Whole School 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 students in the mainstream in New Zealand.

Along this pathway, I discovered that the most effective teaching of autistic students 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 autistic students;

- Believe in the potential of your students, with nurture and the right environmental supports and strengths-based teaching, the potential of autistic students is phenomenal; no matter their speech or written communication level
- Always say what you mean, mean what you say and really hear what autistic students 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 autistic students 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.

Positive Partnerships is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education. The views expressed within this program do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government or the Australian Government Department of Education.

Positive Partnerships is delivered by Aspect (Autism Spectrum Australia).

Positive Partnerships values and recognises 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

Welcome

The Whole School learning program is a workshop designed to benefit educators working directly with autistic students.

We know that the best educational outcomes for autistic students are enhanced when:

- a strong, positive relationship exists between home and school
- teachers feel confident in their knowledge and understanding of autism
- classroom and school environments reflect the unique needs of autistic students

Workshop requirements for educators:

- Completion of the Positive Partnerships online module - An Introduction to Autism
- Completion of Whole School survey
- Attendance at the two day workshop
- Completion of two or more post-workshop tasks (online)
- Completion and implementation of Planning and Reflection Tool (post-workshop)

Overview of Workshop: Day One

Time	Topic
8:30 am – 9:00 am	**Session 1** Introduction
9:00 am – 10:30 am	School inclusion - theory to practice
10:30 am – 10:50 am	Morning tea
10:50 am – 1:00 pm	**Session 2** Strengths and interests Connections to culture and community Executive functioning
1:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm – 3:45 pm	**Session 3** Communication and social skills
3:45 pm – 4:00 pm	Feedback

Day Two

Time	Topic
8:30 am – 8:50 am	**Session 4** Welcome back and reflections
8:50 am – 10:30 am	Sensory processing Self-care and independence
10:30 am – 10:50 am	Morning tea
10:50 am – 12:30 pm	**Session 5** Mental health, wellbeing and behaviour
12:30 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Mental health, wellbeing and behaviour continued
1:30 pm – 3:15 pm	**Session 6** Priority planning and next steps
3:15 pm – 3:30 pm	Feedback

Using this participant guide

To access a copy of the slides from this workshop, as well as all the resources, documents and videos, scan this QR code or visit the following link:

https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/workshops-online-learning/professional-learning/resources

This participant guide contains slide images, key activities and resources used during the workshop.
There is space provided throughout the guide to write any notes.

All of our workshop content is evidence informed by the latest research. To access our reference list for this workshop, scan this QR code or visit the following link:

https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/workshops-online-learning/workshops/references

Session 1

positive partnerships

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

Acknowledgement of Country

Statement of reconciliation

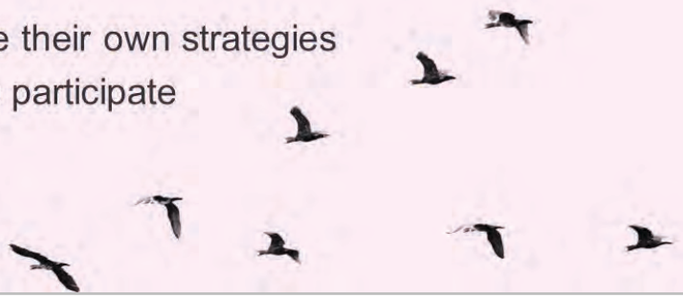
We at Positive Partnerships value and recognise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage and their proud part in Australia's national identity. We acknowledge and continue to learn about Australia's colonial past and the historic and ongoing impacts on Australia's 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.

First Nations people are advised that this workshop may contain images and voices of people who are no longer with us.

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.



House keeping


Tea / Coffee

Exits


Facilities


Phones

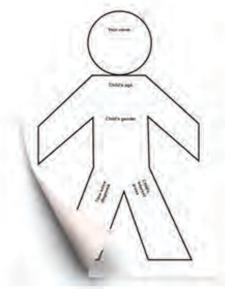

No Smoking / Vaping


Workbook


Other Information


Evaluation

Introductions



It will look like…

- some movement
- use of visual supports and film clips

What will the workshop be like?

It will sound like…

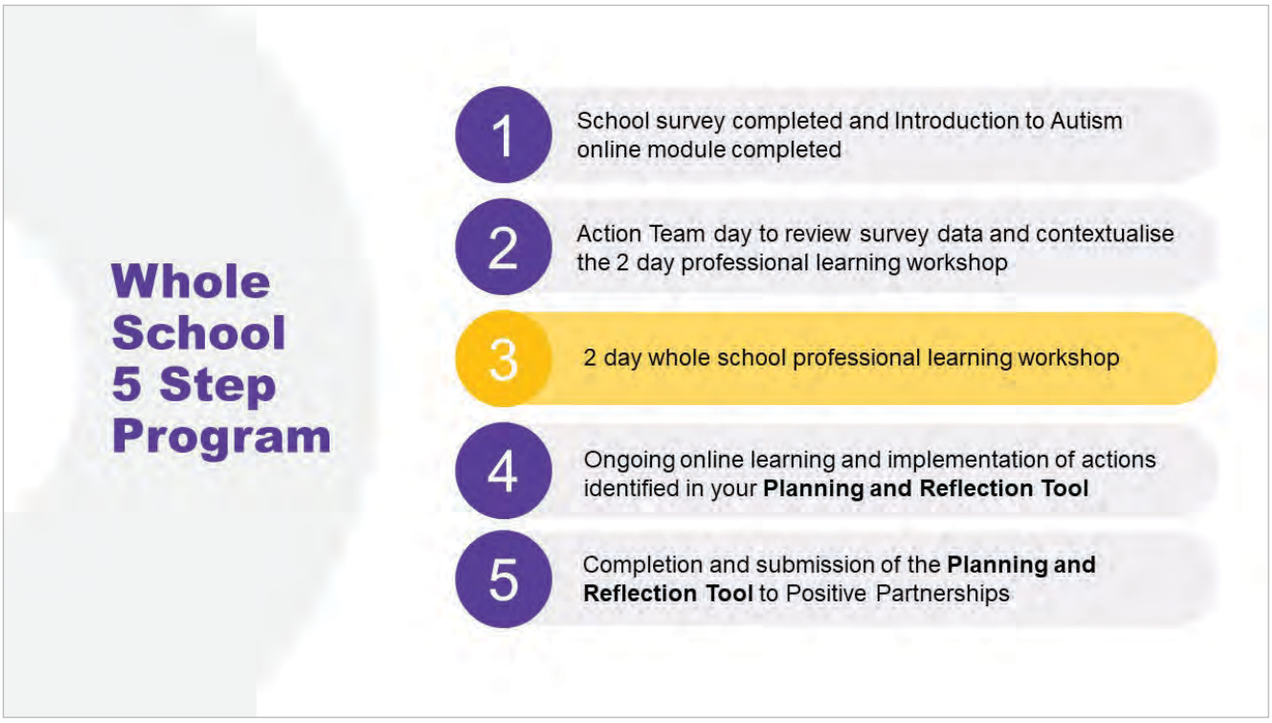
- a sharing of participants knowledge, skills and experiences
- experiences and opinions being respected
- large and small group discussions

It will feel like…

- a safe place
- learning from and with each other

Key information:

- Delivery team members may to need interrupt in order to ensure all content is covered in the session.
- Participants may have opinions and information that differ.
- All discussions need to remain confidential.
- It is important to respect and support individual experiences and opinions;
    - attending to and listening to others shows respect
    - respecting different perspectives shows support
    - school staff can use pseudonyms instead of names.



Key information:

Ensure you understand the different stages of the Whole School program and have had a dialogue with the Action Team to establish how much staff do or do not understand about the Whole School program journey.

Workshop overview

DAY 1	
Session 1 8:30am – 9:00am	**Introduction**
9:00am – 10:30am	**School inclusion - theory to practice**
10:30am–10:50am	MORNING TEA
Session 2 10:50am – 1:00pm	**Strengths and interests** **Connections to culture and community** **Executive functioning**
1:00pm – 1:30pm	LUNCH
Session 3 1:30pm – 3:45pm	**Communication and social skills**
3:45pm – 4:00pm	**Feedback**

DAY 2	
Session 4 8:30am – 8:50am	**Reflections**
8:50am – 10:30am	**Sensory processing** **Self-care & independence**
10:30am – 10:50am	MORNING TEA
Session 5 10:50am – 12:30pm	**Mental health, wellbeing and behaviour**
12:30pm – 1:00pm	LUNCH
Session 5 cont. 1:00pm – 1:30pm	**Mental health, wellbeing and behaviour**
Session 6 1:30pm - 3:15pm	**Priority planning and next steps**
3:15pm – 3:30pm	**Feedback**

Resources/Links:

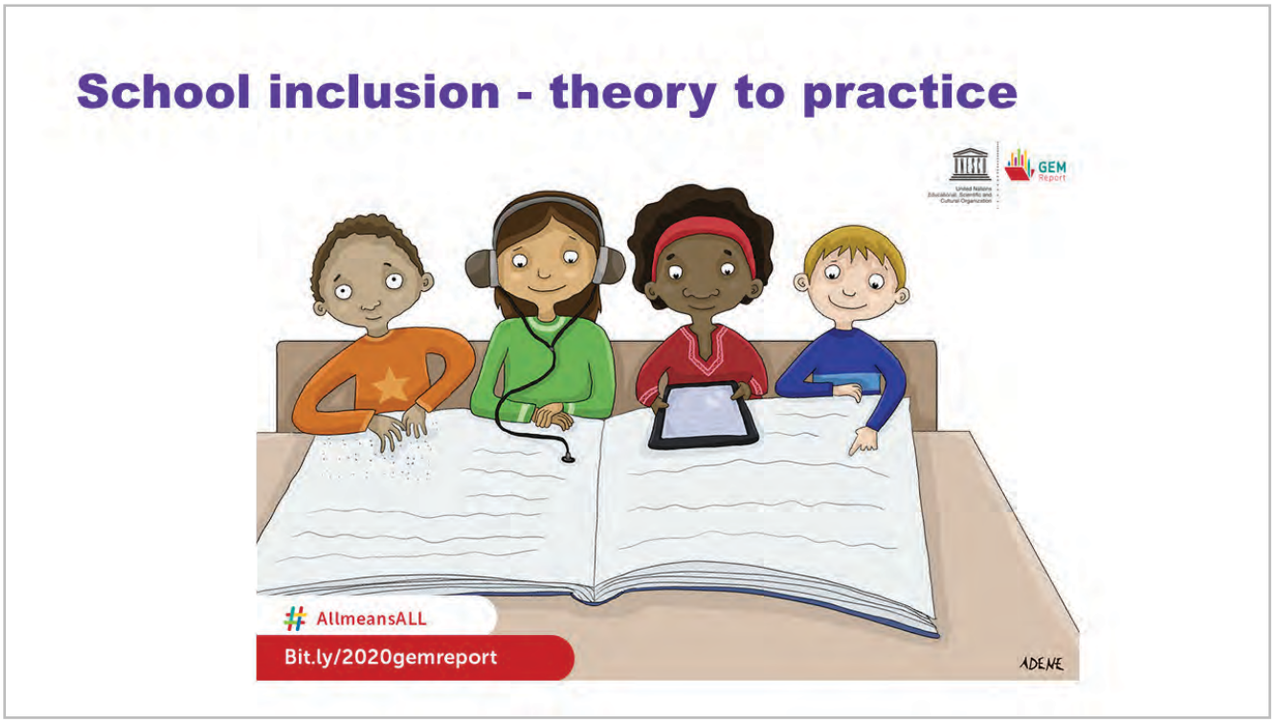
- https://bit.ly/2020gemreport

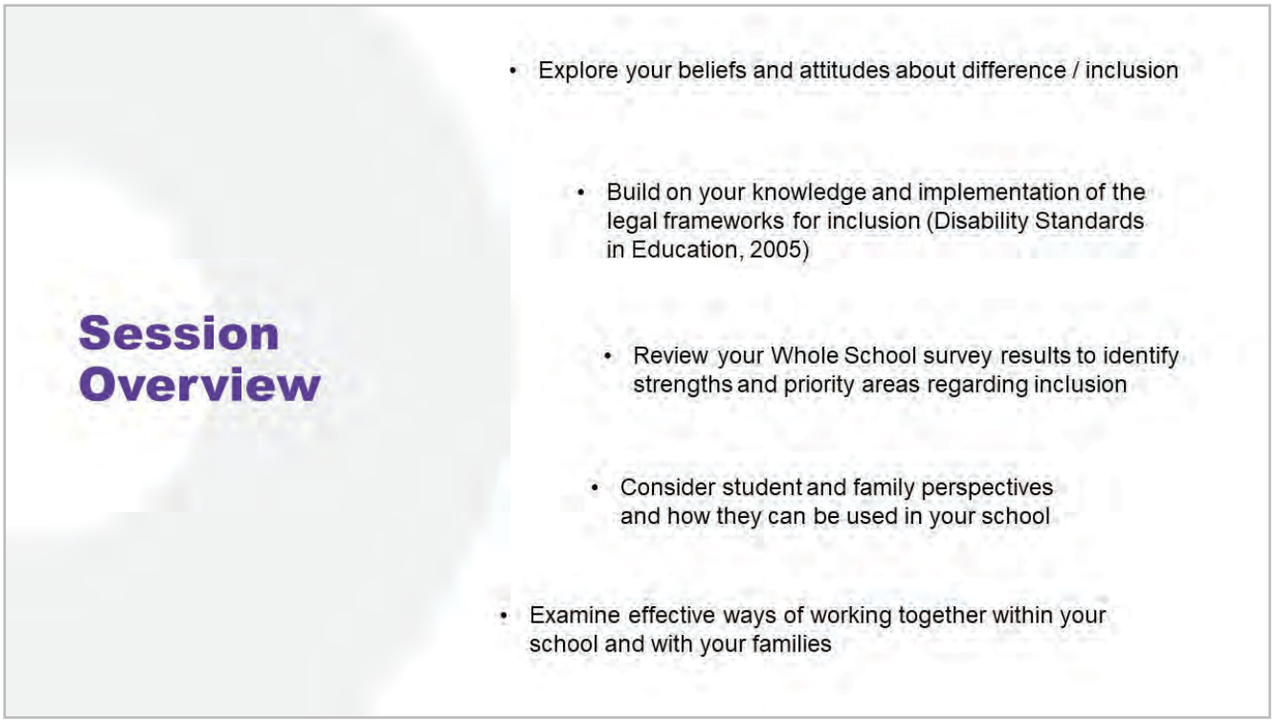
Key information:

- The language used around autism has changed in the last few years.
- Most autistic adults prefer to describe themselves as autistic or neurodivergent.
- It is always good to ask your young person (or their family, if appropriate) what they prefer.
- People use different words to talk about autism and each person will have their own way of talking about autism and about themselves. Some people in the autistic and autism community like to use ‘autistic person’ (identity-first language), some like to say ‘person with autism’ (person-first language), and some are fine with using either. Some autistic people identify as having a disability, while others do not.
- The Australian Government uses identity-first language, Autistic person or Autistic people. This approach is supported by current research.

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.
- 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.
- 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



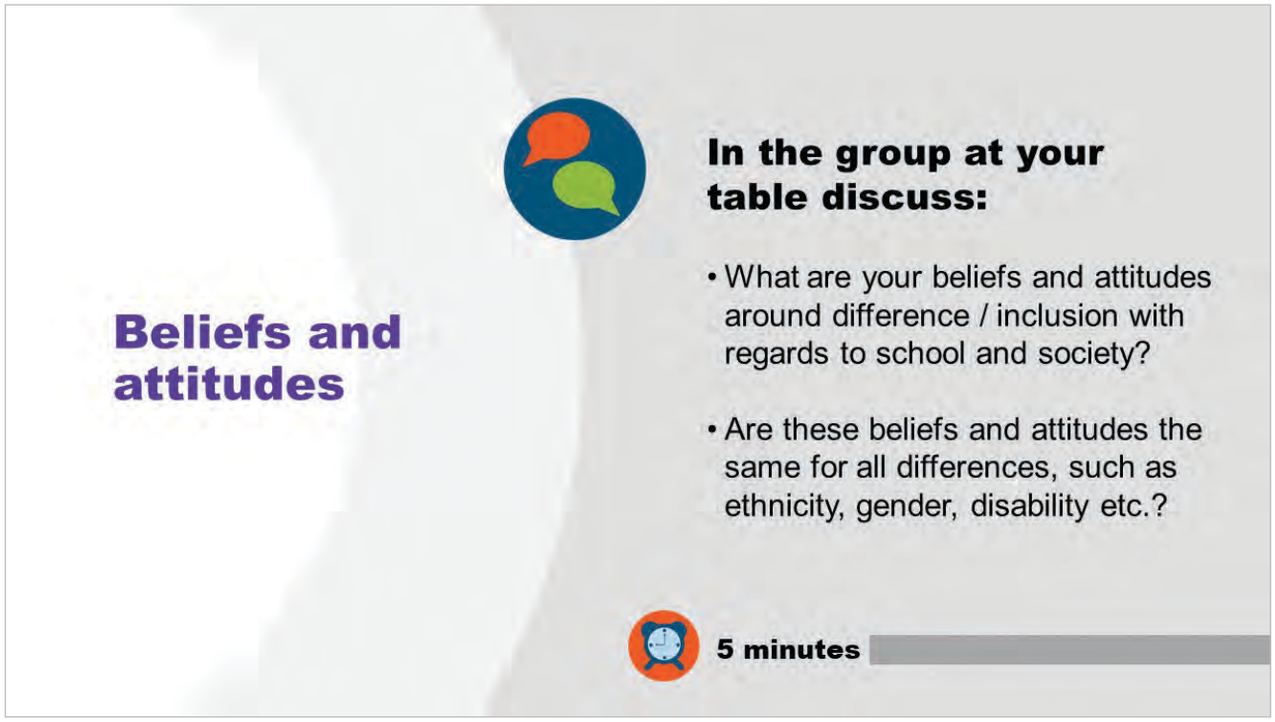


Key information:

- This session will:
  - Explore your beliefs and attitudes about difference / inclusion with regards to school and society.
  - Build on your knowledge and implementation of the legal frameworks for inclusion (Disability Standards for Education 2005).
  - Review your whole school survey results. What do you already do well and what can you build on?
  - Consider student and family perspectives and how these can be used in your school.
  - Examine effective ways of working together within your school and with your families.

"If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn."
Ignacio Estrada

Notes:



Key information:

- The Whole School Survey is a survey that everybody in the school was invited to complete in the months leading up to the workshop. The results of this were delivered to the Action Team prior to the workshop.
- The foundation of inclusive practice is your belief and attitude towards inclusion. If you believe inclusion is important, you'll put it into practice.

Notes:


Action Team
Summary of
survey results
DIVERSITY
AGE
DIFFERENCES

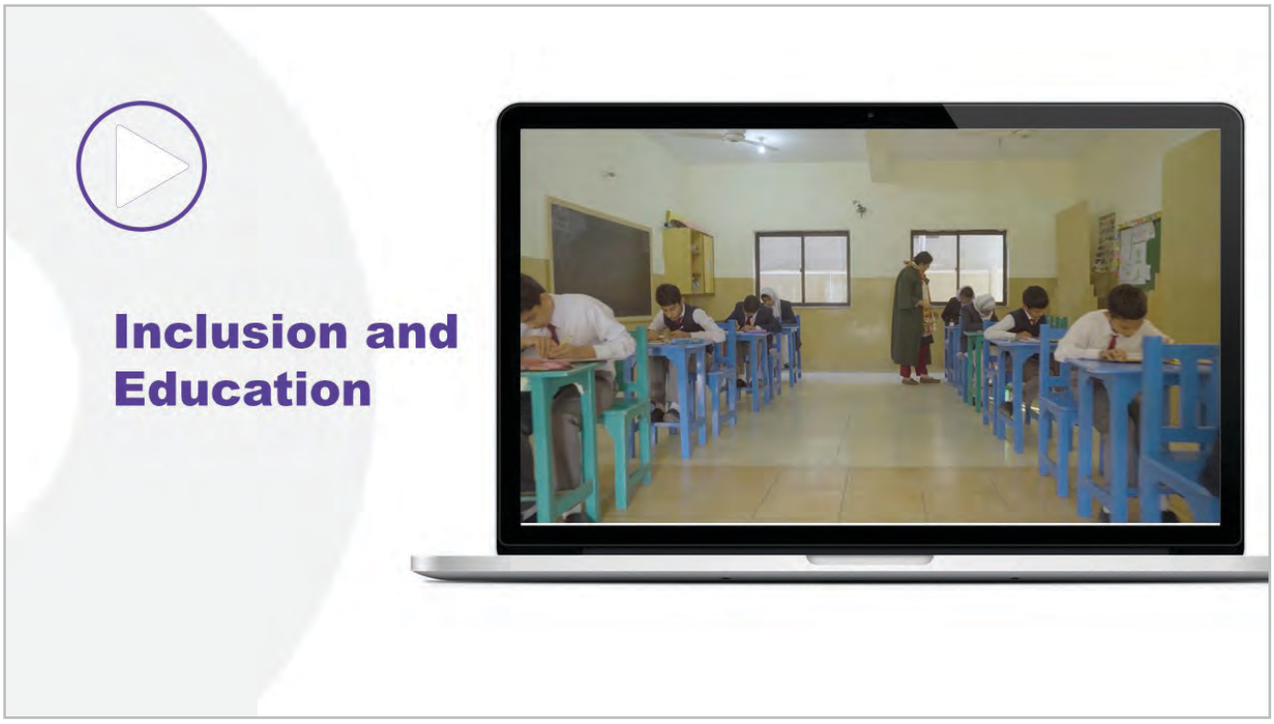
Notes:

Key information:

- The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) informs the legal requirements for the Disability Standards for Education (DSE).
- 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.
- Surveys completed before attending this workshop session identified individual thoughts to strengthen inclusive practices.
- Survey findings provide information about your individual strengths as a teacher and guide areas for further development.

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

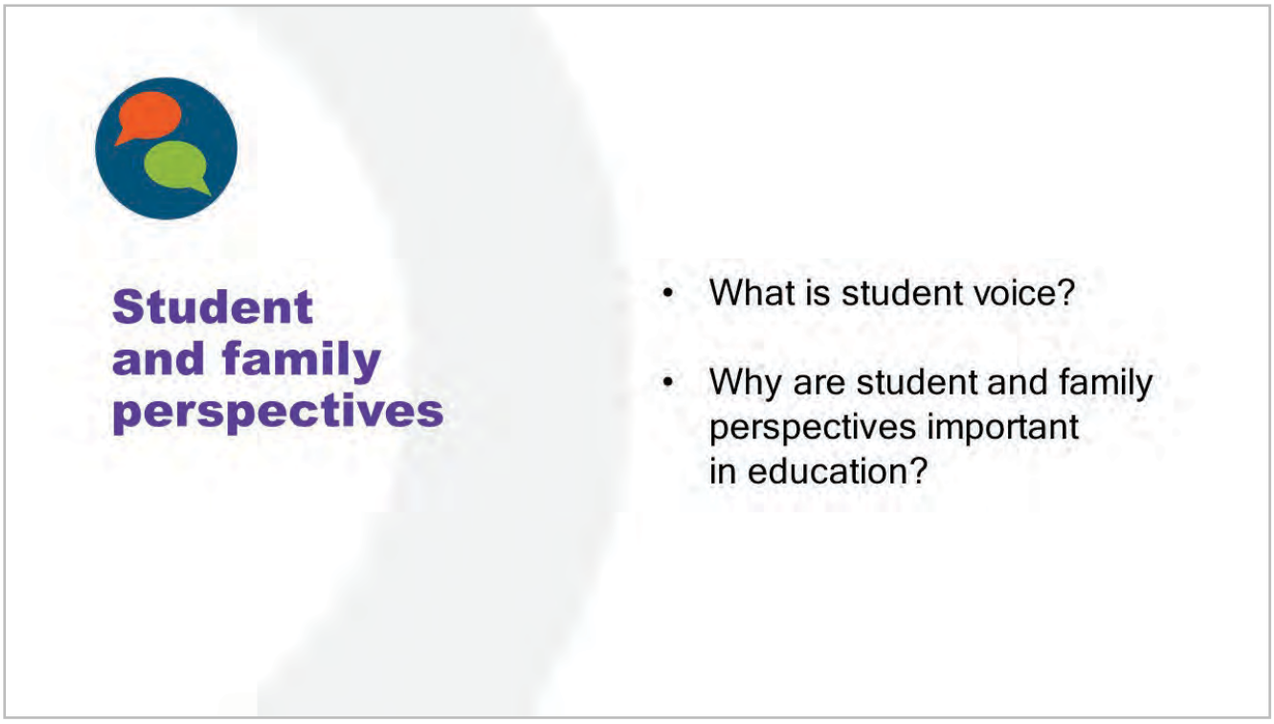


Key information:

- The UNESCO Salamanca Declaration (Ministry of Education and Science, Spain 1994) and The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019) underpin the policy framework for the Australian Curriculum which is outlined in two goals:
  - Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence
  - Goal 2: All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens
- The report also addresses inclusion in education, drawing attention to all those excluded from education because of background or ability. The report is motivated by the explicit reference to inclusion in the 2015 Incheon Declaration and the call to ensure an **inclusive and equitable quality education** in the formulation of SDG 4, the global goal for education. It reminds us that, no matter what argument may be built to the contrary, we have a moral imperative to ensure **every child has a right to an appropriate education of high quality**.

Resources/Links:

- DESE, (2019) The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. https://www.dese.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration
- Graham, L., McCarthy, T., Killingly, C., Tancredi, H., & Poed, S. (2020). Inquiry into Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion Processes in South Australian Government Schools. https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/report-of-an-independent-inquiry-into-suspensions-exclusions-and-expulsions-in-south-australian-government-schools.pdf



Key information:

It is important to highlight the importance of self-advocacy.

The slide is designed to prompt table group and whole of school discussion about how student and family perspectives/voices are currently included and balanced in classroom and wider school systems. The strategic questions can be asked to set up the table discussion, with no more that 4 minutes spent on this. This is the first stage for the school to understand these topics and think about what they can do better.

Resources/Links:

- ACARA, (n.d.), Steps to personalise learning: CASE https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/student-diversity/planning-for-student-diversity/steps-to-personalise-learning-case/
- ACARA, (n.d.), Student diversity. https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/student-diversity/
- Notice for schools and school principals (nccd.edu.au) https://www.nccd.edu.au/sites/default/files/notice_for_schools_and_school_principals.pdf
- NCCD case study e-learning for secondary schools https://www.nccd.edu.au/professional-learning/nccd-case-study-e-learning-secondary-schools
- NCCD case study e-learning for primary schools https://www.nccd.edu.au/professional-learning/nccd-case-study-e-learning-primary-schools
- 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

In the group at your table, supported by the Action Team, discuss the questions assigned:

How do we use student voice? How do you use it in your classroom, how do students share ideas with you, or self-advocate?	How do we use parent voice? When are your families advocating most for their children and young people?
How could you engage parents who are not currently engaging?	How do you balance student perspectives and self-advocacy with parent voice?

7 minutes

Resources/Links:

- ACARA, (n.d.), Steps to personalise learning: CASE https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/student-diversity/planning-for-student-diversity/steps-to-personalise-learning-case/
- ACARA, (n.d.), Student diversity. https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/student-diversity/
- Notice for schools and school principals (nccd.edu.au) https://www.nccd.edu.au/sites/default/files/notice_for_schools_and_school_principals.pdf
- NCCD case study e-learning for secondary schools https://www.nccd.edu.au/professional-learning/nccd-case-study-e-learning-secondary-schools
- NCCD case study e-learning for primary schools https://www.nccd.edu.au/professional-learning/nccd-case-study-e-learning-primary-schools
- 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

Record notes on your allocated ‘Student and family perspectives’ question on this page:

Key information:

- The Department for Education, Training & Skills, (2020) The Family-School Partnerships Framework suggests that in effective family-school partnerships both home and school believe that:
  - parents and families are the first and continuing educators of their children
  - learning is lifelong and occurs in multiple settings
  - partnerships, schools and school communities flourish when the diversity and strengths of families are valued and leveraged
  - community engagement expands responsibility and resources
  - partnerships grow from mutual trust, respect and responsibility
  - partnerships need committed, collaborative and creative leadership.
- Positive Partnerships have a range of communication tools available for schools to use if they would like more support in this area. Check the Whole School resource page.

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

Action Team
Strengths and Priorities

Notes:

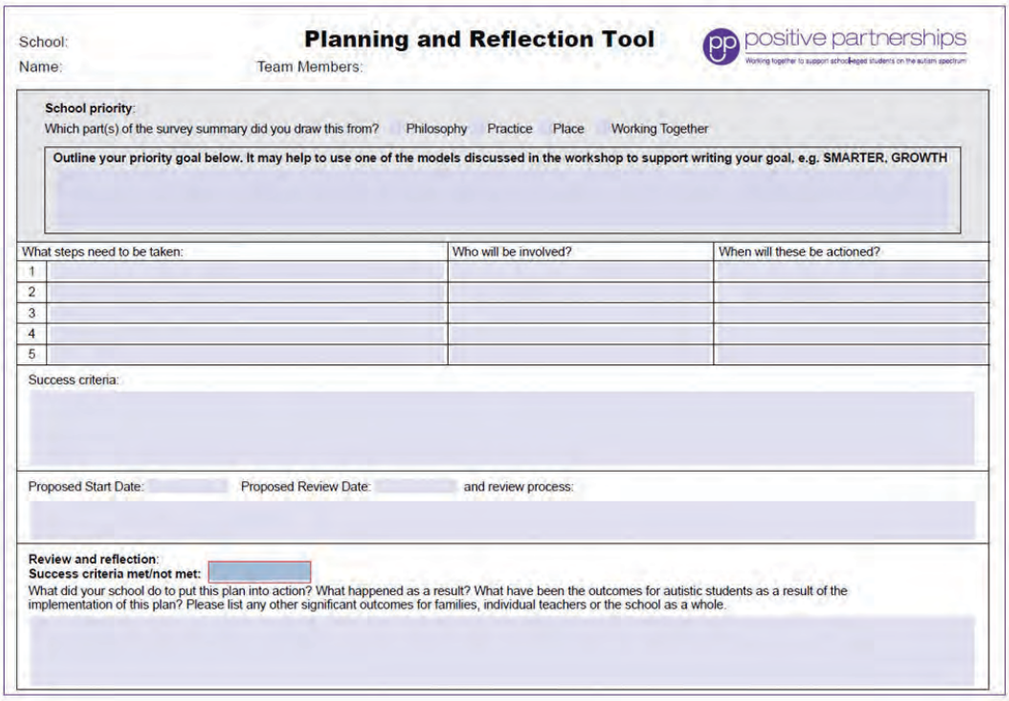
Key information:

Depending on the number of participants / number of strengths and priorities, facilitators may allocate a particular Strength / Priority to a particular table, or give tables a choice on what to work on.

