

Autism Spectrum Conditions

Differences

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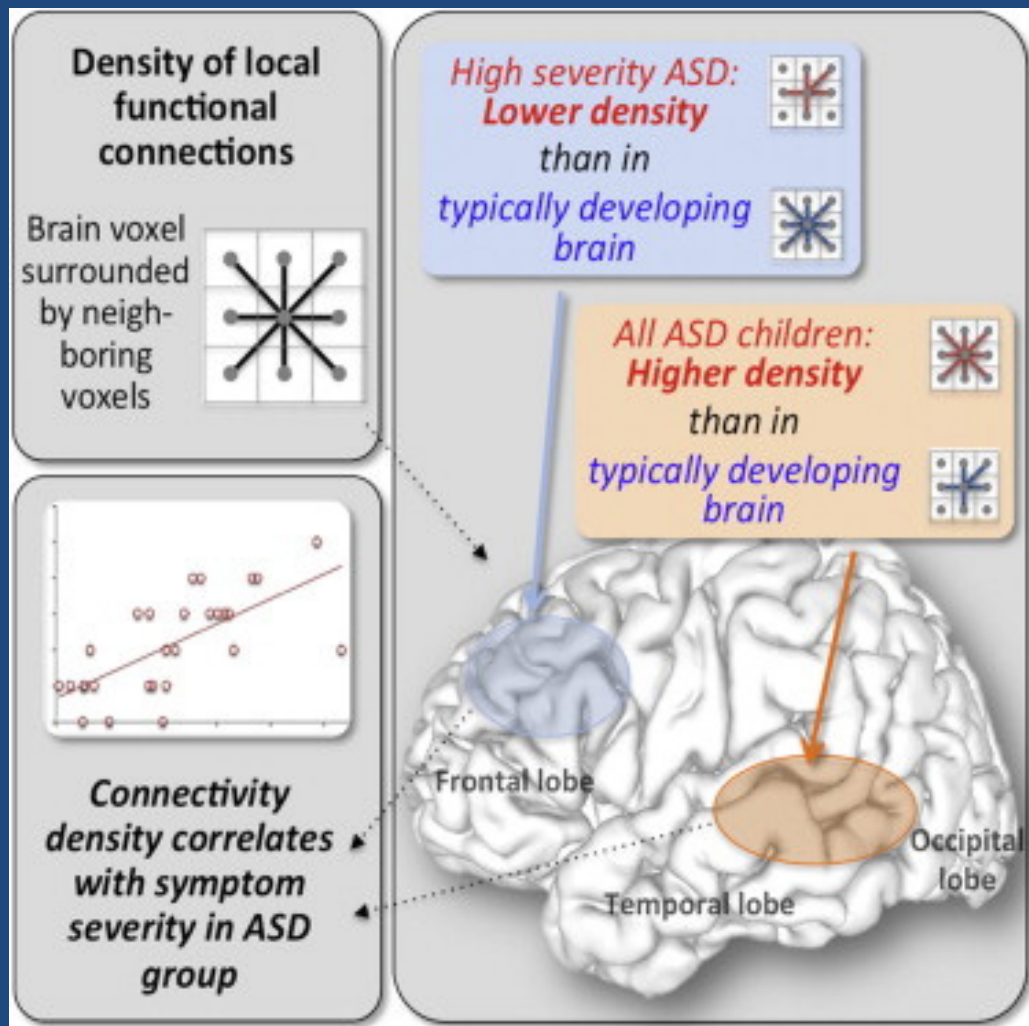
Strategies for Study Advisers

Mrs Tess Coll
Study Adviser for students with AS/autism

Very brief over view of the condition

Differences found in this group of students

Adaptions to practice



- Local brain connectivity is atypically increased in autism in the posterior brain
- Some regions in frontal and parietal lobes show local under-connectivity
- Connection density correlates with symptom severity in autism

