standards for Education (DSE)

Develop plans how to approach and prepare to work in partnership with your child's school

Key information:

- Everyone will have had different experiences of working with their child's school, some may have been really good and others may have been less positive.

- This session is about planning how to approach and prepare to work in partnership with your child's school in a solutions focused manner.

Research tells us home-school partnerships help everyone
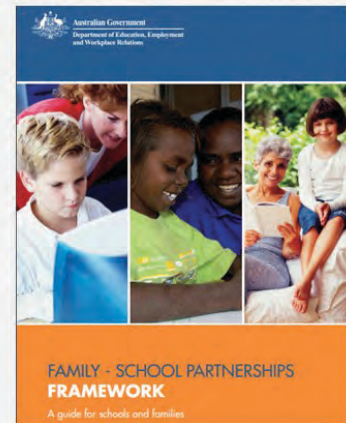
| Allows everyone to be part of the decision-making process | Helps prioritise needs and leads to improved learning outcomes | To develop student-centred plans | To identify strengths and interests | To provide joint problem-solving opportunities |

Key information:

- A team approach can help improve the educational outcomes for individuals on the autism spectrum.

- Families are the first educators of their children.

- Children spend significantly more time in the home than in school.

- If families and schools do collaborate it creates connections between expectation and reality that can positively impact student outcomes. This is particularly important for autistic students who may otherwise face school expectations that are much too high or much too low.

- Having a planned approach is an effective way to work collaboratively with others.

- It is important to be solution-focused and student/child centred.

- Collaborative partnerships serve a number of valuable purposes that can significantly improve learning outcomes.

- Working together can support the educational outcomes for individuals on the autism spectrum.

Resources/Links:

- Department for Education, Training & Skills, (2020) The Family-School Partnerships Framework. https://issr.uq.edu.au/files/3754/Family-school partnerships framework.pdf

- Positive Partnerships:

    - Partnership Planning template.

    - Guide to the Partnership plan.

    - Conversation Flow Chart.

    - Reactions to diagnosis information sheet.

    - Siblings information sheet.

- Working together - Nationally Consistent Collection of Data. (nccd.edu.au) https://www.nccd.edu.au/wider-support-materials/working-together

- Meetings toolkit - Nationally Consistent Collection of Data. (nccd.edu.au) https://www.nccd.edu.au/wider-support-materials/meetings-toolkit

Disability
Standards
For Education
(DSE) 2005
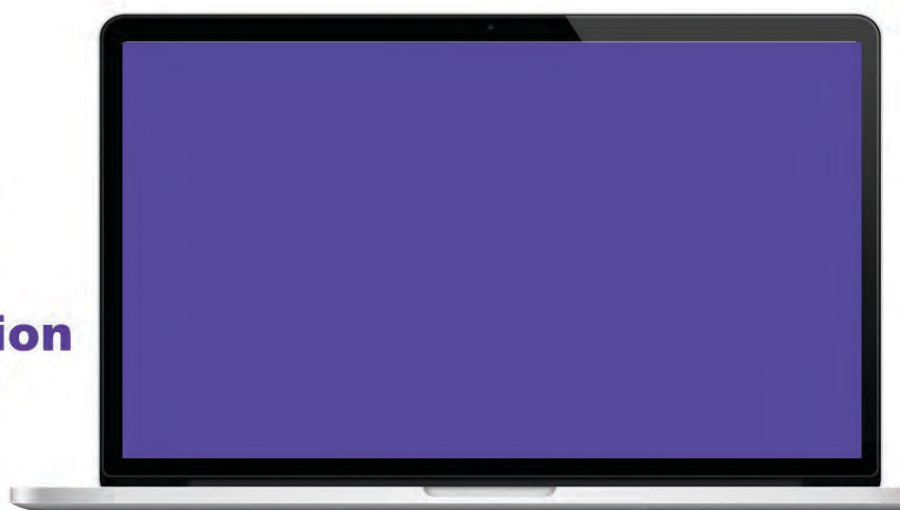
Key information:

•   The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, 1992) informs the legal requirements for the Disability Standards for Education (DSE, 2005).

•   The Disability Standards for Education guide the support and adjustments we must put in place for young people who learn and behave differently.

•   These Standards outline the law. They are not a choice or consideration. They apply across all education sectors, all age groups and all educational settings.

•   There are three main types of obligations for education providers under the Standards:

  1.   consult with the student and/or their parents, guardians or carers

  2.   make reasonable adjustments

  3.   eliminate harassment and victimisation.

