



Issue 36
Summer 2017

AuKids

£16 annually
Available from
www.aukids.co.uk

Positive Parenting for Children with Autism Spectrum Conditions



My Brain and Me
AuKids answers
kids' questions



Solid Foundations
Building a sense of
self with Tali Berman



A Kind of Magic
Adele Devine on
re-directing behaviour
positively

PLUS

WIN books from
The Play Doctors,
Hometown World
and Jessica Kingsley.



Letter from the Editors

Debby
Tori



welcome to our SUMMER ISSUE!

Hi folks

You may be aware that AuKids is a Manchester-based publication. We've witnessed first-hand the anxiety that terror attacks can cause our autistic kids. So, we decided to swap our planned *Ask the Experts* for some guidance on answering questions about terrorism. We hope it helps.

AuKids magazine is always looking for exciting ways to raise funds for our social enterprise. We're delighted to announce that *My Son's Not Rainman* comedian and blogger John Williams will return on November 7th for the grand finale of the show, to be hosted by Stockport Plaza in aid of AuKids.

Do bring friends and family and come along for a great evening out. We'd like to thank John Williams for sharing his hilarious performance with us again as well as the generous team at Stockport Plaza for hosting us. You can buy tickets through Stockport Plaza's Box Office - see Page 3 for details.

We are delighted also to share some ideas from author Tali Berman this issue. Our kids receive many underlying messages (daily) about 'proper' behaviour and 'fitting in'. For many, it results in a sense of never being good

enough, of not being sure just how to be...and this can damage their sense of self and ultimately we have to take great care that it doesn't result in knock-on mental health issues. This is the subject of Tali's feature on Pages 8-9.

Finally, a quick note that as a social enterprise, we don't survive on advertising but on subscriptions, sponsorship and donations. If you are working for a company and you think your ethos is well-aligned with AuKids, don't forget we can offer a great sponsorship package. If you fancy seeing your logo in the magazine, have a chat with co-editor Debby Elley at editors@aukids.co.uk

Tori & Debby



COMPETITION WINNERS FROM ISSUE 35:

- **Trugs:** Heather Bradley, Nottinghamshire.
- **All Birds Have Anxiety:** Judith Woolven, Lancaster
- **Tom Tag:** Jessica Lambert, Wirral; Jane Young, Heysham.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Orchids are beautiful plants which, much like kids with autism, require very specific conditions to grow. If they get them, they thrive. That's why we called this magazine AuKids. AU is also the chemical symbol for gold.

Whilst the products and services advertised in AuKids are recommended to us by readers, we are not an industry inspector or regulator. We advise readers to seek independent advice from regulatory bodies before signing up with a new service provider and to check that products and equipment meet with industry standards.

The opinions expressed in AuKids magazine are those of the contributor. Please seek medical advice before embarking on any therapy or behaviour intervention. All articles are copyright AuKids.

EDITORS: Debby Elley (Executive Editor) and Tori Houghton (Associate Editor)

STAFF WRITER: Mark Haworth

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY: Tim Tuff

MAIN COVER IMAGE: Oliver, taken by David Laslet at Independent Options' 40th anniversary party at Hazel Grove. www.manchesterphoto.com

PRINTING: R and P Printers, Dukinfield

GRAPHIC DESIGN:

 **periscopestudios**
www.periscopestudios.co.uk

AuKids is published by AuKids Limited, PO Box 259, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 9BE, company number 7413180.



If you care for a child or young person with autism, you'll soon be able to access a comprehensive range of support from Seashell Trust.

We'll be offering training and events for the families of autistic children covering the everyday issues you face, from promoting independence and encouraging communication to health and mental well-being and understanding behaviours.

You'll benefit from expert, specialist information and advice that you can put into practice straight away.

Email us today to register your interest:
info@seashelltrust.org.uk

Families can currently access more general support on a range of useful topics by attending a free Seashell Trust event – visit our website for details:

seashelltrust.org.uk/events



Registered Charity No. 1092655.

Stanley Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire SK8 6RQ

t: 0161 610 0100 e: info@seashelltrust.org.uk

Living with autism isn't easy. But finding out all about it should be.

Everything you need to know in one place
www.autismlinks.co.uk



 **autismlinks**

Dear AuKids

I loved the latest edition of AuKids and really liked the section on worship. I wanted to write to you to tell you of our family's experience. We moved churches about two years ago, from one which my son had attended since he was 6 weeks old to a new, smaller one. We found that the new church accepted him immediately and were able to appreciate his many strengths and to understand some of his difficulties.

The previous church knew him as a toddler who displayed unusual and sometimes anti-social behaviour. He was labelled by other parents and children as naughty, weird and always the protagonist in any disagreement. My son never settled or made friends at this church and there were several serious incidents caused by lack of understanding.

At the new church they were very welcoming and accommodating. I think part of the reason is that he arrived with a diagnosis of autism and so people were prepared to accept some anxious outbursts and asked me for advice in dealing with him in Sunday School.

I would urge other parents to try different places as the benefits of a new setting may outweigh the disadvantages of coping with the changes. I would also urge any parent who is reluctant to try for a formal diagnosis because they don't want to label their child, to take into account that other people will choose their own labels to give to children.

Our church is now in the process of setting up a special group for adults with learning disabilities to worship within an informal and more relaxed environment and maybe our son's presence has highlighted the need to extend the church's welcome to an even wider community.

Heather Hills, Cheshire

MY SON'S NOT RAINMAN RETURNS!

<TRUMPET FANFARE>

Author, stand up comedian and Dad
John Williams presents 'My Son's Not Rainman'

VENUE: Stockport Plaza, Mersey Square, Stockport SK1 1SP

DATE: November 7th at 7.30pm

TICKETS: £12 (Concessions: £10)

Available from Stockport Plaza
Box Office on 0161 477 7779
boxoffice@stockportplaza.co.uk



In aid of AuKids magazine

"John Williams's tales of fatherhood are touching, warm and heartfelt, and he's also an incredibly funny man. He pours his heart out and the laughs pour in... By the end of the hour, you're invested in their life together, and want to hear more. Well crafted, funny and full of heart. Go and see it."

★★★★ - *The Skinny*

Show suitable for Ages 13+ Contains some swearing
AuKids Magazine extends heartfelt, never-could-thank-you-enough gratitude to John Williams and Stockport Plaza for generously hosting this event in aid of our not for profit social enterprise. Please come and support us!

Simon Says...

Simon is a little boy who has autism. Sometimes he has to think quite hard about what to say or do next. Use our Simon cartoons as talking points with your autistic child.



Simon is in the classroom. It is getting noisier and he is starting to feel something he can't explain but it's horrible. What can Simon do?

Use this conversation to talk about alerting teachers with traffic light symbols to show when you start to get stressed. Talk about strategies for coping, or leaving the situation calmly.

Cover Star

★ **Oliver** ★
Age: 7

Diagnosis: Autism

Lives: Stockport

Likes: Spongebob Squarepants, racing games on his LeapPad, Disney Infinity (in particular Phineas) and cats.

Dislikes: Cucumber and getting a wobbly tooth.

If he were Prime Minister, what law would he make?

He would enjoy looking after Larry the cat at Downing Street.

I love: Racing games
I dislike: Getting a wobbly tooth



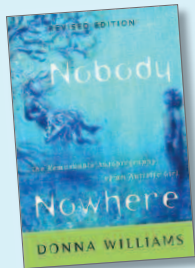
Reviews & Prizes

The Experts' Expert

This July's reviews come with a twist. We asked our autism experts to tell us about the book – recent or written in the past – that's influenced them the most. Here's what they told us:

PHOEBE'S CHOICE

Phoebe Caldwell
Intensive Interaction expert



BOOK

Nobody Nowhere - The Remarkable Autobiography of an Autistic Girl (new edition)

By Donna Williams

Published by Jessica Kingsley
£13.99 • ISBN 9781853027185

When Donna Williams wrote *Nobody Nowhere* in 1992, she was the first of people with autism to write about what it feels like to be on the spectrum. It is still one of the best introductions to looking at autism from the insider's point of view - what she calls the inside/outside approach.

