

Autism in children & young people

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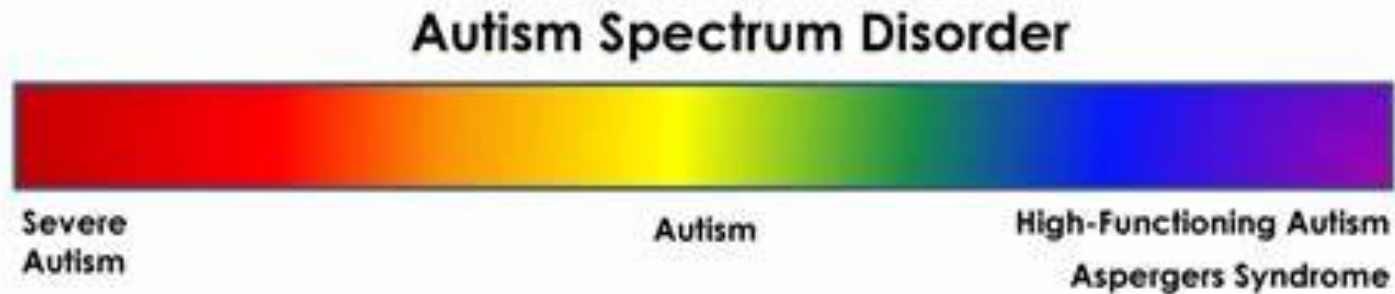
Autism

- Neurodevelopmental – no cure
- Must have impact on functioning
- High level of co-morbidity (ADHD, learning difficulties and disability, anxiety, depression, etc)
- High prevalence of challenging behaviour

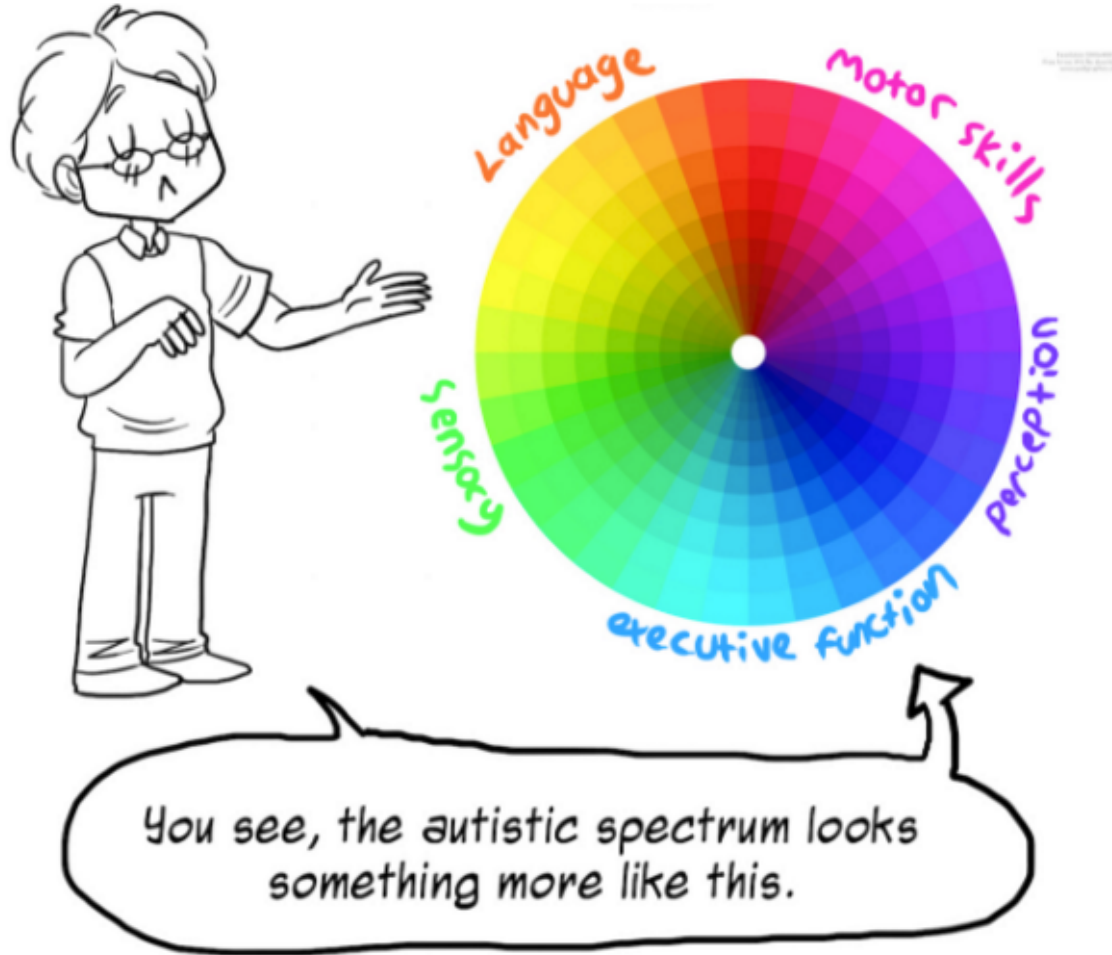
Areas of impairment / difference

- Communication
- Social interaction
- Flexibility and Imagination
- Processing information
- Sensory processing

Traditional view of autism



But...