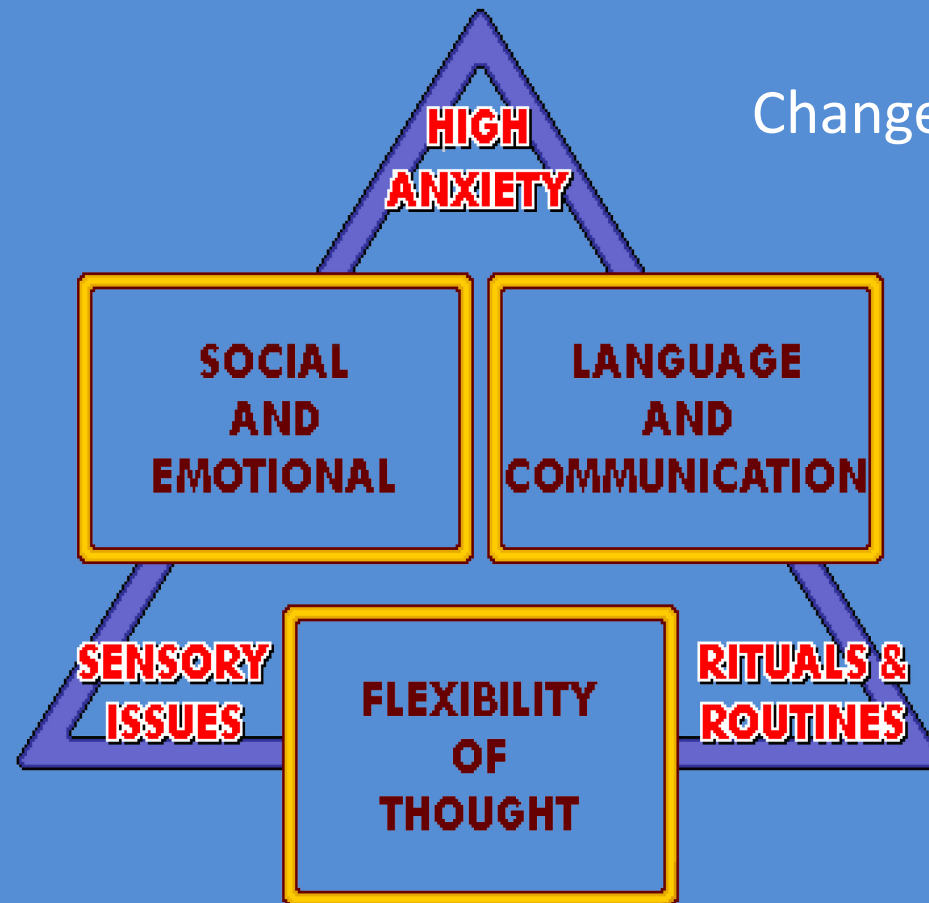
Local Functional Overconnectivity in Posterior Brain Regions Is Associated with Symptom Severity in Autism Spectrum Disorders Keown, Christopher Lee et al. Cell Reports , Volume 5 , Issue 3 , 567 - 572

Sensory

Touch, Taste, See, Hear, Smell
Vestibular, Proprioception,
(pain & temperature)

In the one person during one day perception can
fluctuate, be acute or dulled in different modes
be fragmented or relatively coherent
High visual sensitivity linked to high anxiety

The Triad Revisited



Note
Change of emphasis

Courtesy of Paul Sandford 'www.translate-asc'

Sensory

- Never assume the students sees what you see
- Fighting to concentrate
 - bombarded by ‘background’ distracting stimuli
 - Exhausting
- In addition there can be
 - idiosyncratic aversion to individuals,
 - Idiosyncratic strong likes &/or dislikes
 - ‘artificial’ and actual Scotopic Sensitivity

- Artificial lighting often unpleasant
- Private conversations – you really think so?!
- Ask the student what you need to change in your room
 - Turn light off
 - Grow plants
 - Speak quietly
 - Avoid your favourite perfume / lunch
 - Avoid or Must Use pink / green paperclips

Thinking style

- Strong detail focus negatively affects : updating plans/internal time awareness, perceiving overview - bogged down in details, hard to structure work
- Weaker Executive function negatively affects: Ability to holding several things in mind at once to compare and contrast, rank, order, observe self in a situation, notice context of an event, observe problems and be able to describe them, memory development, accurately linking cause and effect

