



# SPCN Emotional Wellbeing Conference

Autism – Strategies to support in the home

Jan Welsh – Head of Outreach Services & Amanda Firmin - CISS Teacher

A dark blue arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey originate from the left side and sweep across the slide towards the right.

# Myths & facts

- ▶ Let's start by sorting the fact from the fiction!
- ▶ In your small group, look at the statements and discuss which is myth and which is fact.
- ▶ 5 minute task

# Autism is a Spectrum Condition

## Four key areas of difference

Every child on the autism spectrum will have a range of abilities within each of these areas.  
Many pupils on the spectrum have high levels of anxiety. Pupils on the autism spectrum have differences in:

### Interacting

...the way they interact,  
play and develop relationships



### Processing Information

...their attention, interests and  
how they learn.



### Sensory Processing

...taking in and perceiving  
sensory information. This may  
include hyper (high) or hypo (low)  
sensitivity to the 5 senses, as well  
as balance and body awareness.



### Communication

...the way they communicate,  
understand and use language.



# Sensory needs

## Sensory Hotspots

I find it difficult to focus on a task or concentrate

I chew on everything

I have the tags cut out of my clothing

When I touch things I am often too hard or too soft

I have poor gross motor skills and have co-ordination difficulties

I have difficulty listening to what others say

I like to smell things

Some fabrics make me upset and uncomfortable

I don't like being tickled

I prefer to walk on tiptoes

I close my eyes in bright light

I am a fussy eater and like to eat the same things daily

I have poor fine motor skills and hate writing and cutting etc.

I hate being barefoot

I dislike having my hair brushed or touched

I don't like loud or unexpected noises

I don't always feel pain like others might

I don't like being cuddled

I sit awkwardly and fidget on the carpet





# Our language and developing communication

- ▶ Joint attention, mimicking their language (Hanen approach)
- ▶ Turn taking play – model language for play
- ▶ Choices – not too many
- ▶ Visuals to support if needed for processing.
- ▶ Allow take up time
- ▶ PECs vs Makaton
- ▶ Behaviour for communication



# Managing emotions – yours and theirs!

- ▶ Attune to your child, let them know that you understand living in that difficult emotion – get down to their level.
- ▶ Validate the emotion, even use the language of feeling to model that.
- ▶ Contain it – reassure and make the unbearable bearable.
- ▶ Soothe – allow space and time to calm. Sometimes that might be away from a cuddle – having some alone time!
  
- ▶ When they are dysregulated – you may need to draw aside to breathe and keep yourself calm.
- ▶ Make sure you build in time for yourself to recharge!

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a dark blue vertical bar on the far left. A black arrow points to the right from the top of this bar. Several thin, light blue lines curve upwards and to the right from the bottom of the bar, overlapping the main content area.

# Coping with change

- ▶ Most children like routine and order! This reduces anxiety so....
- ▶ Build routines into your days - mornings and evenings.
- ▶ Use visuals so they can start to predict.
- ▶ Use the language of choice so they can have ownership of HOW they do it.
- ▶ Introduce the concept of 'Might and maybe' (Ros Blackwell)

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a dark blue vertical bar on the far left. A black arrow points to the right from the top of this bar. Several thin, light blue lines curve upwards and to the right from the bottom of the bar, overlapping the main content area.

# Preparation for new things or routines

- ▶ If really anxious about going somewhere, make a 'small steps' familiarisation plan.
- ▶ Pre-teach using verbal cues and social stories to introduce new things or routines or places to go.
- ▶ Look places up on the internet.
- ▶ Take a trial journey there and back.
- ▶ Plan what you might eat.
- ▶ Use transition objects / photos.
- ▶ Set realistic success criteria for the trip.



A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a dark blue vertical bar on the far left. A black arrow points to the right from the top of this bar. Below the arrow, several thin, light blue lines curve downwards and to the right, creating a sense of movement and flow.

# On becoming flexible thinkers!

- Things don't always turn out as planned or expected.
- Have a plan B
- Pre-teach for disappointment and say what you will do instead!
- Rigid thinking can bring on Meltdowns, when they refuse to move from the way they had thought things would turn out!
- Introduce small changes to routines in advance so it is not a surprise!
- Children can have trouble solving problems as they lack empathy.
- Examples: Getting the wrong meal. The parcel not arriving.



