



# Supporting Autistic Children at home

## Information and Top Tips



Lizzy Stockwell – Autism Outreach Lead

Woodlands School (Primary East)

# The plan

- Autism
- Top tips for supporting autistic students at home
- Questions



# Autism Diagnostic Criteria

## Criteria

# A

"Persistent ~~deficits~~ **differences** in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, as manifested by the following, currently or by history."

**(All three subcategories must be present for a diagnosis).**

**Note:** This is not my preferred language, but for this series I'm sticking with the direct DSM language. The only edit I've made is changing **deficit** to **difference**. For a strengths-based DSM for Autism, see references.



1. "**Differences** in social-emotional reciprocity"



2. "**Differences** in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction"



3. "**Differences** in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships"

## Criteria

# B

"Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities, as manifested by at least two of the following."

**(2 of the 4 subcategories must be present to meet criteria B.)**



### B1

"**Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech**"

**Examples:** stimming or engaging in echolalia, re-using phrases repetitively, lining up objects or toys, creating elaborate organizational systems and collections. These activities function to self-soothe.



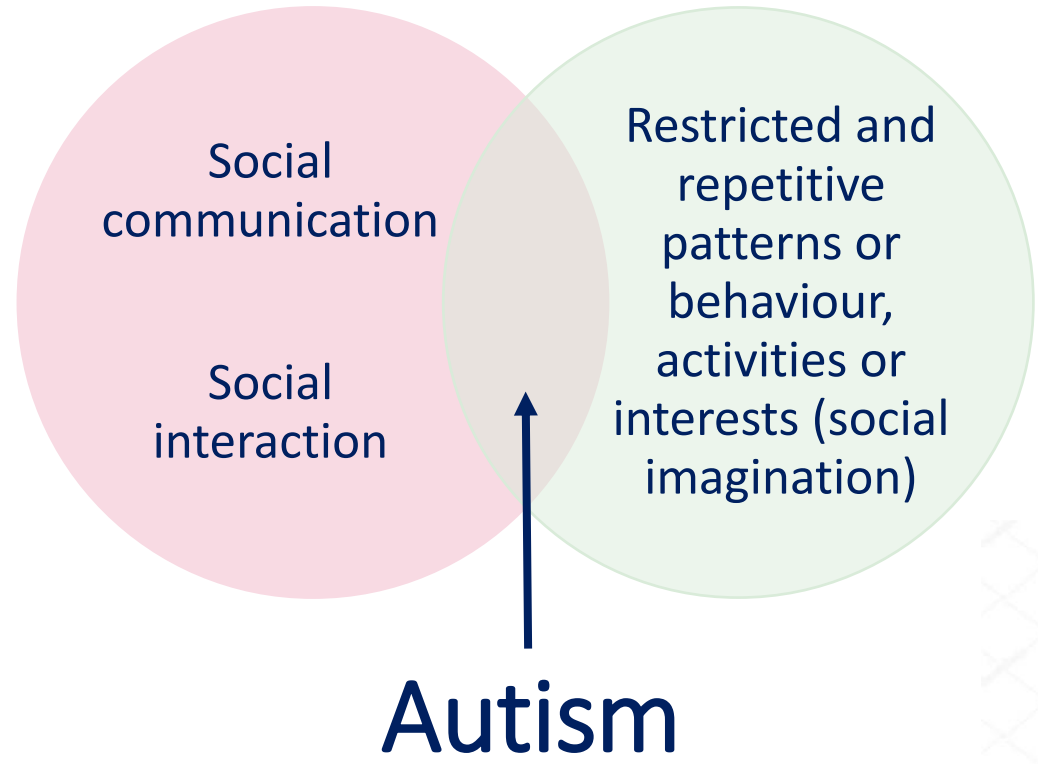
### B2

"**Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior**"

**Examples:** Finding security in routines. Difficulty with unexpected changes (particularly if they are not self-initiated changes).