Thinking style

- Impaired imagination for things not yet experienced
 - Imagining how a strategy applies to them
 - Seeing how new strategies work
- New ways of working can take time to appear in practice

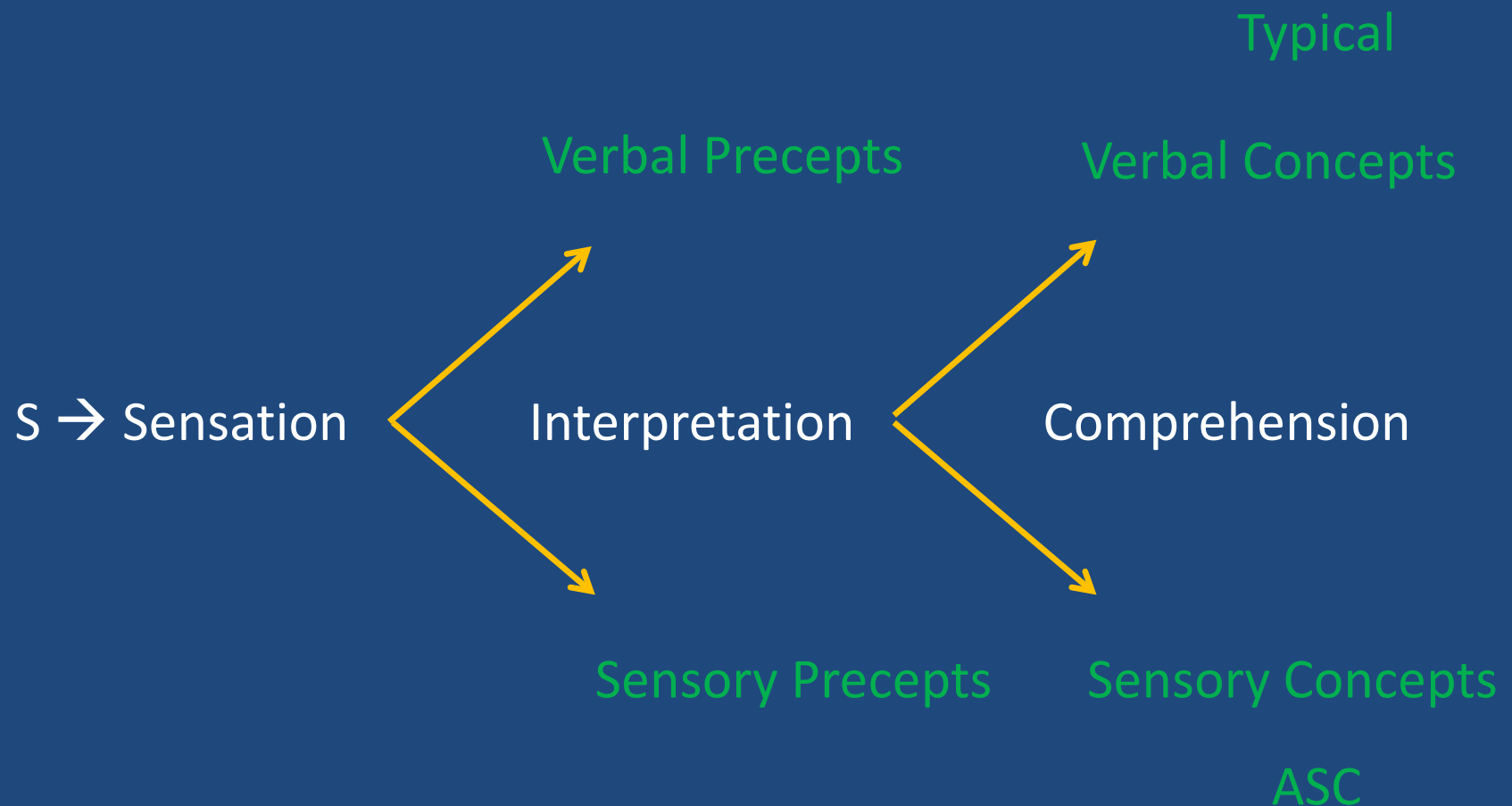
Thinking Style Differences

- One stop learning
- Memory differences
- Weak development of 'self'; less aware of own opinion
- Understanding other people; meanings, motives, opinions, intentions, (that means you too), journal articles, exam / essay questions / lab instructions
- Common knowledge (common to whom?)
- Self/other – explaining to a.n.other during learning helps structuring of information and unprompted recall