It talks about the development of repetitive behaviours but particularly interesting is her account of the different characters she develops in order to cope with different situations. Willie is the tough negative voice who lives under her bed and who she hopes will defend her when she is getting upset. Carol is her socially acceptable voice.

Sadly, Donna Williams recently died. She taught us more about what it is like to be autistic than anyone else. She lived her difficult life with courage and humour and grace. She will be very much missed but what a legacy!



BOOK

A Different Childhood - Autism from the Inside. The story of an amazing childhood

By Iris Johansson

Published by Inkwell Productions • ISBN 99780988356870
Available new and used from Amazon from £11.92

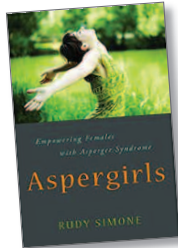
Not many people have come across Iris Johansson's 'A Different Childhood'. Iris loves to bite babies and cannot understand why she is prevented from doing this. It turns out she is synesthetic, and their bellowing triggers beautiful rainbows of colour in her head. One should never take things for granted.

Find out more at www.phoebecaldwell.co.uk
Phoebe's book *The Anger Box* is available from Pavilion at www.pavpub.com

ALIS'S CHOICE

Alis Rowe

Author and founder of the Curly Hair Project. Her lively cartoon books help families understand autism.



BOOK

Aspergirls

By Rudy Simone

Published by Jessica Kingsley
£12.99
ISBN 9781849857918

This was one of the first books I read about Asperger Syndrome and I read it several years before I was diagnosed. I found it very deep and thought-provoking. Rudy has brought together many real life descriptions of people's experiences, which really bring across the struggles of functioning in the world. It highlights that although lots of women may appear 'OK' on the outside, there are lots of complex thought processes and strong emotions happening underneath.

This is a very honest and informative account of what living with Asperger's is like for females. I have not really read anything else that is so personal but yet involves multiple people's stories.

Look up Alis's wide range of books at www.thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk

JENNIFER'S CHOICE

Jennifer Cook O' Toole

Founder of Asperkids and best-selling author ('an Aspie, raising three young Aspies')



BOOK

M in the Middle

By The Students of Limpsfield Grange School and Vicky Martin

Published by Jessica Kingsley
£8.99 • ISBN 9781785920349

Limpsfield Grange is a school in Surrey, tailored to meet the specific needs of girls with Asperger Syndrome aged between 11 and 16. At first, this book was self published, but later acquired by Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

I first met the headteacher at the NAS Women's Conference in 2013. She was completely wonderful and we struck up a mutual admiration. This book's voice is authentic, young, and that unparalleled resource... first-person-informed.

At this particularly trying time in the UK, there seems nothing more important than choosing an authentically-British, extremely-real, tenderly-written book about which many people simply don't know. I couldn't be prouder to endorse this. What a wonderful way for everyone in the UK to get to know more about the work the school does and more importantly, the work that the students do.

See Jennifer's best-seller *Sisterhood of the Spectrum* at www.jkp.com

KATE'S CHOICE

Kate Reynolds

Expert on relationship and sexuality education in autism



BOOK

The Growing Up Book for Boys (Hardcover)

By Davida Hartman

Published by Jessica Kingsley
£10.99 • ISBN 9781849055758

I always recommend these for anyone working with young people with autism. Each book addresses the common issues for young people reaching adolescence, such as physical changes, emotions and more general information around keeping healthy.

Written with sensitivity and insight, these books



BOOK

The Growing Up Guide for Girls (Hardcover)

By Davida Hartman

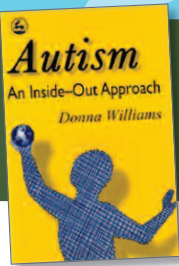
Published by Jessica Kingsley
£10.99 • ISBN 9781849055741

reflect the knowledge of the author and her wealth of experience working with young people on the autism spectrum as an educational psychologist.

Both books explain some of the more confusing aspects of adolescence by understanding the literal nature of autism and giving clear, unambiguous language. As well as covering physical and emotional changes, the books cover broader issues, such as crushes and the internet, which can prove particularly problematic for young people on the autism spectrum.

I always carry a copy of each book when I work with parents and professionals, so they really are on my top favourites list!

Kate's popular *What's Happening to Tom? And What's Happening to Ellie?* series on puberty are available to buy from www.jkp.com



ADELE'S CHOICE

Adele Devine

Author, teacher and founder of SEN Assist



BOOK

Autism - An Inside-Out-Approach

By Donna Williams

Published by Jessica Kingsley
£18.99 • ISBN 9781853023873

On the 22nd April 2017, a bright light in the autism community was extinguished early when Donna Williams passed away.

Williams was born in Australia in 1963 and not diagnosed with autism until adulthood.

She wrote several brilliant books and articles about her personal experiences with autism, but in the book I have chosen - 'Autism: An Inside-Out- Approach' she looks at 'the mechanics of 'autism' and its developmental cousins'. I would love every professional, parent, sibling and grandparent who has a part to play in an autistic life to read it.

Williams is clear from the start that her experiences with autism are not to be generalised and she sets about detailing the possibilities of autistic experience with a wider, incredibly detailed and insightful lens.

She offers a variety of fictional case studies highlighting the diversity of the spectrum and the ways autistic individuals can experience and respond to sensory issues and differing perceptions while highlighting possible misperceptions.

She may have left our world, but Donna Williams created ripples that will go on and on. She was able to provide colour, clarity and hope, which will remain with so many people. She will go on educating, helping and inspiring for many years.

Adele Devine's latest book Flying Starts for Unique Children is available from www.jkp.com and was reviewed in our last issue. To buy her computer software for autistic children, visit www.senassist.com



BOOK SET

The Play Doctors: Inclusion Teaching Resource Island Animal Set

By Wendy Usher
£42.95

The Play Doctors' Island Animal Inclusion books are a set of three fabulously colourful and entertaining stories explaining disabilities to young children. They feature images of cute clay characters created by author and Play Doctors' founder Wendy Usher.

In book one, Zak Makes New Friends, Zak the Zebra, who happens to have autism, finds it hard to make friends. He loves spinning in a circle and likes to count his stripes. The other animals help him to join in and play.

In *Percy Looks For Treasure*, Percy the Parrot has ADHD and gets himself into all sorts of trouble. Finally, Desmond the Dragon comes sailing in on an old pirate ship in book three. Desmond the dragon happens to have dyspraxia. He gets

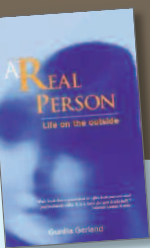
embarrassed and turns purple. He is shy and forgets things, so his new friends help him by writing them down in the sand.

Each of the books has ©Widgit symbols at the base of each page to help explain what is going on in the story.

Each of the children's books is available for £4.95 from www.theplaydoctors.co.uk

The whole set of children's books along with a teachers' resource book full of activities and ideas and a CD rom full of photocopy resources costs £42.95

The Play Doctors also produce a large range of resources to support children in responding to anger, anxiety, impulse control, transition and much more.



LUKE'S CHOICE

Dr Luke Beardon

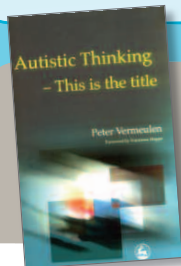
Senior Lecturer at the Autism Centre, Sheffield Hallam University



From the title (which is genius in my opinion - it says so much so quickly) through to the last page this book gripped me. To this day I don't know why it is not a more widely read autobiographical account, as the journey into an autistic life is extraordinary.

On the one hand the story of Gunilla's start in life makes for a depressing read - from a general perspective there is much tragedy that makes for difficult reading. From an autism perspective, though - wow. The richness and depth of Gunilla's writing is wonderful. To be able to read into her life, her perspective, her 'autism lens' feels like a very special privilege - and the connection she seems to make to the reader, allowing for an invaluable autism insight is absolute gold dust. I learned so much, both from Gunilla's life story and in relation to how individual autism is.

Read Luke's blog Perspectives on Autism at <https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/autism>



CHRIS'S CHOICE

Chris Barson

Founder of training company Positive About Autism



BOOK

Autistic Thinking - This is the Title

By Peter Vermeulen

Published by Jessica Kingsley
£16.99 • ISBN 9781853029950

People on the autism spectrum think differently. Peter, with great humour, helps us non-autistics get inside the unique pattern of thinking and problem-solving that is a part of every person with autism, wherever they are on the spectrum.