# Managing difficult behaviour

- Use calm but firm voice and say the behaviour you expect (positive).
- Use hand signals or visuals to support requests.
- Comment on what you see them do and say if they are not safe.
- Use statements of reality rather than direct instructions.
- If really dysregulated, don't try to reason – they won't process it!
- Allow space to calm, withdraw from child if that helps, as standing over them will not help them capitulate!
- Make you and others safe by removing yourselves and monitor from a distance.
- Step in again to reassure and restate expectations once calm.
- PICK YOUR BATTLES! Think about the long term rather than going for a quiet life in the short term by conceding.
- If you get it wrong – don't worry – there is always a way back!

# Managing meltdowns



Make a plan BEFORE  
for a break space....

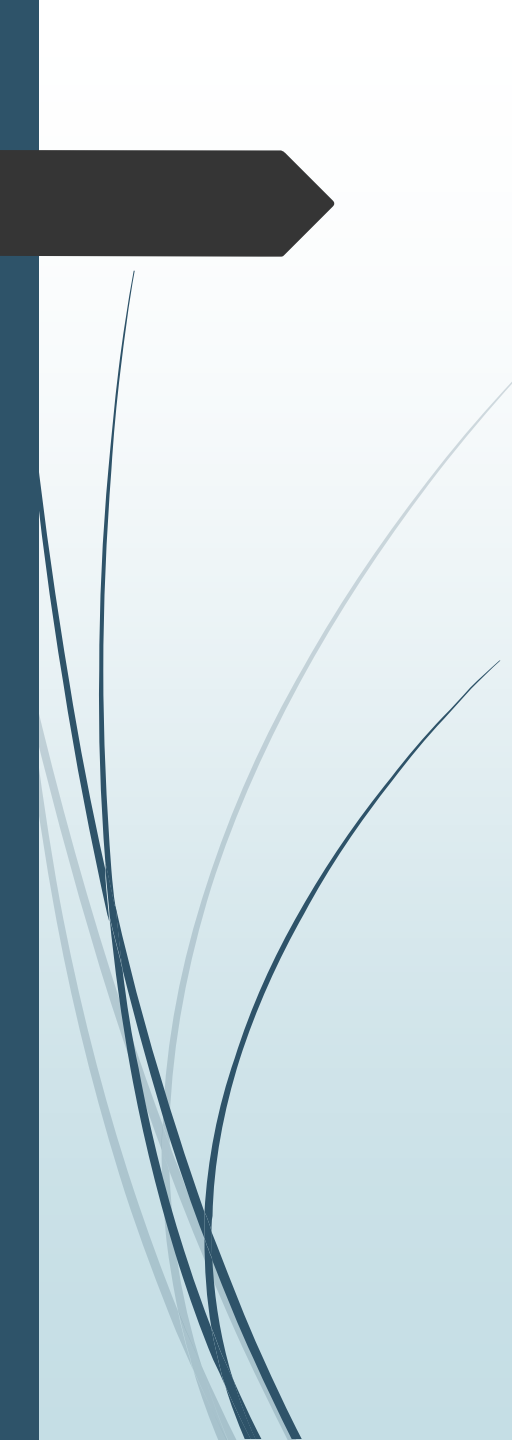
Allow lots of time!  
Adrenalin  
discharge!! Time for  
you to think!

Rebuild here! Try to  
work out what  
trigger was so you  
can do preventative  
work.

# Encouraging interaction

- ▶ Try Lego Therapy so that there is an adult facilitator.
- ▶ Helps with turn taking, communication, fine motor skills and cooperative play.
- ▶ Play games that don't have a clear winner – memory games are good.
- ▶ Pre-teach for disappointment. Someone will win someone will lose or draw.





# Autism awareness – what about siblings too?

- ▶ When to tell? Age not necessarily a good guide – depends on emotional readiness.
- ▶ Please don't leave too late – they need to know as they start to become aware of their difference. Not knowing can lead to mental health issues.
- ▶ Need to see it for the strengths as well as the deficits – so as not to use as an excuse.
- ▶ May need to talk with siblings – good books out there to help!

A dark blue arrow points to the right at the top left. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the slide.

## Things to celebrate

- In order to get the right support for your child, we often have to push the deficits and needs. This can take us away from all the wonderful things that having autism can bring....so to finish lets hear what you love about your child



# Any questions?

- ▶ Recommended reading:
- ▶ Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time – Mark Haddon
- ▶ The Reason I Jump – Naoki Higashida
- ▶ Can I tell you about my Asperger's Syndrome? – Jude Welton Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- ▶ Everybody is different – Fiona Bleach NAS
- ▶ I can't do that – Social stories to help with communication, self care and personal skills - John Ling, Lucky Duck