Anxiety

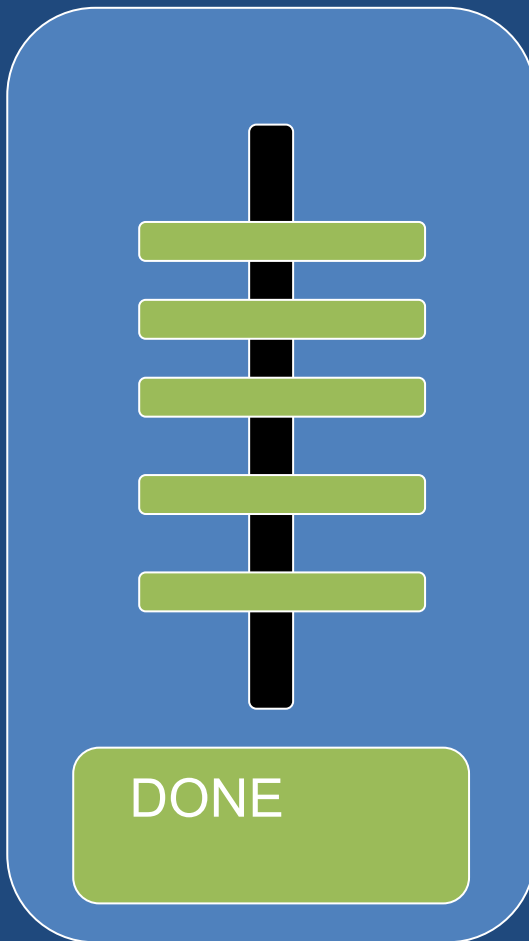
- Chronically elevated levels are normal for this population, but some 'passive' individuals will be unaware until ill or withdrawn and we won't notice
- Causes rapid deterioration in all skills
- 'Meltdown' does not just mean noise and aggression usually it means a 'shutdown' with the trauma hidden inside.
- Poorer emotion control; amygdala less well formed

Without shared experiences
shared language cannot develop



Communication

- Expressive > receptive in the more able
- Delayed processing
- Literal interpretation
- Idiosyncratic use of metaphor (“What’s this about not understanding metaphor? With B... it is all metaphor; his own!”)
- Finding information on the page / screen worse or ‘extremely good but
- Hyperlexic (relative to that expected)
- Volunteer information? What does that mean?
- Long sentences produced (not understood): thoughts in complete wholes; sentences a paragraph long; quotes used to express ‘own opinion’



Step by step thinking at all times

How to start, how to stop

AND

All the steps in between

We have to make the 'obvious'
particularly explicit.

Flowcharts for module

1. Overview

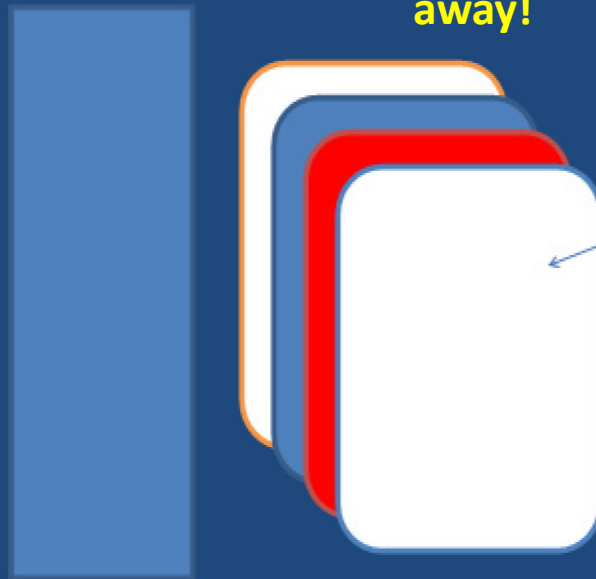
2. 1 per section.