Find out more about Positive About Autism at: www.positiveaboutautism.co.uk

★★★★ WIN a Set of ★★★★★ Communication Fans!

The Play Doctors are giving AuKids readers the chance to win a set of these fans, worth £4.20 each:

- Stop and Think What can I do when I feel angry?
- Stop and Think What can I do to calm down?
- Stop and Think How can I be polite?



Want to win? Zak the Zebra is hiding in AuKids magazine - twice! Can you spot both pictures?

Email your answer, your name and your address to competitions@aukids.co.uk with 'Fan' in the subject header no later than August 30th 2017. Winner will be chosen at random.



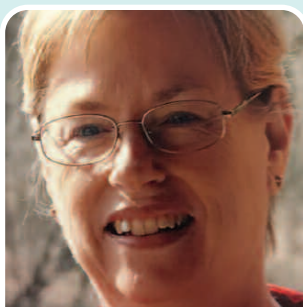
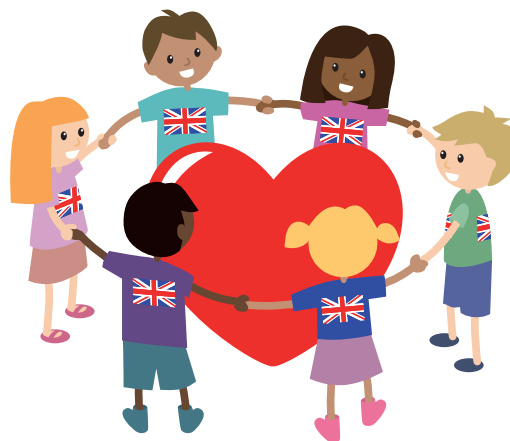
★★★★★★★★★★★★ WIN a Set of Island Animal Inclusion Books!

You can also win a set of books featuring Zak and his friends Percy and Desmond, plus a teaching resource book and CD-ROM, worth £42.95. Follow the same instructions as above, putting 'Zak' in the subject header. Winner to be chosen at random after the closing date of August 30th. Good luck!





“ What should I tell my child to comfort them when they hear about terrorist attacks? ”



Margaret Holmes

Author of many books for children on the subjects of grief, tragedy and loss. Her titles include *A Terrible Thing Happened* for children who have witnessed violence or trauma (Magination Press) and *Charlie's Brother* (published by Boulden publishing and available at Amazon). *Charlie's Brother* was written for siblings of a child with special needs who is being placed in residential care.

As parents and care-givers we try to help our children navigate the terrible things that happen in life. It's hard. Helping an autistic child cope with tragedy is even harder and more complicated.

So, what words do we use to explain the inexplicable? I think the answer is as varied as the autism spectrum is broad. Having said that, there are a few suggestions to consider.

Explain the event as calmly and simply as possible. Using familiar age-appropriate words will help a child feel safer when talking about what happened. Children often regress when under stress so taking a step back can be helpful. Assure the child that it is alright to ask questions and talk about it

whenever he or she feels frightened or upset. As parents, we sometimes have to remind ourselves that, "I don't know," is an acceptable answer.

When a tragedy is experienced, whether personal or communal, it can change a child's perception of his or her world. Keeping daily routines and behavioural expectations as normal as possible can be reassuring.

Our autistic children are constantly struggling to control their world. Changes in the community, such as extra security checks or police and military presence, may be particularly frightening. An autistic child might be familiar with coping strategies like taking deep breaths or wrapping up in a blanket. It could be comforting to talk about how these communal changes help everyone feel safer about what happened just as their own personal strategies help them.

Even the memorials that spring up can be quite unsettling and cause additional stress. Encouraging a child to express his or her own feelings about what happened, in any way that is appropriate for them, can help create some sense of control.

In America it was noted by psychologists that many children were confused in the aftermath of 9/11 by thinking that each acknowledgement of the event was a new attack. It is worth explaining that the repetitive story is not a new story each time.

Your child is unique and you as their parents are uniquely qualified to understand and help them. These are indeed hard times but the words will come.



Katherine Paxton

Katherine is a Canadian Certified Counsellor and author of the award-winning *Counselling People on the Autism Spectrum: A Practical Manual*, published by Jessica Kingsley. She works with children and adults who have autism and their families. She is also the Mental Health Director of Focus Ability WorkAble Solutions and provides mental health services for employees who have an autism spectrum condition.

There is no wrong or right way to talk to children on the autism spectrum about terrorism. Your child will hear about it at school and through the news or friends. It is important that they know that they can talk to you about it, and that you will answer their questions the best that you can.

Use language and ideas that match the child's developmental age. If talking about terrorism creates strong feelings in yourself, let your child know this. Try to talk about your feelings and the terrorism calmly.

Stay matter-of-fact and focus on how your child and family are safe. Autistic children tend

towards having anxiety about safety, and it is important when talking about terrorism, which is random and unpredictable, to focus on the safety aspects of that child's life and their family's safety.

Mention all the different people that are trying to keep their country safe - the police, the military and the government people who work hard to keep the country safe. Then on a smaller scale, talk about how parents and teachers all work together to keep children safe. This might be a good time to talk about which people are safe people to go to for help.

Stress how rare terrorist attacks are and that most people are good, which is why it is on the news and people are talking about it.

You may get some unusual responses from your child. Children with autism can ask questions that may appear to be insensitive. Try to answer them matter-of-factly. Let them know it's ok to have different feelings about what happened, and validate those feelings. Some autistic children can experience a level of excitement as well as fear. Do let them know that others might find these feelings uncomfortable, so it's best to share them with those closest to them.

Developmentally older children will want more specific detail in the answers. Put your answers down on paper, perhaps as a question and answer reference, or as a letter to the child.

It is okay to let them know you do not have all the answers. Do your best, and keep the lines of communication open.

Some great advice from the NSPCC

If you're concerned about how a child is feeling, you can call the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000 for advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also call the National Autistic Helpline on Monday to Friday, 10am - 4pm, on 0845 070 4004.

Some children may feel targeted because of their faith or appearance

Look for signs of bullying, and make sure that they know they can talk to you about it. Often children might feel scared or embarrassed, so reassure them it's not their fault that this is happening, and that they can always talk to you or another adult they trust. Alert your child's school so that they can be aware of the issue.

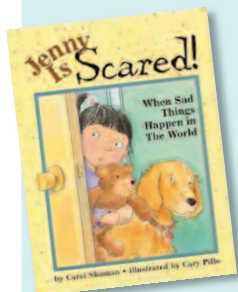
Dealing with offensive or unkind comments about a child's faith or background

If you think this is happening, it's important to intervene. Calmly explain that comments like this are not acceptable. Your child should also understand that someone's beliefs do not make them a terrorist. Explain that most people are as scared and hurt by the attacks as your child is. You could ask them how they think the other child felt, or ask them how they felt when someone said something unkind to them. Explain clearly what you expect them to do.

Final tips

For more advice from the NSPCC and to look up some useful videos see: www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/news-opinion/supporting-children-worried-about-terrorism/

If your child is severely affected, contact your council's Educational Psychology Service or CAMHS (sometimes called Healthy Young Minds) service. These services are producing additional literature to help children. Just Google 'Local Offer' plus the name of your council area; this lists all services available to SEN families.



Jenny is Scared! When Sad Things Happen in the World

By Carol Shuman

Published by Imagination Press

£9.95 • ISBN 9781591470038

www.eurospanbookstore.com/jenny-copes.html

This covers terrorism and is suitable for children worried 'from a distance' who were not directly involved in an attack.



A Terrible Thing Happened: A Story for Children who have Witnessed Violence or Trauma

By Margaret M. Holmes

Published by Dalmatian Press

£9.95 • 9781557987013

www.eurospanbookstore.com/a-terrible-thing-happened-1114.html



Putting Terrorism in Perspective

Dan Salmons has done some fabulous number crunching to help our kids put bad news into perspective.

On average, **6** people per year are killed in the UK by terrorism*. In a population of 65 million, that's a chance of **1 in 10,830,000**.