•   The Standards outline measures for compliance to provide examples of what can be done to meet the requirements for each of these obligations.

Resources/Links:

•   NCCD Introduction to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Disability Standards for Education 2005. https://www.nccd.edu.au/tools/introduction-dda-and-standards-presentation

•   Disability Discrimination Law in Australia and Overview of Rights and Requirements under the Disability Standards (2005). http://www.ddaedustandards.info/

•   https://www.dese.gov.au/download/10710/summary-document-2020-review-disability-standards-education-2005/20791/summary-document-2020-review-disability-standards-education-2005/docx

What does the DSE say about home-school partnerships?

✓ Are centred around the young person
✓ Include the voice of the young person
✓ Connect learning at home and at school
✓ Build community and identity
✓ Recognise the role of the family
✓ Use consultative decision-making
✓ Collaborate beyond the school
✓ Ensure all people participate in planning

Guide Disability Standards for Education

Explaining the Disability Standards for Education

This resource is for anyone who wants to learn more about the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

This resource was co-designed by students with disability and their parents and caregivers

Key information:

- The Disability Standards for Education (2005) known as the DSE says that home-school partnerships:
    - are centred around the young person
    - include the voice of the young person
    - connect learning at home and at school
    - build community and identity
    - recognise the role of the family
    - use consultative decision-making
    - collaborate beyond the school\
    - ensure all people participate in planning.

Resources/Links:

- Information products for students with disability and their parents and carers - Department of Education, Australian Government.
- https://www.education.gov.au/download/13620/explaining-disability-standards-education/28290/explaining-disability-standards-education/pdf/en
- https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/students
- Commonwealth of Australia 2020, *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, 2020 Review, https://www.education.gov.au/download/10886/final-report-2020-review-disability-standards-education-2005/20837/final-report-2020-review-disability-standards-education-2005/pdf/en

DSE roles and expectations

What do education providers have to do?

If you are a student with disability, your institution must:

1. **Consult with you.** They should meet with you to discuss whether you need any accommodations. They may also meet with your parent, caregiver, or associate. (See Associate.)

2. **Make reasonable accommodations.** Accommodations are actions or changes that let you join in with your peers. They may also be called **reasonable adjustments**. (See Reasonable adjustment.)

3. Put steps in place to **prevent** you from being mistreated.

NCCD links and basic info

Sir Joseph Banks High School: Student and parent school involvement - Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (nccd.edu.au)

Key information:

- All parents will experience their own home-school partnership journey. This is just one example.
- These clips and more can be accessed through the NCCD website.

Resources/Links:

- Resources and Tools. (nccd.edu.au)
  https://www.nccd.edu.au/resources-and-tools/roles/parents-guardians-and-carers-14
- St Joseph's School: Family, culture and learning - Nationally Consistent Collection of Data.
  (nccd.edu.au)
  https://www.nccd.edu.au/illustrations-practice/sir-joseph-banks-high-school-student-and-parent-school-involvement

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What do you want for your child at school?

> "Having high expectations of what children can achieve will support the skills they learn in school" (Smith et al., p.45 2022)

> "Children should feel safe, secure, and connected at school…a safe space…where they are respected (Rabba et al., p.19, 2022)

Key information:

1. Positive Partnerships worked with Macquarie University on three pieces of research:
   a. We look after our own mob.
   b. Strengthening Partnerships: Autistic Parents' Experiences with Australia's Schools. Sydney Australia: Macquarie University.
   c. Culture and Connection — Building Strong Home-School Partnerships with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families of Autistic Children.

2. The full research reports can be found on the Positive Partnerships' website.

3. Some of the key recommendations from the research are:

   • the importance of school fostering a safe and secure school environment

   • education settings must foster a sense of belonging for all families, regardless of diversity

   • educators should demonstrate a willingness and openness to learning while acknowledging what they do and don't know and valuing the input of families and autistic students.

• Three quotes, one from each piece of research:

   • Somali mothers expressed a great deal of pride in their autistic children. They had high expectations of their children, especially around independent and adaptive skills (e.g., toileting, washing, dressing etc.). Mothers often felt that schools did not share similarly high expectations and failed to reinforce children's skills in the school context. (Smith et al., p.45 2022)

   • Autistic parents also yearned for their children to feel safe, secure, and connected at school. They wanted schools to be a "safe space", which embodied, at least for one parent, "lots of little, tiny incidental conversations that show respect. (Rabba et al., p.19, 2022)

   • "I just want him to be a happy, confident young man and just be comfortable with trying things." (Lilley, et al., (2019).