Make sure to keep a record of what participants write and place on the Post-It Notes / butcher's paper. You may like to take a photo or type them up into a document.

The following key sections of the survey may be useful to refer to for this activity:

- What does your school do well to support autistic students?
- What might be a priority action for your school to better support autistic students?
- Strengths and Weaknesses Summary.



School:

Name:

Planning and Reflection Tool

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

Team Members:

School priority:

Which part(s) of the survey summary did you draw this from? Philosophy Practice Place Working Together

Outline your priority goal below. It may help to use one of the models discussed in the workshop to support writing your goal, e.g. SMARTER, GROWTH

What steps need to be taken:		Who will be involved?	When will these be actioned?
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

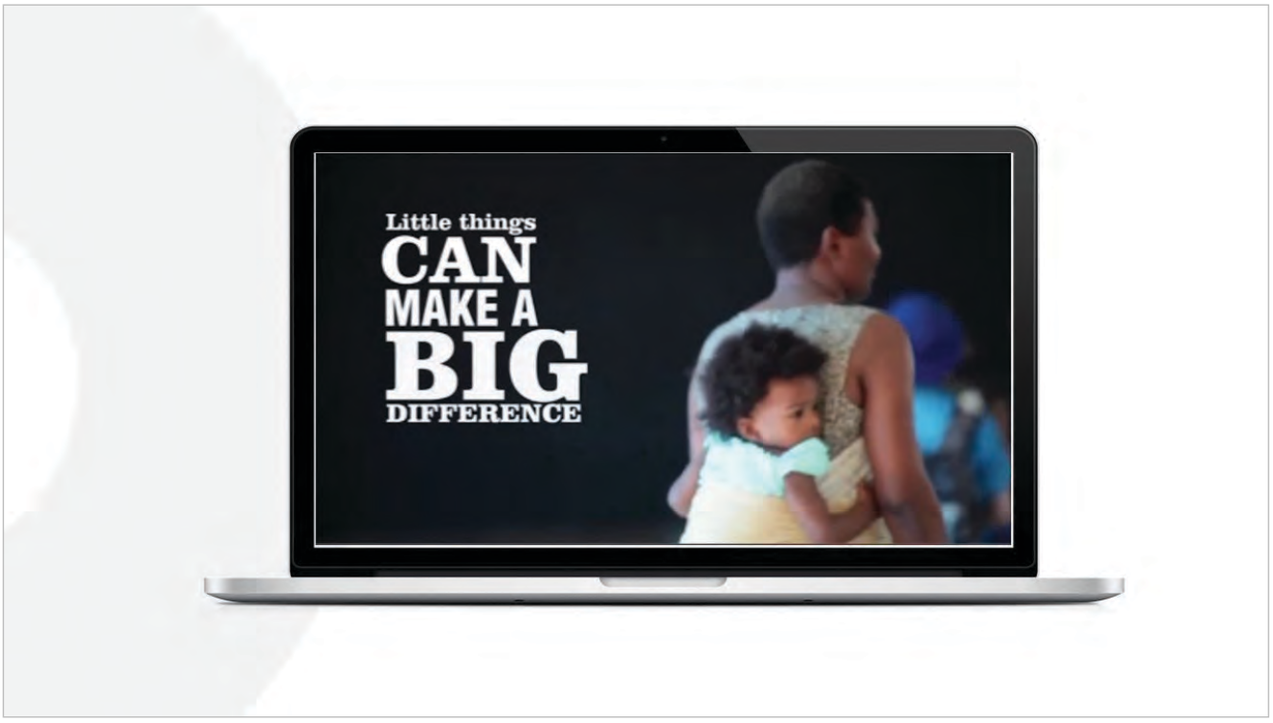
Success criteria:

Proposed Start Date: Proposed Review Date: and review process:

Review and reflection:
Success criteria met/not met:

What did your school do to put this plan into action? What happened as a result? What have been the outcomes for autistic students as a result of the implementation of this plan? Please list any other significant outcomes for families, individual teachers or the school as a whole.

Notes:



Resources/Links:

- DESE, (2019) The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. https://www.dese.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration
- Graham, L., McCarthy, T., Killingly, C., Tancredi, H., & Poed, S. (2020). Inquiry into Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion Processes in South Australian Government Schools. https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/report-of-an-independent-inquiry-into-suspensions-exclusions-and-expulsions-in-south-australian-government-schools.pdf

Morning Tea
20 minutes

"The Australian Curriculum provides opportunities for teachers to develop inclusive teaching and learning programs that build on students' interests, strengths, goals and learning needs to support all students to achieve their potential."

Notes:

Session 2

positive partnerships

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

Key information:

10:50am-1:00pm

Introduction to the Diversity Wheel & Planning Tool

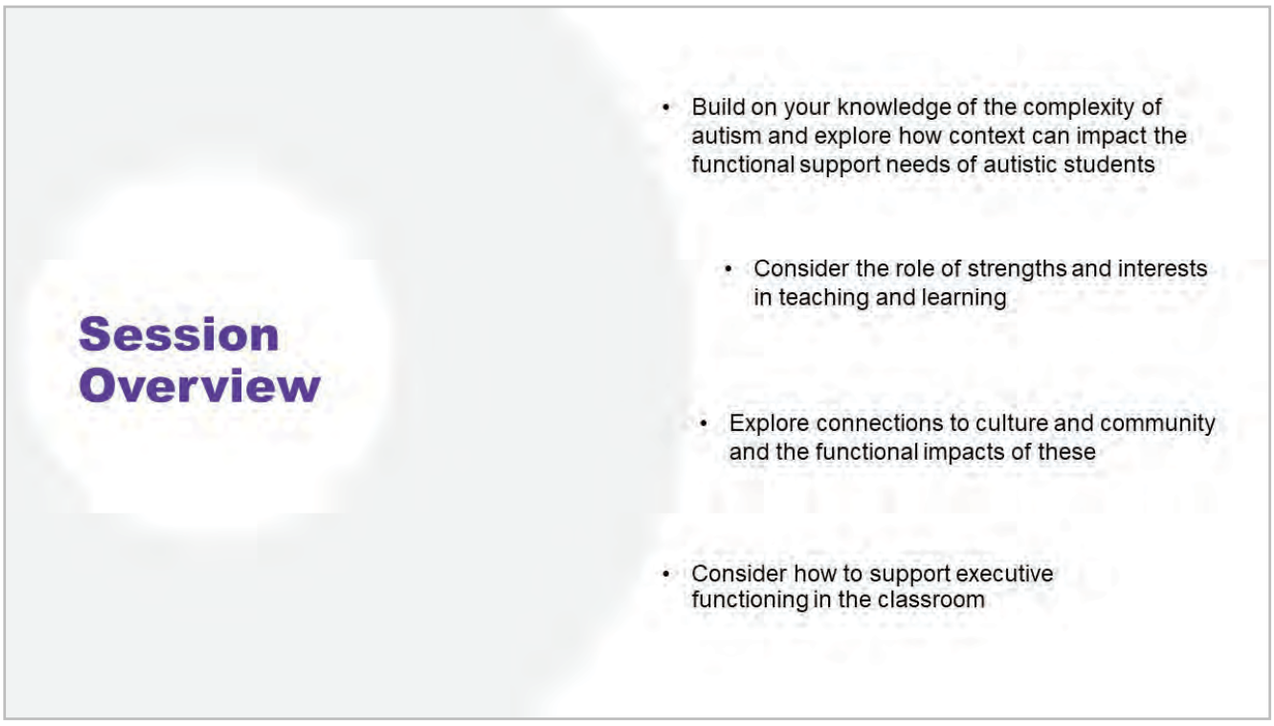
Strengths and interests

Connections to culture and community

Executive functioning

Resources:

- Diversity Wheel (in workbook)
- Planning Tool (in workbook and A3 handout)
- Planning Tool with prompts and examples (in workbook)


Session Overview
Build on your knowledge of the complexity of autism and explore how context can impact the functional support needs of autistic students
Consider the role of strengths and interests in teaching and learning
Explore connections to culture and community and the functional impacts of these
Consider how to support executive functioning in the classroom

Notes:

Key information:

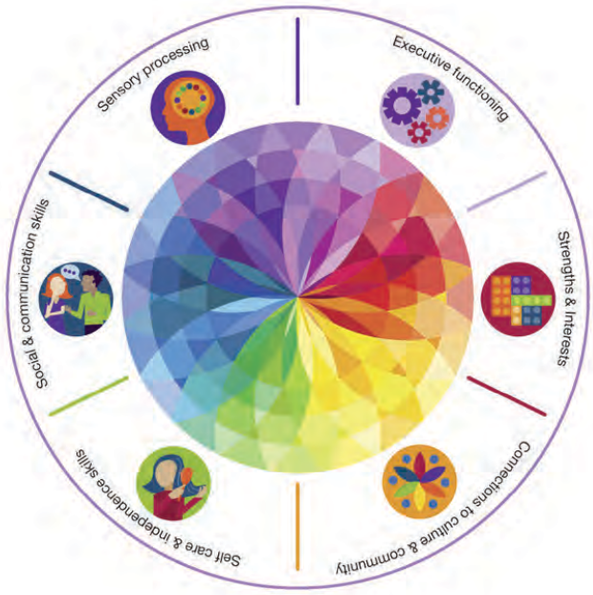
- Autism is diagnosed using observations and gathering information about an individual's behaviours and characteristics across a range of environments.
- Professionals diagnose autism on the basis of difficulties in two areas – 'social-communication', and 'restricted, repetitive and/or sensory behaviours 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://www.autismcrc.com.au/access/national-guideline/for-community
- 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

The Diversity Wheel

The Diversity Wheel is comprised of six areas that contribute to the life of a young person.



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

Key information:

- The Diversity Wheel is comprised of six areas that contribute to the life of a young person.
- The levels of support autistic students may require will depend on the different environments they encounter throughout the day, but also the changes that can take place within that environment, including;
  - who they are with
  - what they are doing
  - what they are feeling
  - the time of day
- The headings and colour coding on the Diversity Wheel match the Planning Tool we will be using throughout today.

Link/Reference:

Link:

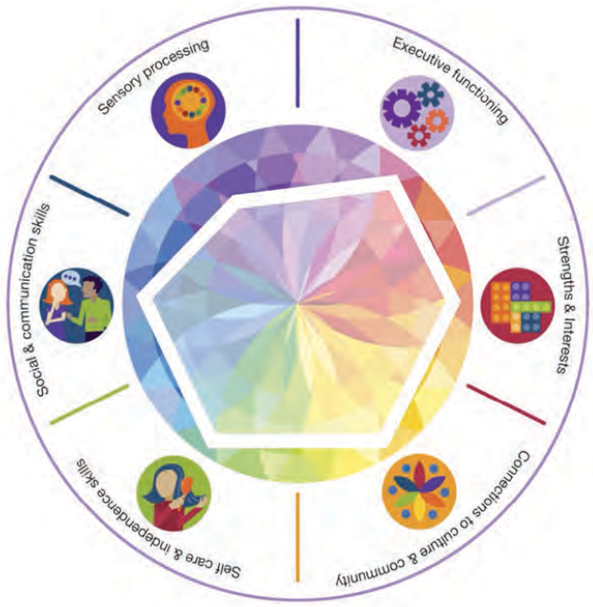
- The art of autism: www.the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/

Reference:

- 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. www.onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.usq.edu.au/doi/epdf/10.1002/aur.2077

The Diversity Wheel

Getting ready for school (at home)

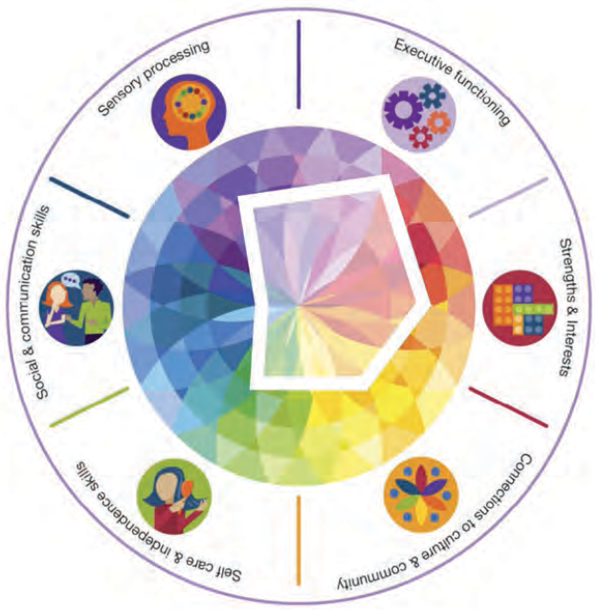


Key information:

- Autism can be complex.
- It is important to consider all areas of the Diversity Wheel when we are getting to know a young person's strengths and support needs.

The Diversity Wheel

Unexpected change of teacher



Planning Tool

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

Resources:

- Online interactive Planning Tool https://planningtool.positivepartnerships.com.au/
- Planning Tool resource page: https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/diversity-wheel-planning-tool
- QR Code takes you to our Planning Tool webpage:

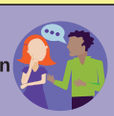
Notes:

Planning Tool

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

Name: **D.O.B:** **Class / Year Level :**

The team supporting the young person: *Names and roles*	
Who attended this planning meeting: *Names and dates*	
How the young persons' voice was or will be included: *Description*	
Date completed:	**Review date:**

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

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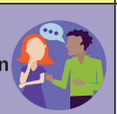
Planning Tool

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

Name: **D.O.B:** **Class / Year Level :**

The team supporting the young person: *Names and roles*	
Who attended this planning meeting: *Names and dates*	
How the young person's voice was or will be included: *Description*	
Date completed:	**Review date:**

	Observations and examples. What can you see or hear the young person doing?	What are the helpful and unhelpful impacts on them and others?	What strategies and adjustments might help them?
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 	*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.*

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Planning Tool

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

Name: **D.O.B:** **Class / Year Level :**

The team supporting the young person: *Names and roles*	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.
Who attended this planning meeting: *Names and dates*	
How the young person's voice was or will be included: *Description*	Leah attended the first part of the 3 way conference to share her thoughts and ideas to be included in this form.
Date completed:	**Review date:**

	Observations and examples. What can you see or hear the young person doing?	What are the helpful and unhelpful impacts on them and others?	What strategies and adjustments might help them?
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 	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.

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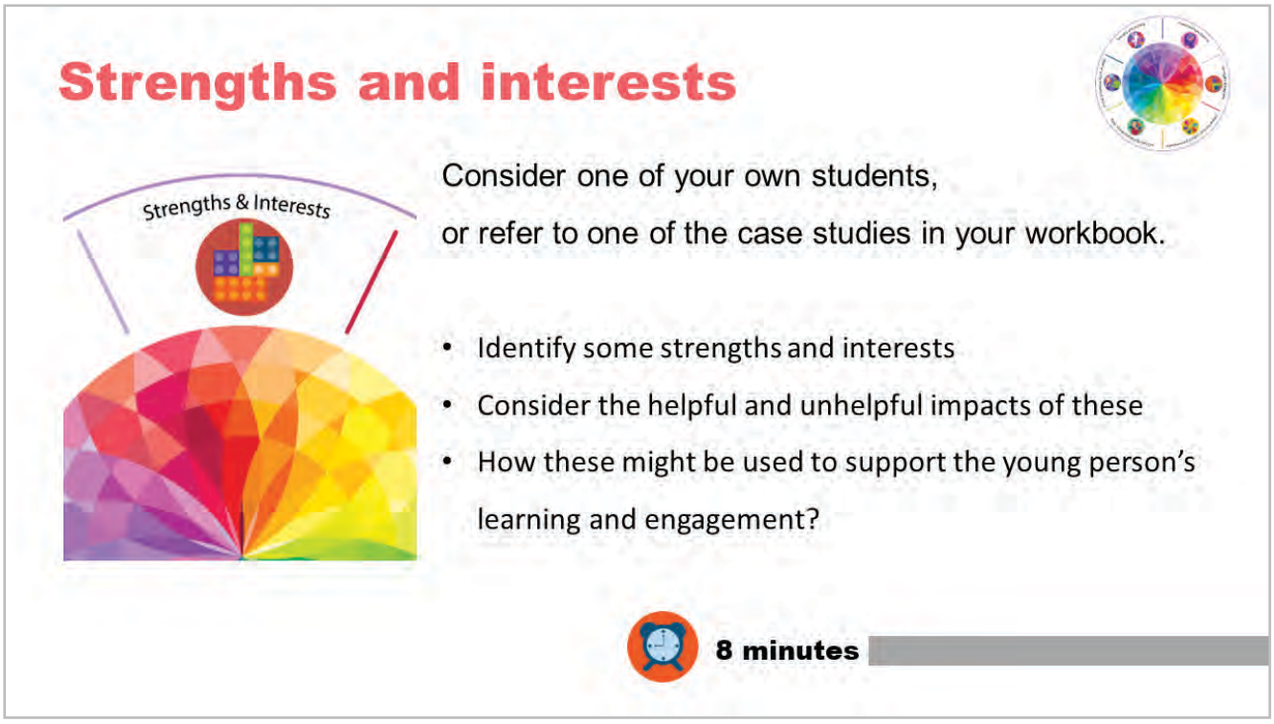

Key information:

- Neuroscience research indicates that all children learn better when they are interested as this increases engagement.
- However, research suggests 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:

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Notes:

Olivia

Olivia is a 6-year-old girl who has just started mainstream primary school. Olivia's mother feels that Olivia will settle and be ok at school if she is understood and supported in the right way by the school staff and students. Olivia is very skilled in the area of music. She can name the instruments that are being played in a piece of music. She is learning the piano and the violin. Olivia loves nonfiction books about music and instruments and can relay the information she has read in these books, but has trouble reading the class reader.

Olivia does not join in playground games unless she is in charge. She has trouble following the rules when children play games that change as she can't keep up. Instead she spends most break times just outside her classroom reading her music books. Olivia does want to join the school orchestra, but has been told said she needs to be in Year 4 before she can join. Olivia is struggling to connect with her peers and with the curriculum.

Listen to Olivia's case **study as an audio file:**

Nadim

Nadim is a 9-year-old boy. He is supported in mainstream in the areas of communication and physical tasks. Nadim loves sci-fi movies. At lunchtime, he sometimes plays a sci-fi game in the playground with his classmates, who have made up the rules. He often gets frustrated and cross with his friends when they explain the rules to him and he can't remember them all.

Nadim enjoys talking about sci-fi movies with his peers. His teacher incorporates this interest into as much of the curriculum as she can. For example, sci-fi content is embedded into numeracy and literacy activities. Nadim is hoping to create his own sci-fi movies with friends doing the camera work and him directing.

Eric

Eric is a 13-year-old boy who attends a mainstream secondary school. Eric has a diagnosis of autism. He is bilingual and understands English and Mandarin. Eric has not yet shared his interests with school and they are still struggling to identify any consistent strengths, as they do not yet know him well enough. Eric will engage with his peers if they are playing on devices but usually not otherwise. Eric recently attempted to show his homeroom teacher a city that he built on his laptop, but the teacher didn't have time to look at it properly. Eric seems to enjoy art and history and the teachers of these classes say that he always appears attentive and occasionally responds to questions in a clear and accurate manner.

Questions for Strengths and Interests scenarios:

Think about one of your own students or one of the scenarios.

1. Identify some of their strengths and interests.

2. Consider the helpful and unhelpful impacts of these strengths and interests.

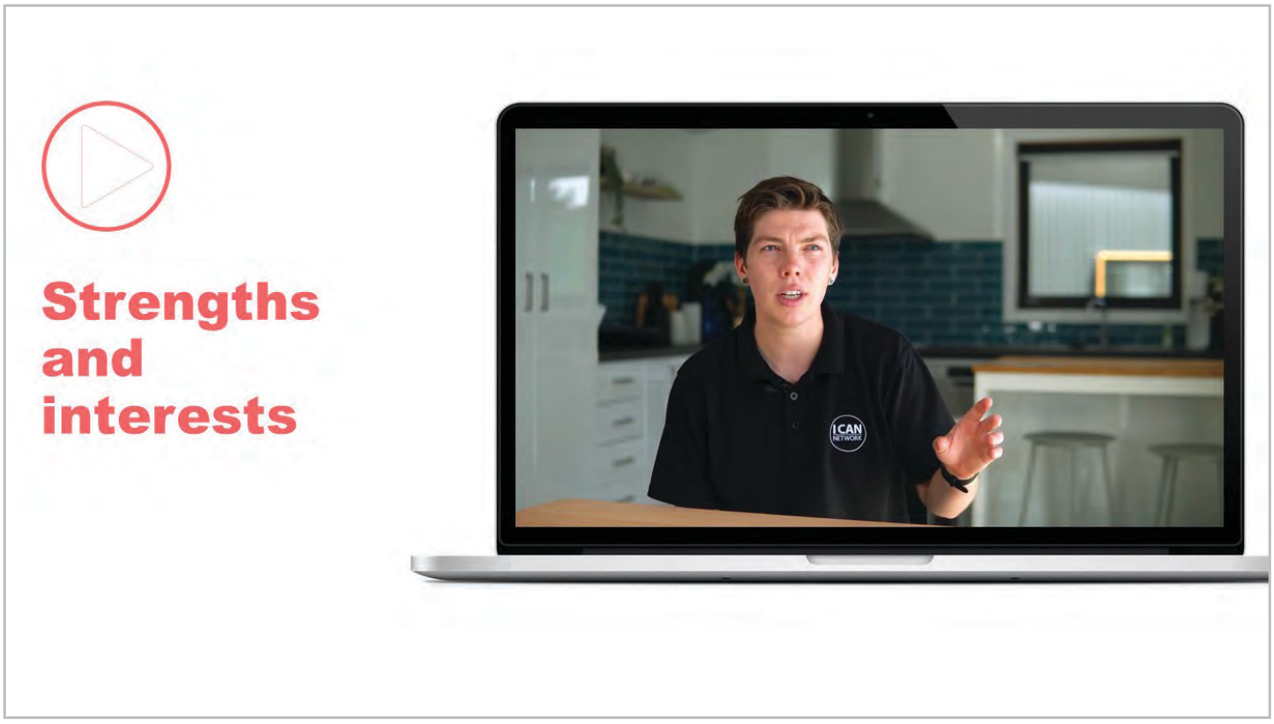
3. How might these strengths and interests be used to support learning and engagement?

Strengths and interests

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.
- There are always opportunities to incorporate student interests into the class curriculum. Sometimes there are explicit opportunities, like students being able to give presentations on preferred topics, and other times there may be more subtle opportunities, like referencing a student interest to make a point about a class topic. For example, referencing Transformers robot movies to give an example of good versus evil when discussing morality in literature, or referencing Pokemon in a science lesson. Interests may provide a practical way of exploring curriculum matter, such as using the video game Minecraft to model mathematical solutions. Even if an interest cannot be readily included in a lesson, it could be a great way to build rapport and trust with a student, by having a brief conversation about the topic you know they love, such as asking a student the football scores from the weekend if they are a keen football fan.

Notes:



Key information:

- No matter what a student's interests are you can find a way to link it to the curriculum in appropriate ways.
- Sensitive topics can be addressed from different perspectives rather than focusing on the inherent topic. For example, the topic of zombies. A student might investigate which countries have traditional stories about zombies and how these stories have changed over time. For a topic like guns, the student could investigate the gun laws in different countries and the power of gun lobbies.
- Autistic students struggle to learn effectively if they are not interested. On the flip side, if they are interested, they are usually engaged in their learning and are therefore much less likely to be dysregulated. Students who are highly dysregulated may be that way for a number of reasons. Completing a Planning Tool with the student and the parents/carers can help to highlight reasons why this might be the case.
- In high school, it can be hard to cover the curriculum through interests and passions. They can be used as occasional activities, such as a fortnightly fishing trip for a student who is passionate about fishing. This can support the building of rapport and show the student that they are valued.

Notes:

	Observations and examples. What can you see or hear the young person doing?	What are the helpful and unhelpful impacts on them and others?	What strategies and adjustments might help them?
Strengths and interests 	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

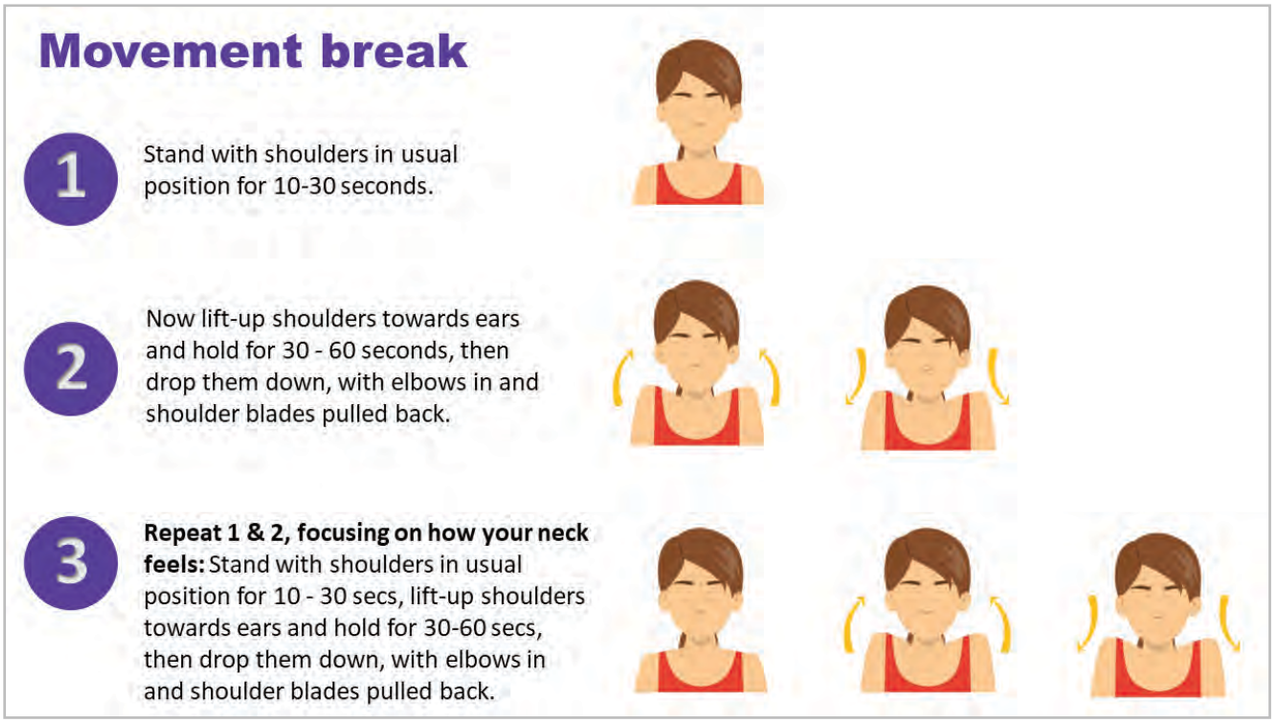
Key information:

- 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

Notes:



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 help us to neurologically and biologically connect the thinking cap of the brain and get us ready to learn.
- Interoception activities are useful to both develop interoception and to support self-regulation. When doing an interoception activity, unless the person is overloaded, the parasympathetic nervous system is activated and the sympathetic nervous system decreases activity. This results in a calmer person.

References:

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- 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:

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.
- Being disconnected from your cultural heritage can lead you to question who you really are and where you belong. This may cause you to feel lost and isolated.
- 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.

Link:

- 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)

References:

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Notes:

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.

Notes:

Connections to culture and community

	Observations and examples. What can you see or hear the young person doing?	What are the helpful and unhelpful impacts on them and others?	What strategies and adjustments might help them?
Connections to culture and 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 student feels valued by their family whilst losing connection time with peers.
- Strategies and adjustments:
  - use helpful impacts to support other areas
  - minimise unhelpful impacts 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 students, enabling their child to connect to peers over the break.

Notes:

Key information:

- Each individual has their own set of strengths and support needs across the executive functioning domains.
- Support needs will vary across the day and over a lifetime and will usually increase when the individual is stressed/distressed.
- Many other skills, such as self-care and independence skills rely on executive functioning skills.

Links:

- Positive Partnerships executive functioning information sheet https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/uploads/Executive-Functioning-_21.03.22.pdf
- Positive Partnerships executive functioning webinar https://vimeo.com/493618538

Reference:

- Krockow, E (2018) How Many Decisions Do We Make Each Day? https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/stretching-theory/201809/how-many-decisions-do-we-make-each-day

Notes:

positive partnerships

Executive Functioning Strategies

Executive functions are brain processes that help us manage our thoughts and actions. These include the ability to organise and plan, shift attention, be flexible with thinking, and self-regulate, which can all impact how a young person copes with daily tasks.

Here are some examples of strategies that can be used in the classroom, at home and in the community to support autistic young people.

Planning

In The Classroom

1. Structured timetables: Provide a clear, visual daily timetable that outlines activities and transitions.
2. Chunking tasks: Break down large assignments into smaller, manageable steps with checklists.
3. Explicit instruction: Teach planning skills explicitly, including how to prioritise tasks and set goals.

At Home

1. Family calendar: Maintain a calendar in a common area to track family activities and responsibilities.
2. Weekly planning sessions: Hold regular family meetings to discuss and plan for the upcoming week.
3. Model planning behaviour: Demonstrate effective planning in daily activities and family events, e.g. typing shopping lists on your phone.

In The Community

1. Community programs: Enrol in programs or activities that require planning and organisation, e.g. community sport and recreation clubs.
2. Public transport: Support young people to plan and navigate using public transport timetables.

Organisation

In The Classroom

1. Colour-coding: Use colour-coding for subject timetables and tasks to make organisation easier to follow.
2. Provide organisational tools: Offer folders, binders and labelled storage for materials.
3. Set specific goals: Establish clear organisational goals and review progress regularly.

At Home

1. Designated study area: Create a clutter-free study area with necessary supplies.
2. Use baskets or bins: Organise tasks by priority or subject using clearly labelled containers.
3. Regular check-ins: Implement regular check-ins to review tasks and responsibilities.

In The Community

1. Library resources: Utilise library resources for organising research and projects.
2. Technology tools: Use apps and technology to support organisation (e.g. calendar apps, task managers).

Time Management

In The Classroom

1. Timers and alarms: Provide access to timers to allocate specific periods for tasks and breaks.
2. Teach planning skills: Incorporate lessons on creating to-do lists and prioritising tasks.
3. Reflective practices: Have students reflect on their time management skills and set study goals.