*source: Global Terrorism Database, 2000-2015, 90 people in total

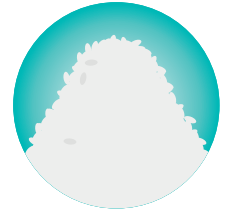
That's the same probability as:



Picking a card at random from a stack of cards 2.9 miles high, and guessing not only the number and suit, but which of the 208,300 packs it came from



Spinning a roulette wheel 21 miles across, and choosing the right 1cm square box that the ball will land in



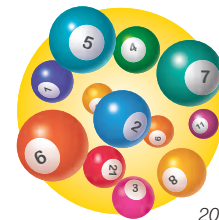
Picking a grain of rice at random from the floor of a warehouse 13m (42 feet) square that is covered in rice, and finding it's the one you marked with a pen earlier.

In comparison to being killed by a terrorist, you are much more likely to:



Be hit by lightning - 4 times more likely

source: Oxford Brookes University with Royal Meteorological Society, study of 1988-2012, 29 people per year



Win over a million in the National Lottery - 33 times more likely

source: National Lottery website, 4400 millionaires in 22 years, 200 per year.

Although there has been a number of attacks this year, and the figures taken were until 2015, it is not a typical year, since in 40 years terrorism attacks do seem to come and go. It would be inaccurate to use this year's as an average figure. But, even if you did, the probabilities are so low that even if the average was 5-10 times more, you can see from our figures how very unlikely it is that you'd be affected.

Recommended Reading



Night Night series of books

By Katherine Sully

Published by Hometown World

www.hometownworld.co.uk/tag/night-night

Comforting little tales - choose your own town and see how all your local landmarks go to bed and sleep tight.



We have 3 books to give away. Just answer this question. **Hometown World produce books for children all over the UK, but in which town are they based?** Look up www.hometownworld.co.uk to find out.

Email competitions@aukids.co.uk with the answer, your name and address, and your choice of town from the following: Birmingham, Cornwall, England, Essex, Ireland, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Scotland, Wales & Yorkshire. Closing date August 30th 2017. The publisher will contact winners directly.

Now That's Magic!

Sparkling strategies to re-direct behaviour

When it comes to re-directing dangerous or destructive behaviour, Adele Devine is a bit of a magician. Here, the author of *Flying Starts for Unique Children* (published by Jessica Kingsley) shows how with imagination and creativity, you can charm a little one's less-than-helpful pass-time into a much more fruitful endeavour!

I love the thinking behind the Aukids' name. 'Orchids are considered difficult plants to grow. But actually, they just need slightly different treatment. If you understand what they need, and give them the right conditions, they thrive into beautiful and unusual plants.'

Of course, it's important to celebrate our kids' curiosity and defend their uniqueness. But if they choose an activity we believe is potentially harmful or overly

isolating, we can use ourselves as a bridge to redirect that behaviour.

During many years of teaching autistic children, I've found that even behaviour that seems impossible to divert can be changed without stress and tears. All it needs is some careful thought.

Here are some recent case studies to illustrate different techniques, with thanks to the parents who gave their permission for me to mention them in AuKids.



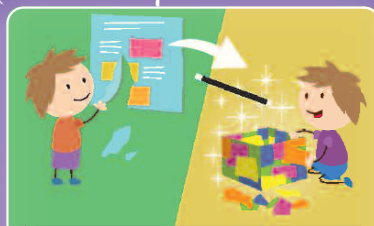
Lone Arranger

Leo is lining up cars. He has taken them one by one and lined them up along the windowsill. "Wow! What a great line of cars. Look at the colours."

I fetch more cars for Leo and make sure no one disturbs his line because I know what it means to him. Leo is quietly satisfied and accepts the cars I bring. He has allowed me to be a part of his play. In time, we will be making a ramp and sending the cars down it. Another child may see the fun and get involved.

More time will pass. Leo might go and put the car down the ramp in our toy garage. We start seeing parallel play (playing alongside a peer). This may develop into turn taking. We cannot force these steps.

Helping isolated children to join our world takes patience and time – we need to join their own world first, make few demands and build trust and self-esteem.



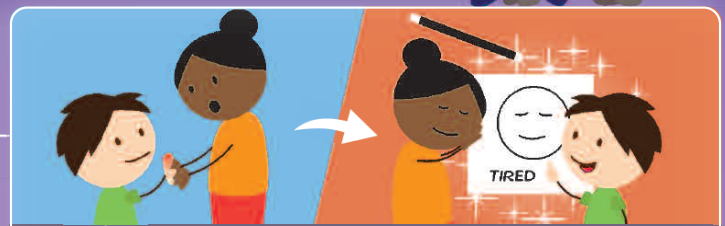
Little Tearaway

Ripping can be lots of fun and gets amazing reactions from adults who like their displays or pretty wallpaper.

Billy likes to rip. He likes it so much that by the end of his first day my classroom looks like it has housed a mini dinosaur. Every display within his reach is ripped to shreds.

When Billy rips, we notice a twinkle in his eye. He is looking for reactions, so we agree to avoid giving any exciting responses. We also remove the ripping sound from displays by laminating displays that are Billy level and sticking them up with Velcro.

As Billy enjoys ripping, we create a box covered in coloured papers so he can rip. We meet his sensory needs in a positive way. (This story is adapted from the Billy the Display Ripper case study in my book *Flying Starts for Unique Children*, Page 46).



Reaction Seekers

We expect toys to do things these days. A teddy talks when you squeeze his hand, robot toys follow commands, so why not adults? We are the first 'toys' children learn to play. They learn our reactions and autistic children (who often like control) will learn all sorts of clever ways to get us to react. Strange as it sounds, sometimes even 'angry' and 'sad' can seem like fun reactions. However, we can find ways to provide enjoyable reactions without them needing to press our buttons!

Charlie loves mischief. There's a button on our interactive whiteboard that Charlie knows makes the screen go up and down. He once caught his finger and hurt himself doing this and must have enjoyed the reaction.

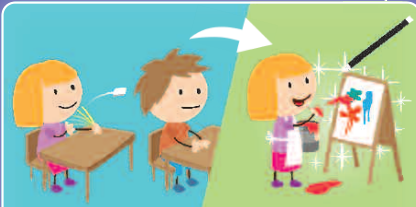
I open Charlie's communication book. This is a book with pages of symbols. It has colours, shapes, numbers, animals,

songs, symbols for 'help' or 'stop' and 'cuddle'. But it isn't these things that Charlie wants.

I turn to the page filled with emotions and point to 'happy' and say 'happy' with a big smile. Next I point to 'sad' and became really, really sad. Charlie beams his brightest smile. He points to 'angry' and I do my best dramatic 'angry'.

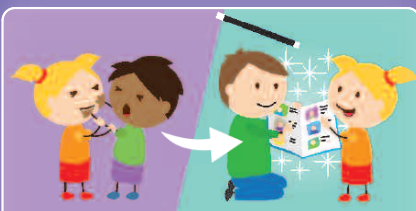
Charlie beams at me. We go through all the emotions again and again. Charlie learns that he can get the most wonderful reactions from the staff without needing to get up to mischief. He is able to focus on other more important things like play.

As play develops so does a friendship. Now Charlie and Rufus have a new favourite emotion and have created a game. They point to 'tired' and whoever is with them will act asleep (and snore for added fun). Together they will shout "Wake up!" and the adult wakes with a jolt. It is so much fun!



Fearless Flinger

Hitting and throwing both require a flinging action. The child is seeking a response so we provide opportunities when they get that sensory feedback. Banging big drums (for hitting) and throwing, aiming rubbish in the bin, tidying up (making it fun) or throwing art (wet tissues in paint are wonderful). You can also redirect to ball skills.



Chewsy Customer

When a child is biting or chewing toys they may be using their mouth to explore, or communicating a sensory need, anxiety or frustration. First think about why the child is chewing and provide a selection of chew toys so that they can find one that suits. A child may benefit from a sensory programme which includes opportunities to chew.