Early indicators

- **Communication / social interaction**
 - Poor eye contact, lack of or exaggerated gestures
 - Poorly modulated facial expressions
 - Difficulty in understanding others' feelings (may be described as “lack of empathy”)
 - Isolating / school refusing
 - Problems with social relationships and/or lack of interest in others
 - Speech delay, SALT input, Selective mutism; language which is unusual for age and culture (e.g. American accent, but never lived in US; vocabulary well above that of peers)

Early Indicators (cont.)

- **Flexibility, imagination, and processing differences**
 - Repetitive / ritualistic behaviour, or intense obsessive interest
 - Extreme reactions / black and white thinking, including emotional dysregulation or highly controlling behaviour
 - High levels of anxiety related to transitions and/or change
 - Always distracted, takes longer to react, or comes to wrong conclusion
- **Sensory difficulties**

Predisposing factors

- History of known or suspected family neurodevelopmental conditions
- Chronic constipation that is not explained by physical health;
- Epilepsy
- Movement difficulties / motor coordination issues
- <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg128/chapter/Recommendations#recognising-children-and-young-people-with-possible-autism>

Before diagnosis

- Education has access to wealth of information / strategies available; SENSS can also input **without** a diagnosis
- School can start EHCP assessment **without** a diagnosis

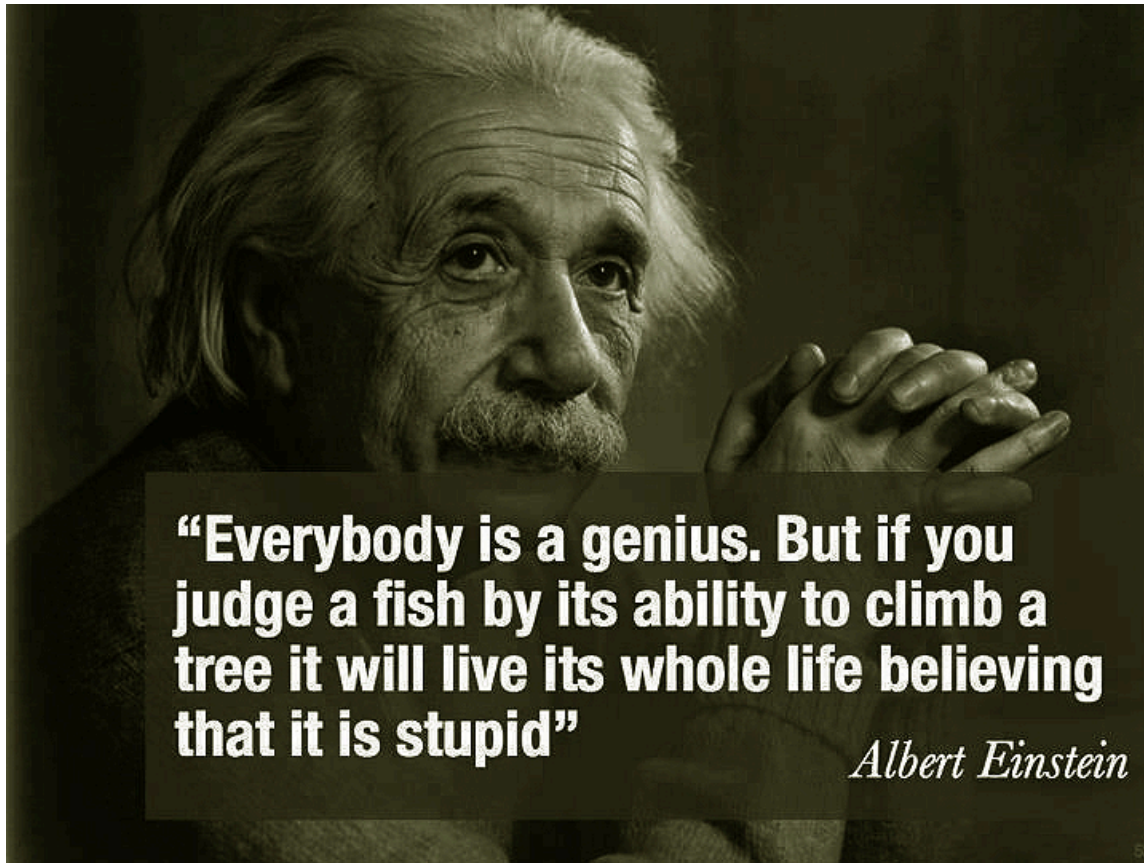
After diagnosis

- Access to support groups – e.g. Bicester Autism/ADHD, SHIFT Abingdon, Autism Family Support
- If diagnosis has been given, NICE guidelines show that attendance of training for parents is necessary
- Visit websites from credible organisations such as National Autistic Society as these are full of practical tips!

1. If you think a child has autism, start treating them as if they have it!
2. Autism has no cure – adaptations will **ALWAYS** be necessary (would you take someone's glasses if they start seeing?)
3. Focus on the strengths and shift expectations! Accept the child!
4. Children on the spectrum need role modelling everyday
5. Needs will change – remain curious and involve the child



Final thought



“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid”

Albert Einstein

Any questions???



NDC website

- <https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/oxon/service/ndc/>