Particular rituals (ways of greeting, morning routines, rituals before exams, etc.). Deviation from these rituals creates significant distress.





# What do we see?

- Makes it hard for children and young people (CYP) to organise themselves and think about what's happening.
- May need support with transitioning.
- Can make it hard for CYP to understand and cope with change.
- May need support understanding others.
- Logical thinking.
- Can fixate on certain things.
- Unique and creative thought processes.



# What do we see?

- Good language skills don't always mean good understanding.
- Literal understanding of language; CYP may not understand sarcasm or idioms.
- CYP may need time to process information and instructions.
- Visual learners and communicators.
- May need help making choices.
- Difficulty expressing their own needs and feelings.
- Imitation echolalia (copying language from favourite shows or experiences).

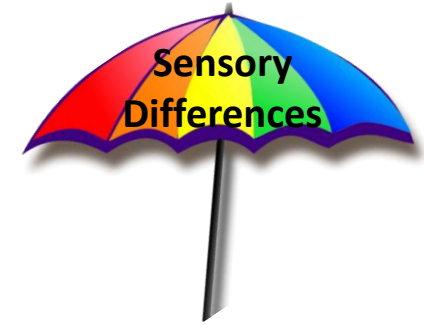


# What do we see?

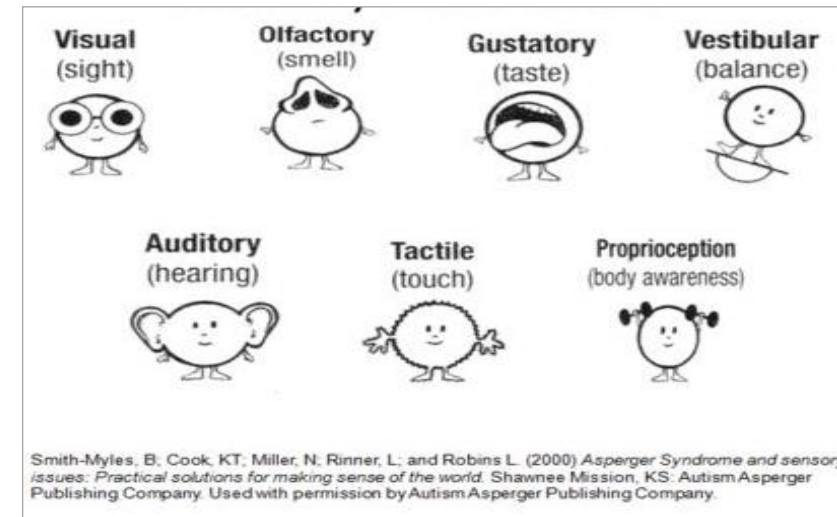
- Strong personal agendas.
- Interaction can sometimes cause anxiety.
- Copying others to 'fit in.'
- Masking
- Support - new people, places or situations.
- Difficulty with eye contact, turn-taking and sharing.
- Difficulty with emotions.
- Articulate - preference for conversations with older children / adults.
- Lots of children with autism learn how to 'fit in' to a neurotypical world



# What do we see?



- Varies hugely from child to child
- Particularly sensitive to some sensory experiences e.g. sound
- Under-sensitive to others e.g. not feeling pain
- Some students – OT support, especially if sensory processing disorder is suspected
- Need regular sensory breaks built into their day
- May feel overwhelmed in noisy or busy places
- Lots of children with autism cope with adaptations and understanding about sensory needs



# The Vestibular Sense

The sense that detects movement through sensory receptors in the inner ear.