3. 1 per topic / theme

4. 1 per potential essay plan

Memory jogger
As soon as the exam starts write it down!

Annotate questions
Catch the information straight away!



Essay Plan / formula cards;

Front

**key words / theory /
names / dates / legal case**

Back

**essay plan / application /
algorithm / judge's ratio**

Learn both ways!

**Forced recall has to be
practiced!**

1. Remember - make links explicit.

2. Colour code the notes

- a) to separate topics and/or
- b) to emphasise links

**Example, example, example, example
then generalise**

Remember it is the 'advice to incoming students with AS'.

09:00 Heather from Creative Services sets up

10 till 12 Chris and Debora take turns interviewing each other

12:00 Heather has a lunch break and does technical things

A joke based on conversations we'd had

1 till 3 John and Kamala take turns at interviewing each other

3pm Anthea you do your introduction again as per the sort of thing we did originally. **I will let you have the original recording to listen to before you do your bit.**

We can go over the questions again later this week or early next week. I include them below to make doubly sure you see them.

Names have been changed

Remember

These are not exam questions, there is no right or wrong answer. They are only a trigger, for

- an informal conversation about what it has been like for you as a student with AS and
- the ways that you found to cope.

1) The lecture experience

- What was it like the first time you went to a lecture and how did you feel?
- How did you learn to cope with the lecture experience, for example what things did you do in order to help?
- Who helped you?
- How do you find attending lectures now?

2) Seminars and tutorials

- What was it like the first time you went to a seminar and how did you feel?
- How did you learn to cope with going to seminars, for example what things did you do in order to help?

Dear All,

To remind you of the arrangements for tomorrow Friday 12th December.
Please see the schedule below. **Please let me know of any problems as soon as possible!**

Chris & Debora in the morning then **John & Kamala in the afternoon** will ask each other the same set of questions.

So tonight please think about what you might say. These are not exam questions; **we are after what you really think and the advice you would give to other students with AS.**

Anthea – you will be giving the introduction. I have the original so you can listen to it and remind yourself before filming.

Thanks again
Tess

Rules of Thumb

BEWARE THE AUTISTIC 'YES'

Expect to be misunderstood

- Allow time for delayed processing – '10 second rule'
- Use narrowly bounded open questions OR a closed question ending with prompts for alternative answers
- Use simple, 1 or 2 phrase sentences
- Say things in the order they need to be thought about
- Show then tell, or (rarely) vice versa, not simultaneously
- Notes on session to help student reflect / remember
- Months can pass before student understands and independently implements new strategies / learning

Early on I give explicit permission for the student to tell me to do something differently. I say

- I do not yet know them well,
- I have experience of different ways of working but I do not know what is best for them
- I need them to tell me if something I do irritates or is not effective not just what does work.

- Unless agreed in advance avoid direct eye gaze
- Discuss orientation & proximity for working together
- Analysing the problem; be more prescriptive
“From what you have told me, it seems that....
Have I understood accurately or got it wrong?”
- Give some information about yourself – “it gives me something to hang the meaning on”
- “Give us reasons; we cannot imagine why.”

- Explain cognitive differences underlying a difficulty – makes it easier to accept, reduces frustration.
- Review timetables / to do lists
- Cartoon comic strips/ social story style explanations
- Describe situations that arise because of a difficulty, then ask if this happens to them. Avoid ‘is a problem for you?’
- Discuss what works for them. I say something like, “Some of the people I work with find ..., others prefer; can you tell me which way works best?”
- Make processes explicit

- Pause after explaining something; we tend to go still when processing then there is a little movement; this can be smaller in AS but will usually be present, look out for it before you make the next point.
- Do not repeat too quickly the student will have to start processing all over again from the beginning.
- Be honest about your weaker areas, I have a dreadful memory and at first meeting always tell the student &/or parent that I need them to feel free to nag.
- When I pause to think something through I say so.

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