Resources/Links:

• Lilley, R., Sedgwick, M., & Pellicano, E. (2019). "We Look After Our Own Mob": Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Experiences of Autism. Sydney, Australia: Macquarie University.

- Rabba A.S., Smith J., Hall G., Heyworth M., Lawson W., Lilley R., Datta P., Pellicano L., Alexander V., Goodall E. and Syeda N. (2022) Strengthening Partnerships: Autistic Parents' Experiences with Australia's Schools. Sydney Australia: Macquarie University. https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/uploads/MACQ-60532-Strengthening-Partnerships_FINAL.pdf
- Smith J., Rabba A., Datta P., Dresens E., Hall G., Heyworth M., Lawson W., Lilley R., Syeda N. and Pellicano L. (2022) Culture and Connection — Building Strong Home-School Partnerships with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families of Autistic Children. Sydney, Australia: Macquarie University. https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/uploads/MACQ-60532-Culture-Connection_FINAL.pdf

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Where do children spend their time?

School – 17%

Home – 83%

In 12 months, what percentage of time are your children with you and what percentage of time are they at school?

Resources/Links:

- Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2008). Family-school Partnerships Framework. *A guide for schools and families*. Retrieved from: http://www.familyschool.org.au/files/3013/8451/8364/Family-school_partnerships_framework.pdf

- Queensland Department of Education. (2014). *Advancing Partnerships - Parent and Community Engagement Framework* (pp. 1-16). Queensland: Queensland Government.

- Catholic Education Office Melbourne. (2013). *Parent Engagement in Action A practical guide and toolkit for schools* (pp. 1-45). Melbourne: Catholic Education Office Melbourne. Retrieved from http://www.parentfederation.catholic.edu.au/__files/d/10919/Parent_Engagement_in_Action_Guide.pdf

- ACT Government Education and Training. (2014). *EDUCATION CAPITAL: Progressing Parental Engagement Teacher Fact Sheet* (pp. 1-8). Canberra: ACT Government Education and Training. Retrieved from: https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/686550/52741-DET-Parental-Engagement-A4-Factsheet-4pp_FA2_ACC.pdf

- Wherry, J.H. (2004) The Influence of Home on School Success, National Association of Primary School Principals. https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/resources/2/Principal/2004/S-Op6.pdf

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What do parents/carers
bring to the partnership?

What do school staff
bring to the partnership?

child

What challenges do parents/carers face?

What challenges do school staff face?

Key information:

- Understanding the challenges and strengths of both parents/carers and school staff in the partnership can help build trust and confidence in the relationship.

- There are similarities and differences between what parents/carers and school staff bring to the partnership.

- In effective collaborations, everyone has the child at the centre and the child's voice is included.

- At the heart of all interactions there should be an assumption of good intent regarding the outcomes for the child.

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What has worked for you in your partnerships with school?

Key information:

- The Australian Government Education Department's Family-School Partnerships Framework notes that the seven key dimensions that frame relationship and partnership building are:
    - communicate
    - connect learning at home and school
    - build community and identity
    - recognise the role of the family
    - consult on decision-making
    - collaborate beyond the school
    - participate.

Resources/Links:

- Ladder of participation for students
  https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/ladder_of_participation.pdf?v=1457323935
- https://www.education.gov.au/resources/supporting-family-school-community-partnerships-learning
- https://www.dese.gov.au/supporting-family-school-community-partnerships-learning/family-school-partnerships/family-school-partnerships-framework

Reference:

- Stelmach, B. (2016). Parents' participation on school councils analysed through Arnstein's ladder of participation. *School Leadership & Management, 36*(3), 271-291.

What would you like to improve in your home school partnership?

Key information:

- Parents and families can, in partnership with schools, support the learning of young people by promoting positive attitudes towards education and nurturing young people's confidence as learners (Barker & Harris, 2020).

Resources/Links:

- Barker, B., & Harris, D. (2020). *Parent and Family Engagement: An Implementation Guide for School Communities.* Canberra: ARACY.

Notes:

Planned and collaborative approach

Key information:

- Teachers and schools need a variety of information and clear agreed priorities for your young person.

- It can be difficult to get information into an easy to use and accessible format.

- The Positive Partnerships' 'Working Together Communication Tool' and 'Partnership Planning Template' can help to clarify how to communicate this information to schools.

- The Planning Tool can help to ensure that key information about your young person is shared with the school.

Resources/Links:

- Working Together Communication Tool and Partnership Planning Template in participant workbooks.