# The Proprioceptive Sense



Proprioception is the **body awareness sense**. It helps with:

Knowing where our body parts are



Scratching an itch and knowing where to scratch without looking



Touching hands to feet, also known as "finding your feet"

Understanding how much force to use



Using a pencil with the proper amount of force



Holding a delicate item without breaking it

Coordination between body parts and senses



Riding a bike and coordinating the movements to stay on track



Using hand-eye coordination to catch a ball

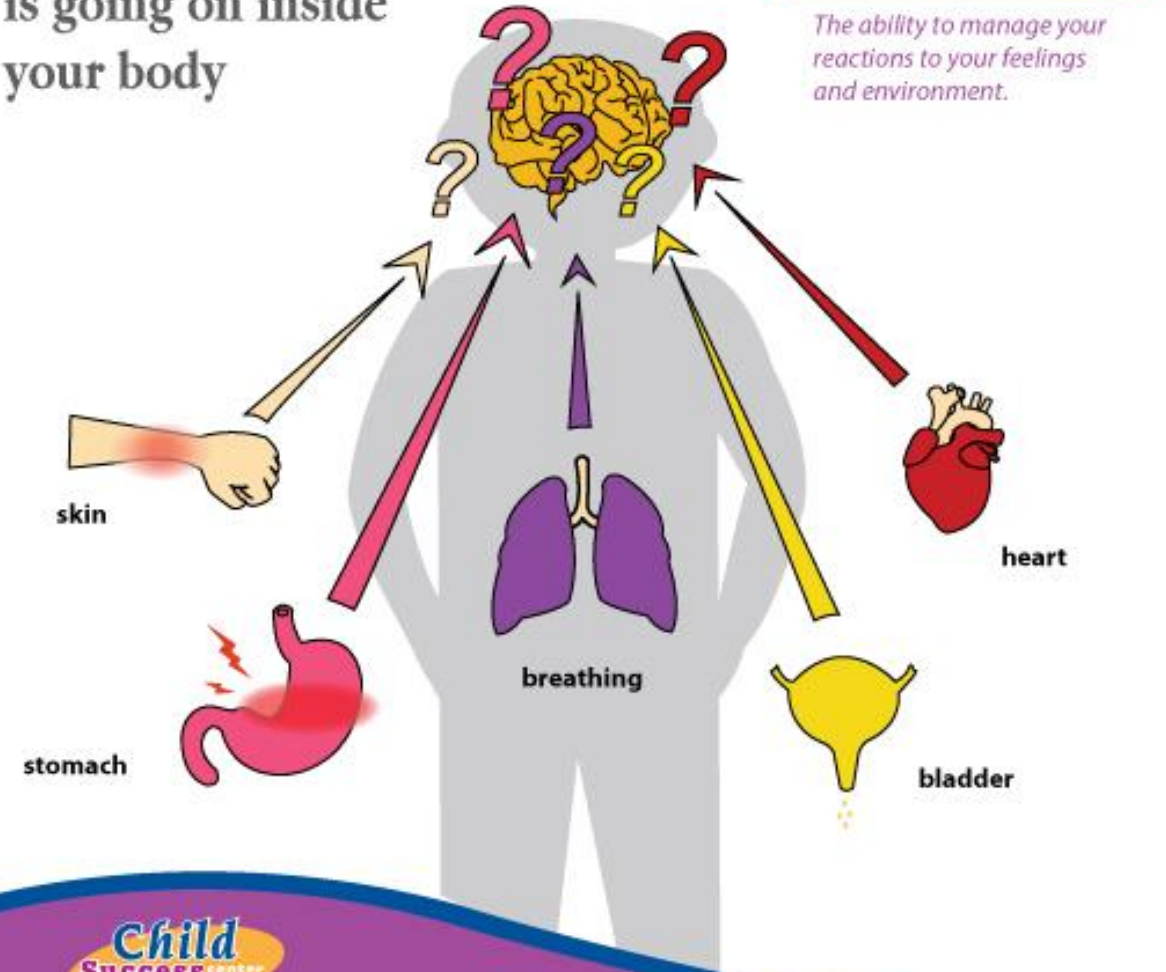


# INTEROCEPTION

*the 8th SENSE* that helps you *feel* what is going on inside your body

# Self-regulation

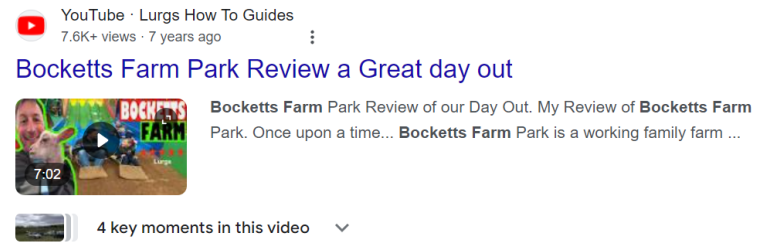
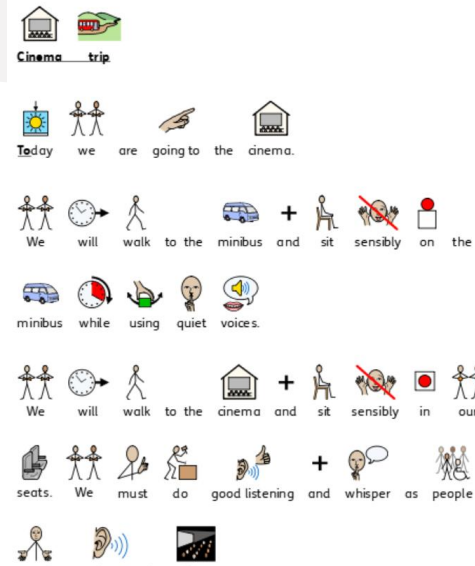
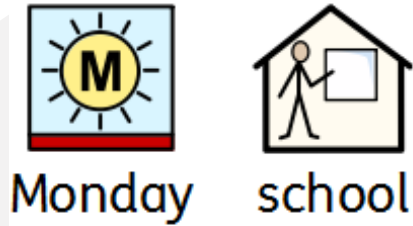
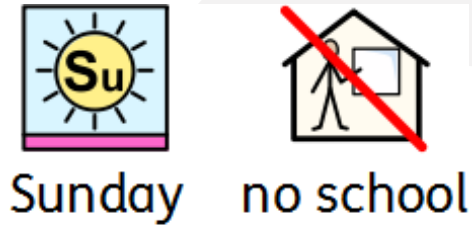
*The ability to manage your reactions to your feelings and environment.*



# How can we support autistic children?

- Prevention is key for reducing the likelihood of emotional meltdowns.
- In all special needs settings, the focus is on preventing students becoming dysregulated in the first place.
- How can we do this?





1. Make life as predictable as possible  
 Planners and calendars let your child know what to expect and reduce anxiety. They also allow us to let children know when there are going to be changes to what they expect! You can also use social stories or YouTube videos about new places.

## 2. Lists promote independence



### 3. Think sensory – think about their sensory needs and have a plan to tackle overstimulating environments.



## SENSORY CHECKLIST



### Visual/Sight

✓ Tick where appropriate

Visual Seeking		Visual Avoiding	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Looks for bright/flashing lights	<input type="checkbox"/>	Overly sensitive to bright lights (may complain or close eyes)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enjoys lining up items in rows or by colour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Easily distracted by bright displays
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enjoys playing with toys that spin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Finds 'busy' rooms challenging
<input type="checkbox"/>	Loves to play with shiny objects	<input type="checkbox"/>	Seeks out dark spaces
<input type="checkbox"/>	Appears to enjoy games which involve bumping and crashing different toys	<input type="checkbox"/>	Often rubs eyes when focusing on work
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stands too close to interactive whiteboard/screen	<input type="checkbox"/>	Avoids eye contact with others

#### How to support:



Allow the child to play with visually stimulating equipment (such as a torch). Ensure this time is carefully managed and structured.

#### How to support:



Schedule regular visual breaks into their day. Use a blackout tent (if possible) or create a bespoke low-stimulating area for them to use.