At Home

1. Set routines: Establish regular routines for homework, household jobs and leisure activities.
2. Task lists: Encourage the use of daily or weekly task lists with items to tick off.
3. Model time management: Demonstrate effective time management strategies through your actions.

In The Community

1. Opportunities for practice: Use public transport timetables or other schedules (e.g. movie or concert timetables) to plan what's required to be on time for a particular event.
2. Use technology wisely: Integrate apps and tools designed to support time management into daily routines (e.g. timers and reminder apps).

Working Memory

In The Classroom

1. Visual supports: Incorporate charts, diagrams and graphic organisers to help visualise information.
2. Interactive activities: Engage students in hands-on activities that reinforce memory through practice.
3. Mnemonics and memory resources: Teach memory strategies using a range of classroom resources, songs and acronyms.

At Home

1. Memory games and puzzles: Encourage use of games and puzzles that focus on memory-based activities.
2. Active reading strategies: Promote highlighting, note-taking and summarising when reading.
3. Environmental organisation: Help organise study spaces to minimise distractions and optimise accessibility.

In The Community

1. Situational practice: Engage in sports and recreation activities that provide opportunities to practice working memory, e.g. remembering the rules and processes of a game.
2. Shopping resources: Use strategies and visual supports to help remember items to purchase when going shopping.

Meta-Cognition

Thinking about our own thinking

In The Classroom

1. Model meta-cognitive strategies: Demonstrate problem-solving by verbalising your thought process.
2. Reflective journals: Encourage students to keep journals reflecting on their learning and strategies.
3. Peer collaboration: Work in groups to discuss and reflect on their thinking processes.

At Home

1. Reflective discussions: Have regular conversations about strategies used for homework or jobs.
2. Goal setting: Work with your child to set specific, achievable goals and discuss steps to reach them.
3. Model meta-cognitive thinking: Share your own thinking process when solving problems or making decisions.

In The Community

1. Community trips: Involve young people in thinking aloud about what they need to do in preparation for a trip or outing.
2. Mentorship programs: Engage with a trust mentor who can provide guidance on effective meta-cognitive strategies.

Emotional Regulation

In The Classroom

1. Mindfulness activities: Incorporate short interoception / mindfulness exercises to help students with their self-regulation.
2. Explicit teaching: Teach students to identify and understand their emotions and provide regulation strategies.
3. Calming spaces: Create a space for students to support self-regulation. This could include different sensory supports and visuals.

At Home

1. Model emotional regulation: Demonstrate self-regulation strategies and support young people through co-regulation.
2. Safe space: Create a dedicated area where family members can go to support their self-regulation.
3. Emotion vocabulary: Teach and use a rich emotional vocabulary to support young people to articulate particular feelings.

In The Community

1. Use personal (social) stories: Use personal stories to prepare for new or challenging situations.
2. Self-regulation apps and resources: Use apps and podcasts to help calm and prepare for a range of community experiences.

Attention

In The Classroom

1. Environment: Work with the young person to ensure the classroom environment will support their learning.
2. Movement breaks: Include short, structured movement breaks to help students reset and refocus.
3. Assistive tools: Provide tools like timers and headphones to support students with their learning.

At Home

1. Model focus strategies: Demonstrate ways of paying attention to one task at a time, e.g. using timers and visual reminders.
2. Scheduled breaks: Incorporate regular breaks during activities to maintain focus.
3. Physical activity: Encourage movement / brain breaks during activities to support concentration and refresh the mind.

In The Community

1. Structured activities: Enrol children in structured extracurricular activities that interest them.
2. Interest Groups: Form or join interest groups that can provide a supportive and focused activity environment.

Flexibility

In The Classroom

1. Scenario-based learning: Create activities requiring flexible thinking, like role-playing or problem-solving tasks.
2. Teach flexibility skills: Integrate lessons that discuss concepts of change and adaptability.
3. Provide choices: Offer choices in assignments to help students practise decision-making and flexibility, e.g. universal design principles.

At Home

1. Predictable routine with built-in flexibility: Maintain a consistent routine but include opportunities for learning by discussing changes to routine with the young person.
2. Play games promoting flexible thinking: Engage in board games, card games, or puzzles requiring strategy changes.
3. Practise problem-solving together: Engage in family projects where plans might need to change.

In The Community

1. Exposure to diverse experiences: Take young people to new places to experience and learn about different environments.
2. Community activities: Participate in clubs, sports and events.

Task Initiation

In The Classroom

1. Prompting: Use verbal or visual prompts to signal the start of a task.
2. Modelling and role-playing: Demonstrate how to start a task and have students practise.
3. Environmental resources: Ensure students have access to necessary resources for starting class tasks.

At Home

1. Visual reminders: Use charts, checklists or sticky notes as visual reminders for tasks.
2. Environment organisation: Keep necessary materials organised and easily accessible.
3. Family involvement: Work alongside the young person to support task initiation.

In The Community

1. Peer support: Encourage forming study groups or project teams with peers for learning support.
2. Technology Resources: Utilise apps such as reminders and calendars to help commence tasks and stay focused.

Persistence

In The Classroom

1. Scaffolding: Offer support at the beginning of a task and support the young person to increase their independence.
2. Time management: Teach students to use timers to allocate specific periods for tasks.
3. Modelling: Model persistence by working through challenges in front of the students.

At Home

1. Problem-solving discussions: Engage in discussions about approaching difficult tasks and developing strategies.
2. Breaks and downtime: Ensure regular breaks to help manage fatiguge and support self-regulation.
3. Encouragement: Praise young people for their efforts and persistence in completing tasks.

In The Community

1. Community involvement: Encourage participation in activities requiring commitment and perseverance.
2. Celebrate results: Recognise and celebrate achievements and efforts on community-based projects, e.g. community gardens, murals, volunteer projects.

Positive Partnerships is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education. The views expressed within this program do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government or the Australian Government Department of Education.

Key information:

- Executive functioning encompasses a number of skills in ways that are similar to the analogies of an air traffic controller, chief executive officer and orchestra conductor.
- Executive functions are a set of cognitive skills that regulate, control and manage our thoughts and actions.
- These skills are crucial for learning and development.
- Children are born with the potential to develop these skills throughout childhood through to the late teen years and early adulthood. (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015)
- Executive functioning supports young people during the school day. It also supports many adaptive functioning skills such as self-care, self-help, independence in daily tasks and navigating community resources i.e. taking public transport.

References:

- Barlow, M. (2020). Improving Executive Function | Organization for Autism Research. Retrieved 6 August 2020, from https://researchautism.org/improving-executive-function/
- Brown, T. (2020). The Adult ADHD Mind: Executive Function Connections. Retrieved 6 August 2020, from https://www.additudemag.com/inside-the-add-mind/
- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2011). Building the Brain's "Air Traffic Control" System: How Early Experiences Shape the Development of Executive Function: Working Paper No. 11. http://www.developing child.harvard.edu
- MacKenzie, H. (2019). Thinking and Learning. In R. Jordan, J. M. Roberst & K. Hume (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Autism and Education* (1st ed., pp. 167-185). Sage Publications ltd

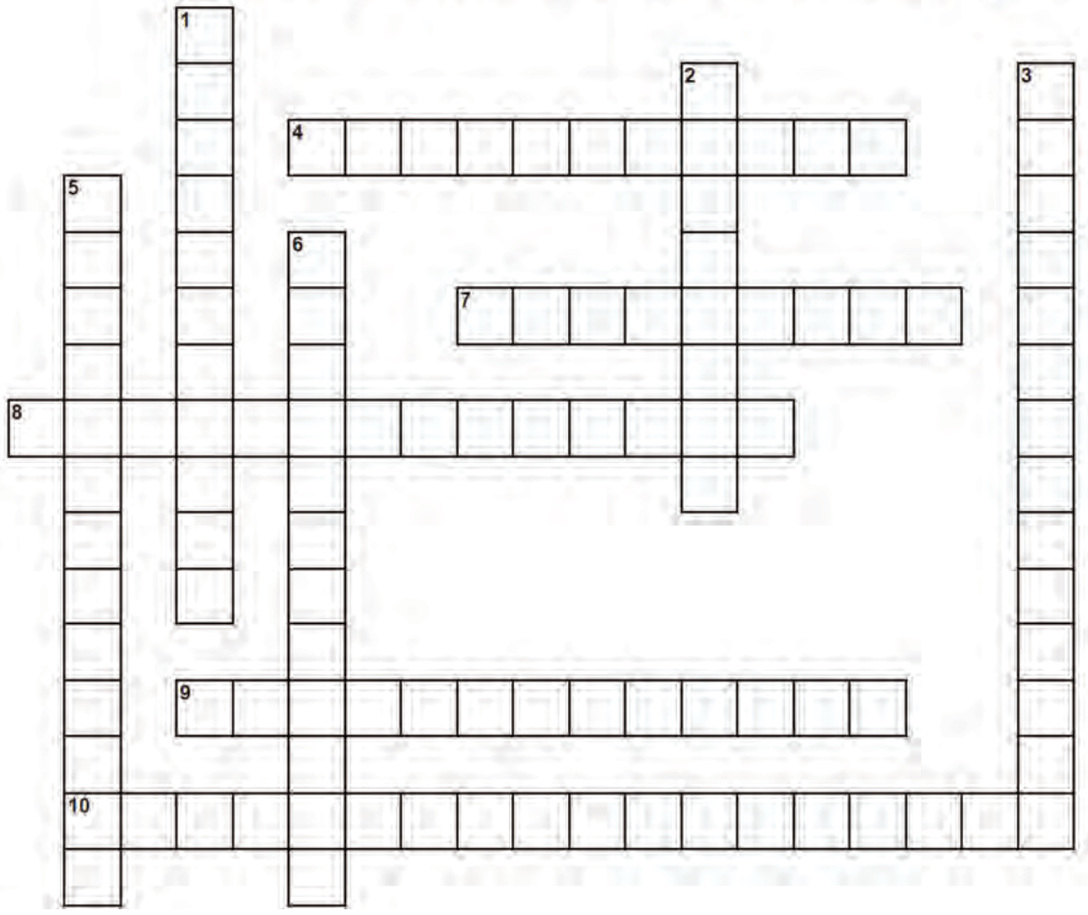
Key information:

- Executive functioning is comprised of sets of cognitive processes which are the base skills required for learning and engagement.
- Research estimates that up to 78% of autistic individuals have difficulties with executive functioning (Lynch et al, 2017 as cited in Alsadei et al., 2020).
- Executive functioning skills needing support will differ from person to person. No one is born with these skills, but it is possible to learn them over time.
- Diverse learners often have difficulties with one or more areas of executive functioning.

References:

- Alsaedi, R., Carrington, S., & Watters, J. (2020). Behavioral and Neuropsychological Evaluation of Executive Functions in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Gulf Region. *Brain Sciences, 10*(2), 120. doi: 10.3390/brainsci10020120
- 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. Roberst & K. Hume (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Autism and Education* (1st ed., pp. 167-185). Sage Publications ltd

Executive Functioning



ACROSS

4 Being able to think about different view points, change plans and adapt to new situations.
7 Focusing on a task even if bored or tired or being presenting with alternative things to focus on.
8 Understanding how important time is and how to get jobs done within allocated timeframes (2 words).
9 Thinking about our own thinking. This includes checking on how things are going for ourselves.
10 Stopping yourself from doing something so that you can think through what to do next (2 words).

DOWN

1 Being able to keep going to finish a task and re-visiting the job if necessary.
2 Deciding on what's important and not important and the ability to sequence sections of the tasks in order, to best achieve the overall task.
3 Knowing how to and being able to start a task when needed (2 words).
5 Being able to remember information while working on other tasks (2 words).
6 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.

WORD BANK: Attention, flexibility, metacognition, organisation, persistence, planning, responseinhibition, taskinitiation, timemanagement, workingmemory.

Executive functioning

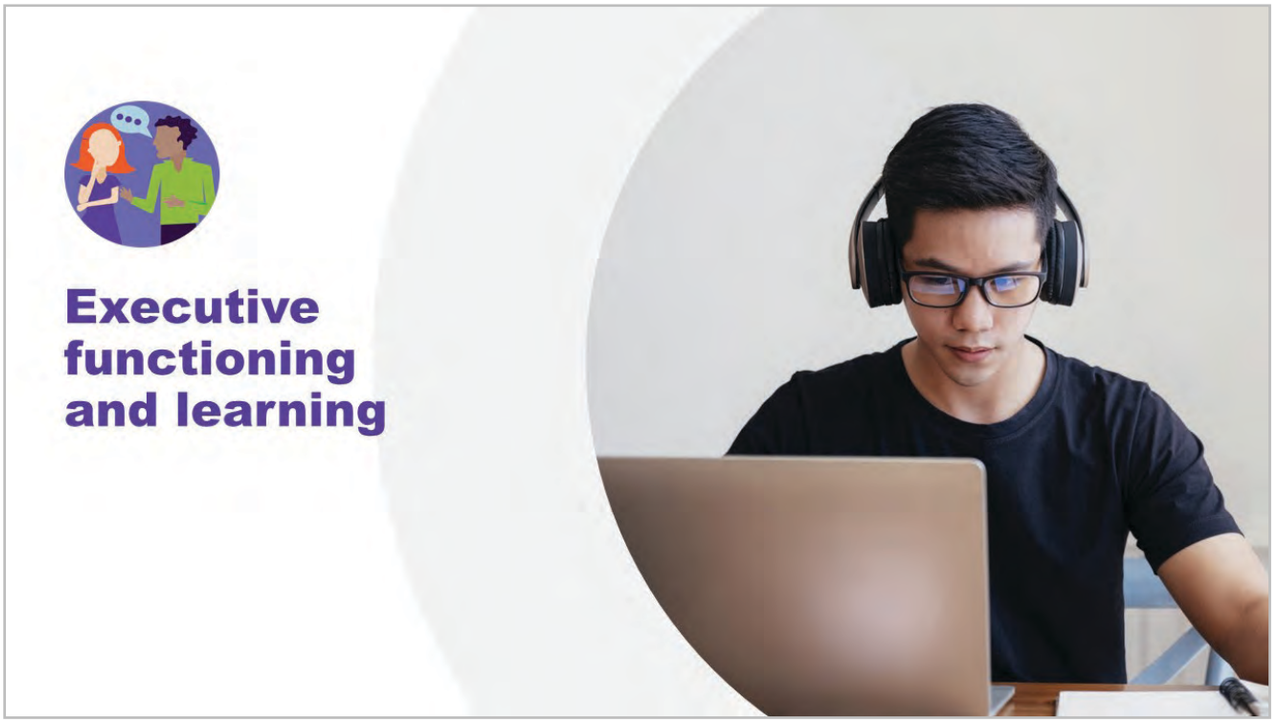
Key information:

- We may use some or all components of executive functioning to complete a task.
- Context significantly impacts executive functioning, either helpfully and/or unhelpfully.

References:

- 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. Roberst & K. Hume (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Autism and Education* (1st ed., pp. 167-185). Sage Publications ltd

Notes:



Key information:

Research shows that involving students in planning for their learning:

- enhances engagement in learning. This is because when students have the opportunity to contribute to their own goals and voice their aspirations, they are more motivated to achieve them. They are also more likely to be engaged when teaching is tailored to their needs
- enriches participation in the classroom, school and community (Victorian Department of Education and Training, 2019)
- provides the opportunity for students to acquire skills, build confidence, expand their aspirations and gain confidence. The more they are able to participate, the more effective their contributions and the greater the impact on their development. (UNICEF, 2012)
- improves outcomes in both education and in life (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2018)

Students who have been taught self-advocacy skills through being able to contribute to their education planning are more likely to succeed in post-secondary education. These skills are also crucial to participating in the workforce and the community. (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2018).

Links:

- Understanding Learning and Attention Issues – NCLD https://www.ncld.org/news/state-of-learning-disabilities/understanding-learning-and-attention-issues/
- Victorian Department of Education and Training, (2019) *Amplify: Empowering students through voice, agency and leadership.* https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/AmplifyAccessible.docx

References:

- National Center for Learning Disabilities, (2018) *The State of Learning Disabilities: Understanding the 1 in 5.* https://www.ncld.org/research/state-of-learning-disabilities/
- 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.

Key information:

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

Notes:

Think about one of your students, or refer to a case study in your workbook:

1. Identify where you see this student experiencing difficulties in the area of executive functioning.

2. Name what executive functioning skills are proving challenging for this student?

3. List some strategies that may be effective to support this student to be more successful with their learning.

10 minutes

Key information:

- Challenges with executive functioning can significantly impact students during the school day.

Olivia

Olivia is a 6-year-old girl who has just started mainstream primary school. Olivia's mother feels that Olivia will settle and be ok at school if she is understood and supported in the right way by the school staff and students. Olivia can read high level non-fiction books on music but is reluctant to read the school readers as she doesn't find them interesting. Olivia's mum has a wide circle of autistic friends who get together regularly to play music. Olivia enjoys their company when they are together and finds these interactions easier than with people her own age.

Olivia has trouble getting organised for school in the mornings. She is often late, as isn't able to leave enough time to get dressed and eat a proper breakfast. This often causes tension as her mum is trying to get out the door for work as well. If she is late for school, Olivia becomes anxious and often doesn't want to enter the classroom if the lesson has started.

Olivia has a visual schedule to help her remember the days she has to wear her sports uniform. She loves her non- fiction books about music and instruments and can relay the information she has read in these books. When asked to complete a series of steps to complete a maths task, Olivia does not know where to start and will spend a long time on one section. She often does not have time to complete the whole task and she becomes upset as she likes maths and wants to finish. Olivia does not join in playground games unless she is in charge. She has trouble following the rules when children play games that are spontaneous and ebb and flow as she can't keep up. Some teachers and students see her as being bossy and spoilt.

When Olivia becomes anxious, her speech volume and noise making increases. She has trouble controlling this which can be annoying and frustrating for teachers and other students.

Listen to Olivia's case **study as an audio file:**

Nadim

Nadim is a 9-year-old boy who is of middle- eastern descent. He is supported in mainstream in the areas of communication and physical tasks. His family speaks English at home and also Lebanese with the extended family. Nadim's extended family are less patient around Nadim's auditory processing needs and he can get left out in large family gatherings, where he often retreats to his room.

Nadim's father works long hours and his mother is busy during the day with his little brothers and sisters, so they find it difficult to attend meetings at school. The family are all focused on Nadim's cerebral palsy and are not really accepting of his autism diagnosis. Some of them think his behaviours are from being spoilt.

Nadim's teacher will sometimes provide dot point instructions for him to follow to complete a task. He enjoys writing tasks using his iPad where he can write about sci- fi movies. However, he can get frustrated and anxious if his sentences aren't exactly how he wants them to sound. Despite having the instructions to follow, he often doesn't complete all the task requirements, as he has focussed too much on getting everything perfect and runs short of time.

At lunchtime, he sometimes plays a sci-fi game in the playground with his classmates, who have made up the rules. He often gets frustrated and cross with his friends when they explain the rules to him and he can't remember them all.

He often gets frustrated with his mother after school when she asks how his day was. He needs time to process the question and formulate his answer, but often she will ask him again as she thinks he hasn't heard the question. He also gets frustrated with himself, as he can find it difficult to remember everything that happened during the day.

Eric

Eric is a 13-year-old boy who attends a mainstream secondary school. He has a diagnosis of autism. Eric is able to independently get ready for school using a visual schedule on his iPad. This visual schedule supports Eric to remember the sequence for getting dressed. Eric uses a timer to complete getting dressed within 15 minutes. His mum has found that using a timer supports him to get dressed in enough time to leave for school.

Eric can be easily distracted in class and find it difficult to complete tasks that don't have a visual schedule to prompt him. His maths teacher checks in on him during the lesson to remind him to stay on task, but a task sheet full of questions is quite overwhelming for Eric.

During cooking lessons, Eric is given a visual schedule to follow. He is able to follow the visual schedule and collect the necessary equipment. On occasions, he can use too much or not enough of some ingredients when following a recipe. This can make him very frustrated and animated, so much so that he can't focus on the schedule anymore and the teacher has difficulty engaging him back on task.

Deng

Deng is 18 years old and is in a mainstream class where he receives additional support in many areas of his learning. Deng loves sport and usually remembers to bring his training gear to school. He has sport most days as part of his flexible learning program. He sometimes forgets to bring it home to be washed and has to be reminded to put it in the laundry.

Deng has difficulty getting to other classes on time without 1:1 support and often brings the wrong books and resources that he needs for those classes. He has trouble focussing on a topic that is not football and concentrating on verbal information. The information he sometimes does take in is not the important information but more random details. This makes planning for his work requirements a challenge. When there is a change to the school routine, such as a teacher being absent or a change to the daily timetable, he can become anxious as routine changes and meeting new people can be distressing.

Deng finds it difficult to meet assignment deadlines for Maths and English. He often becomes overwhelmed with information and doesn't know where to start and has trouble deciding what is important to include in assignments. At home when asked to help with jobs around the house, he often has trouble starting. If the job is something he isn't interested in doing, he has trouble completing it.

Questions for Executive Functioning scenarios:

1. Identify where you see this student having trouble in the area of executive functioning.

2. Name what cognitive skills are proving challenging for this student.

3. List some strategies that may be effective to support this student to be more successful with their learning.

Strategies to support executive functioning

- being able to use technology to support their educational needs in a variety of ways (e.g. to type or help with school work)
- copies of what the teacher wrote on the board
- receiving rewards for jobs well done
- being able to take a break and having time away from others
- using special interests to do projects
- a quiet space to do assessment
- 1:1 help from an adult
- being reminded of pending changes
- help with organising themselves

Saggers et al, 2015

Reference:

- Saggers, B., Klug, D., Harper-Hill, K., Ashburner, J., Costley, D., Clark, T., ... & Carrington, S. (2016). *Australian autism educational needs analysis-What are the needs of schools, parents and students on the autism spectrum?* (Full Report). Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism (Autism CRC). https://eprints.qut.edu.au/95975/

Planning Tool activity

	Observations and examples. What can you see or hear the young person doing?	What are the helpful and unhelpful impacts on them and others?	What strategies and adjustments may support them?
Executive functioning skills 	Dean focuses on several things at once, not always including work.	Dean does not know what task he's meant to be doing.	Give Dean bullet point instructions that he can tick off as he completes each bullet point.

Lunch

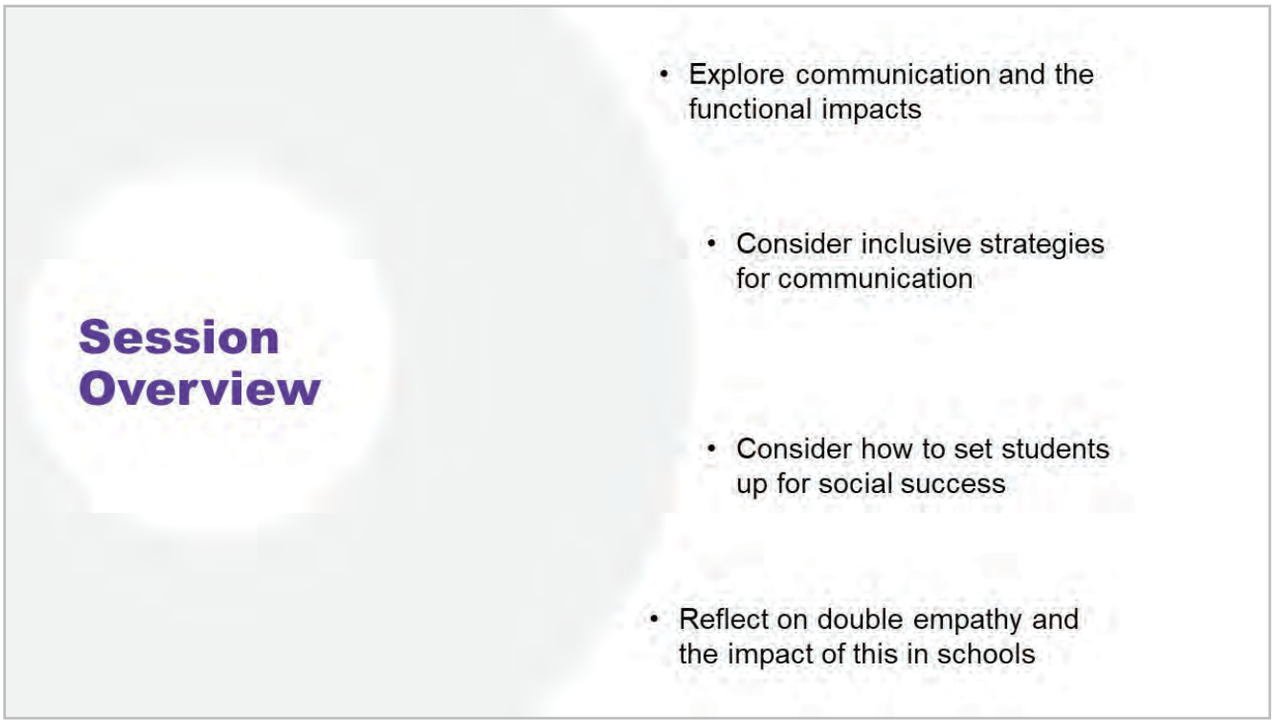
Session 3

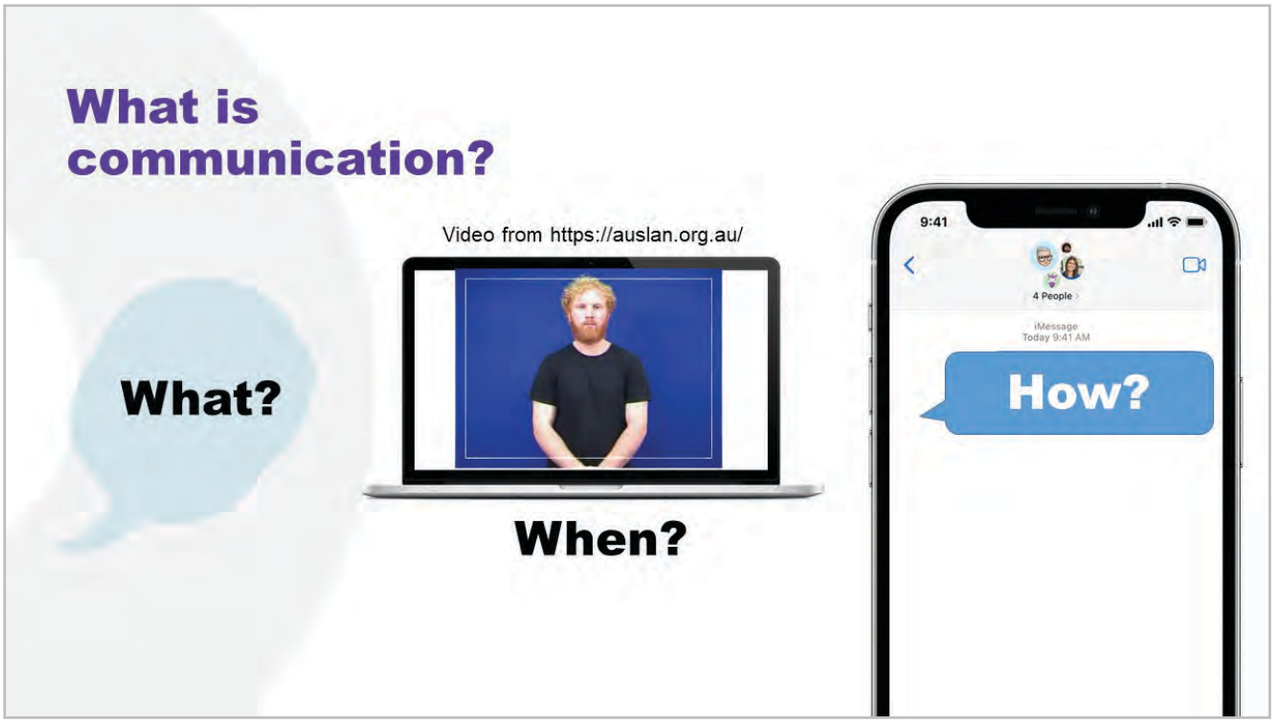
positive partnerships

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

Resources:

- Double Empathy article (in workbook)





Key information:

- People communicate for:
  - social closeness (e.g. I love you, smiling, hugging)
  - getting our needs met (e.g. can you make me a cup of tea please?)
  - sharing information (I am taking the dog for a walk and will be back at 6pm – this could be a note or spoken)
  - learning and literacy (e.g. asking a question at work, reading a document)
  - meeting our emotional needs (e.g. I am frustrated as the dishes haven't been done. Crying if you are upset)
  - being part of a family and community (e.g. waving to your neighbours, saying good morning to your sibling).
- Communication is an incredibly important life skill that most of us take for granted. We start communicating well before we can speak through our behaviour and non-verbal messages.
- Communication doesn't just involve speaking. It also includes things like listening, understanding, social skills, reading and writing.

Link:

- Video from https://auslan.org.au/

References:

- 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:

- Consider the different components of communication (expressive & receptive) and other features such as echolalia.
- There may be a mismatch between expressive & 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.
- It can be a step in language development. Echolalia can decrease as more spontaneous language is incorporated (Davidoff, 2018).

Link:

- Positive Partnerships' Webinars: Communication

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

Communication in the classroom

A student uses a communication device to request a drink.

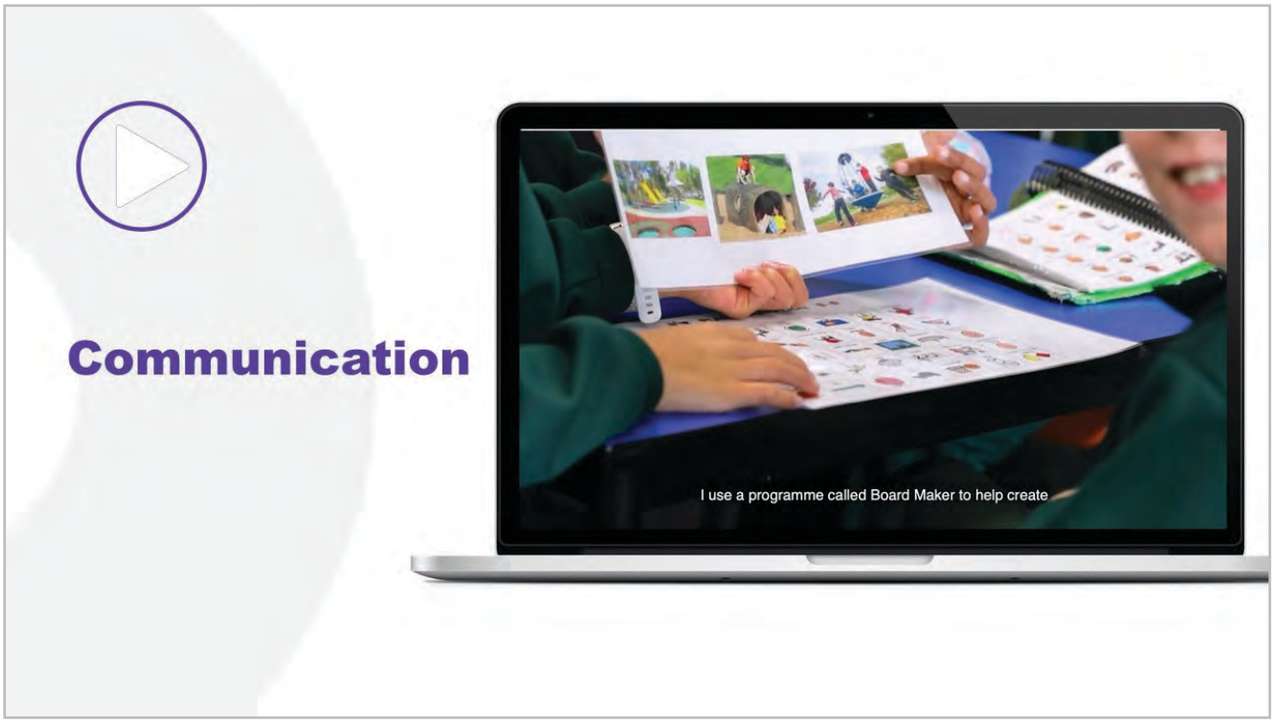
A student waves to a friend.

