



Quirk or concern?

Assessing need in people with autism

NASCA Conference
2nd September 2015
Catherine Trezona



Tailor made workshops include:

- Introduction to Autism
- Autism-friendly environments
- Supports and Services
- Behaviour Supports



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What does autism look like?

**Social
interaction
challenges**

**Inflexible
thinking /
behaviour**

**Communication
challenges**

ALTOGETHER
AUTISM

What does autism look like?

**Social
Interaction
challenges**

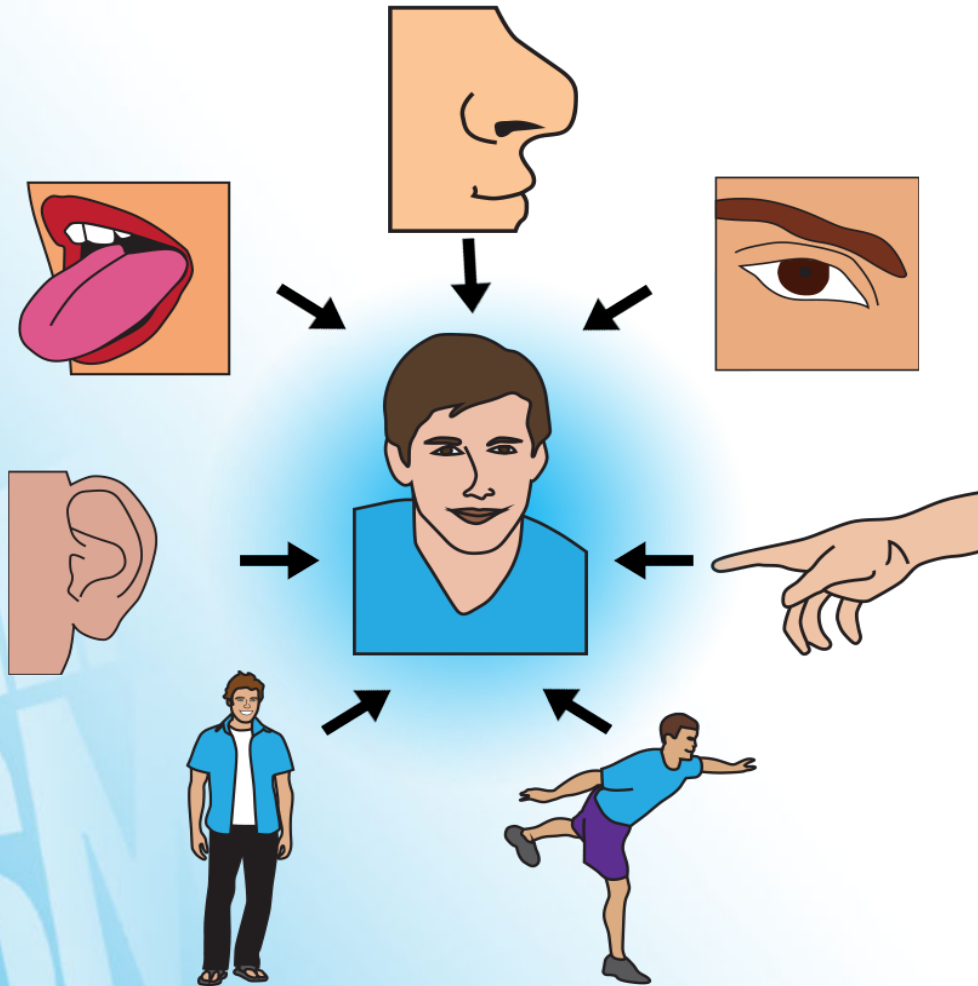
**Inflexible
thinking /
behaviour**

Sensory

**Communication
challenges**

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The seven senses



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People with autism might...



Communication

- Have language delays
- Be non-verbal
- Have unusual ways of communicating
- Have difficulty understanding others, appear to ignore or not hear
- Use language in unusual ways

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People with autism might...



Social Interaction

- Not join in with play or social opportunities
- Prefer to do things alone
- Not respond to others' greetings, smiles or waves
- Not share interests with others
- Have difficulty with social situations

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People with autism might...

**Thinking
or
Behaviour**

- Need unusual rituals
- Get upset when switching tasks
- Stim
- Overreact to noises, smells taste or textures
- Have poor problem solving skills
- Have a special interest
- Have poor coordination or motor skills

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People with autism might...

Stim



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Quirk or concern?

**Concern
for
whom?**

Safety

**Now or in
the future?**

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**Common
behaviours
that might
be either**

- **Flapping**
- **Rocking**
- **Lack of eye contact**
- **Echolalia**
- **Non-verbal communication**
- **Repetitive ritualistic behaviours**

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Case study #1

9 year old boy

- ADHD
- Poor parenting?
- Ritualistic behaviours
- OCD

At aged 12

- ODD
- Medication
- Psychosis

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Case study #2

4 year old boy

- Puts hands over ears
- Only uses 2 words
- No eye contact
- Loves dinosaurs
- Supermarket meltdowns
- No eating issues
- Delayed potty training
- Lines up cars
- Ignores mum in play
- Poor motor skills

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Case study #3

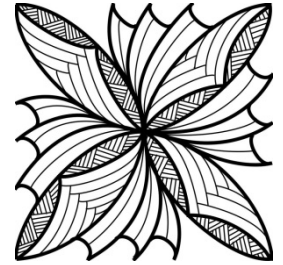
8 year old boy

- **Recent new behaviour- stripping leaves off trees**
- **Mum teaches him weaving**
- **Caretaker protective of trees**
- **Mum loses it!**

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Culture

Be especially attentive when working with families of other cultures.

Consider attitudes of

- self-reliance
- stigma
- supernatural

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Puberty

- Can start as young as 9
- Emotional immaturity + physical maturity = challenges
- Aggression?
- Withdrawal?
- Anxiety and depression common

- Listen to the parents!

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Gender

- **Growing awareness of the gender differences in autism**
- **In girls especially, watch for withdrawal and mental health concerns**

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Siblings

- Quirky behaviour copied especially by younger siblings
- Tough on parents

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Quirk or concern?

**Concern for
whom?**

Safety

**Now or in
the future?**

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Quirk or concern?

Summary

- **Behaviour is communication**
- **Listen to families/whānau**
- **Poor parenting does not cause autism!**

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