### Touch/Tactile

Tactile Seeking		Tactile Avoiding	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enjoys touching everyone/everything	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dislikes being touched unexpectedly
<input type="checkbox"/>	May not recognise when they have been touched (unless forcefully)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Avoids having their hair brushed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unaware when they have dirty hands/runny nose	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dislikes being close to others (lining up)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Seeks messy play	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sensitive to certain items of clothing or labels



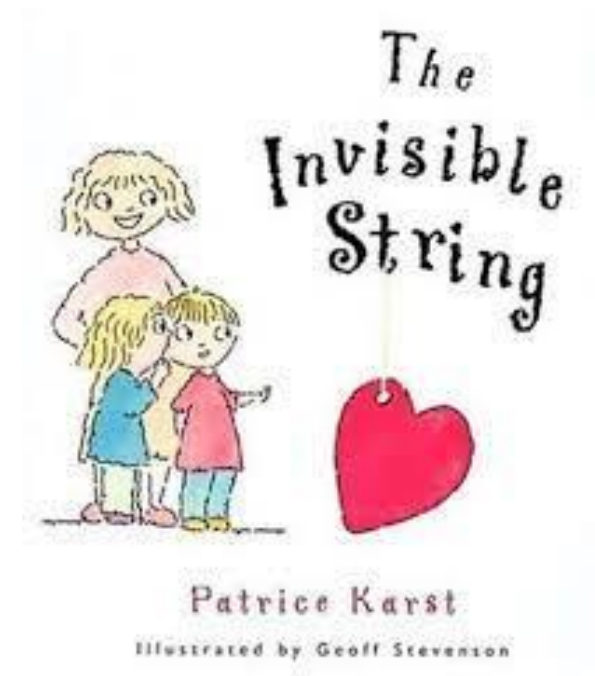
# 4. Prepare positively for the school day

Talk through the lessons or timetable for the day, or remind them of a favourite activity



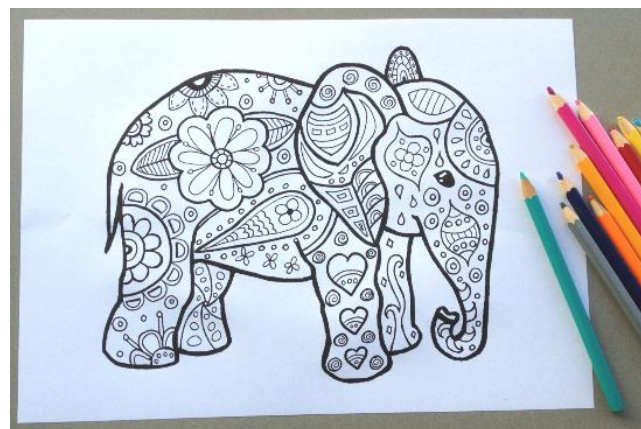
 Morning jobs to complete	 Tick
+ Wake up and get out of bed	
 Go to the toilet	
+ Have breakfast and a drink	
 Take your pyjamas off	
 Put on your school clothes on	
+ Clean your face and brush your teeth	
 Brush your hair	
 Put on suncream	
 Put your school shoes on.	

Consistent morning routines



Discuss the link with home

# 5. Allow some down-time after school



## Energy Accounting



Too much energy out and not enough in is bad. It leads to overload, and exhaustion.

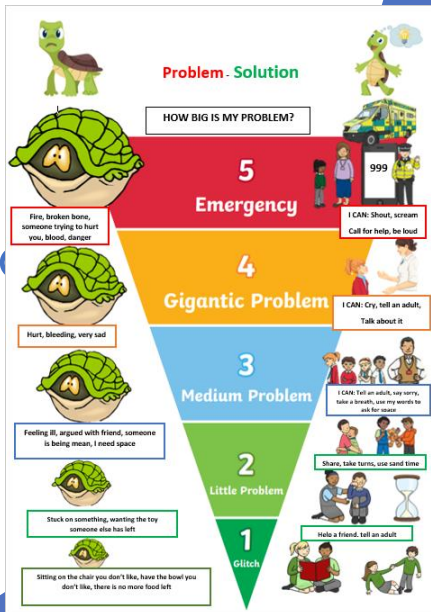


Balancing your energy using energy accounting is good. It leads to feeling regulated, calm and happy.