A student gives a speech about a project they've completed.

Link:

- Communication Module (https://learninghub.positivepartnerships.com.au)

Notes:



Key information:

- Autistic students 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, such as being unable to calm themselves and unable to communicate intense emotions (Kapp et al., 2019).
- Quiet hands refers to not moving hands around, rather keeping them still e.g. not flapping.

References:

- 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.
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Communication - discuss:

- These individuals have shared their views on communication. What did you think?
- What are the implications for autistic students being told 'quiet hands' or otherwise being asked not to move their bodies in ways that are natural to them?

5 minutes

Key information:

- Autistic individuals may use body movements to communicate, asking them to keep their bodies still, for example by saying quiet hands, causes long term distress as it is effectively silencing them.
- For those who don't use speech to communicate (either some or all of the time), they might use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) to aid their communication.
- This can be low tech AAC such as pictures or visuals or hi-tech AAC such as a speech generating device.
- Everyone needs effective ways to communicate so they can participate as an active member of the class, their family and the wider community.

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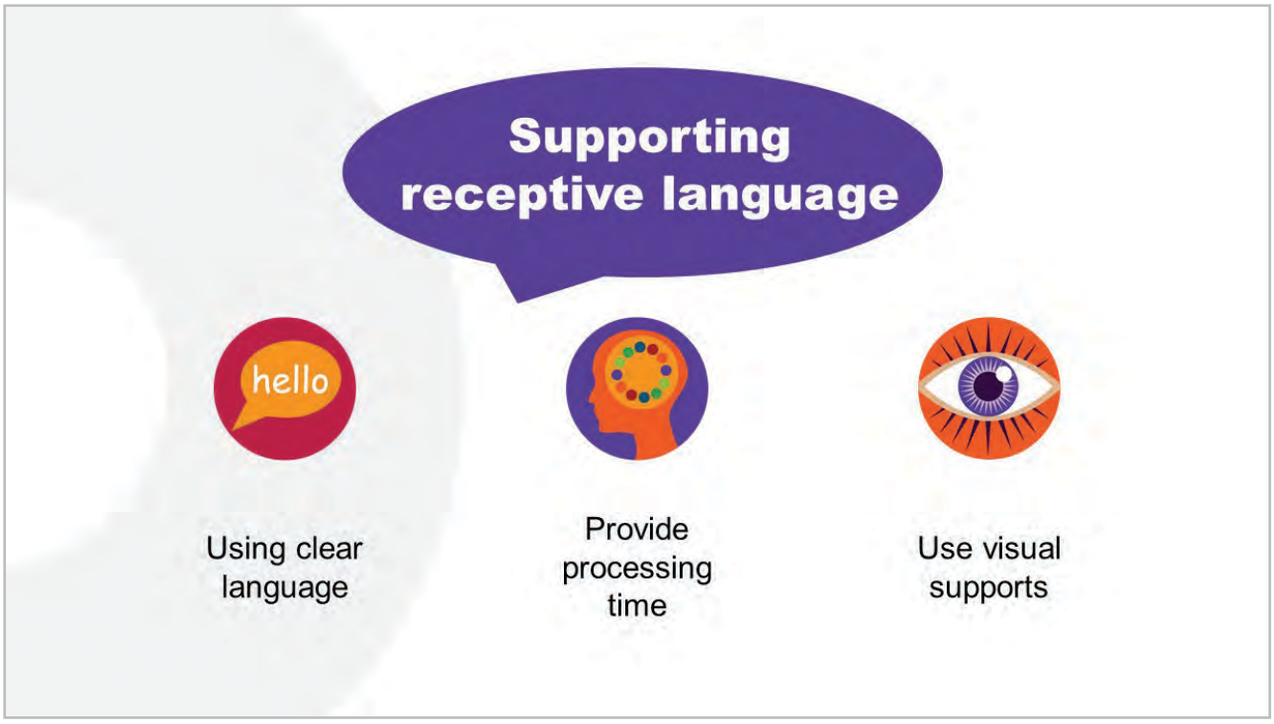

Key information:

- Communication has both expressive and receptive elements.
- Autistic students can experience differences with expressive and/or receptive communication.
- There may be a mismatch between their expressive and receptive communication skills which can mean that their communication challenges are not always obvious.
- **Expressive** communication involves the **sending** of a message. A message can be sent using a range of different forms of communication including verbal (i.e. speech) or non-verbal (i.e. gesture, facial expression, tone of voice etc). AAC, such as pictures or technology can also be used to send a message.
- **Receptive** communication involves the **receiving** and **interpreting** of a message. Receptive communication is the ability to understand what someone is communicating. This also includes verbal and non-verbal messages. Part of interpreting a message is also understanding the intent; whether it is a joke, a question or a sarcastic comment.

Link:

- Positive Partnerships Webinars: Communication

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

Clear communication

- Say what you mean, mean what you say
- Try not to use questions to share information
- Be careful with idioms, sarcasm and irony
- Break down instructions, give one at a time if needed

4 minutes

Key information:

- Non-literal language can be misinterpreted by autistic students. This doesn't mean to never use metaphors, sarcasm and irony, just that those language conventions might need to be taught first. So, instead of just saying, 'Never in a million years would I have known how to do that', you might first teach students that we sometimes use language that greatly exaggerates to create an effect.
- Many autistic students may use lots of sarcasm but this does not mean they understand other people's sarcasm. They may also be using phrases that they don't understand themselves, as they may be using complex echolalia. For example, a student might repeat a phrase from a movie to join in a conversation with peers, without knowing the meaning of the phrase themselves.

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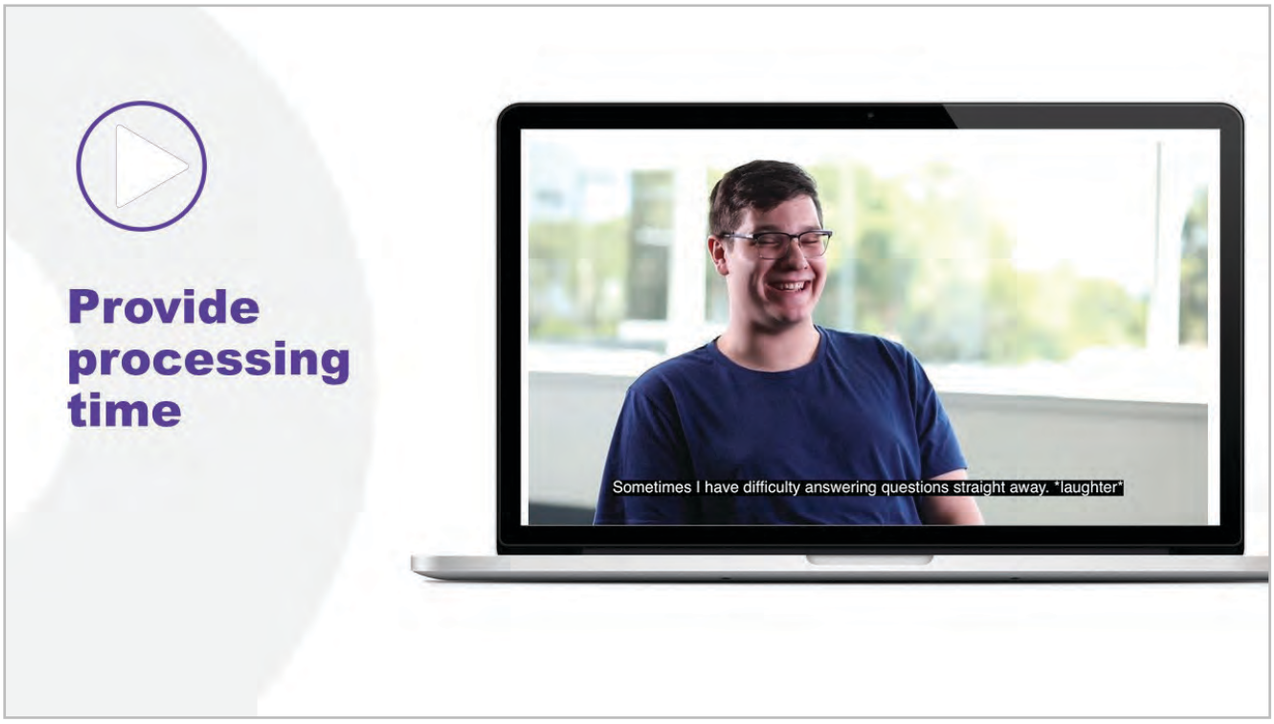

Key information:

- Autistic students can show relatively slower processing speeds, compared with typically developing children and this is true for older children and adults as well. Slower processing time can sometimes be associated with greater social difficulties.
- Providing a little extra processing time is critical for some of our students. We can sometimes forget that students need this extra time if they appear very capable when using expressive language.
- Extra processing time should be given to students to help comprehend what's been said and also to give students extra time to formulate their own expressive responses.
- Be careful not to quickly repeat or change a question or instruction too quickly when waiting for a student to respond. This could cause extra stress. Just give some time for the student to properly process what's required of them.

Reference:

- Haigh, S. M., Walsh, J. A., Mazefsky, C. A., Minshew, N. J., & Eack, S. M. (2018). Processing speed is impaired in adults with autism spectrum disorder, and relates to social communication abilities. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders, 48*(8), 2653-2662.

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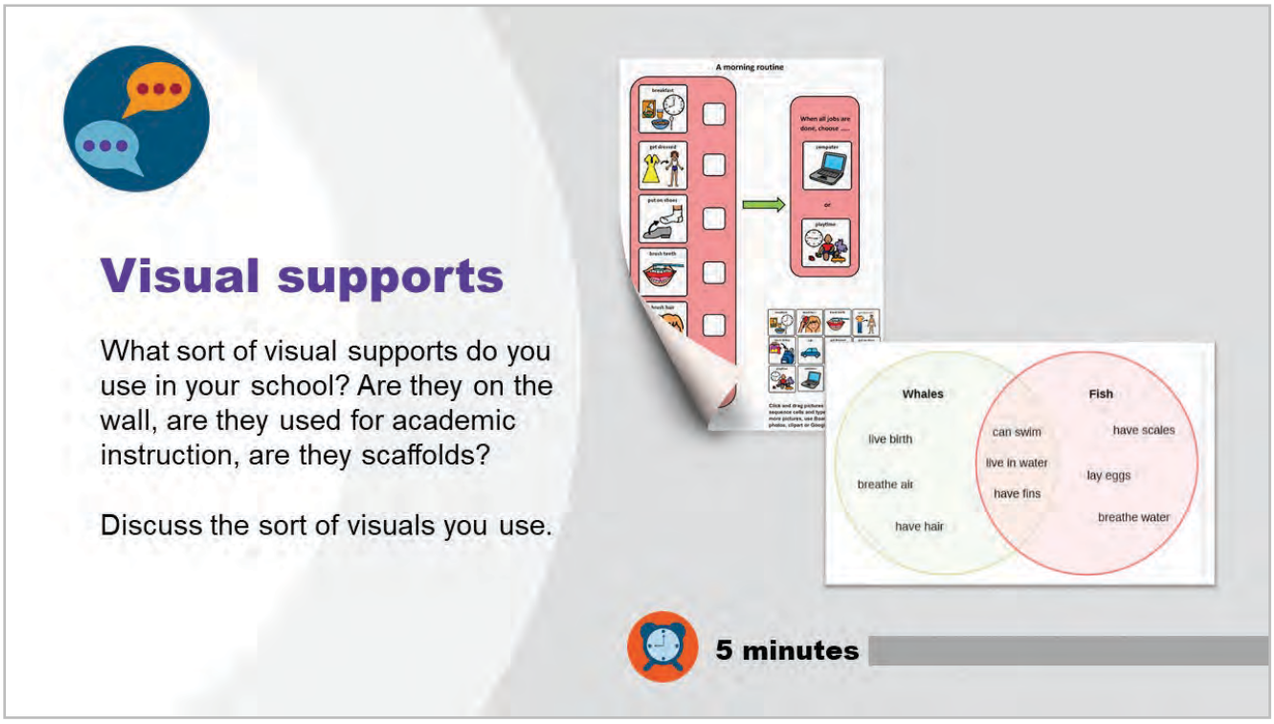


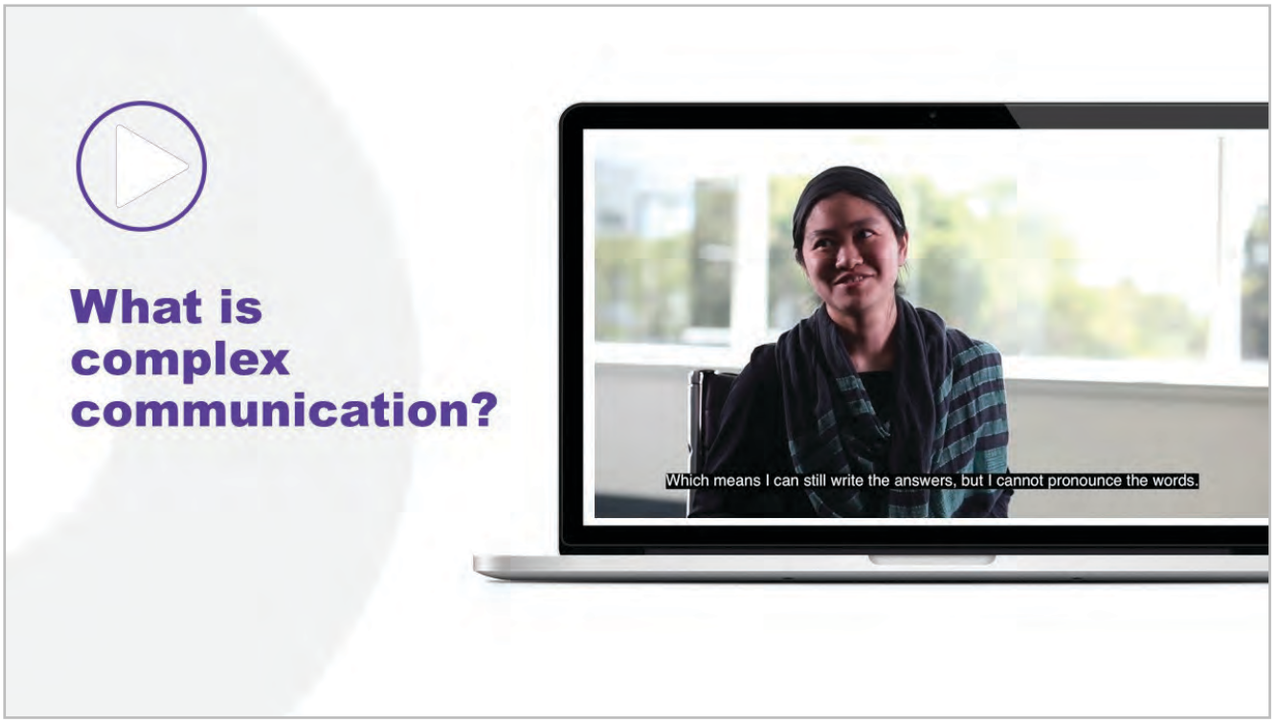
Key information:

- Visual supports can be a useful addition to spoken language as they last longer than spoken words, so can be used for as long as needed and can be clear and specific.
- Visuals are an effective way of supporting understanding for many autistic students, including those with good language skills.
- Visuals can support a range of communication functions including:
  - helping children understand expectations around activities, routines or behaviours
  - providing reminders or cues (e.g. in conversations)
  - support the understanding of instructions
  - learning new tasks
  - understanding rules and social situations
  - transitioning from task to task
  - supporting behaviours.

Links:

- PP Visual Support Information sheet https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/visual-supports
- Visual Supports module on our Online Learning Hub.
- Visual Support Micro Module

Notes:



Link:

- Positive Partnerships Webinars: Communication

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

Notes:

> Not all students will use handwriting to create texts; some will express themselves using augmentative and alternative communication strategies. This may include digital technologies, braille, real objects, photographs and pictographs.
>
> (ACARA, p.56)

ACARA, National literacy learning progressions

Key information:

- Autistic students involvement in their learning plans can differ greatly from student to student.
- Students who do not use speech to communicate may have fewer opportunities to be fully involved in their learning plans if educators are still working out how to communicate effectively with these students.
- Sharing effective strategies with colleagues can build up confidence and competence in including all students in ways that enable them to express themselves in relation to their wants and needs in school.

Links:

- ACARA, National literacy learning progressions. https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/media/3634/national-literacy-learning-progression.pdf
- Positive Partnerships communication webinars

References:

- Biegun, D., Peterson, Y., McNaught, J., & Sutterfield, C. (2020). Including student voice in IEP meetings through use of assistive technology. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 52*(5), 348-350. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0040059920920148
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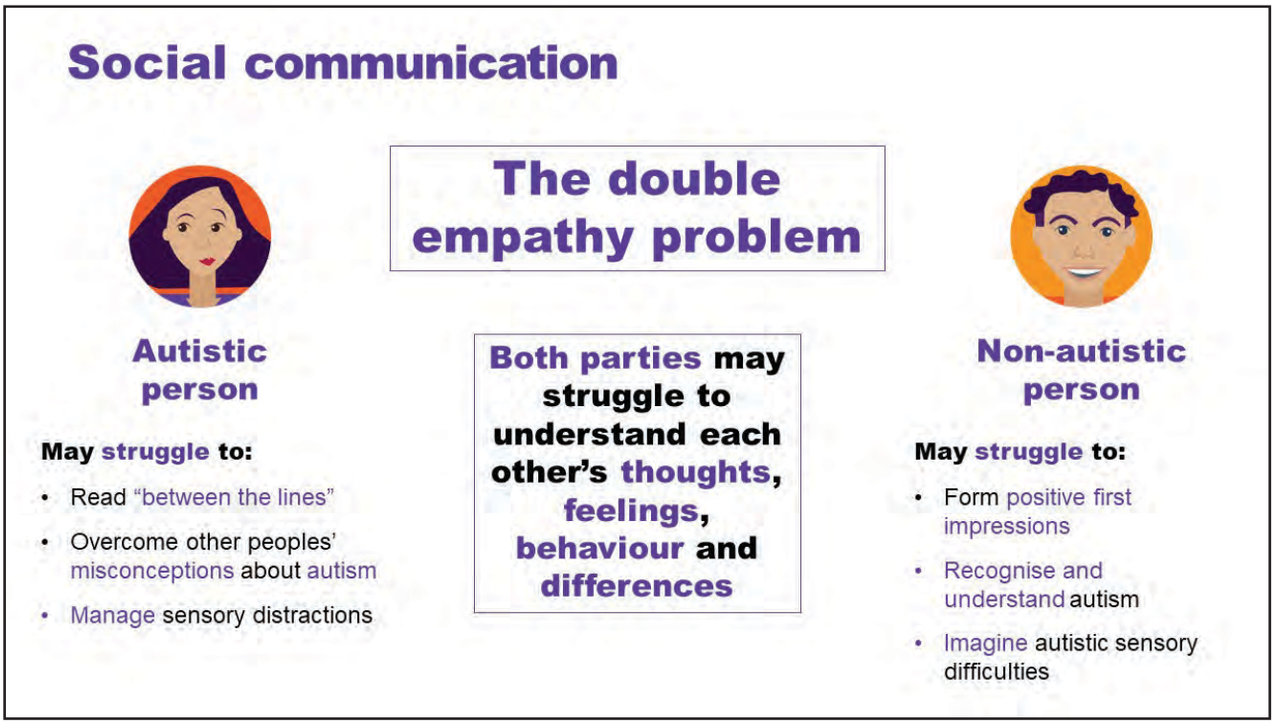

Key information:

- Autistic students will have varying strengths and support needs in their use of communication and social skills.
- This may also vary between individuals over time and may depend on context.
- Difficulties in communication between autistic and non-autistic individuals occur because of differences in the ways each neurotype is communicating. This is known as the double empathy problem. (Crompton et al, 2020)
- Autistic people may have a distinctive way of interacting and building rapport with others (Heasman and Gillespie, 2019).
- Autistic people may make social judgments using non-traditional criteria (Morrison et al., 2020).

References:

- Crompton C, DeBrabander K, Heasman B, Milton D and Sasson N (2021) Double Empathy: Why Autistic People Are Often Misunderstood. Front. Young Minds. 9:554875. doi: 10.3389/frym.2021.554875
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- Morrison, K. E., DeBrabander, K. M., Jones, D. R., Faso, D. J., Ackerman, R. A., and Sasson, N. J. (2020). Outcomes of real-world social interaction for autistic adults paired with autistic compared to typically developing partners. *Autism 24*, 1067–1080. doi: 10.1177/1362361319892701

Double Empathy: Why Autistic People Are Often Misunderstood
2021, https://kids.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2021.554875

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What Is the Double Empathy Problem?

Can you tell when somebody is bored or frustrated or upset with you, even when they do not say so? People often communicate information about themselves without even saying a word. The expressions on their faces or the ways they are acting can be big clues to what they might be feeling or thinking. Being autistic is considered clinically to be a medical condition, but is also a source of social identity. Being autistic affects how someone makes sense of the world. Some autistic people can find it hard to communicate with other people, and might have difficulty making friends and fitting in. Autistic people might find changes difficult and might experience sounds, smells, and other senses differently. Some autistic people might move in a certain way (like twirling) or do the same thing repeatedly (like opening and closing doors). People are born autistic and remain so their whole lives. Some autistic people need only a little support, while others need a lot of help with learning and everyday activities. affects how people make sense of the world around them, and some autistic people can find it hard to communicate. For a long time, research has shown that autistic people can have trouble figuring out what non-autistic people are thinking and feeling, and this can make it difficult for them to make friends or to fit in. But recently, studies have shown that the problem goes both ways: people who are not autistic also have trouble figuring out what autistic people are thinking and feeling! It is not just autistic people who struggle.

A theory that helps to describe what happens when autistic and non-autistic people struggle to understand each other is called the double empathy problem. Empathy is defined as the ability to understand or be aware of the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of others. According to the double empathy problem, empathy is a two-way process that depends a lot on our ways of doing things and our expectations from previous social experiences, which can be very different for autistic and non-autistic people. These differences can lead to a breakdown in communication that can be distressing for both autistic and non-autistic people. It might sometimes be difficult for non-autistic parents to understand what their autistic child is feeling, or autistic people might feel frustrated when they cannot effectively communicate their thoughts and feelings to others. In this way, communication barriers between autistic and non-autistic people can make it more difficult for them to connect, share experiences, and empathize with one another.

Let us look at the example of “reading between the lines.” This is when you understand something that someone means, even when they have not said it with words. For example, your friend might say that his day has been okay, but sigh and seem a bit grumpy or sad. Reading between the lines, you might guess that your friend’s day has not been okay at all.

Autistic people might struggle to read between the lines of what non-autistic people are saying, because this way of communicating does not come easily to autistic people. On the other hand, non-autistic people might make incorrect assumptions about autistic people because they are reading between the lines too much.

Autistic people can find it exhausting and confusing to understand non-autistic ways of communicating. Likewise, non-autistic people might feel uncomfortable when they are around autistic people because their usual ways of communicating do not work as well. This mismatch between social expectations and experiences can make communication between autistic and non-autistic people difficult. That is why building understanding and empathy is described as a "double problem," because both autistic and non-autistic people struggle to understand each other.

What Has Research Told Us So Far?

One way that scientists understand double empathy is to see if people who are not autistic judge autistic and non-autistic people differently. Unfortunately, when people who are not autistic find it hard to understand autistic people, they tend to like them less. In fact, it takes just a few seconds for people who are not autistic to form negative first impressions about autistic people [3]. Non-autistic people quickly become less interested in interacting with autistic people than with other non-autistic people, which means that autistic people may have fewer opportunities to meet people and make friends. Why does this happen? It is not because autistic people talk about things that are less interesting. When non-autistic people read the words of what autistic people are saying, they do not judge them any differently than they judge non-autistic people. So, it really seems that it is how autistic people appear and sound, and not what they talk about, that leads non-autistic people to judge and avoid autistic people. Sadly, this means that autistic people might have fewer opportunities to make friends or get jobs because of how non-autistic people judge them, which is not fair.

Another way to explore double empathy is to see if autistic people connect with other autistic people more easily than they do with people who are not autistic. This is exactly what some new studies are showing. Autistic people want to talk to other autistic people, sit next to them, or live near them even more than they want to do these things with non-autistic people. In one study, two unfamiliar adults got to know each other by talking for 5 min. Sometimes the two adults were both non-autistic, sometimes both autistic, and sometimes one of each. You might expect, if autistic people are poor at social interaction, that the conversations between two autistic people would go especially badly. But that is not what the study found. The quality of interactions between two autistic people was just as strong as between two people who were not autistic. Autistic people even shared more information about themselves with other autistic people, suggesting they felt more comfortable with them. This shows that autistic people are like everyone else: they find it easier to connect with, and maybe even form friendships with, people who think and communicate like they do.

Why might autistic people find it easier to understand other autistic people?

Research indicates that autistic people are less likely to rely on typical social expectations for interacting, or be upset if such expectations are not followed. This means that autistic people give each other more freedom to express themselves in unique ways. We can see evidence of this by looking at how well autistic and non-autistic people share information with each other. One recent study was based on the game "Telephone," in which one person whispers a message to another person, who then whispers it to the next person, and so on. The last person then says the message out loud to see how different it is from what the first person said.

Researchers compared how accurately groups of autistic people, groups of non-autistic people, and groups with a mix of autistic and non-autistic people shared a story in a game of Telephone. They found that autistic groups share information just as accurately as non-autistic groups. Mixed groups of autistic and non-autistic people were much less accurate.
This shows that autistic people are just as able to share information as non-autistic people if they are with other autistic people. This supports the theory of the double empathy problem: that there is a two-way difficulty when autistic and non-autistic people interact.

What Do We Still Need to Learn About the Double Empathy Problem?

So far, studies of the double empathy problem have focused mainly on teenagers and adults, and it will be important to see if the results differ for younger children. For example, if it turns out that non-autistic children are more positive about autistic people than non-autistic adults are, this would tell us that negative attitudes about autistic people are not destined to happen but are learned over time. Also, because autistic children are more likely now than in the past to be included in classes and activities with non-autistic children, this may provide more opportunities for autistic and non-autistic children to interact and learn about one another. These increased opportunities for interaction might help autistic and non-autistic people to understand each other and decrease the double empathy problem over time.

Additionally, studies so far have only included autistic people who are highly verbal and do not have an intellectual disability. According to the theory, the double empathy problem would be even greater between non-autistic people and autistic people who have an intellectual disability, but further research is needed to see if this is the case. Another avenue of research is to explore the effect of familiarity of a relationship. For example, how does the double empathy problem differ when communicating with a stranger vs. a family member? Family members share backgrounds, experiences, and environments, which suggests that the double empathy problem may be reduced within familiar relationships. However, research has shown that familiarity can sometimes create additional barriers. For example, thinking we know someone well might prevent us from listening and understanding what is really being communicated.

Finally, although new research suggests that autistic people may communicate more effectively and more comfortably with other autistic people, we do not yet know exactly how or why this occurs. The double empathy theory would suggest that having similar ways of understanding the world helps people understand each other and connect. Understanding whether there are specific ways of communicating that underlie this connection could help us identify ways to bridge the gap in communication between autistic and non-autistic people.

Why Is This Research Important?

Social interactions are a gateway to many things in life—from buying a bus ticket to interviewing for a job. Because most people are not autistic, most social interactions fit the non-autistic communication style but might not work as well for autistic people. Autistic people must navigate many social interactions that are difficult to understand.

By finding out more about how the double empathy problem plays out in real life, we can help non-autistic and autistic people to understand each other better and help them to “meet in the middle.” Improving our understanding of the ways that autistic and non-autistic people interact might help autistic people to find it easier to spend time with non-autistic friends and family as well as non-autistic teachers, doctors, and employers. It may help people who are not autistic not to leap to conclusions based on assumptions about autistic people and to be less judgmental of them. This research may also provide people who are not autistic with more

creative and accessible ways of communicating with others. Overall, for both people who are autistic and those who are not, understanding how each other communicates can help us build understanding and make the world more inclusive and accepting of everyone—and that is important!