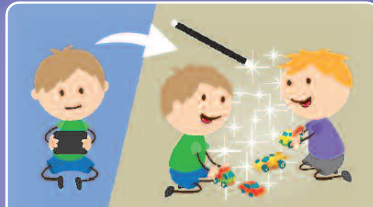
What about the child who bites other children? This child will ideally have 1:1 support at school so that staff can be vigilant in premeditating it. Note down each time a bite occurs. Is there a potential trigger? Is there a way to avoid that trigger? Is it at a certain time of day or during a certain session?

When Milly returned to school after the summer holidays she seemed more anxious and had started to bite. I called home and Mum said that there had been changes at home. An older sister had started boarding school and Milly would try to stop anyone leaving her house (even visitors she didn't know).

Once I knew this, I thought about times when Milly had bitten and each time it had happened, we had visitors in class. I created a Social Story™ for Milly about where people were, with photos of her friends and family. When we were expecting visitors, we added it to our visual timetable. We are extra vigilant at these times and we manage to redirect Milly to other activities.

We don't say 'no biting' (they just hear the word 'bite' and it reinforces it). We certainly don't show a visual of biting. When children bite it is distressing, but we must think about the triggers and support them in situations when they are more likely to bite.

When Milly returned to school after the summer holidays she seemed more anxious and had started to bite. I called home and Mum said that there had been changes at home. An older sister had started boarding school and Milly would try to stop anyone leaving her house (even visitors she didn't know).



iPad Addict

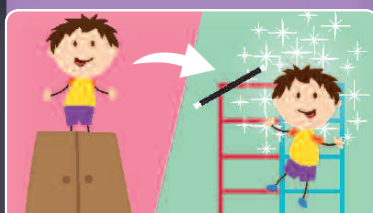
Cole loves technology. He really loves iPads. When Cole first started school the iPad was all he wanted. He would lash out or have an almighty tantrum if anyone touched it.

Cole comes into school and takes my hand to go to the cupboard to get the iPad. We get it down and try to turn it on. "Oh no!" I say. "The iPad is broken. Silly Adele left it in the rain. We must get it fixed." Cole listens. I'm not saying "No iPad", but trying to solve a big problem.

We take the iPad to our ICT technician who has been prepped and tries to turn it on. "Oh dear! It's broken," he says. "We will have to send it away to be fixed." He puts it in a big envelope.

Cole finds other things to play with. He starts to interact and play more. We no longer use iPads with our Early Years class. We know many children are tech savvy and give them lots of other opportunities to explore these skills.

Having a special interest is a wonderful thing and we must nurture this by following play and encouraging the child to share and develop their special interests, but ensure that they do not become isolated.



Fast Movers

Sol is climbing onto a high cupboard. "Sol is the most amazing climber," I say as I help him down. "That's why we've got this climbing frame in the class." I lead Sol to the climbing frame and he climbs up, showing off his skill. "Look at him balance! He's amazing!" I smile and he clocks this. "I'm so proud of Sol climbing on the climbing frame."

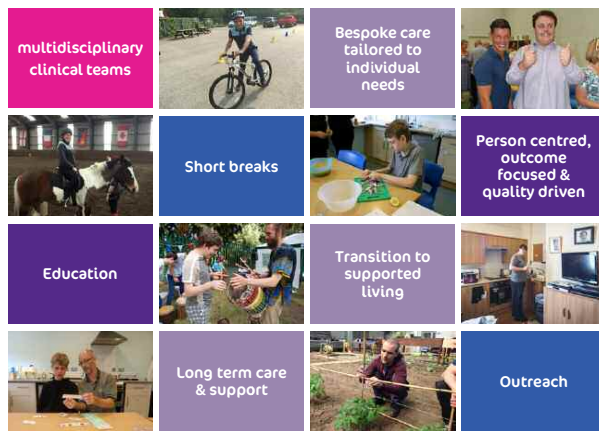
Here, catching him doing the right thing and reinforcing him with praise was so much more effective than him getting lots of negative attention for doing the 'wrong' thing.

Options

Innovators in care and education

100% of our services are rated Good, Outstanding or Fully Compliant by the respective registering bodies

Specialists in education & care for children and adults with autism, complex needs & learning disabilities



T: 08442 487 187
E: info@optionsautism.co.uk
W: www.optionsautism.co.uk

f optionsautism @optionsautism

part of the Outcomes First Group

General Hints for Re-Directing

Ask yourself these questions from the child's viewpoint...



WIN!

We have a copy of Adele's book **Flying Starts for Unique Children** to give away. E-mail your name and address to competitions@aukids.co.uk, stating 'FLYING STARTS' in the subject header, or send us a postcard to AuKids, PO Box 259, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 9BE. Closing date is August 30th 2017.

How to Build a Sense of Self



Tali Berman has specialized in autism for 20 years and is the founder of the Autism Empowerment Telesummit, a free virtual conference for parents. She is author of *Play to Grow! Over 200 games to help your special child develop fundamental social skills.*

Tali and fellow professional Sean Fitzgerald have developed a pioneering course called the *Whole Child Approach*.

Central to the approach, says Tali, is belief in the true intelligence of a child (whether they are able to communicate understanding or not) and using their interests and motivations to inspire meaningful growth. She adds: "In my work in the autism community, I have seen that there is no goal more important than helping your child cultivate self-esteem and a positive sense of self".

What do we mean by 'sense of self'?

We've all heard of self-esteem but a sense of self – the knowledge of who you are – is the foundation for self-esteem. Our opinion of ourselves and where we fit into the world is based on what we witness around us. If you are interested in something more than others

are – and you value that difference – it helps you to form a sense of self. Unfortunately, autistic kids often devalue their differences, as they blame them for contributing to social unease and other difficulties. Some kids on the spectrum spend so much energy and time trying to fit in that they lose their sense of self.

The good news is that there's plenty you can do to help. Here are ten of Tali's strategies:

1 Change Your Goal

Think about your goals. Are they designed to help your child 'fit in'? If so, focus instead on helping your child bring their uniqueness to the world. Valuing what's different about your child will help them to build self-esteem and prevent them from feeling that they are always 'falling short' because of their autism. The goals you set for your child have an influence on all of your parenting. A subtle

judgement that your child will not be complete until he or she is more like others will be a big part of the choices you make and will become something your child will sense.

So, think about putting your child in environments where they can cultivate the things that they enjoy.

As you consider different therapies or treatments, ask yourself the following question: "Am I considering this therapy because I believe it may make my child more like others, or am I considering this therapy because I believe it will help my child more fully develop their unique self?"

2 Cultivate passions

A mum I worked with, Mary, was telling me that her son Jason loved songs from the synagogue services she took him to on Saturday mornings. One of her son's therapists had

encouraged her to stop taking him to synagogue because the songs were distracting him from the other learning he was doing at school (he would continue to hum and sing during the week). So they stopped going. Mary said it was like his light started to dim. He became depressive and unmotivated.

On my advice, Mary took her son back to synagogue. From the love of prayers and songs he learned to play the piano. From that love of piano, he learned to be a community leader and he performed at a very successful autism fundraiser in their home.

Nothing will give your child a stronger sense of self than validating what they love, what is important to them and what they are good at.

3 Find Belonging

See if you can find a group activity that focuses on your child's passion. It will foster a sense of belonging and allow them to become a part of a community of shared interest. This has a tremendous impact on self-esteem. Shared communities can be found online as well as in the physical world, just make sure that your chosen website and its forum are safe to use. AuKids recommends Autcraft, a Minecraft server for people with autism.

4 Respect attempts at independence.

One day, I was baking with my 11 year-old son and he was in charge of mixing the batter. When he was done, I said "Great job!" then took the bowl and mixed a couple more times. He looked at me directly and he said "I hate it when you do that". And you know what? He was right! In that moment, I undermined his contribution by basically communicating, by mixing more, that the way he did it was not good enough.

Identify small opportunities for independence, take a step back, withhold any urge to correct and allow your child to be truly independent. Prioritize their experience of independence over getting

something done the way you want it done. Select one activity, every day, where your child can be truly independent and then you can build from there.

(Ed's note: I'd better leave Bobby's tie on wonky then - Debby)

5 Help them make a meaningful contribution

Not only is it important that your child has the opportunity to experience independence, but it is also important that they experience themselves as someone who makes meaningful contributions to the family/community. Examples of this might be taking out the rubbish or recycling it in the correct bin, putting grocery items on the conveyor belt, helping to carry the groceries to the car, walking or feeding the dog, etc. Find a consistent and clear way your child can contribute to the family and recognize and honour, in a sincere way, this contribution.