Don't worry if children don't want to talk about their day



We all  
make  
mistakes!



## 6. Model Emotions

Show children that it is normal to feel different emotions – the key bit is how we deal with them and get back to calm. Give guidance on appropriate ways to respond to problems.

**BUT...**

Beware of over-sharing serious worries with your child.

Mistakes are great- they are how we learn! Let your child know that mistakes are ok!



# 7. Prioritise sleep routines

Sleep is really important and sleep deprivation can be a source of behaviors and anxieties;

- Have a bedroom set up for sleep and downtime!
- Keep similar bedtime timings - even the weekends and holidays
- Have a consistent routine
- Encourage / work towards self-settling



## 8. Encourage independence and life skills

Job rotas and helping with household tasks can boost self-esteem, improve fine motor skills and promote independence.



## 9. Managing Meltdowns

**Fight**



*flight*



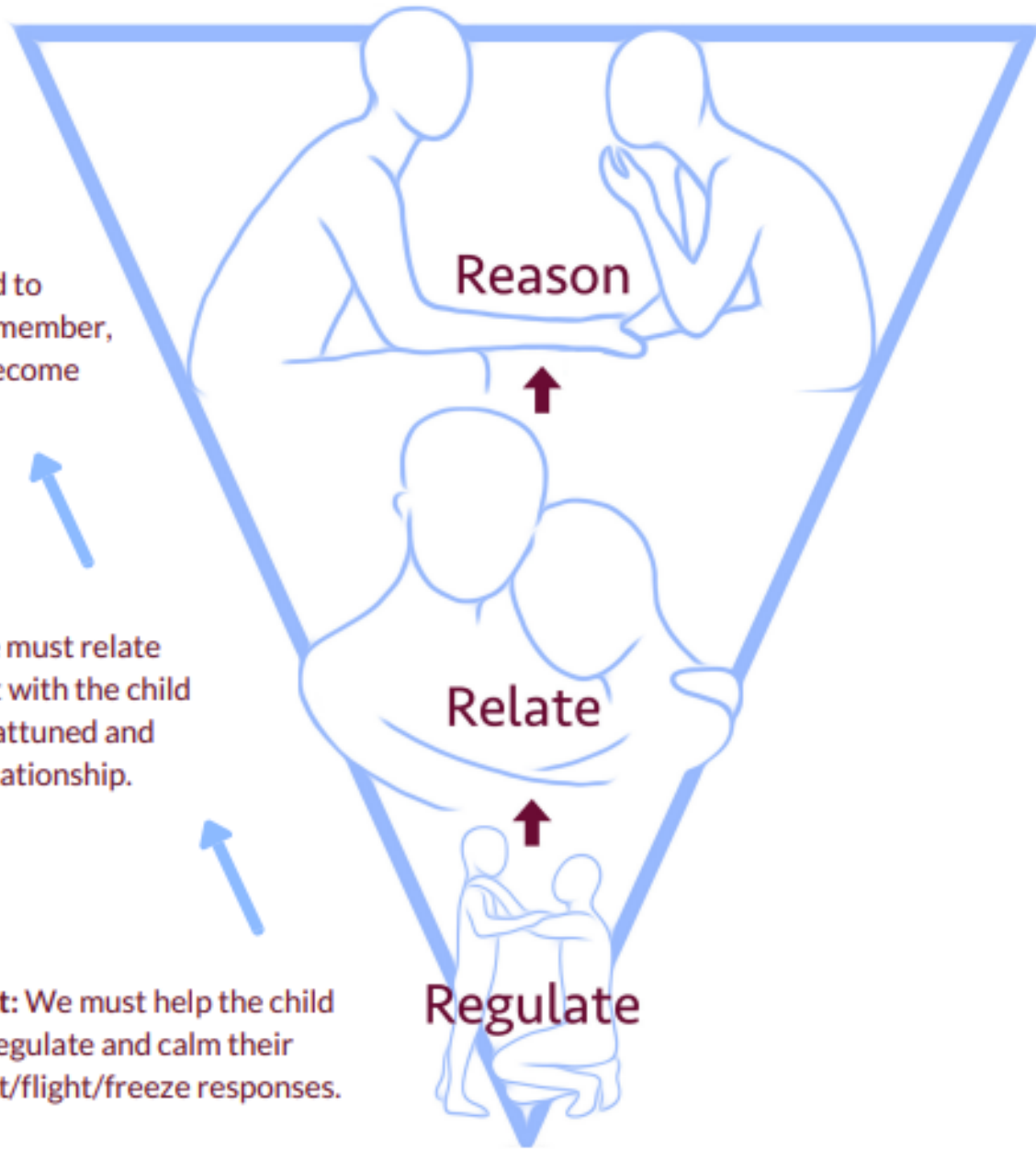
FREEZE



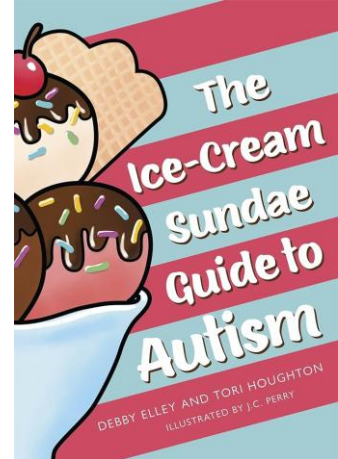
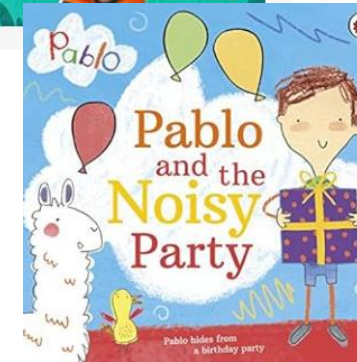
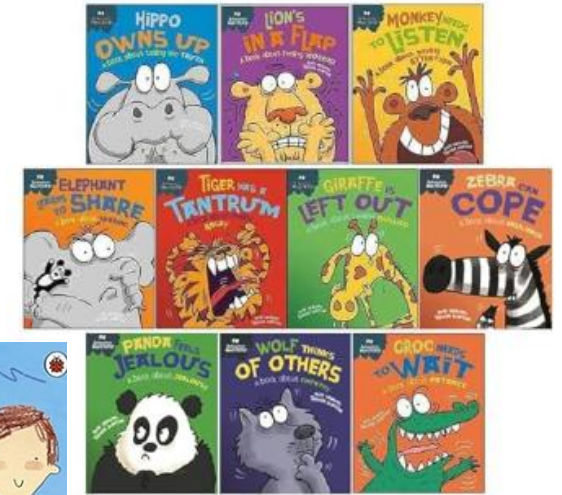
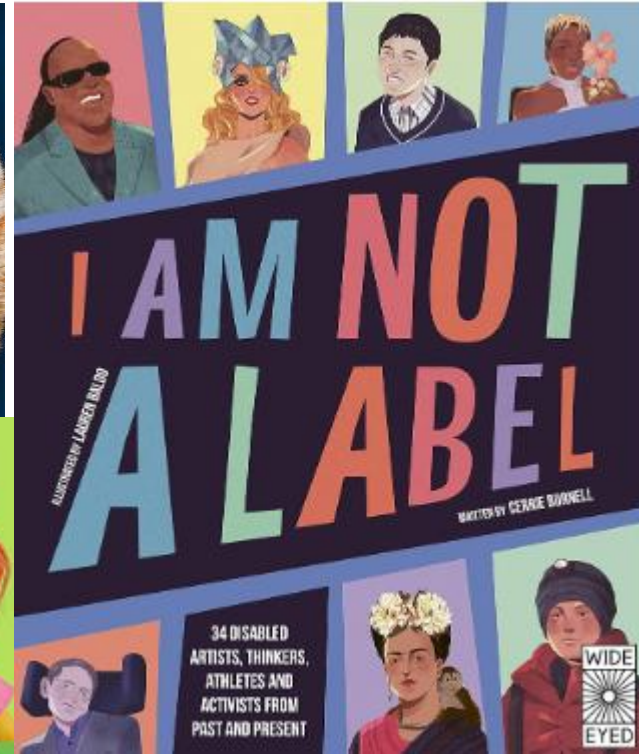
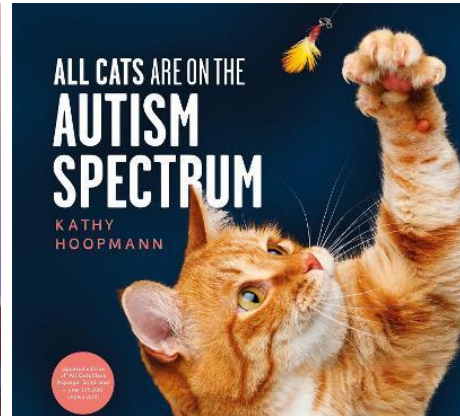
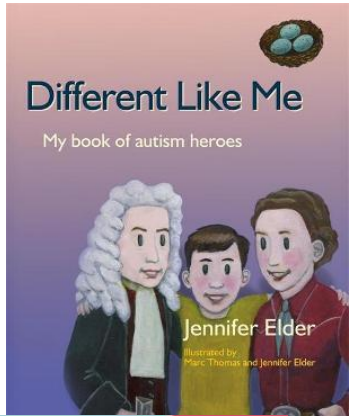
**Third:** We can support the child to reflect, learn, remember, articulate and become self-assured.