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Lunch

Communication Tool

How are we going to communicate as a home-school partnership? (Circle or highlight the ones that are most useful to you)		How often are we going to communicate this way and what are we going to communicate about?	Next steps and dates (write in any meetings or planned communication and when they will happen)
	Text		
	Email		
	App		
	Phone		
	Communication book		
	Face to face		
	Other		

Key information:

- The Working Together Communication Tool is a good tool to use at the beginning of the school year to set up clear communication preferences with the teacher.

Resources/Links:

- Working Together Communication Tool in participant workbooks.

Working Together Communication Tool

How are we going to communicate as a home-school partnership? *(Circle or highlight the ones that are most useful to you)*	How often are we going to communicate this way and what are we going to communicate about?	Next steps and dates *(write in any meetings or planned communication and when they will happen)*
Text		
Email		
App		
Phone		
Communication book		
Face to face		
Other		

positive
partnerships
Working together to support school-aged
students on the autism spectrum

Working Together Communication Tool (EXAMPLE)

How are we going to communicate as a home-school partnership? *(Circle or highlight the ones that are most useful to you)*	How often are we going to communicate this way and what are we going to communicate about?	Next steps and dates *(write in any meetings or planned communication and when they will happen)*
Text	**Daily – Mum will text teacher to give an update on Josiah's sleep as this impacts on his mood and energy significantly.**	**Mon – Fri Mum will text: good, ok, poor, terrible. Teacher will know this means Josiah can work well, ok, a bit, not at all.**
Email		
App **SEESAW**	**Daily – used as a check in and sharing tool for tasks and activities and general how things are going.**	**Teacher & Mum will check in & post/review Josiah's SEESAW once a day.**
Phone		
Communication book		
Face to face		**Attend review meeting scheduled for 1st August. 3.30pm @ Josiah's classroom.**
Other **Google Classroom**	**Monday, Wednesday, Friday. Teacher will leave tasks and activities on Google Classroom and mark submitted work. Mum can access Josiah's login.**	**2pm Teacher will text Mum if Josiah hasn't completed any of his work, unless they got a text that Josiah's sleep had been terrible that morning.**

Partnership Planning Template

Partnership Planning Template

- This template may help parents/carers and school staff to work together. You can tick a box or write down extra ideas.
- The first column lists what has worked well.
- The second column lists what has been challenging.
- The third column lists what could help.

What has worked for you?	What has been challenging?	What could help?
☐ Regular face-to-face catch-ups	☐ Ongoing written communication between home and school	☐ Having a regular time to meet
☐ Regular written feedback, i.e. communication book, reports.	☐ Sharing of goals and concerns	☐ Ongoing written communication between home and school
☐ Regular text messages	☐ Finding a time for parents and schools to speak	☐ Having an advocate or support person at the meetings
☐ Regular emails	☐ Understanding what is important to talk about	☐ Sharing how things are going at home or at school
☐ Regular video conferencing	☐ Feeling heard	☐ Sharing key things that may impact on home or school
☐ Recorded meetings, i.e. audio, video.	☐ Communication, i.e. expressing myself	☐ Voice of the young person being included
☐ Meetings with an advocate	☐ Listening for extended periods of time	☐ List of goals
☐ Group meetings with an advocate	☐ Environment, i.e. fluorescent lighting, noise levels	☐ Different meeting environment
☐ _____	☐ Negative experiences in the past	☐ Visual support for ideas shared in meetings
☐ _____	☐ _____	☐

Key information:

- The Partnership Planning Template is a good tool to plan strategies to communicate.
- It is also helpful to use if there are some challenges in the partnership as it helps to identify some solutions.

Resources/Links:

- Working Together Communication Tool and Partnership Planning Template in participant workbooks.

Notes:

Partnership Planning Template

Next step planning –

What is your current priority? (examples here)

What is the student's priority? (example here)

What do you plan to do next?

Who or what could help you?

When will you start?

CREATE a plan for moving forward

1. What is the biggest issue you are currently experiencing, or one thing you feel could help foster a more positive and productive partnership?

2. What will be the first step you need to take? What will you need to do? For example: ask for a meeting; complete a Planning Tool together as a starting point for discussion.

3. Who might you need to call on for help? Will you need to ask a support person to attend a meeting with you? What other resources might you need?

4. Decide on a start date!

Key information:

- When preparing a meeting with the school it will be helpful to think about:
    - questions to ask (writing these down can remind you to discuss at the meeting)
    - what you will say to contribute to each stage of the discussion
    - what action or outcome you would like from the meeting
    - what action or outcome others might like from the meeting (NCCD Meetings Toolkit).