6 Speak to your child's true intelligence

If there is anything I would scream from the rooftops it would be this:

Your child's verbal production means nothing, and I mean NOTHING, about your child's comprehension. This point has been confirmed over and over again by people with autism who are non-verbal and then learn to communicate via typing or pointing. Suddenly, the incredible depth and intelligence of a person who others thought was impossible began to emerge.

Avoid baby talk, talking about your child in front of them as they do not understand or talking down to your child. Tell your child what you are doing and why. Talking to them in this way will help them see themselves in a different way; as someone who is capable of that kind of understanding and relationship.

7 Teach to your child's TRUE intelligence.

As I mentioned above, many people on the autism spectrum understand way more than they are able to demonstrate.

However, because of a challenge to demonstrate knowledge, it is often a mistaken assumption that a child does not understand.

One boy I am working with has been asked to tap his head during daily exercises. Most people assume that he must not understand the concept of 'head' or where his head is. Through typing, he has explained that he knows what his head is, but his challenge is in the motor planning required to do what his brain wants him to do.

Teach to your child's true intelligence about the world around them. Allow for processing difficulties, of course, but don't confine their understanding to babyish concepts. Gaining this knowledge, that all other kids get, not only empowers your child to feel that they are seen for the truly intelligent person that they are, but it also allows them to make sense of the seemingly chaotic world. The more they can understand how the world, and even their body works, the more they can relate to it in a calm and orderly way. This will not only help to increase self-esteem but also help to decrease anxiety as they begin to understand how things work and why.

8 Surround your child with the people who accept and believe in him.

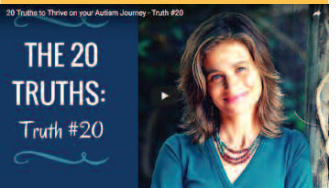
Reflect on the people in your life and the life of your child and consider those who tend to judge you, your parenting and your child. These people bring stress and anxiety and can be toxic, in many ways, to you and your child. Do your best to minimize having people like this in your life and instead surround yourself and your little one with people who love who your child is today, believe in their true intelligence and the possibilities that lie ahead.

9 Create a supportive environment.

Sensory dysregulation can lead to being overwhelmed. When your child is in an environment



Further Information



Access Tali's free 20 Truths to Thrive on Your Autism Journey Guide at taliberman.com

Play To Grow: Over 200 games to help your child on the autism spectrum develop fundamental social skills by Tali Berman and Abby Rappaport, is available for £9.96 at www.amazon.co.uk



in which they can thrive, their self-esteem will improve.

Take some time to identify which environments support your child and which do not. For example, hectic shopping trips, certain activities or outings, big family gatherings, etc. Think about the places where your child does not thrive and try to minimize those as much as possible. When in those environments, make sure to provide ways they can regulate, like a quiet space to calm down. This will allow them to have the ease that is required to have a positive sense of self.

10 Ask your child's views

Children learn to develop opinions when they are asked for them. This in turn creates a sense of self. Non-verbal kids can be asked to state preferences using symbols, so always assume that they have an opinion. Practise giving them daily choices, like what to wear. Difficult behaviour can be exhibited when people assume that someone non-verbal has no opinion and gives them little control or choice.



Tori's

Interaction On The Go!

The sun is out, your bag is packed and after a short battle with the sunscreen, you and your child are off to the park to have some fun. But suddenly you remember that you haven't done your Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) practice today and you start to feel guilty. Fear not! Here at AuKids, we strongly believe that practising communication can happen anywhere - and should!

Here is our handy guide to practising interaction in the park. Remember, your child will learn more when they are having fun and motivated so make the most of this great opportunity!



1. Making choices

Why practice it?
In making choices, children with autism need to understand that there is not a right or wrong answer and that their opinion matters.

What you can do

Encourage choosing the next activity - e.g swing, slide, roundabout...

To make it harder for more verbal kids

Give more instructions to choose from and cue them in by saying "I'm going to give you two choices, so you need to listen".
Examples of choices: Up the slide or down the slide?
Shall I push the swing or pull the swing?
Faster or slower?

To make it easier for less verbal kids

Signal that a choice is being offered by saying 'choice' or 'choose'. Then use visual prompts. You can show pictures, point or use your hands or fists to help them.

2. Model language

(demonstrating words)



Why practice it?

The more they hear them in a meaningful context, the more words they learn.

What you can do

Say "high" when swinging high.
"Down" for going down the slide

"Out" for getting out of the swing
"More" for more spinning on the roundabout

To make it harder for more verbal kids

More complex language: "Push Alec really high!" "I want to get out now!"

To make it easier for less verbal kids

Use single words, find whatever visual support you have available and back up with symbols and signs.

3. Turning questions into comments

Why practice it?

Adult questions represent missed opportunities for increasing your kid's language skills. By feeding them the language of what they are focusing on, you are providing the words that match their thoughts. You also take pressure off; by not having to think of a reply they can process your language.

What you can do

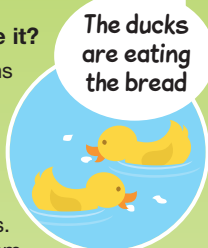
Describe what they are doing/thinking/looking at touching/hearing. Watch their focus and try and match the language to their point of interest.

To make it harder for more verbal kids

Use new words and increase sentence length.

To make it easier for less verbal kids

Simplify with single words e.g. "duck" "plane".



4. Encourage requesting

Why practice it?

Learning to request is a basic function that gives a child control and decreases frustration.



What you can do

Demonstrate a request for help when you think it's needed, by signing, saying or using a visual.

To make it harder for more verbal kids

Use longer sentences to request.

To make it easier for less verbal kids

Use PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) to help support this, signs or just symbols.
Build up routines to help your child know what to expect and what's happening next with a game so they are more likely and able to request more.

5. Practise waiting

Great waiting!



Why practise it?

Difficult for kids with autism.

What you can do

When it's busy at the park, waiting turns or queueing.

To make it harder for more verbal kids

Use Social Stories™ to help try and explain why it's important to wait.

Keep them occupied whilst waiting, eg. counting. "Lets count all the trees/children/swings"
Looking out for things.

To make it easier for less verbal kids

Using symbols e.g. a red circle with wait in it, build up from seconds to minutes over time.
Praise good waiting.
Have fidget toys available.
Showing sand timers can help give an indication of length of wait.

TOP TIPS

- You don't have to plan ahead to use symbols or pictures. You just need a few blank laminated cards with Velcro on and a marker or even just a pen and a paper on the go. You can also use your phone camera to take photos of activities they can choose at the park.
- It's important for children to be able to reflect and report back on what they have done. Take photos of your child in the park on your phone and use this to look back at when you get home. For children with lots of language you can use words to describe what you see and talk about how they are feeling. For those who need more support or who struggle to look at photos, you can collect momentos from the park that they have enjoyed on a sensory level - or items that might help spark the memories.



Tori Houghton is the co-editor of AuKids and a specialist speech and language therapist.

Stimming and Me

Alex Lowery is a 23 year-old professional trainer and speaker on autism. His book **Thinking Club: A Filmstrip of my Life as a Person with Autism** is available at his site www.alexlowery.co.uk Alex has a passion to move society from awareness to acceptance of autism. In the first of our new series of columns written by people on the spectrum, Alex shares his thoughts on 'stimming' – repetitive movements that are common in autism.



In this article, I'm talking about one aspect of autism, which is a huge part of my life and that is 'stimming'. Stimming is short for 'self-stimulatory behaviour'. It's a series of movements that people on the autistic spectrum often do, like hand flapping, rocking back and forth and spinning around in circles. A lot of people who aren't on the spectrum don't understand why we stim. I'm here to talk about why I stim.

Educators and psychologists are still trying to stop children from 'stimming'. I believe it is good to be taught how to manage 'stimming' but trying to stop it altogether is harmful and shows no understanding of the reasons why people like me 'stim'. Some people seem to think that if you can get rid of the outward behaviours of autism you get rid of autism. This is just not true.