**Second:** We must relate and connect with the child through an attuned and sensitive relationship.

**First:** We must help the child to regulate and calm their fight/flight/freeze responses.



# 10. Talking about neurodiversity and social situations



Amazing Things Happen!

YouTube · Amazing Things Project  
9 Apr 2017

There are lots of successful people with Autism!



# 11. Look after yourself

YOU'LL HAVE  
GOOD DAYS,  
BAD DAYS,  
OVERWHELMING DAYS,  
TOO TIRED DAYS,  
I'M AWESOME DAYS,  
I CAN'T GO ON DAYS.  
AND EVERY DAY YOU'LL  
STILL SHOW UP.

WHEN YOUR CHILD STRUGGLES,  
**YOU'RE ALLOWED TO**

- 

feel all your feelings, even if they seem wrong
- 

listen to the experts but trust your gut
- 

love your child yet wish things were easier
- 

be polite but advocate like a bear
- 

be kind to yourself, even if you feel ineffective
- 

put yourself first so you can keep on giving
- 

set boundaries even when it's awkward
- 

hold joy and sorrow at the same time
- 

believe you're a superhero, perfectly imperfect

@WILDPEACE.FORPARENTS

## 12. Don't be afraid to ask for support

- Surrey Branch of the National Autistic Society: [www.nassurreybranch.org](http://www.nassurreybranch.org)
- BRAAIN (Be ready ADHD ASD Information Network): [www.braain.co.uk](http://www.braain.co.uk)
- APPEER (Support for autistic girls): <https://www.appeer.org.uk/>
- Send Advice Surrey: <https://www.sendadvice.surrey.org.uk/>
- Family Voice Surrey: <https://www.familyvoicesurrey.org/>
- Autism Outreach for Schools: <https://www.autismoutreachforschools.uk/>
- Mindworks: <https://www.mindworks-surrey.org/>
- YMCA East Surrey: <https://www.ymcaeast Surrey.org.uk/>



Find help sheets, FAQs, videos  
and more at:  
[www.autismoutreachforschools.uk](http://www.autismoutreachforschools.uk)