Resources/Links:

- Meetings toolkit - Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (nccd.edu.au)
https://www.nccd.edu.au/wider-support-materials/meetings-toolkit

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Partnership Planning Template

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What has worked for you?	What has been challenging?	What could help?
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☐ Regular written feedback, i.e. communication book, reports.	☐ Sharing of goals and concerns	☐ Ongoing written communication between home and school
☐ Regular text messages	☐ Finding a time for parents and schools to speak	☐ Having an advocate or support person at the meetings
☐ Regular emails	☐ Understanding what is important to talk about	☐ Sharing how things are going at home or at school
☐ Regular video conferencing	☐ Feeling heard	☐ Sharing key things that may impact on home or school
☐ Recorded meetings, i.e. audio, video.	☐ Communication, i.e. expressing myself	☐ Voice of the young person being included
☐ Meetings with an advocate	☐ Listening for extended periods of time	☐ List of goals
☐ Group meetings with an advocate	☐ Environment, i.e. fluorescent lighting, noise levels	☐ Different meeting environment
☐ _____	☐ Negative experiences in the past	☐ Visual support for ideas shared in meetings
☐ _____	☐ _____	☐ Use of and access to interpreters
☐ _____	☐ _____	☐ _____

2 Day Parent/Carer Participant Workbook
Working in partnerships

Next step planning –			
What is your current priority? (examples here)	What is the student's priority? (example here)	What do you plan to do next?	Who or what could help you?

When will you start? |

Key information:

- The NCCD meetings toolkit can provide further advice and guidance on planning conversations and making meetings as collaborative and effective as possible.

Resources/Links:

- Meetings toolkit - Nationally Consistent Collection of Data. (nccd.edu.au) https://www.nccd.edu.au/wider-support-materials/meetings-toolkit

Notes:

Working together

What is one key action that you are taking away from this session?

Key information:

- Working together in partnership with home and school takes effort but is linked to improved outcomes for all children and young people, especially diverse learners.

You are important

take care of yourself first or you will have nothing left to give others.

Key information:

- If you do not take care of yourself eventually you will have nothing left to give to others.
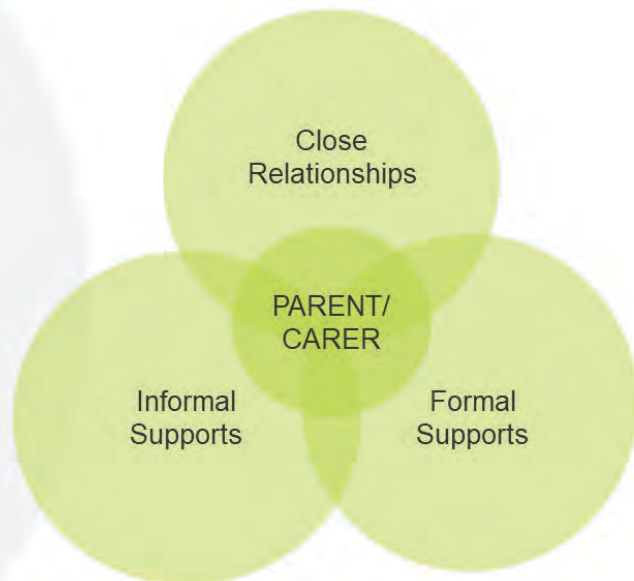
Looking after yourself

- Take care of you
- Keep things in perspective
- Have the information and resources you need
- Understand how to be a positive advocate for your young person
- Find out about support networks and how to access them

Key information:

- There are many ways to look after ourselves and many of these do not have a financial cost.
- Self-care enables people to be more able to keep things in perspective and be as positive as possible.

Your connections

- Close Relationships
- PARENT/ CARER
- Informal Supports
- Formal Supports

Key information:

- Support networks can make both parenting and advocacy easier.

Resources/Links:

- Autism Connect – 1300 308 699.
- Disability Gateway - 1800 643 787.
- Carer Gateway – 1800 422 737.

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Resources

LinkedIn positive partnerships

Instagram @positivepartnerships

Twitter @PosPartnerships

pinterest.com.au/PositivePartnershipsAustralia/

facebook.com/PositivePartnershipsAU

positivepartnerships.com.au

pp positive partnerships

Moving Forward

Feedback

http://tiny.cc/PP-PCfeedback

Good luck on your journey

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positive partnerships

Working together to support school-aged students on the autism spectrum

positivepartnerships.com.au