Acknowledgements

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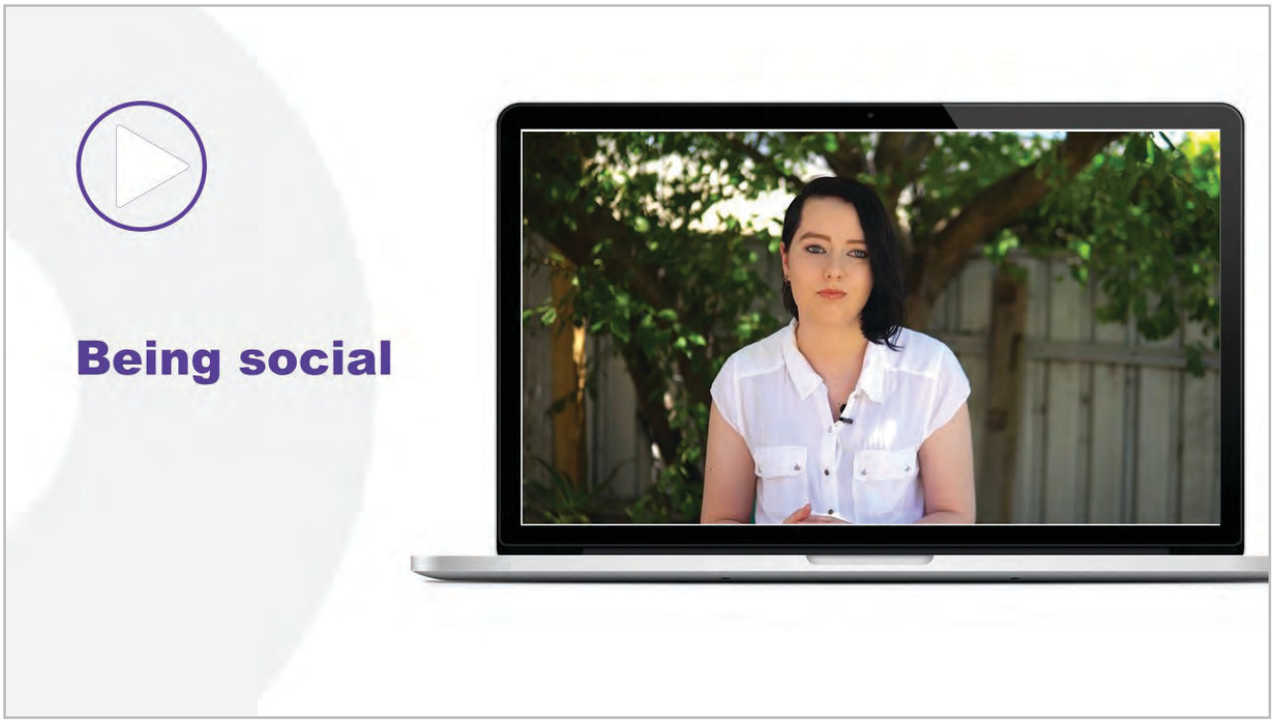
References for this article available on the website:
https://kids.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2021.554875



Key information:

- Each individual has their own set of strengths and support needs across the domains of social and communication skills.
- Support needs will vary across the day and over a lifetime.
- Just like other students, some autistic students will want to have lots of friends and frequent interactions, whilst others will prefer their own company or that of just one or two other people.
- For many non-autistic students, interacting in the playground/yard is energising, whereas for many autistic students it is exhausting and/or anxiety provoking.

References:

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Being social – activity

In classrooms

- Students that want to interact with others but need support
- Students that need a break from social interactions

Out of classrooms/ break times

- Students that want to interact with others but need support
- Students that need a break from social interactions

20 minutes

References:

- Refer to previous page

Planning Tool activity

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

Reflections

Feedback

http://tiny.cc/PP-PLfeedback

positive partnerships

Session 4

positive partnerships

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

Resources:

- Reflections on being an autism friendly classroom (in workbook)
- Planning Tool (in workbook and A3 printout)
- Planning Tool with prompts and examples (in workbook)

Statement of reconciliation

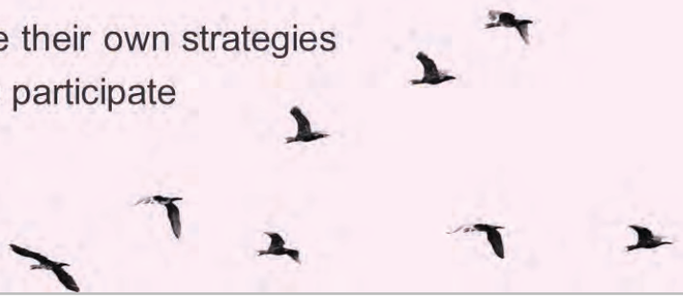
positive partnerships

First Nations people are advised that this workshop may contain images and voices of people who are no longer with us.

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.



House keeping

Tea / Coffee

Exits

Facilities

Phones

No Smoking / Vaping

Workbook

Other Information

Evaluation

Our learning agreement

- Be confidential
- Be supportive
- Be respectful

Workshop overview

DAY 1	
Session 1 8:30am – 9:00am	Introduction
9:00am – 10:30am	School inclusion - theory to practice
10:30am – 10:50am	MORNING TEA
Session 2 10:50am – 1:00pm	Strengths and interests Connections to culture and community Executive functioning
1:00pm – 1:30pm	LUNCH
Session 3 1:30pm – 3:45pm	Communication and social skills
3:45pm – 4:00pm	Feedback

DAY 2	
Session 4 8:30am – 8:50am	Reflections
8:50am – 10:30am	Sensory processing Self-care & independence
10:30am – 10:50am	MORNING TEA
Session 5 10:50am – 12:30pm	Mental health, wellbeing and behaviour
12:30pm – 1:00pm	LUNCH
Session 5 cont. 1:00pm – 1:30pm	Mental health, wellbeing and behaviour
Session 6 1:30pm - 3:15pm	Priority planning and next steps
3:15pm – 3:30pm	Feedback

Key information:

- Taking time to reflect is a valuable part of any new learning or experience.

Session overview

- Explore sensory processing, the unique sensory differences autistic students may have and the functional impacts of these
- Consider sensory solutions that can assist students to cope with sensory input and meet their sensory needs
- Think about the relationship between self-care and independence for students and the functional impacts on teaching and learning

Key information:

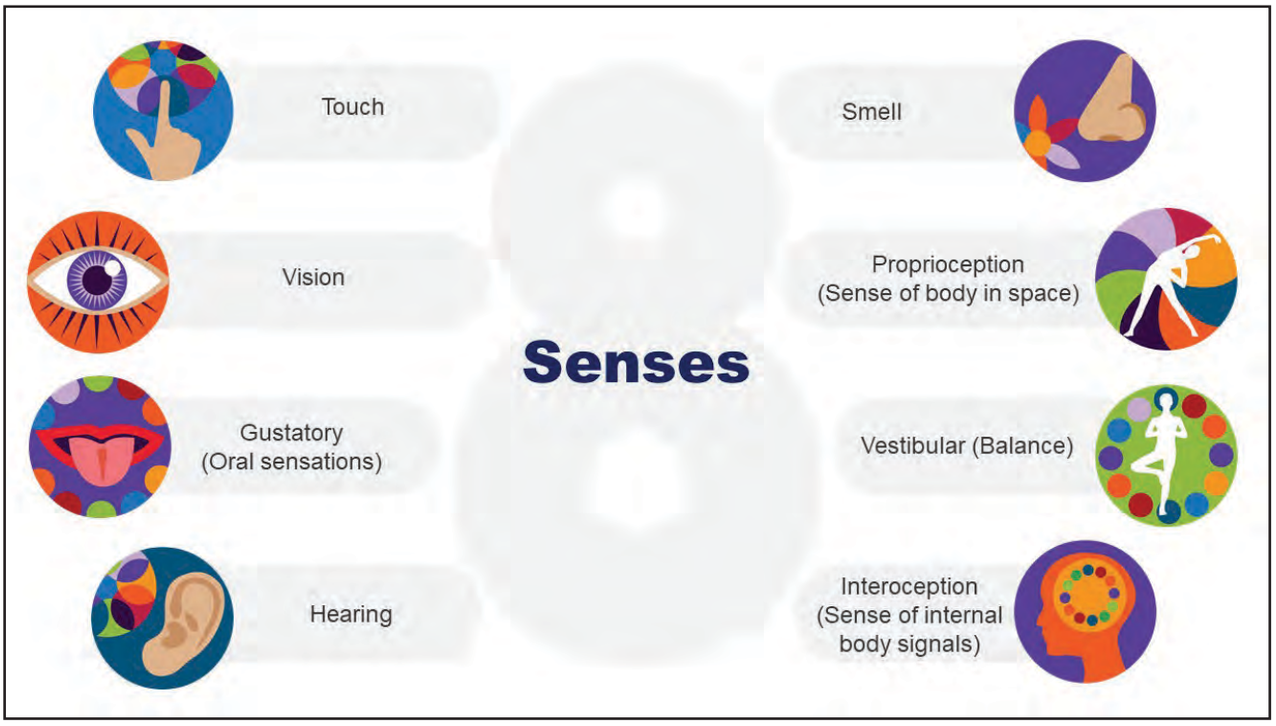
- Remember that everything we discuss in this session is applicable to adults as well as to children and young people and not just autistic individuals. We all have our own unique sensory processing differences.

Notes:

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.

Notes:



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 or thirsty
  - Knowing if you are hot or cold.

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:

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.
- Research shows that more than 70% of autistic children display sensory processing differences. [Esposito, et. al., (2019)]
- Sensory processing differences are included within the diagnostic criteria for autism.
- It is important to note that not all autistic young people will have sensory processing differences. Likewise, not all individuals with sensory processing differences are autistic.

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. 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:

- 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).
- There can also often be a mismatch between sensory preferences and the environment. Often it can be assumed that a student is "work avoidant" when they may actually be avoiding a certain sensory experience.
- Examples of sensory processing differences are:
  - some students love to sit by the air conditioner whilst it can make others very uncomfortable (temperature &/or airflow)
  - the sounds of pencils or pens writing on paper may not register with some students, whilst being painful for some other students
  - textures of school uniform fabrics can be neutral, nice or really uncomfortable
  - singing in assembly can be enjoyable or it can be physically painful for some students
  - eye contact can be natural for some students, 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 student).

Link:

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

References:

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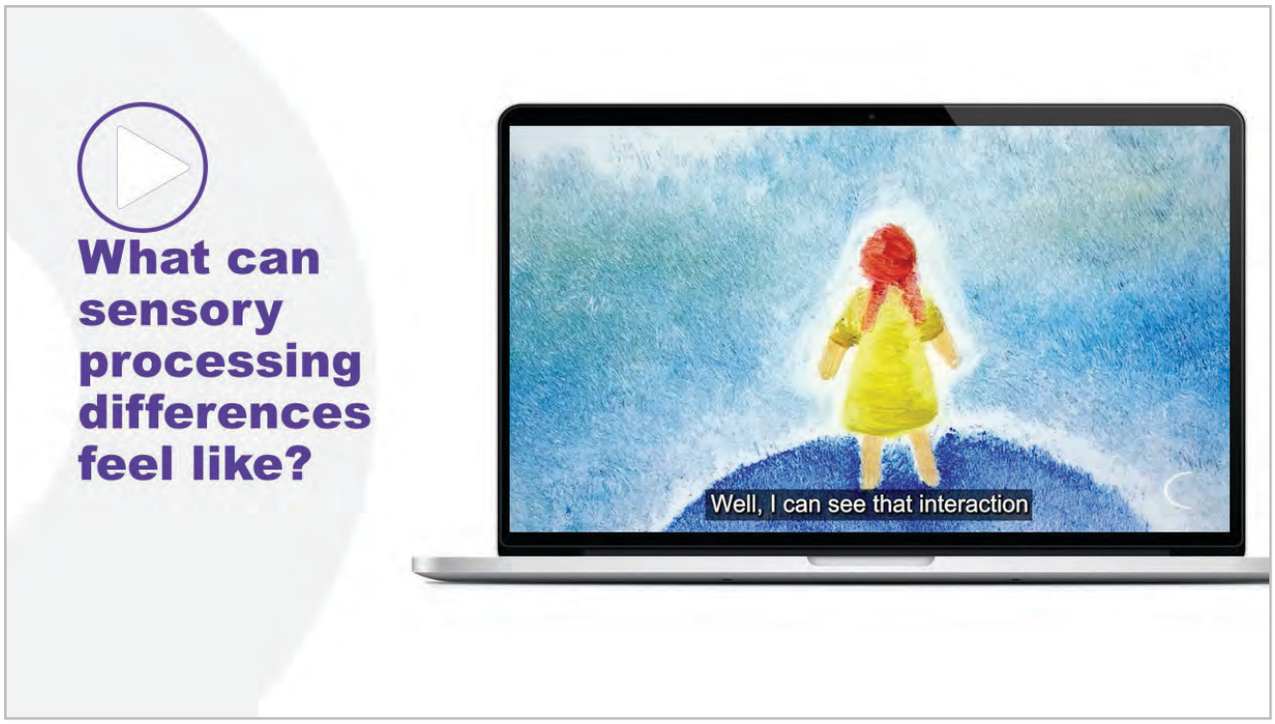


Key information:

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

Some of the positive impacts are that they might be able to:

- gain pleasure or enjoyment
- hear things that other people don't
- notice things that other people might not notice
- 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.

What role does sensory processing play in our classrooms?

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.

References:

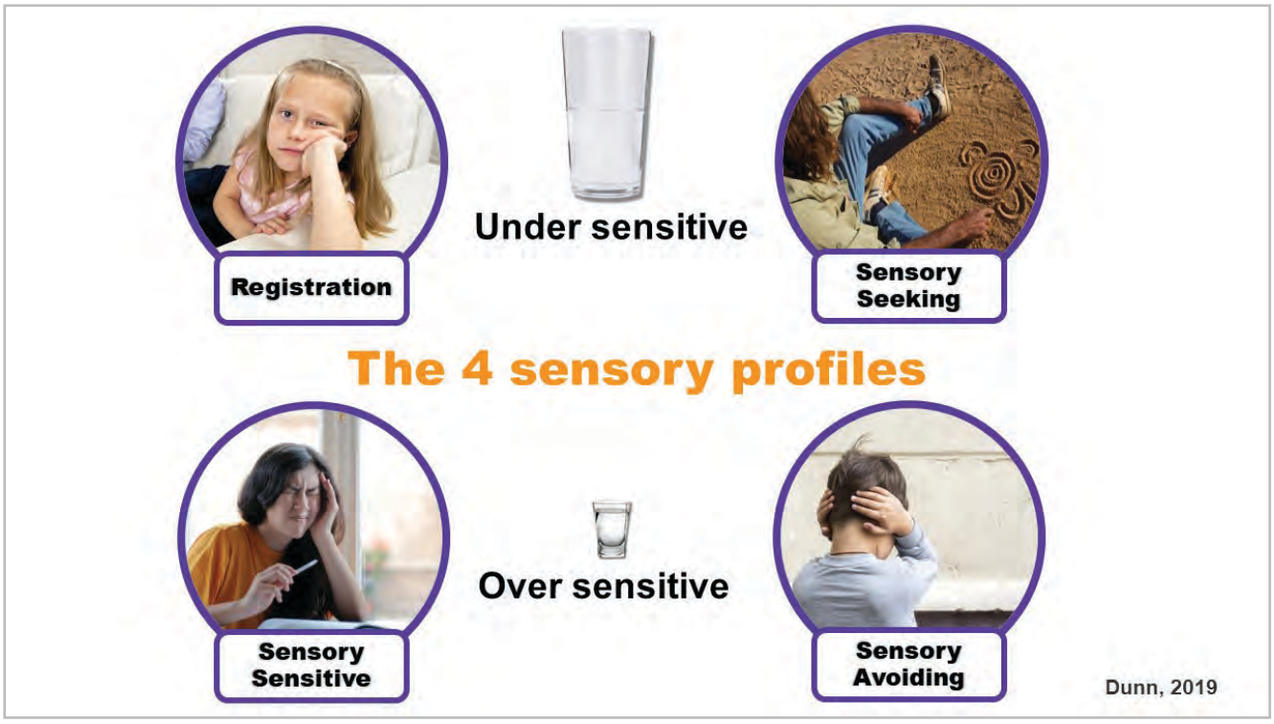
- Dunn, W. (2008), *Living Sensationally: Understanding Your Senses*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers London and Philadelphia.
- Pastor-Cerezuela, G., Fernández-Andrés, M. I., Sanz-Cervera, P., & Marín-Suelves, D. (2020). The impact of sensory processing on executive and cognitive functions in children with autism spectrum disorder in the school context. *Research in developmental disabilities, 96*, 103540.

Notes:

Key information:

- Assume we all have a cup for holding sensory input.
- Some of us have a 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.

Notes:

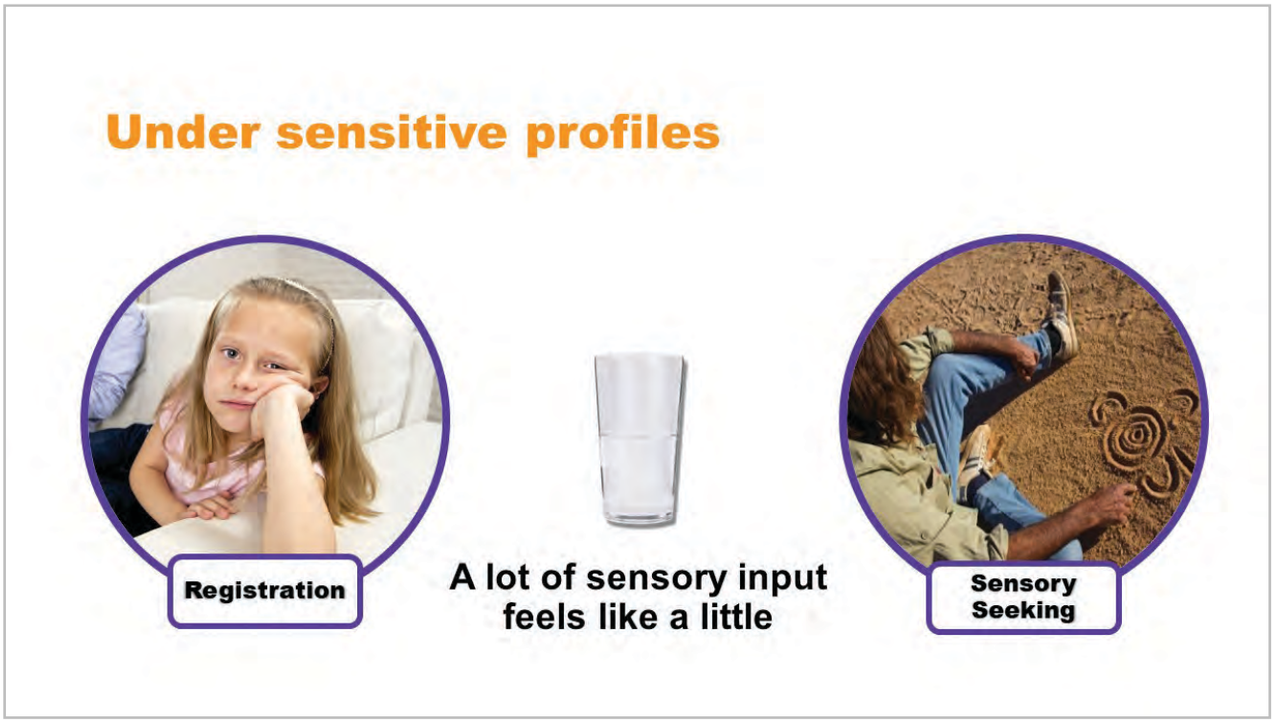


Key information:

- These four profiles may be called other things:
  - sensory seeking (or, seeker)
  - registration (or, bystander)
  - 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 student 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.

References:

- Dunn, W. (2019). Supporting Sensory Processing Differences for People with Autism Spectrum Disorders. http://downloads.pearsonclinical.com/images/Assets/SensoryProfile2/SP2-Infogrfx.pdf
- 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.



Key information:

Registration (bystander)

- Individuals with registration 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 the teacher 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 there is an assumption because they are quiet that everything is 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 the 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
  - be overly curious and like to be busy.
- Educators can help students channel their sensory seeking into an activity.

For example: these are the students 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:

- 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.

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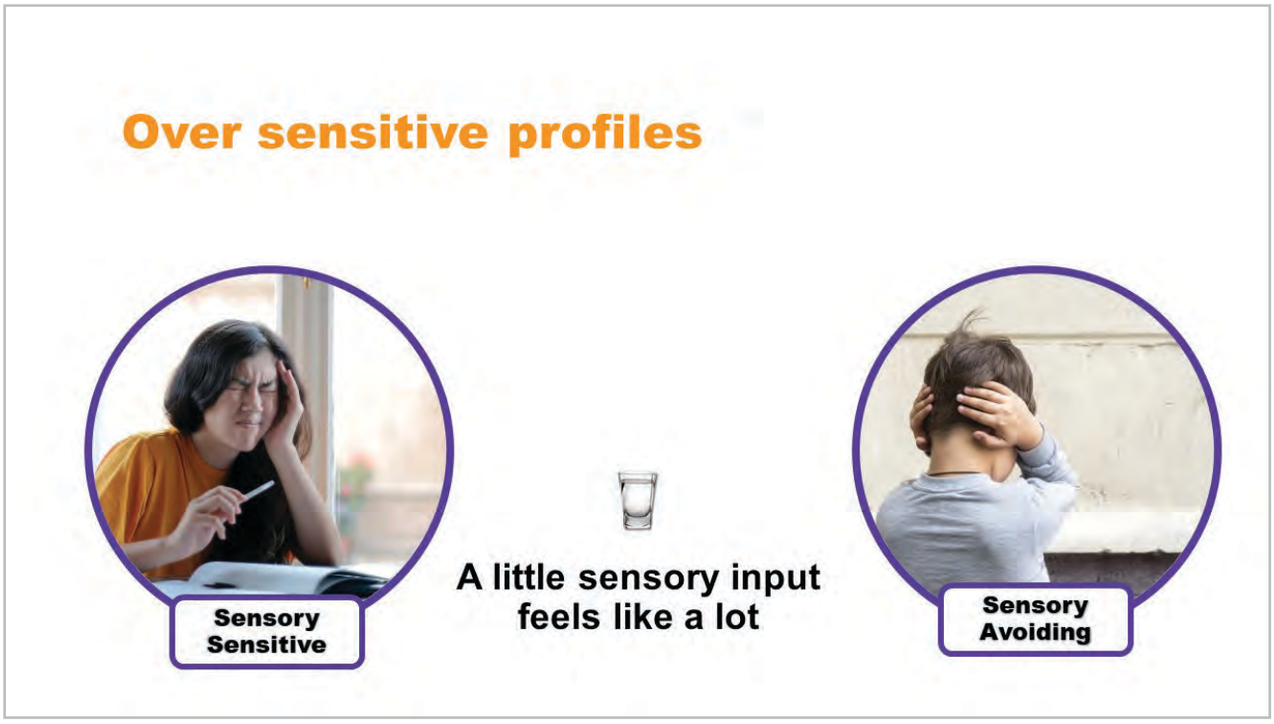


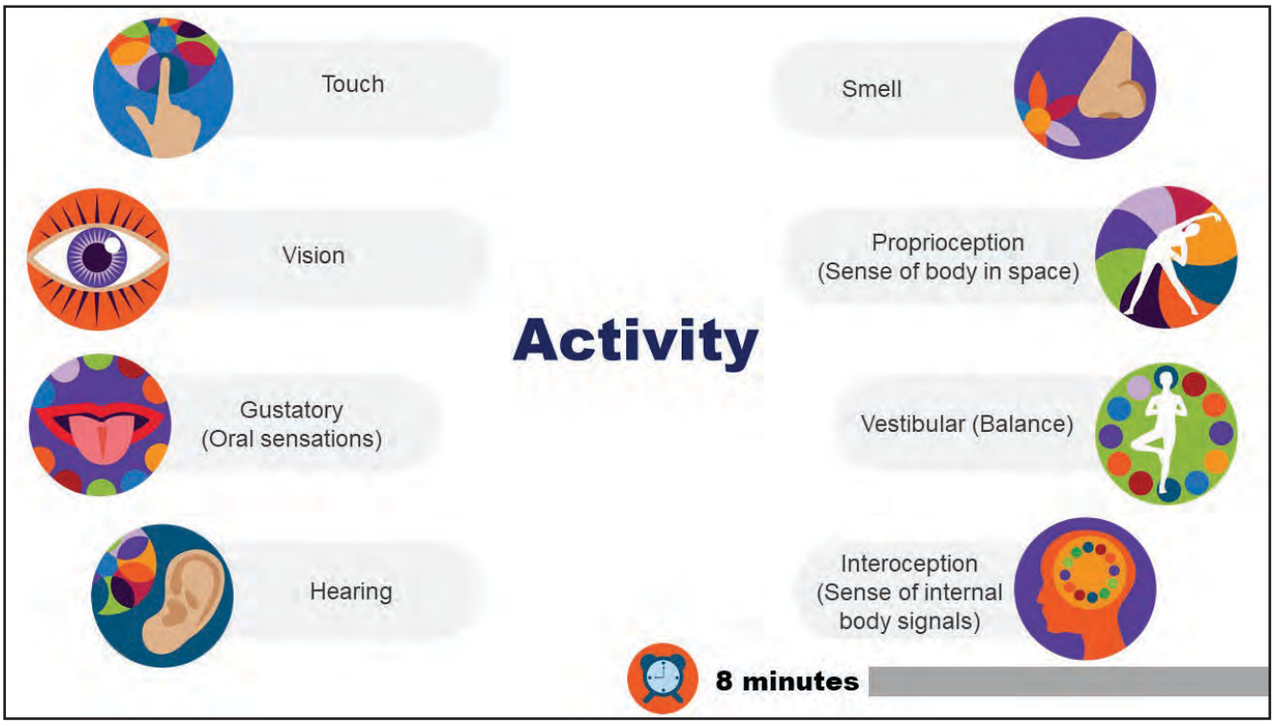
Key information:

Sensory sensitive (sensor)

- Individuals who are sensory sensitive have a small cup which can overflow quickly because they don'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 or into a room with lots of people etc.
  - 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.



Key information:

- Sensory processing differences are complex and affected by context.
- The Disability Standards for Education (DSE, referenced on Day 1 of the workshop) 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 students require accommodations for.

- I often don't notice whether I am wearing shoes or not.
- I can't feel if there is food on my face.
- 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.

Registration

- 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 Seeking

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

Sensory sensitive

- 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 push people away if they bump into me or brush past me.
- I can't touch certain foods with my hands (e.g. banana).
- I can't wear my school jumper.

Sensory avoiding

- 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.

Registration

- 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.

Sensory Seeking

- My family say I am overreacting when I yell or jump after I walk into things.
- Tight clothes are very uncomfortable for me.

Sensory sensitive

- I avoid crowds because I don't like it when people get close to me.
- I tried step class once and I am never going back, I couldn't follow it at all.
- When my friends want to climb on the playground equipment, I ask if we can do something else instead.

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 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 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 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

- 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 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 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

- 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 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.

Registration

- 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 Seeking

- 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 sensitive

- 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.

Sensory avoiding

- 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.

Registration

- 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.

Sensory Seeking

- 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 sensitive

- 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 avoiding

- 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 off milk to drink as a joke and I don't notice it doesn't taste right.

Registration

- 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 Seeking

- 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.

Sensory sensitive

- 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.

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 can spin for a long time without getting dizzy.
- I find it difficult to sit up straight and often lean on the table or against my peers on the mat.
- I find it hard to stand on one foot.

Registration

- 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 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

- 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 take the stairs at the shops instead of riding the escalator.

Sensory avoiding

Sensory processing and context

What are the contextual factors that can impact your students' sensory processing?

Consider if the impact of these factors are helpful or unhelpful.

3 minutes

Key information:

- Our sensory preferences can look very different when we are:
  - **tired** (e.g. may be less able to tolerate bright lights when tired)
  - **sick** (e.g. some young people are more able to tolerate hugs when they are sick versus when they are not or vice versa)
  - **anxious e.g. in a new environment** (e.g. may be able to tolerate strong smells in a familiar environment, but find them overwhelming in a new environment)
  - **in control of the sensory input** (e.g. may be able to tolerate listening to loud music when they are playing it themselves, but not be able to tolerate sudden unexpected noises).
- There is also a relationship between sensory processing and **stress/anxiety**.
- Stress impacts on a person's ability to regulate their sensory systems and cope with their environment (e.g. when feeling calm, they might be able to tolerate certain sounds, but they may bother them when feeling stressed. For example, when driving in heavy rain you may turn the music down to help you focus, whereas when you're driving on a familiar road you may turn it up).
- Equally, sensory processing differences can impact on stress levels.

Notes:

Learning Environments

Consider the functional impact of having various learning environments, including:

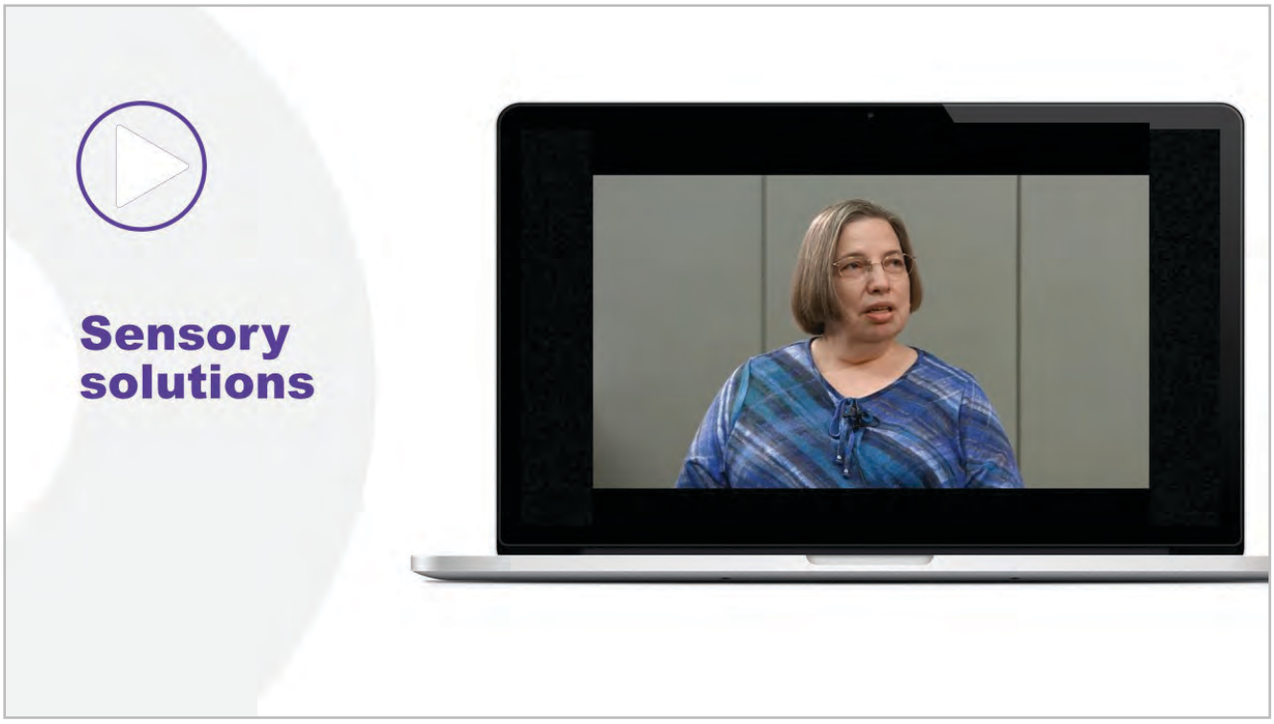
- open plan classrooms
- traditional classrooms
- quiet spaces

5 minutes

Key information:

- All students are different and some will benefit from an open plan learning environment whilst others will prefer and be able to work more effectively in small quiet spaces.
- Think about the supports that you can put in place to reduce the unhelpful impacts (or increase the helpful impacts) that sensory processing differences might have on your students.