When I'm stimming, I'm quite simply thinking about things. I may be thinking about exciting things that have happened in the past. I'll be keeping loads of things that have been said to me in my head, and it's a bit like my mind's a video

recorder. I'll listen to what people will have said, and then I'll imagine seeing them again, replaying these memories in my mind, and while I'm doing all of this, I'm stimming. I can't really do it without making the movements. However, it only ever happens with things that have been said that are of interest to me. Other stuff completely bypasses me.

I may also be playing things in my head that didn't really happen, but I'm imagining that they did. I may be re-playing things that I've seen in films or in documentaries. I have an interest in fantasy stories like the Lord of the Rings, the Chronicles of Narnia and Star Wars. When I'm stimming, I may be imagining that I'm a character in one of those worlds.

I may also stim because I'm excited. If there's something which I'm really looking forward to, or if something happens which may be of interest to me, I'll stim, but if I'm in public with people I don't know very well, I try to control my stims to the best of my ability.

Stimming is also something that helps me focus on the things that I'm interested in. A lot of the things, like my knowledge of autism (and my gift for public speaking on autism) wouldn't be here if it wasn't for my stimming.

When I was little, many people tried to teach me to control it. My teacher in school tried to stop me from stimming, and when I had therapy, my therapists tried to control it for a little while. But the fact is I've never been able to stop. I've actually tried and it's impossible. It's like OCD in the sense that it's unavoidable, but since it helps me to focus on things that I'm interested in, it has positives.

There are still negatives. It interferes with my focus on the things that I'm not interested in. For example, when I was given school work and being taught about the Second World War,

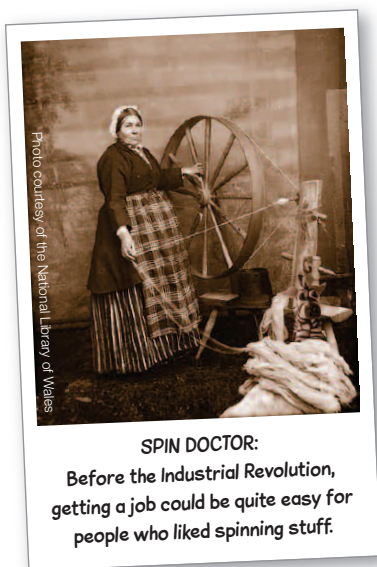
I kept getting distracted and couldn't concentrate, because I was busy thinking about other things, stimming over them, and that is one rather big problem.

Another problem is that people who don't know about autism aren't going to be very accepting of stimming. It could make autistic people a bigger target for bullying, or it could make people think that you're having a seizure (which has happened to me).

So the question is, is stimming wrong? There are good things about it and bad things, but I still believe that it is not wrong, and should not be stopped. It can help autistics have the gifts they have, it helps them to cope with stress

and anxiety and it's also (speaking for me personally) just a part of my life. Now, please note that even though I think it shouldn't be stopped, that doesn't mean I don't think it should be controlled to a degree in my case. When I was little, I stimmed almost all day every day, and it did really interfere with functioning. I would not have learnt every day things at all. I have had therapy to control my stimming to a degree, and I'm glad I've had that, but every autistic person should have time to do it.

To read a longer version of Alex's article on stimming, visit this link on his website: www.alexlowery.co.uk/why-stimming-is-a-big-part-of-my-life-and-why-it-should-never-be-stopped/



Support for me and my family

Our family support services offer a wide range of advice, training and free advice drop-in sessions

If you are looking for flexible care, short breaks, special education or community support for a young person or adult with an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), in North West England, then the Together Trust can help.

Visit our website or contact us to find out more:

T 01612834848

E enquiries@togethertrust.org.uk

togethertrust.org.uk **together trust**
real differences for real lives

Registered charity number 209782

[/SupportTogetherTrust](https://www.facebook.com/SupportTogetherTrust) [@TogetherTrust](https://www.instagram.com/TogetherTrust)

MARK057



Why Do I?

Your brain is a marvellous thing. But it's also confusing. Sometimes our brains do things that makes us think "Why??" Here AuKids has answered some common questions from kids just like you. There are some tips for adults in the blue bit on the right.

Why do I need speech therapy?

For children who aren't talking yet, speech therapy is there to help them talk with words or with pictures. Some children need help making their talking clearer so other people can understand them better.

This might confuse you if you CAN talk really well! Speech therapy is not just lessons in how to talk. It teaches us how to understand what other people say, what we read and what feelings mean. Speech therapy also teaches us to explain our thinking and feelings to other people.

Sometimes people talk lots and lots and it's hard to figure out what they're saying. Speech therapists can help us organise those words so they make sense to us.

Have you ever felt really angry but not known how to show it without getting into trouble? Or wanted to make friends but weren't sure what to do? Or felt puzzled about what to do when you don't want the same thing as a friend or teacher? Sometimes, nasty words can slip out. Not being sure of how to deal with those situations can make life tricky at school.

Speech therapy helps with all of that. It also helps with conversation skills.

It's a smart thing to get other people to help us learn things. Speech therapists, parents and teachers are some people who can help us make talking, listening and understanding easier.

Why do I worry all the time?

Lots of kids worry for lots of different reasons. Sometimes kids worry that something is going to change. Parents and teachers can help by telling you beforehand when change is going to happen. This can help your brain and body stay calm because you know what's going to happen.

You can help your brain and body stay calm when you worry.

The first thing you do is STOP and take a deep breath. That'll help you calm your brain and body.

Then, make a plan to help yourself. What can you do to make the worry stop? It's a good idea to write it down.

Think about what is worrying you. Then figure out two or three things you can do to help yourself. Try one out. Did it work? If it did, you should congratulate yourself. If it didn't work, that's okay, you can choose another idea. Keep trying but remember, you can ask an adult for help too.

If you worry about getting your school work done, write down your jobs and the days you have left to do the work. Then you can see what you have to do and how long you have to do it.

Making a plan stops the worry from wandering around your head again and again.

Some people worry about things they

CAN'T do anything about. That's really difficult because you like to have things under control and decided. Sometimes, things you worry about might not have a clear answer.

You can help yourself by helping your brain think about other things. That's right, you can distract your own brain! Go and do (or think about) something you enjoy. That will give your brain a little holiday from worrying. There is also a great book about worries that we've recommended at the end of this article.

Sometimes when you have lots of worries, they get all jumbled up and you don't know which ones are more important and which ones are only small. So it helps to get together with an adult and decide if each worry is a big one (scoring a ten out of ten) or a small one (a one). You can tell your brain to forget about the smaller worries and you can sort out the biggest ones first.

Have you got a box to store your worries in? If you worry when you should be doing other things, write down your worry and save it in your worry box. Then, choose a time that you can go through the worry box with an adult, deciding which ones you can deal with – and which ones you can forget.

Some kids have so many worries that they need some extra help with this from someone who understands how your kind of brain works. Getting this kind of help is great - lots of kids get help for their worries.

Why do I get cross so quickly?

I might even hurt people I care about.

Our bodies are full of feelings. When we get too many of them, our bodies can't keep them inside any more and that's when they sometimes burst out – you might shout, cry or hit. If you're excited, your hands might flap or your body might rock back and forth.

Some people worry a lot and that makes it hard to stay calm. They worry if things get changed, if they don't have enough time to do things they want, or if there might be a surprise. Worries can make our bodies full of a lot of different feelings.

Because of that, our feelings can get too much for us.

There is part of your brain that helps you to keep control of your big feelings, it is a bit like a lion tamer. Your lion tamer needs a bit of training, so sometimes you need to learn new skills about how to calm yourself down when things get a bit much.

A place to start is learning how to tell when your feelings are getting bigger.

Think about how your body feels when you're calm. That'll help you notice when your body and your brain start to feel less calm.

Some people feel their tummies dance and grumble; some people feel their whole body get tight.

These are signals that you could do with some help in staying calm. Your parents and teachers can help you by teaching you to use a scale like in the *Incredible 5 Point Scale* book. This will help you to understand your feelings a lot better – so you can tell other people when they start to get too big.

Why do I need a teaching assistant/support worker?

You have a good brain, so why do you need a teaching assistant – sometimes called a TA?