Notes:



Key information:

- Some students 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.

Links/Resources:

- 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
- inclusionED acoustics: https://www.inclusioned.edu.au/practices/improve-classroom-acoustics
- https://www.inclusioned.edu.au/practices/assess_acousticsPositive 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
- inclusionED acoustics: https://www.inclusioned.edu.au/practices/improve-classroom-acoustics
- https://www.inclusioned.edu.au/practices/assess_acoustics

Key information:

- There are many sensory solutions and resources available.
- It can be quite difficult to determine what to introduce and how to get started.
- Communication with students, 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 students 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 things 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 student'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.
    - For example, if you're considering or being asked to use a sensory solution such as the weighted toy mentioned in the video before, there are many things to consider before implementing this in the classroom. In the example given, an Occupational Therapist was consulted and using their skills and knowledge, supported the school to introduce it into the classroom when the student chooses to use it to support their wants and needs. If the three elements of evidence-informed practice are not in place, the sensory solution may actually be dangerous and cause harm.It is important to consider what is evidence informed, what is feasible and what is safe.

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 and examples. What can you see or hear the young person doing?	What are the helpful and unhelpful impacts on them and others?	What strategies and adjustments might help them?
Sensory processing 			

Key information:

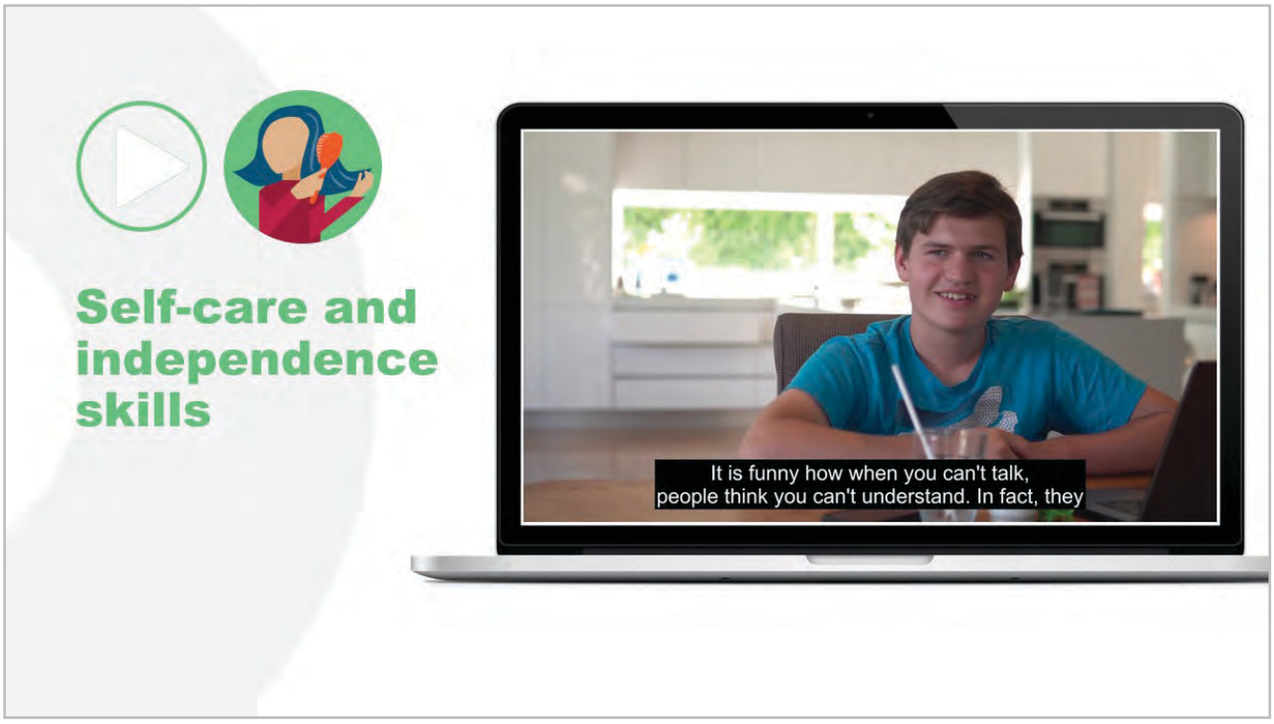
- Many self-care activities require a range of skills including fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, sensory processing and executive functions.
- Physical disabilities, developmental delays and learning differences can impact on self-care skills.
- People with physical support needs can still be independent with choice and control.
- Self-care activities can include dressing, cleaning teeth, eating, showering etc.
- Different areas of autism 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 autistic students 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. *Scandinavian 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



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.

Notes:

Planning Tool example

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

Planning Tool

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

Links:

- Online Planning Tool - https://planningtool.positivepartnerships.com.au
- Walkthrough of Online Planning Tool - https://vimeo.com/684430062

Session 5

positive partnerships

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

Key information:

11:20am-1.00pm

Mental health, wellbeing and behaviour (100 mins)

- Discussions around mental health, wellbeing and behaviour may be challenging and bring up many of our own feelings and experiences.

Resources:

- Butchers paper and pens
- Quiz (in workbook)
- Participant's School NCCD Data (participants provide)
- Hand Model of the brain (in workbook)
- Most Likely / Least Likely (in workbook)

Key information:

- This session will explore some sensitive information about mental health and then look at what we can do to support children and young people to maximise their wellbeing.
- The session will finish on a positive note having noted where to go for further support and an autistic perspective on how to reframe autism positively.
- Please know that you can choose to leave at any point, or step away from the session to take a break.
- If you would like to discuss any issues raised in this session you can contact **Lifeline on 13 11 14**.

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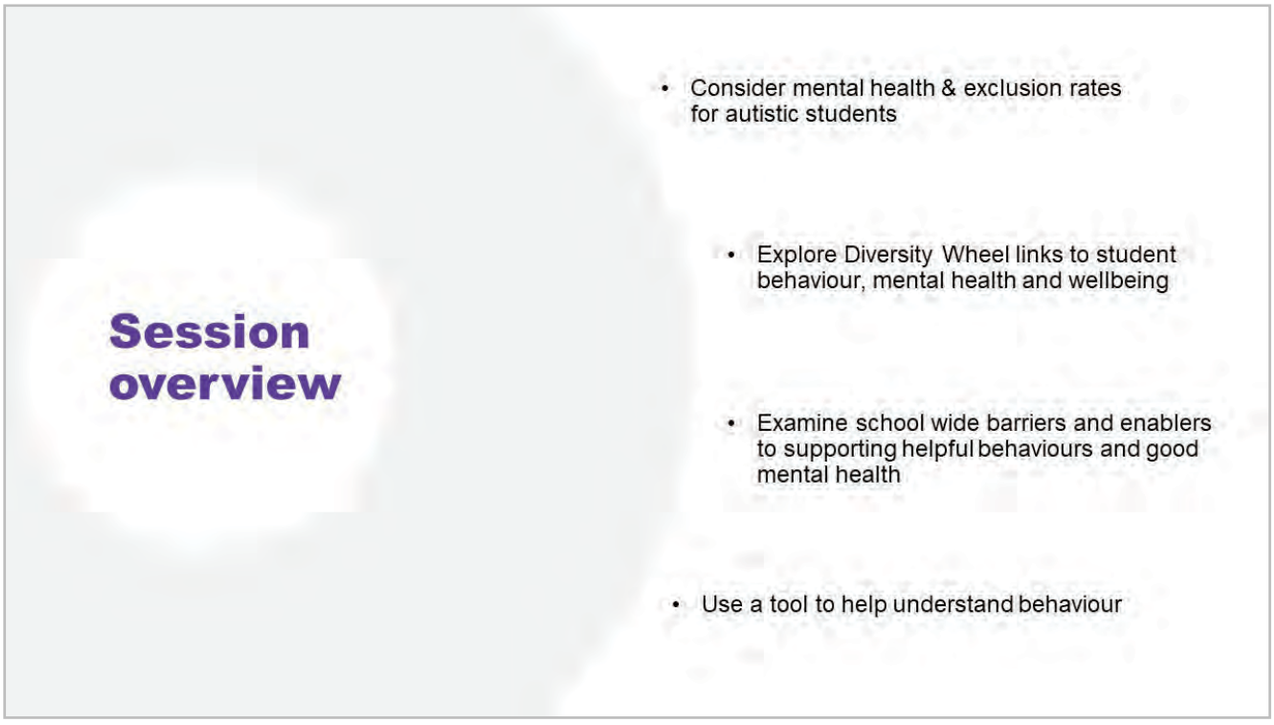

Session overview
• Consider mental health & exclusion rates for autistic students
• Explore Diversity Wheel links to student behaviour, mental health and wellbeing
• Examine school wide barriers and enablers to supporting helpful behaviours and good mental health
• Use a tool to help understand behaviour

Notes:

Quiz – in your workbook

- No talking – except for the person reading out the quiz questions
- You must try to answer all questions
- At the end of the quiz you will be asked for your answers
- Everyone will share their marks out of 9

Write quiz answers here:

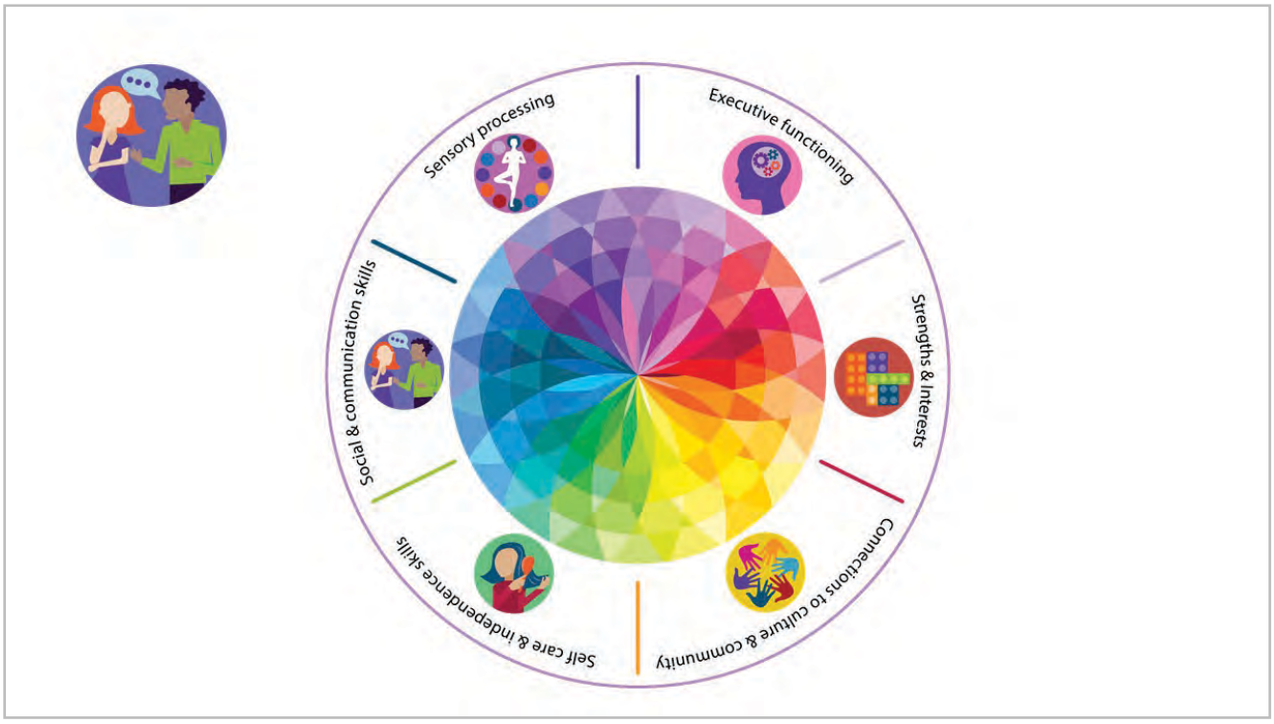
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Resource:

- NAPLAN

Key information:

- This activity was suggested by the Positive Partnerships Education Reference Group as one that is used by some group members when they are doing workshops with teachers. The questions have been taken from actual NAPLAN tests. It is designed to give the participants an insight into the stressful experiences of students who are struggling to access learning. However, if participants are becoming distressed, stop the activity and explain the rationale behind it.



Key information:

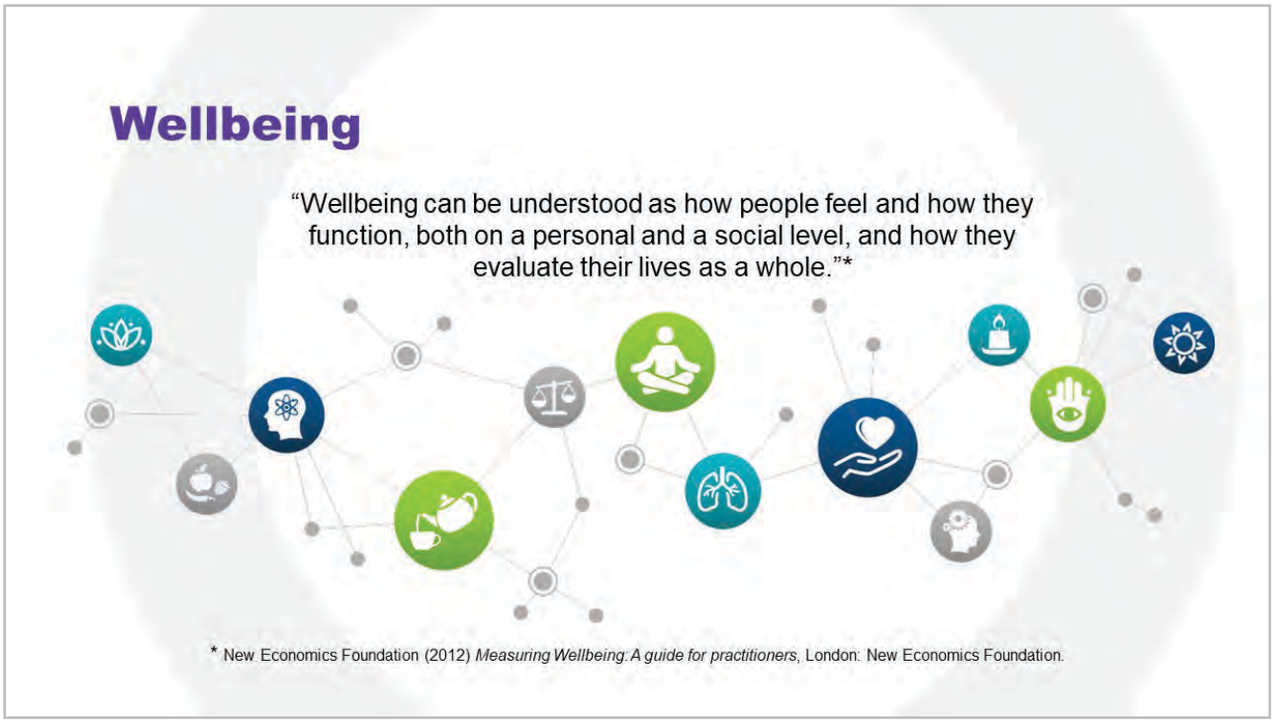
- All students have fluctuating support needs. Autistic students may be disproportionately impacted by sensory experiences, emotional experiences and tasks being too hard or too easy.
- Executive functioning challenges can exacerbate difficulties in other areas and vice versa.
- Long term unmet support 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



Key information:

- The following all improve wellbeing:
  - Self–esteem
  - Resilience
  - Engagement
  - Happiness
  - Sense of purpose
  - Interoception
  - Emotional self-regulation
  - Friends
  - Relationships.
- An example explaining the relationship between mental health and wellbeing: when the demands of life equal available resources and the ability to cope, then good wellbeing is more likely to be the outcome. However, when the demands of life outweigh your available resources and ability to cope, your wellbeing will be negatively impacted.

Link:

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

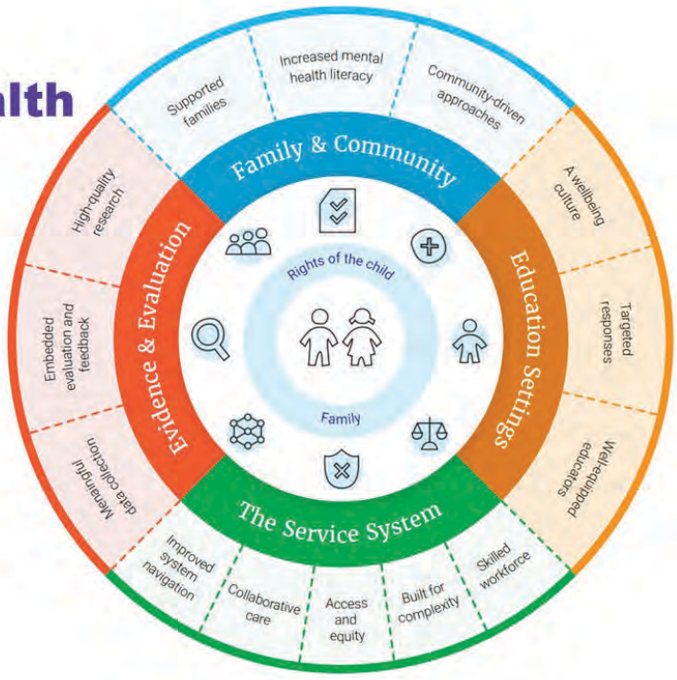
References:

- Brown, C., & Donnelly, M. (2020). Theorising social and emotional wellbeing in schools: a framework for analysing educational policy. *Journal of Education Policy,* 1-21.
- New Economics Foundation (2012) *Measuring Wellbeing: A guide for practitioners*, London: New Economics Foundation
- Powell, M. A., Graham, A., Fitzgerald, R., Thomas, N., & White, N. E. (2018). Wellbeing in schools: what do students tell us?. *The Australian Educational Researcher, 45*(4), 515-531.
- Svane, D., Evans, N., & Carter, M. A. (2019). Wicked wellbeing: Examining the disconnect between the rhetoric and reality of wellbeing interventions in schools. *Australian Journal of Education, 63*(2), 209-231. https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/57525/

Good mental health

*"Good mental health and wellbeing enables children to reach their full potential, experience fulfilling relationships, and adapt and cope with challenging circumstances."**

*National Mental Health Commission, 2021



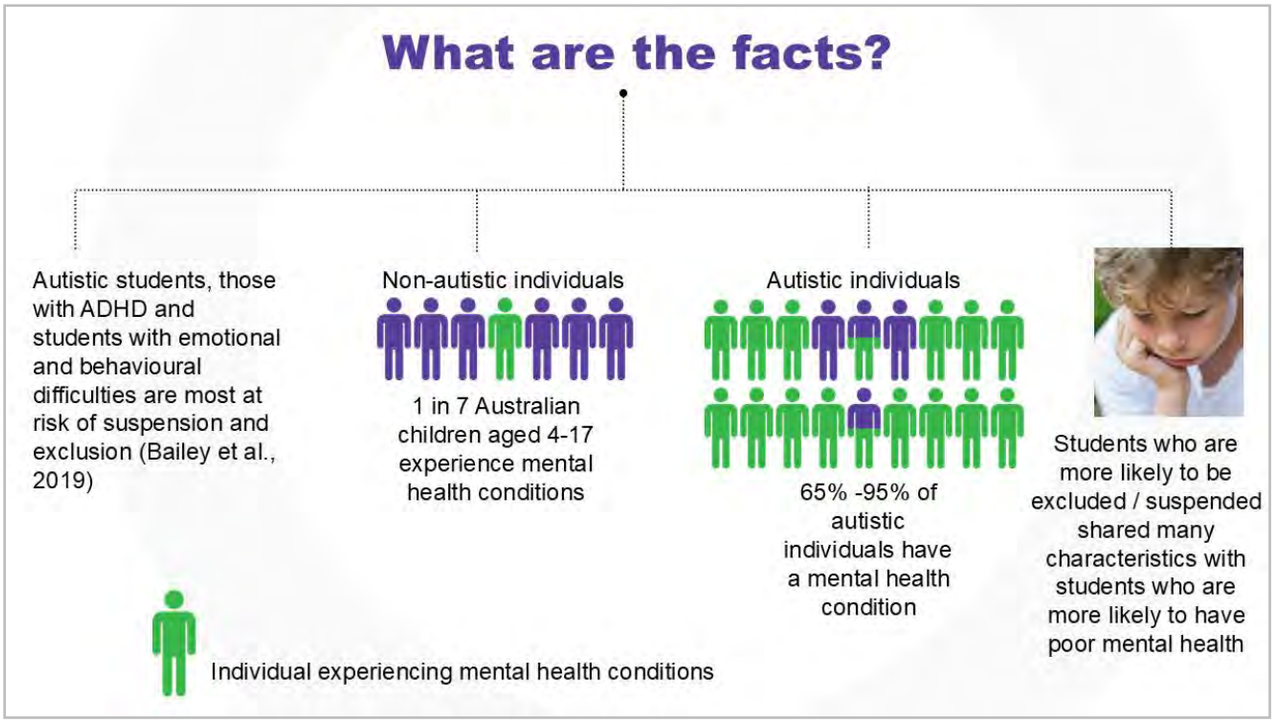
Key information:

- The following all support good mental health:
  - self–esteem
  - resilience
  - engagement
  - happiness
  - sense of purpose
  - emotional stability
  - friends
  - relationships
  - sense of belonging
  - sense of value.

Link:

- National Mental Health Commission. (2021). The national children's mental health and wellbeing strategy. Downloaded from https://apo.org.au/node/314516

Notes:



Key information:

- The statistics indicate that most of your autistic students experience mental health difficulties.
- Students who are more likely to be excluded / suspended shared many characteristics with students who are more likely to have poor mental health.
- School based prevention programs can reduce the incidence of depression & anxiety.

Links:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007 & 2017 https://www.abs.gov.au/
- Mental Health Council of Australia: https://mhaustralia.org/
- Australian Government Institute of Health & Welfare: https://www.aihw.gov.au/
- Black Dog Institute: https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-training/community-and-schools
- Beyond Blue: https://www.beyondblue.org.au/healthy-places/helpful-contacts-and-websites
- Headstrong: https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-training/community-and-schools/free-school-resources/headstrong-2.0
- Be You: https://beyou.edu.au/getting-started/educators

References:

- Bailey, R., Meland, E. A., Brion-Meisels, G., & Jones, S. M. (2019). Getting developmental science back into schools: Can what we know about self-regulation help change how we think about "no excuses"? *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 1885.
- Conner, C. M., White, S. W., Scahill, L., & Mazefsky, C. A. (2020). The role of emotion regulation and core autism symptoms in the experience of anxiety in autism. *Autism, 24*(4), 931-940. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7773149/
- Graham et al., (2020). *Inquiry into Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion Processes in South Australian government schools: Final Report*. The Centre for Inclusive Education, QUT: Brisbane, QLD.

- Joshi, G., Petty, C., Wozniak, J., Henin, A., Fried, R., Galdo, M., ... & Biederman, J. (2010). The heavy burden of psychiatric comorbidity in youth with autism spectrum disorders: A large comparative study of a psychiatrically referred population. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders, 40*(11), 1361-1370.
- Lawrence D, Johnson S, Hafekost J, Boterhoven De Haan K, Sawyer M, Ainley J, Zubrick SR (2015) *The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents. Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing.* Department of Health, Canberra. https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/the-mental-health-of-children-and-adolescents
- Parker, C., Tejerina-Arreal, M., Henley, W., Goodman, R., Logan, S., & Ford, T. (2019). Are children with unrecognised psychiatric disorders being excluded from school? A secondary analysis of the British Child and Adolescent Mental Health Surveys 2004 and 2007. *Psychological medicine, 49*(15), 2561-2572. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291718003513

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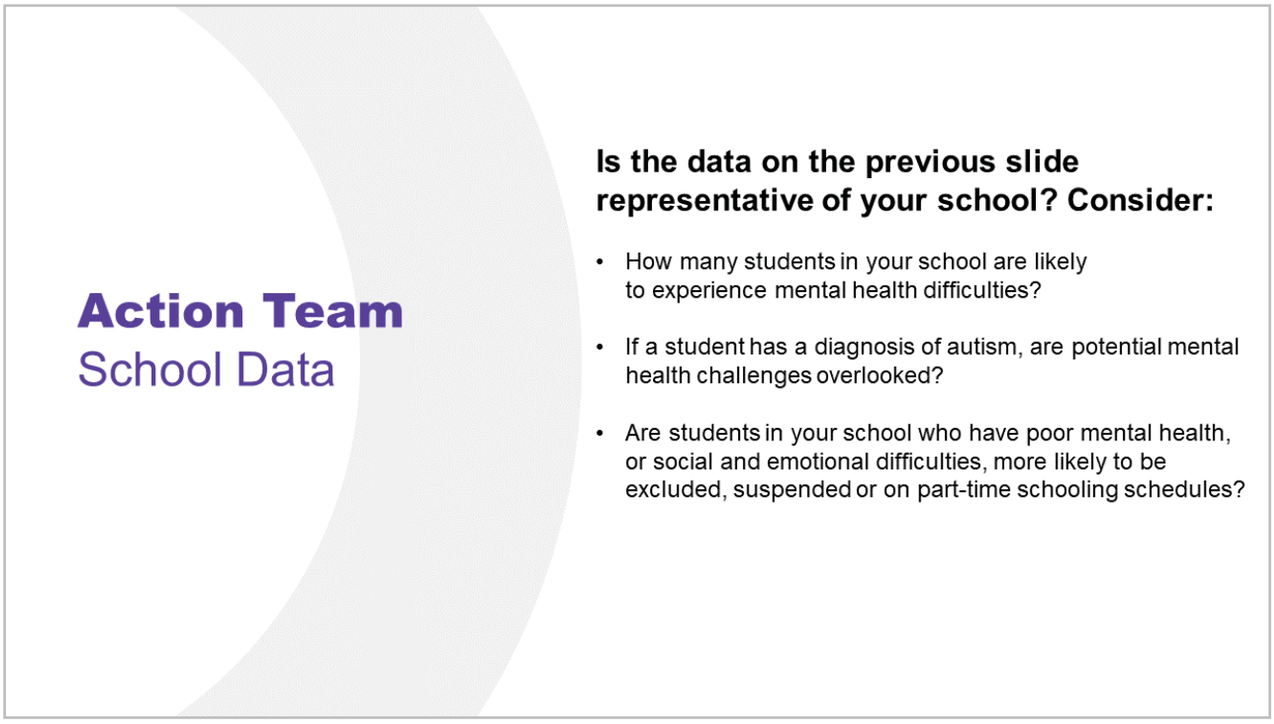

Key information:

- Additional discussion points:
  - Applying your school's NCCD data to the statistics on the slide, how many students in your school are likely to experience mental health difficulties?
  - Is this more or less than you had thought?
  - When you think about students at your school who have experienced behavioural consequences, such as take-homes (family is phoned to collect their child from school and take them home), partial enrolments, suspensions and exclusions, do they have similar characteristics to individuals who are likely to be experiencing mental health challenges, such as difficulties expressing their feelings and emotions helpfully?
  - Before an autistic student has received their autism diagnosis, are they more or less likely to receive support with difficulties expressing their feelings and emotions helpfully?

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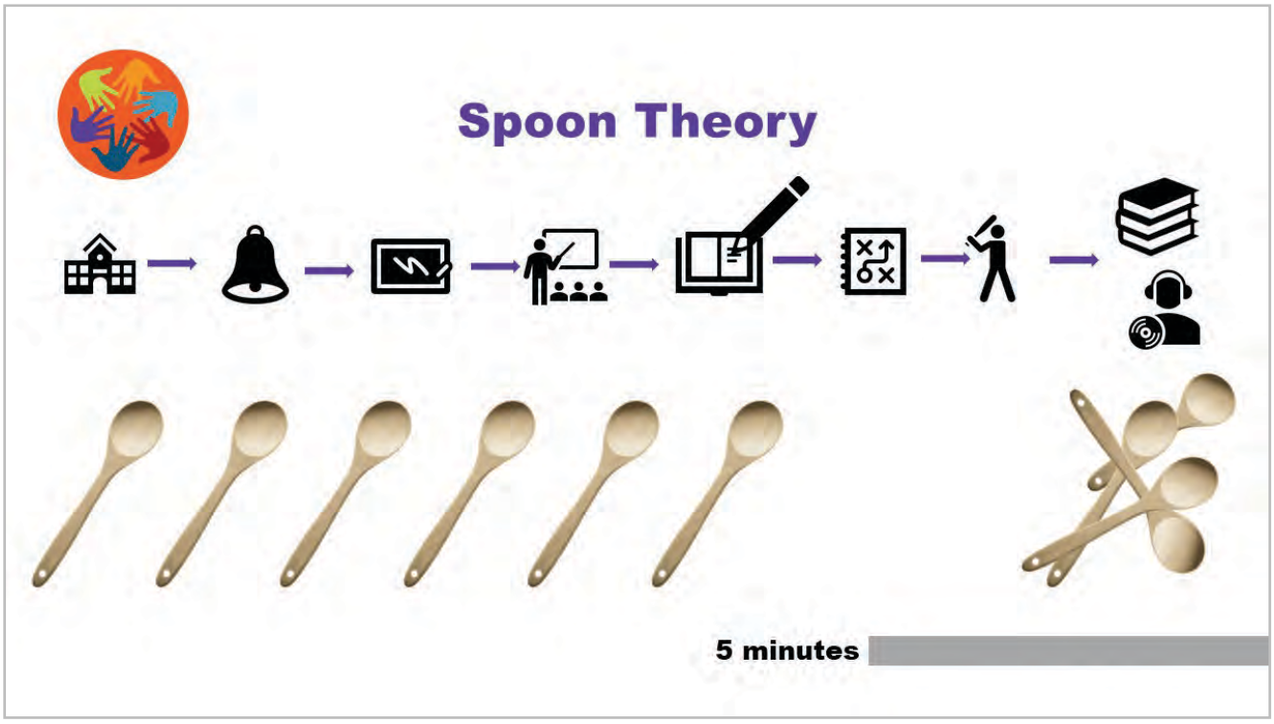


Key information:

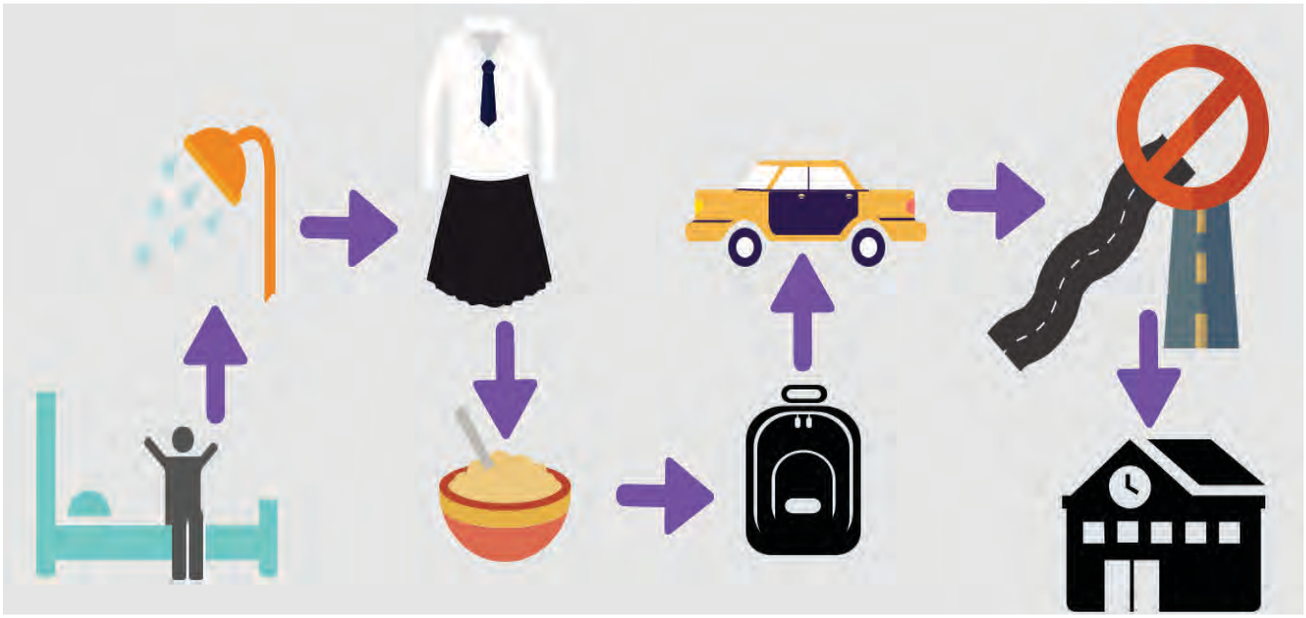
- Spoon Theory was developed by Christine Miserandino, as a way to express how it felt to have an invisible illness or disability. She used spoons to provide a visual representation of units of emotional and/or physical energy that a person might have.
- The Spoon Theory is a way of explaining how it feels to respond to the world in atypical ways, when your physical and emotional energy can be depleted by everyday experiences.

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/

Notes:

Spoon Theory



Key information:

- Each child or young person will react differently to sensory or other contextual things.
- What one young person finds builds up their spoons another might find decreases their spoons.
- It is important to collaborate with young people and their families, to get to know what strategies may work to replace spoons that have been used up.
- A lack of understanding of self impacts young people whether or not they have a diagnosis of autism.
- Unmet support needs in any area of the diversity wheel can lead to difficulties for the student, with possible longer term behavioural and mental health difficulties.

Notes:

Key information:

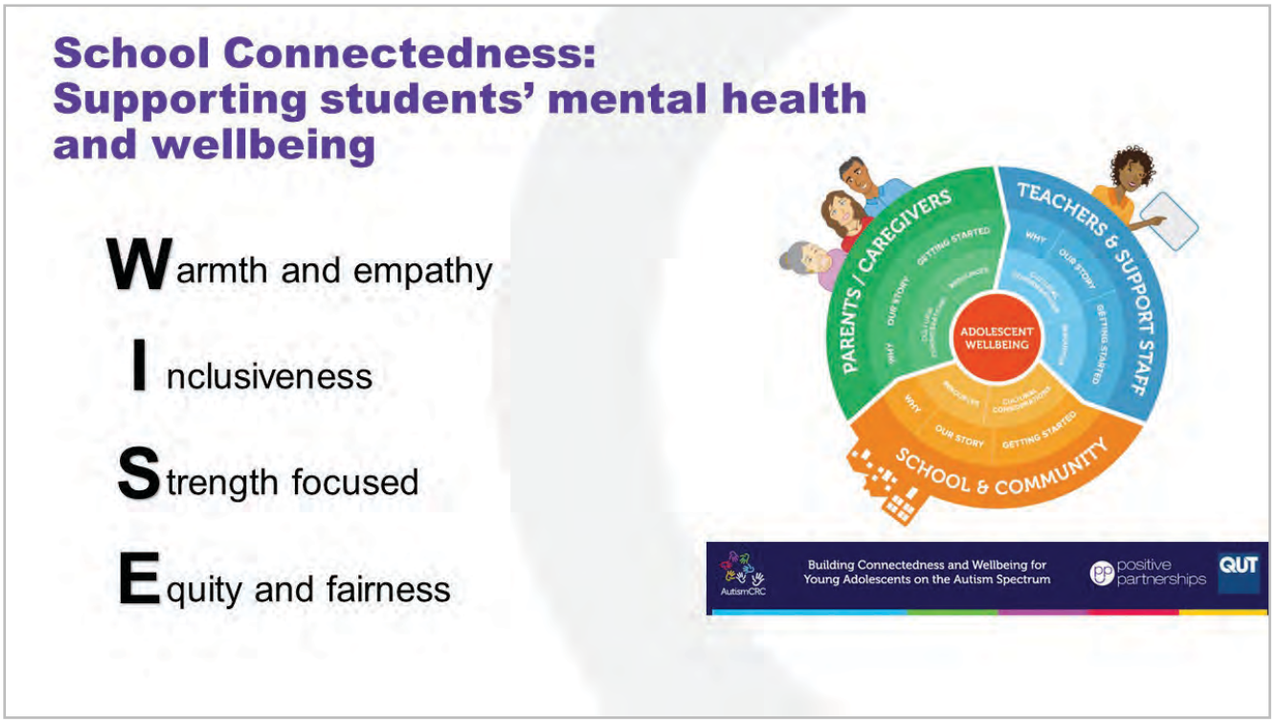
- Research suggests that autistic students are bullied more frequently than their peers, often covertly.
- Being bullied or feeling that you don't fit in or belong can increase mental health difficulties and/or behaviours that are challenging.
- Researchers have found that being bullied is linked to autistic students' school refusal.
- Autistic community connectedness has been found to be a protective factor, supporting good mental health and wellbeing (Botha, 2020).
- Autistic pride is linked to improved self-esteem, wellbeing and mental health (Cooper et al. 2017).
- Young people may be able to let us know how they are feeling and managing through a range of methods.
- Bullying can also be a cause of, or contribute to, anxiety and/or depression.
- Addressing bullying is a whole school responsibility.
- Bullying programs include education and support for the victim, perpetrator, bystanders and the wider school community.

Link:

- Positive Partnership Conversation Cards https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/conversation-cards

References:

- Botha, M. (2020). *Autistic community connectedness as a buffer against the effects of minority stress* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Surrey).
- Cooper, K., Smith, L. G., & Russell, A. (2017). Social identity, self-esteem, and mental health in autism. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 47*(7), 844-854.
- Ochi, M., Kawabe, K., Ochi, S., Miyama, T., Horiuchi, F., & Ueno, S. I. (2020). School refusal and bullying in children with autism spectrum disorder. *Child and adolescent psychiatry and mental health, 14*, 1-7. https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A3160889/view



Key information:

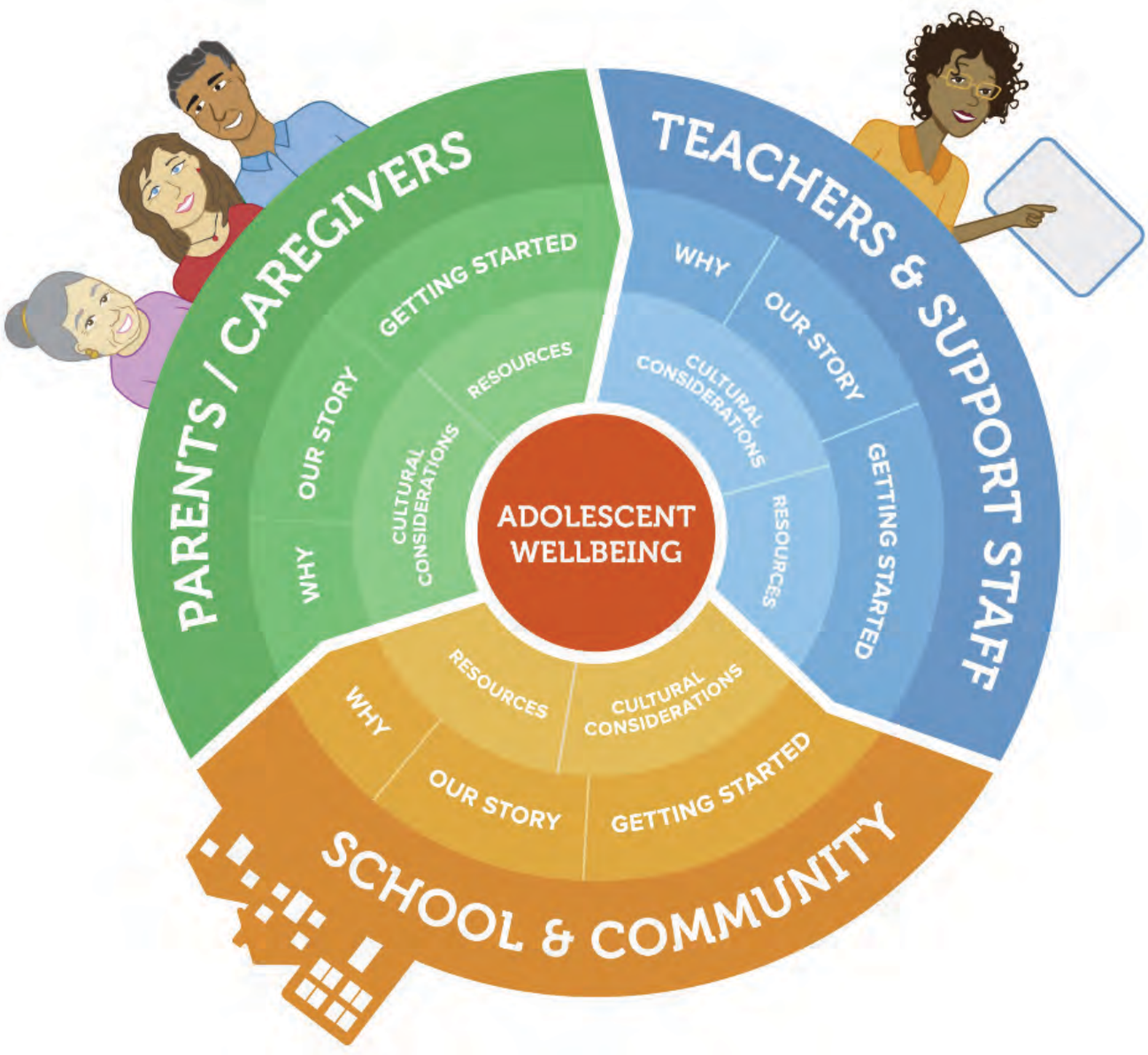
- School connectedness is a belief held by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.
- Students are more likely to engage and succeed academically when they feel connected to school.
- School connectedness supports good mental health.
- School connectedness is particularly important for young people who are at increased risk for feeling alienated or isolated from others. For example, students with disabilities.
- Australian research has highlighted the four attributes of schools with good school connectedness. This is known as the **WISE** model.
    - **W**armth and Empathy: with all the elements (such as empathy, respect and understanding "where teenagers are at") that help establish warm relationships
    - **I**nclusion: and the importance of finding a role and sense of belonging for the students/group participants
    - **S**trength Focus: which entails noticing, identifying and encouraging each group member's strengths
    - **E**quity and Fairness: which includes not only a lack of discrimination, but support for differences and a strong sense of fairness.

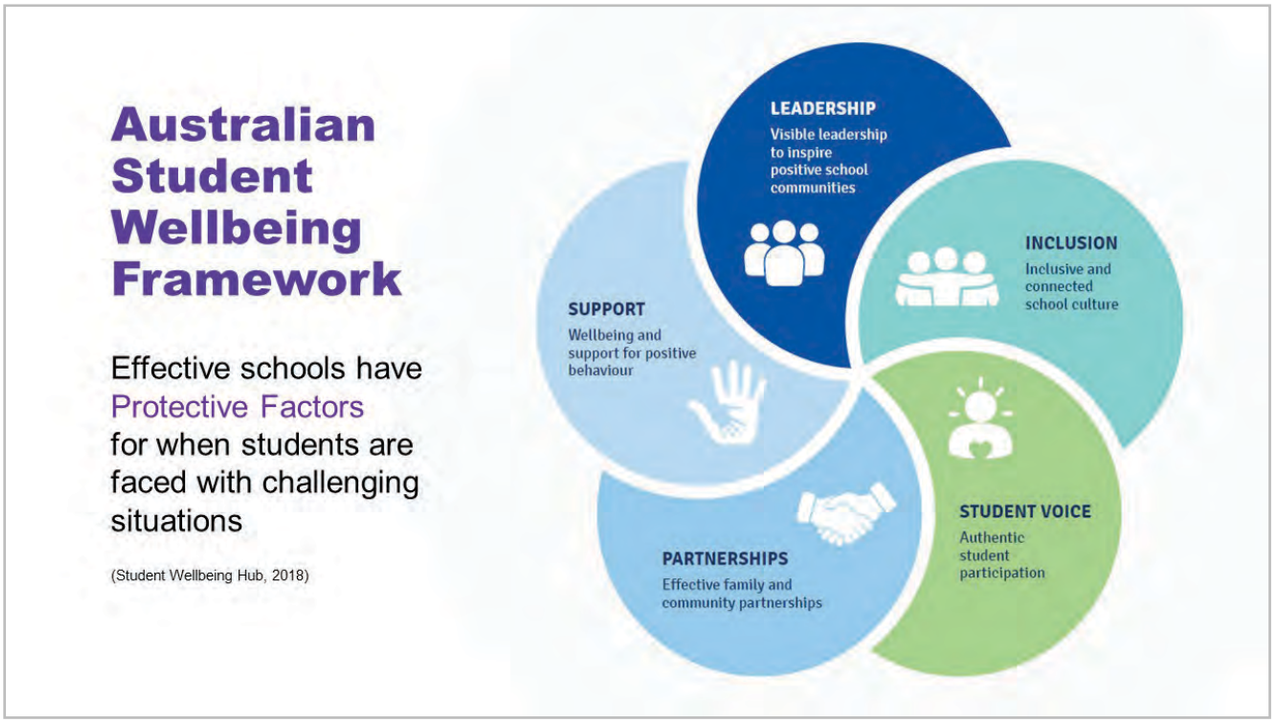
Links:

- Autism CRC (2019) Autism Teen Wellbeing https://autismteenwellbeing.com.au/
- https://autismteenwellbeing.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/WISE_Model_Resources.pdf

Reference:

- Shochet, I., Wurfl, A., Orr, J., Kelly, R., Saggers, B., & Carrington, S. (2021). School connectedness to support student mental health and wellbeing. In *Supporting Students on the Autism Spectrum in Inclusive Schools* (pp. 17-32). Routledge.


PARENTS / CAREGIVERS
GETTING STARTED
RESOURCES
OUR STORY
CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS
WHY
TEACHERS & SUPPORT STAFF
WHY
OUR STORY
CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS
RESOURCES
GETTING STARTED
ADOLESCENT WELLBEING
SCHOOL & COMMUNITY
WHY
RESOURCES
CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS
OUR STORY
GETTING STARTED



Key information:

- Effective schools have protective factors for when students are faced with challenging situations (Student Wellbeing Hub, 2018).
- When schools are functioning well, students are more able to develop resilient mindsets as opposed to vulnerable mindsets (Student Wellbeing Hub, 2018).
- The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework is a foundational document that provides Australian schools with a vision and a set of guiding principles to support school communities to build positive learning environments and to consider reviewing their current safety and wellbeing policies and support requirements.
- The 5 key elements focus on leadership, inclusion, student voice, partnerships and support.
- Student resilience and wellbeing are essential for both academic and social development and are optimised by safe, supportive and respectful learning environments.
- Schools share this responsibility with the whole community.

Links:

- https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/resources/australian-student-wellbeing-framework/
- Positive Partnerships' Protective Factors Action Plan

Reference:

- National Mental Health Commission. (2021). The national children's mental health and wellbeing strategy. Downloaded from https://apo.org.au/node/314516


LEADERSHIP
Visible leadership to inspire positive school communities
INCLUSION
Inclusive and connected school culture
SUPPORT
Wellbeing and support for positive behaviour
STUDENT VOICE
Authentic student participation
PARTNERSHIPS
Effective family and community partnerships

Key information:

- Protective factors are the things that can help to keep the risk factors at bay. They help to build us up and give us the strength to deal with challenges throughout our lives.
- Possible protective factors include things like:
  - support networks – family, friends and those in similar situations to ourselves (for example a special interest group)
  - being able to access support networks – knowing how to approach them
  - good interoception, so that you know how you feel and when you might need support or help
  - being physically healthy and taking care of yourself
  - the ability to cope and problem solve
  - having a sense of belonging, a positive sense of identity and strong connection to your cultural heritage
  - a belief that life has meaning
  - providing a safe and stimulating environment
  - providing and modelling safe and trusting relationships with educators during the school day
  - encouraging emotional development
  - encouraging and supporting social development
  - supporting the sense of belonging to the school community
  - supporting the development of self-worth
  - supporting the development of a sense of purpose
  - developing the students' sense of cultural identity
  - encouraging the student to do something new or more challenging
  - supporting the development of a positive self-identity as an autistic person
  - students being able to learn through their interests.

Links:

- https://www.beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/older-people/connections-matter
- https://wayahead.org.au/download/deadly-tips-poster-2020/?wpdmdl=13000&refresh=5f6044ab005011600144555
- https://autismteenwellbeing.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Shochet__Ham_2004.pdf

References:

- Mackay, B. A., Shochet, I. M., & Orr, J. A. (2017). A pilot randomised controlled trial of a school-based resilience intervention to prevent depressive symptoms for young adolescents with autism spectrum disorder: A mixed methods analysis. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 47, 3458-3478. doi:10.1007/s10803-017-3263-5. https://autismteenwellbeing.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Pilot-RCT.pdf
- Shochet, I., & Ham, D. (2004). Universal school-based approaches to preventing adolescent depression: Past findings and future directions of the Resourceful Adolescent Program. International Journal of Mental Health Promotion, 6(3), 17–25. https://autismteenwellbeing.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Shochet__Ham_2004.pdf

Notes:


DEADLY TIPS TO STRESS LESS
MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF
SAFE SUPER VISION
GO AND SIT BY
THE RIVER
WATERHOLE
OR THE OCEAN
Take time to think
HAVE THE COURAGE TO BE IMPERFECT
GET ACTIVE GO OUTSIDE
GET SOME FRESH AIR
GO FOR A WALK
KICK THE FOOTY
HAVE A YARN
TALK ABOUT IT
CLOSE YOUR EYES
FOCUS ON YOUR BREATH
LIGHT A CANDLE, HAVE A BUBBLE BATH
BE PROUD OF YOURSELF
WHO YOU ARE
WHERE YOU'RE FROM
SPEND TIME WITH ELDERS
SHARE SOMETHING THAT MAKES YOU LAUGH
SPEND TIME WITH PEOPLE YOU LOVE
LISTEN TO YOUR FAVOURITE MUSIC
CONNECT WITH THE LAND
LAUGH LOVE LISTEN
Tune in
Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of New South Wales
wsu@ahmrc.org.au
mentalhealthmonth.org.au
AH&MRC SEWB
WORKFORCE SUPPORT UNIT

In table groups, think about what Sam and Bobby said and select one of the approaches to discuss:

- What barriers and challenges exist around helpful behaviours, mental health and wellbeing?
- Are your behaviour policies flexible or one size fits all? What are the functional implications of this?
- What is your school doing well in this area?
- What are some areas for further growth and awareness in your school setting – student, staff and community?
- How could your school support autistic community connectedness and autistic pride for your autistic students?

References:

- Campbell, M., Hwang, Y. S., Whiteford, C., Dillon-Wallace, J., Ashburner, J., Saggers, B., & Carrington, S. (2017). Bullying prevalence in students with autism spectrum disorder. Australasian Journal of Special Education, 41, 101-122. 9.
- Humphrey, N., & Hebron, J. (2015). Bullying of children and adolescents with autism spectrum conditions: “state of the field” review. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 19, 845-862.10.
- Maiano, C., Normand, C. L., Salvas, M. C., Moullec, G., & Aimé, A. (2016). Prevalence of school bullying among youth with autism spectrum disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Autism Research, 9, 601-615.

Notes:

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 the webbing between your fingers

Key information:

- Watch https://youtu.be/mXSGUjEQVrM for an illustration of this activity.
- Over time interoception activities help students, including autistic students, develop awareness of and be able to self-manage their emotions and feelings.

Links:

- 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

Notes:

What is behaviour?

Key information:

- Behaviour is observable, it is everything that we do.
- Some behaviours can be a response to input from our environment, people or events occurring around us.
- Behaviours serve a purpose and 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 this can change depending on the context. For example, the act of spitting. This can be helpful when brushing your teeth. It is unhelpful when the behaviour is spitting on other people with intent.
- Behaviours can be understood as an individual's solution. This can be their best attempt to cope.

Notes:

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 be helpful to others around them.
- Behaviour policies should be applied equitably to students who can and cannot control their behaviour due to their developmental age or stage.
- Research indicates that when students are unable to control their behaviours, they are also unable to make choices (Goodall, 2021).

Link:

- Positive Partnerships Webinars: Interoception, Sensory Processing, Communication

Reference:

- 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).

Expressing emotions and behaviour

Key information:

- Students who are unable to express their emotions and behaviour helpfully are the most likely to exhibit behaviours that are difficult for you as educators.
- These students are also more likely to be excluded from school (Bailey et al., 2019).
- When our emotions are extremely intense or extreme, we lose our ability to accurately process information and choose how to respond (Goodall, 2021).
- When we are well connected to our internal body signals, we notice these building emotions and feelings and can choose how to respond, more often and more quickly.
- Our survival brain/instinct is designed to keep us alive when it works like this it is extremely useful. However, it can be activated by the perception of danger in addition to actual danger, resulting in the presentation of survival behaviours when there is no actual need for them.
- Some people refer to these types of survival behaviours as a meltdown or a shutdown.

Reference:

- Bailey, R., Meland, E. A., Brion-Meisels, G., & Jones, S. M. (2019). Getting developmental science back into schools: Can what we know about self-regulation help change how we think about “no excuses”? Frontiers in Psychology, 10, 1885.
- 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:

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.

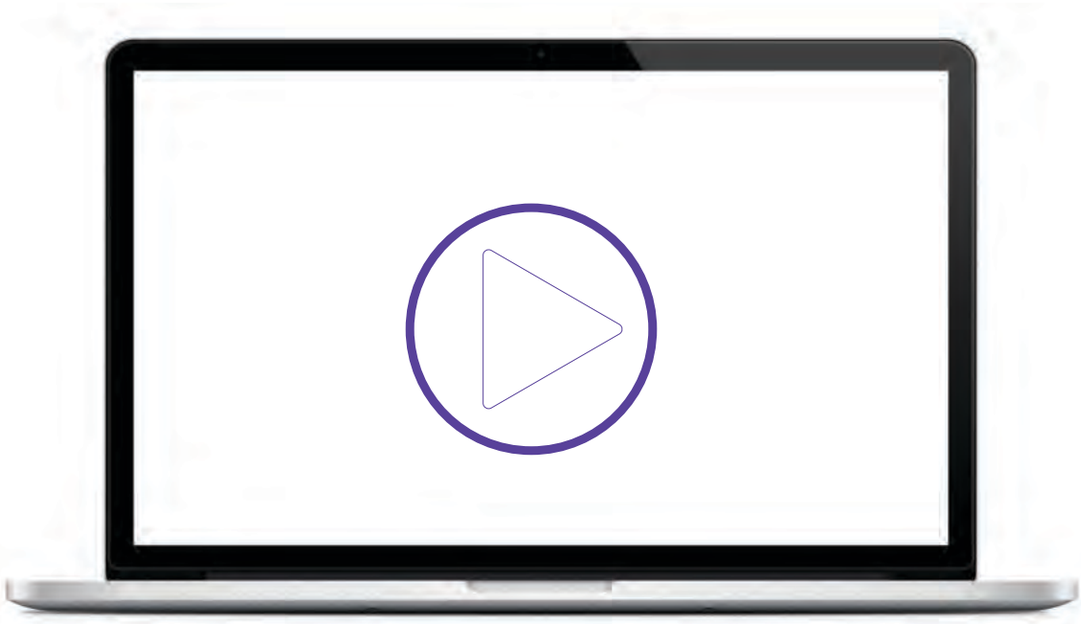
Link:

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

Notes:

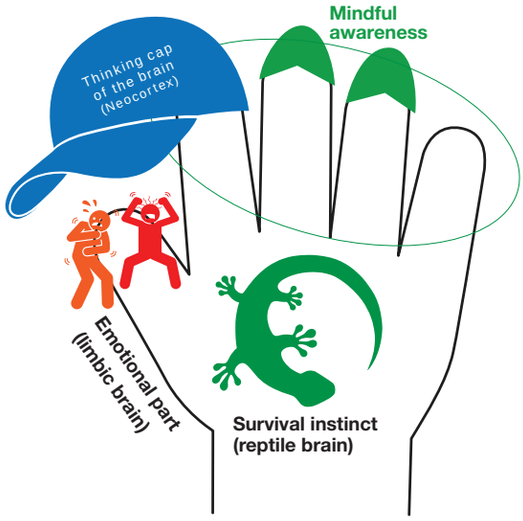
Dan Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain

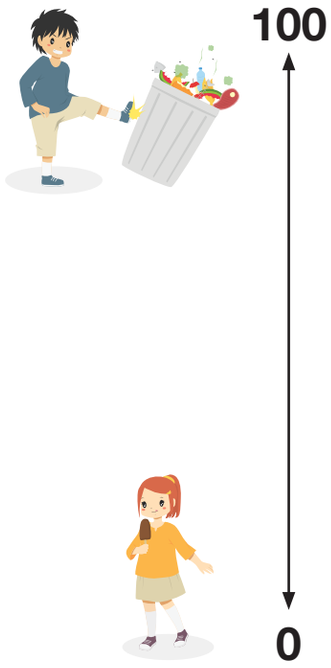
- When people experience intense or extreme emotions, they can lose their ability to accurately process information and choose how to respond.
- Being aware of internal body signals supports young people to notice an increase in emotions and feelings. This allows them to implement strategies that can support self-regulation.



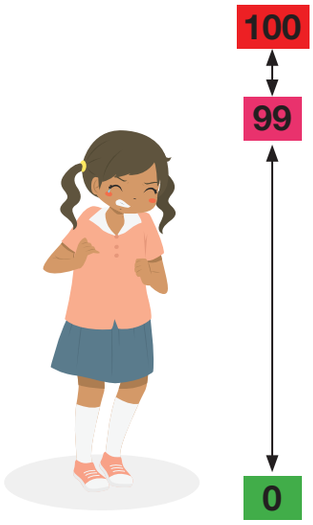
Scan this QR code to watch a video of the hand model of the brain.

Or, you can visit this link:
https://vimeo.com/779822600



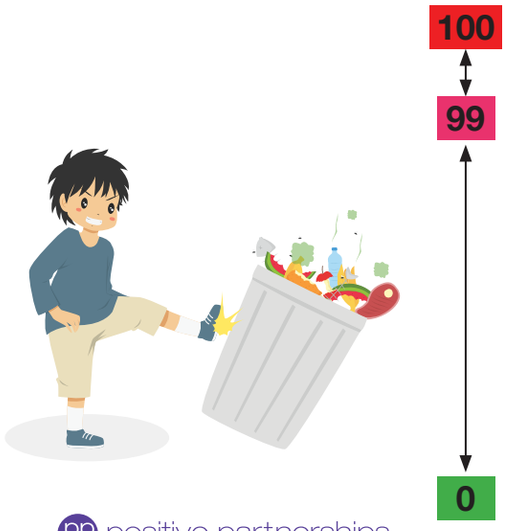


Let's use a behaviour scale that starts at zero (0) and ends at one hundred (100), with zero reflecting a calm and content individual and one hundred reflecting out of control behaviour, driven by survival instinct.

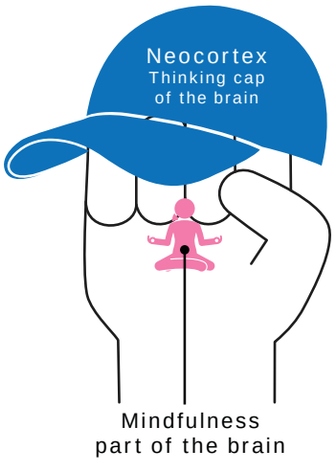


If someone's interoceptive awareness is still developing, they will not notice or understand what their body is telling them.

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.

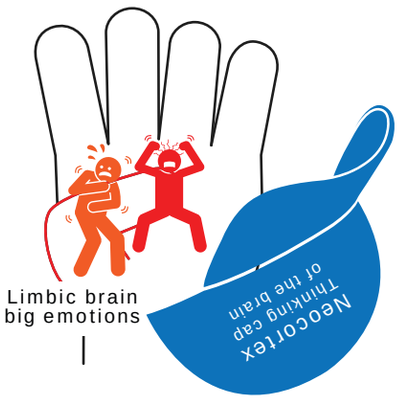


Ninety-Nine (99) is when someone has big emotions and it's hard to learn, think clearly or self-regulate. At 99, your emotions are in control of you and this can easily escalate to 100, when survival instinct takes control.



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

0 98



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**

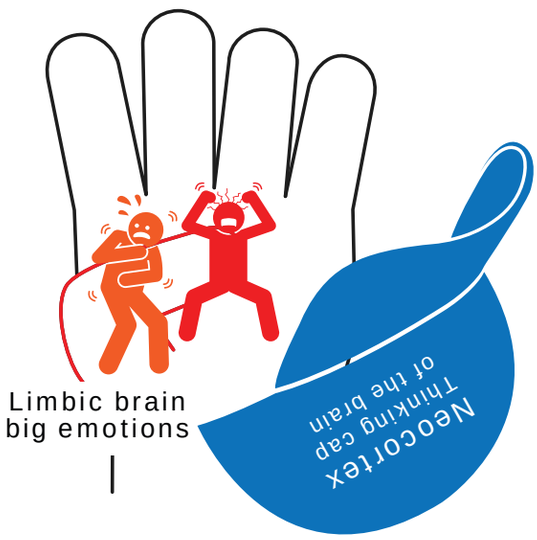
100

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.