We'll tell you a secret. Some of the cleverest kids we know have teaching assistants.

Sometimes your brain finds it hard to know what to listen out for, or gets distracted. Your teaching assistant will help you to focus on what's important.

Sometimes things may get a bit much for you, so if you get upset the teaching assistant can help you to calm yourself down.

You may struggle a bit with writing – or your thoughts may be too quick for your handwriting – so your TA can write things down for you.

Everybody needs help with something!

Most importantly, your TA will be able to work with your teacher to work around some of these difficulties, so that you get the best out of your lessons.

Think of your TA as your cheerleader!

Why don't I cry when other people do?

For some people, if they see something sad, they might cry.

Some people don't like to cry in front of other people; they prefer to cry when they're by themselves. Other people aren't sure how they feel so need some time to think about it. This doesn't mean they don't have feelings. When a person doesn't show that they feel sad, it's hard for their family and friends to know how that person is feeling. You can help other people by telling them how you feel.

Hints for Parents

If you're talking about autism, never talk about it in a negative way. Discuss differences and how they may be helpful in some ways and not so helpful in others. You and your child can view the video, *Amazing Things Happen* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JdCY-cdgkl) which talks about differences in a positive way.

Focus on solutions and ways of coping. Help your child see that, although some parts of autism can be annoying, there are lots of things their brains do well. With the help of parents and teachers, they can learn to deal with worries.

Dr Heather MacKenzie inspired us with her excellent way of getting kids to understand how they work by talking about 'your brain' and 'your hands' etc., rather than 'you'. This distance allows kids to take an outside perspective on themselves and not to blame themselves for the way that they think, feel and work.

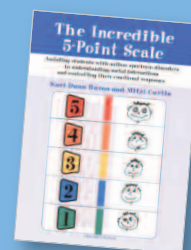
Giving examples of success stories is always encouraging. See AuKids Issue 11 in our archive for our autism heroes.

If you want to explain your child's autism to them, look up Issue 23 in our online archive.



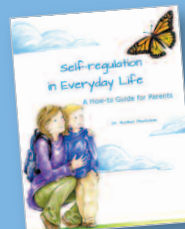
Books

The Incredible 5-Point Scale by Kari Dunn Buron and Mitzi Curtis – help with emotional responses by teaching kids to recognise the signs that their feelings are growing, pinpointing 5 stages, published by AAPC.



What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety (What-to-Do Guides for Kids) by Dawn Huebner published by Magination Press.

What to Do When Your Temper Flares: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Problems with Anger (What-to-Do Guides for Kids) by Dawn Huebner, published by Magination Press.

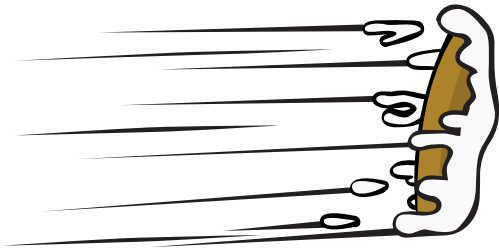


Self-regulation in Everyday Life: A How-to Guide for Parents Paperback by Dr Heather MacKenzie, Wired Fox Publications.



The Last Word

By Debby Elley, journalist and mum of twins with autism.



Flag It up First!

In this life, there is only one certainty, and that's that you can expect the unexpected. This is kind of rubbish if you're on the autism spectrum. We know that, don't we? But as Bobby matures and expresses himself more, I've found that it's far more rubbish than you might think.

As we were walking towards a building the other day, a lady was walking in the opposite direction wearing a large, flamboyant fur hat. As Bobby's eyes followed her path, I quipped 'Yep, that's a cat she's wearing on her head!'

Bobby considered for a moment and then burst out: "DON'T DO THAT! I hate it when people tell me jokes without warning!!"

The point of most of my jokes are precisely that they are unexpected, but when I thought about it from Bobby's point of view I could see why he objected. For years I've been used to warning Bobby that a question is coming by saying 'Bobby - question:' before I ask one. This means he tunes in more quickly and doesn't have to immediately orientate to the tone of my voice. It takes some of the hard work out of processing.

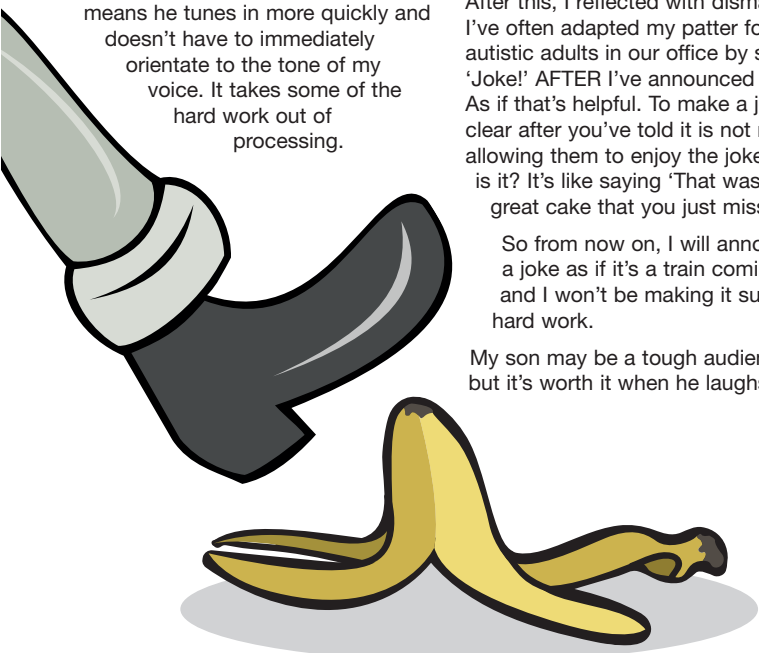
It makes sense to me that it's a struggle for him to listen, process and then orientate his brain towards the fact that the speaker wasn't serious. So many of our jokes are just inferences and it's well known that inferences are hard for autistic people to understand.

It's not that autistic people don't have a sense of humour, it's that the rest of us don't make it easy for them to get in on the joke. We have practised recognising sarcasm with Bobby, because it's used at home a lot (I mean, a lot), but I can understand why people on the spectrum seem to find slapstick such an unparalleled joy. The joke is right there, no inferences or subtle tones or inflections. It says in huge neon letters 'This is a joke! BA-HAH-HAH-HAH-HAHAAAA!' It was wonderful to see Alec laughing at Gavin's impression of a dying slug the other day, for instance, even with his limited language. You had to be there.

After this, I reflected with dismay that I've often adapted my patter for the autistic adults in our office by saying 'Joke!' AFTER I've announced it. As if that's helpful. To make a joke clear after you've told it is not really allowing them to enjoy the joke at all, is it? It's like saying 'That was a great cake that you just missed!'

So from now on, I will announce a joke as if it's a train coming and I won't be making it such hard work.

My son may be a tough audience, but it's worth it when he laughs.



NO MORE SCHOOL KIT WORRIES!



Does your child regularly leave their PE kit, lunchbox, glasses or homework at home or at school?

Visual checklists are a great tool for kids with autism, helping to boost their organisational skills and independence as well as reducing anxiety about having the right kit with them.

With TomTag toolkits it's quick and easy to make personalised checklists to help pack for school, as well as visual schedules and timetables perfect for home, school or going out and about.



Find out more at www.orkidideas.com

Love Aukids?

Get the T-shirt to go with it!

Plus the hoodie, beanie hat, cap, school bag, pump bag, apron and even teddy bear!

The Aukids clothing range carries a selection of slogans dreamt up by the magazine team and designed to inspire tolerance and positivity! Quality clothing at fantastic prices made by our friends at www.finsdesignandprint.co.uk. Order online. Kids' t-shirts for £8 and kids' hoodies for £14. Adult sizes also available.

A BIG thanks to Fins Design and Print for giving a percentage of each Aukids sale to our magazine.



www.finsdesignandprint.co.uk

Sponsored by



www.hallidays.co.uk

David Laslett
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

PORTRAITS • WEDDINGS • COMMERCIAL
MANCHESTER CREATIVE MEDIA LTD

david@mcmediatd.com

07918 155362

Want to sponsor us? Step right forward. Write to editors@aukids.co.uk