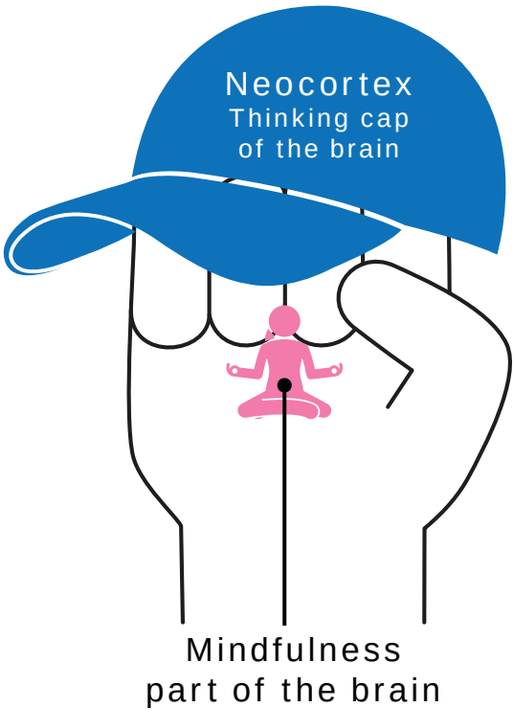
Individuals cannot be co-regulated when they are in survival mode.



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.

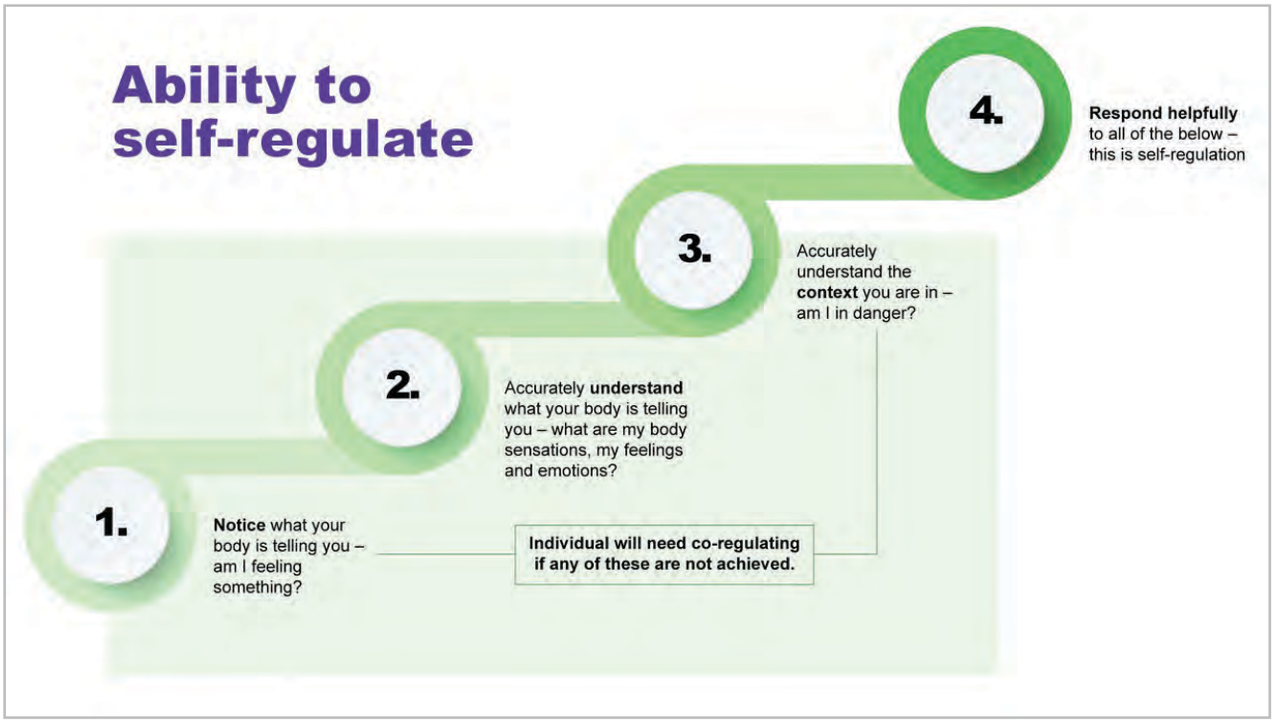
This can prevent emotional overload and avoid someone flipping their lid, which activates the survival instinct.



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.

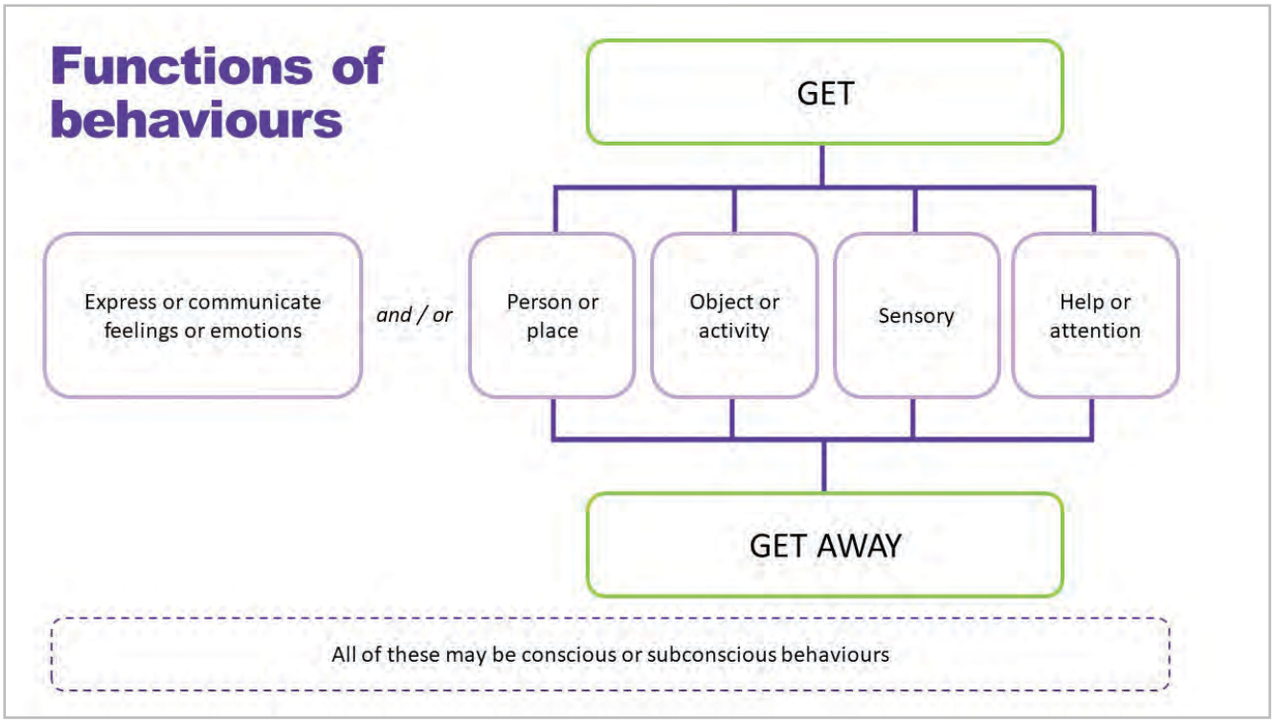


Key information:

- Mental health difficulties can impact the ability for an individual to accurately understand the context they are in, e.g. highly anxious students 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, so they are in big emotions or survival zone, 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 on a number of steps, with each skill relying on the step below:
  - The first skill is to: Notice what your body is telling you (am I feeling something?),
  - The second skill is to: Accurately understand what your body is telling you (what are my feelings and emotions?) and
  - The third is to: Accurately understand the context you are in (for example, am I in danger?)
  - The final step: builds on the first three steps and is where the individual is able to respond helpfully to the first three steps (self-regulation).

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



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 can help you record what you find out using your detective skills.
- Let's consider this detective approach over lunch.

Reference:

- 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:

Lunch

Notes:

Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence (ABC) Table

Student Name	Date
Observer	Time
Activity	Location

Antecedent	Behaviour	Consequence
Lining up under tin shed on a hot day, amongst a busy crowd of children.	Student hits other student when lining up under tin shed.	Student is sent to the administration office in an air conditioned room.
Assembly in summer in the hall, noisy, hot.	Student hits another student.	Student is sent to the administration office in an air conditioned room.
	...what do you think will happen next?	

Key information:

- The Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence Table (ABC) is often used to try and understand behaviour:
  - Antecedent – what happens before behaviour. Think about spoon theory and whether the Diversity Wheel needs are being met.
  - Behaviour – what happened (should include context).
  - Consequence – what happened after the behaviour (what potentially/accidentally reinforces the behaviour, including the teacher's behaviours).
- An Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence Table can be really helpful in terms of evaluating consequences. For example, if a student gets sent out whenever they hit, they may start to hit in order to get sent out. The consequence is actually accidentally reinforcing or even driving the behaviour.
- For autistic students, many of the setting events occur over a period of time that may or may not be observed. Think about spoon theory and how this relates to when your student engages in behaviour that is challenging for you or them.
- Taking spoon theory into account when completing an Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence Table can be helpful for complex behaviours.
- The links to the Diversity Wheel and whether or not strengths are being utilised and support needs met, can also impact behaviour as well as wellbeing and mental health.

Notes:

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:
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?* 
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?* 

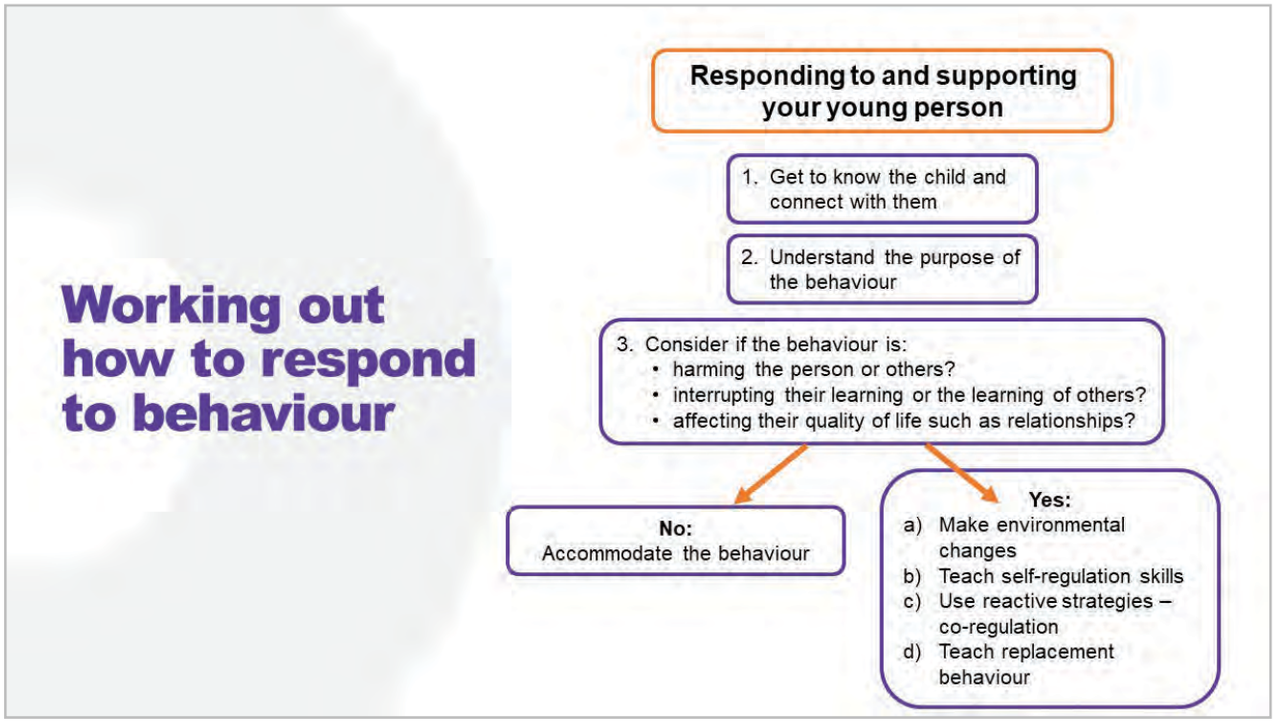
Key information:

- 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.

Link:

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

Notes:



Key information:

- Under the DSE schools need to plan collaboratively with students around supporting how students express themselves.
- Fully inclusive environments enable autistic students to be more comfortable, decreasing the likelihood of becoming overwhelmed and engaging in survival behaviours.
- Survival behaviours are biologically driven and are not a choice.
- Some behaviours, such as stims (repetitive sounds/movements) may help students to manage their emotions and feelings.

Most Likely / Least Likely Tool Activity

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:
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?* 
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?* 

 **15 minutes**

Key information:

- The Most Likely / Least Likely Tool may be used to understand a behaviour, by gathering additional information about when the behaviour happens and under what circumstances.
- It can help to differentiate between when a student can't or won't do something as well as for behaviours that are unhelpful in context to the student and/or their peers or teacher.
- This tool needs to be completed in collaboration with the whole team around the young person, including the young person themselves where possible/appropriate.
- It is equally as important to identify information about when the behaviour does NOT happen as when it does.
- 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.

Link:

- Positive Partnerships:

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

Notes:

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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?* 
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?* 

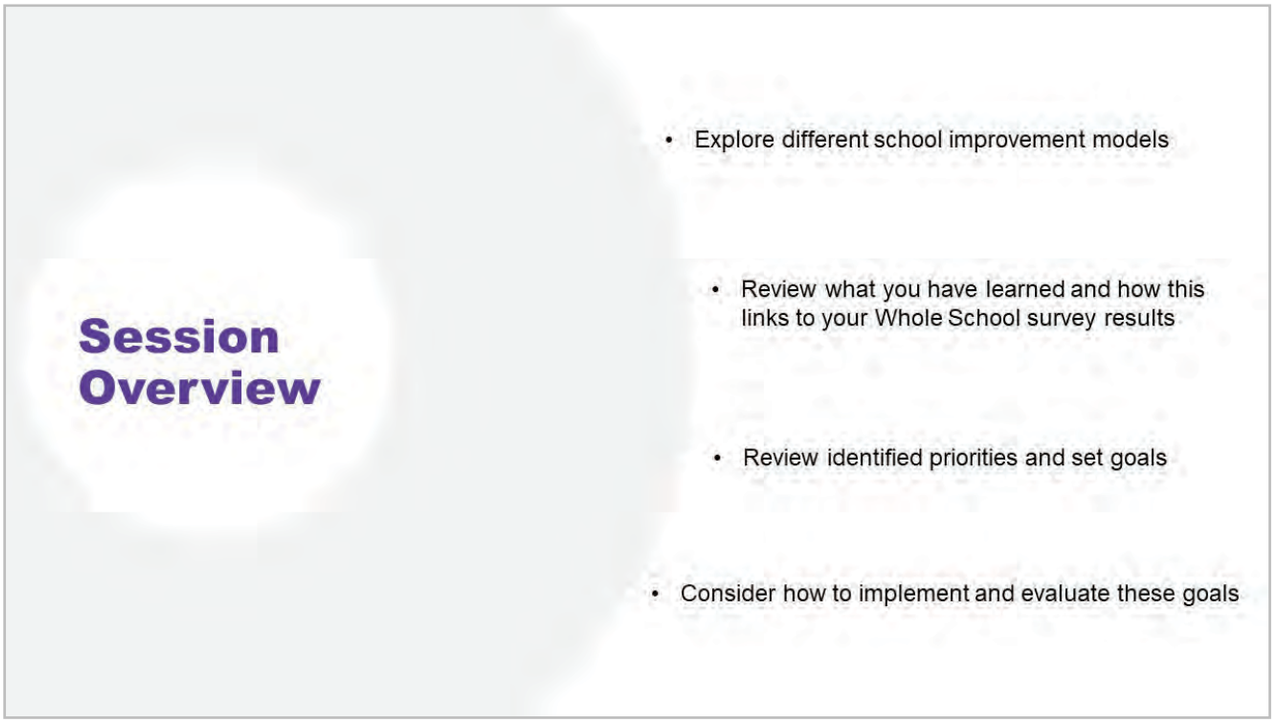
Session 6

positive partnerships

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


Priority planning and next steps
positive partnerships
Working together to support school-aged students on the autism spectrum

Notes:



Key information:

- Explore different school improvement models.
- Review what you have learned and how this links to your school survey results.
- Prioritise goals, plan actions/implementation and how these will be monitored .
- Consider how to achieve and embed these goals.

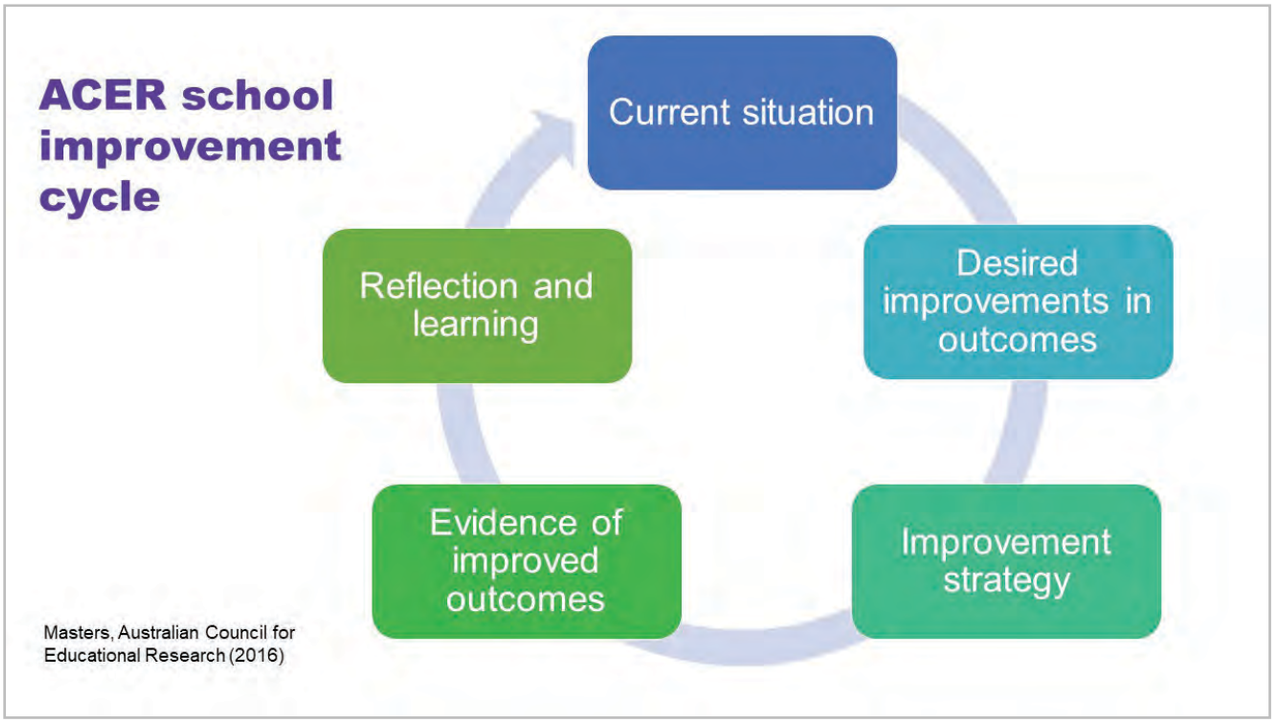
Action Team
Strengths and Priorities

Models for whole school improvement

The Lippitt-Knoster Model for Managing Complex Change

✗	Consensus	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action plan	=	Confusion
Vision	✗	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action plan	=	Sabotage
Vision	Consensus	✗	Incentives	Resources	Action plan	=	Anxiety
Vision	Consensus	Skills	✗	Resources	Action plan	=	Resistance
Vision	Consensus	Skills	Incentives	✗	Action plan	=	Frustration
Vision	Consensus	Skills	Incentives	Resources	✗	=	Treadmill

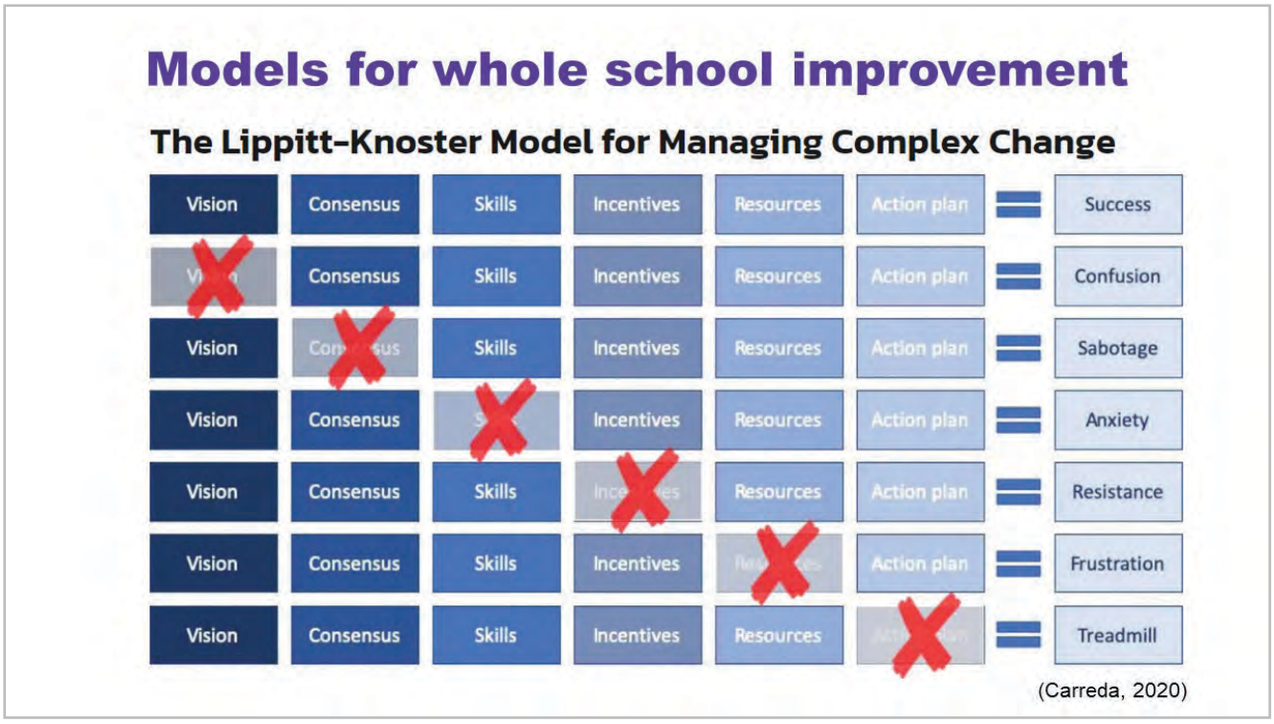
Setting up for successful improvement	
G	Goals – what do you want to achieve?
R	Reality – what is the situation currently?
O	Options – what could you do?
W	Will – prioritize **what** you will do
T	Tactics – **how and when** will do it?
H	Habits – how can you **embed** these actions sustainably?
Celebrating the improvements	



Links:

- Masters, G. (2016). *Schools as learning organisations*. Australian Council for Educational Research. https://www.acer.org/files/Schools-as-learning-organisations.pdf
- Masters, G. (2016). National school improvement tool. Australian Council for Educational Research https://pivotal.acer.edu.au/au/school-improvement/improvement-tools/national-school-improvement-tool
- The Education Endowment Foundation, (2021) The teaching and learning toolkit. https://evidenceforlearning.org.au/the-toolkits/the-teaching-and-learning-toolkit/full-toolkit/

Notes:



Resources/Links:

- Carreda, S. (2020) Models: The Lippitt-Knoster Model for Managing Complex Change https://sergiocaredda.eu/organisation/tools/models-the-lippitt-knoster-model-for-managing-complex-change/
- Growth Coaching In Education, (n.d.) Growth Coaching Model. https://www.growthcoaching.com.au/about/growth-approach
- Loren Swancutt via the School Inclusion – From Theory to Practice website (JFPO) https://inclusiveschoolcommunities.org.au/resources/toolkit/inclusive-school-reform-reflection-action-planning-and-monitoring-impact
- Ebert, P. M. (2018). *The Impact of the Change Process on Teacher Leadership Roles in Education*. Widener University.
- Stober, D. R., & Grant, A. M. (2006). Evidence based coaching handbook: Putting best practices to work for your clients. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc; US.

Notes:

Embedding Whole School improvement

Setting up for successful improvement	
G	Goals – what do you want to achieve?
R	Reality – what is the situation currently?
O	Options – what could you do?
W	Will – prioritize **what** you will do
T	Tactics – **how and when** will you do it?
H	Habits – how can you **embed** these actions sustainably?
Celebrating the improvements	

Resources/Links:

- Refer to previous page for resources and links.

Notes:

Key information:

- Planning for school improvement needs to focus on SMART or SMARTER goals.
  - **S** Specific
  - **M** Measurable
  - **A** Achievable
  - **R** Relevant
  - **T** Time-based
  - **E** Everyone agrees
  - **R** Reviewed

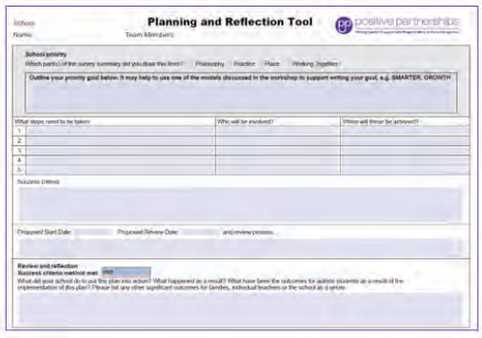
Notes:

Planning and goal implementation

It is now time to meet in your identified priority groups.

Using your learnings across these two days of our workshop, you will develop your identified priorities into goals using our **Planning and Reflection Tool**.

75 minutes


Planning and Reflection Tool

School:
Name:
Team Members:

School priority:
Which part(s) of the survey summary did you draw this from? Philosophy Practice Place Working Together

Outline your priority goal below. It may help to use one of the models discussed in the workshop to support writing your goal, e.g. SMARTER, GROWTH

What steps need to be taken:	Who will be involved?	When will these be actioned?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Success criteria:

Proposed Start Date: Proposed Review Date: and review process:

Review and reflection:
Success criteria met/not met: met
What did your school do to put this plan into action? What happened as a result? What have been the outcomes for autistic students as a result of the implementation of this plan? Please list any other significant outcomes for families, individual teachers or the school as a whole.

After the workshop

- Implement the goals and actions identified in your **Planning and Reflection Tool**
- Log on to your school's digital classroom and complete <u>at least two</u> post-workshop tasks
- Complete the reflection section of the **Planning and Reflection Tool** and upload it to the digital classroom

A video walkthrough on how to use our Online Learning Hub is available to access from your workbook.

Your Online Classroom: After this Workshop

You will find your classroom on our Online Learning Hub.
Go to 'My Modules' and you'll see your unique classroom there.
Below is a screenshot of what your classroom looks like.

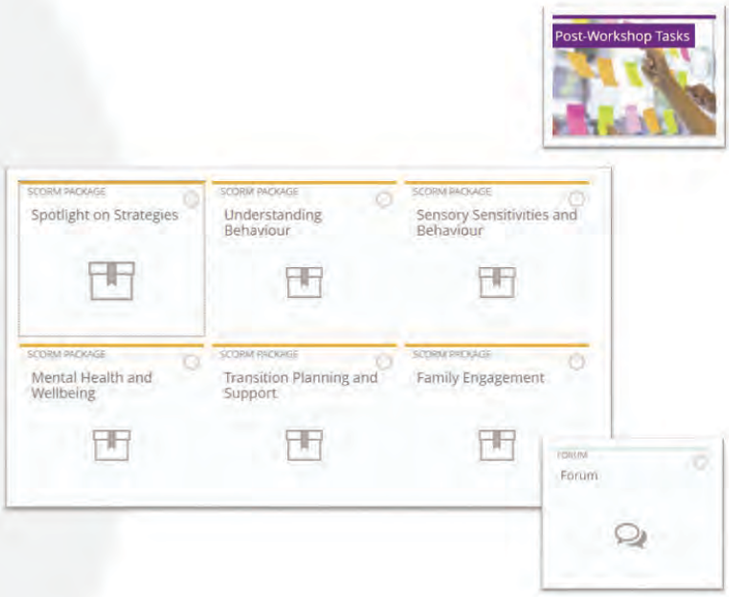
Welcome to your online learning classroom for the Professional Learning workshop.
Below you will find the **Pre-Workshop Module** [Introduction to Autism] to be completed prior to attending the first day of the workshop.
Please make sure to complete the module within this classroom and not within the general area of the Online Learning Hub.
NB: If you complete the module outside of this Classroom, *it will not show as complete*.

If you have any questions about the workshop, please contact the team leader
We look forward to meeting and working with you soon.
Warm regards, Positive Partnerships

Post-Workshop Tasks

Please complete at least two of these post-workshop tasks. They are self-paced modules for you to complete at your own pace.

Each task has an activity at the end that needs to be submitted to the Forum. Click through to the Forum at any stage to see the discussion threads that relate to each task. You can see responses that others have submitted, and you are invited to comment and provide feedback on these responses. This is a community of practice space where you can share ideas and reflect on your educational practices.



Planning and Reflection Tool

After completing the Post-Workshop Tasks, next proceed to the tile called 'Planning and Reflection Tool'. This is where you download your reflection tool.

Complete and upload your planning and reflection tool into the assignment submission space for our team to provide you feedback.

Certificate

Your **Certificate** will become available for you to download after you have completed the pre-workshop module (Introduction to Autism), have attended the workshop, and after our team have marked your completed post-workshop tasks.

CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

positive partnerships

CHRIS CHAMPION
Director
Positive Partnerships

THIS IS TO CERTIFY

Craig Smith

has completed a 19-hour Positive Partnerships professional learning program.

The program consisted of online learning activities and face to face workshop sessions.

Riverwood, 2022

Workshop Code: 21-22NSWSPFPL1

Feedback

http://tiny.cc/PP-PLfeedback

Professional Learning Feedback Form

Your feedback is very important to us and will help ensure that our professional learning events are effective and meet the learning needs of participants.

Start

* How was the workshop facilitated?

- (•) face-to-face (in person)
- ( ) online

Which professional learning workshop did you attend today or most recently?

- ( ) Whole School PL - Day 1 - All staff
- (•) Whole School PL - Day 2 - All staff

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positivepartnerships.com.au

Positive Partnerships is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education.