


Government of South Australia
Department for Education

Practical tips for working with autistic children and young people

Dr Emma GOODALL


May 2019 education.health@sa.gov.au



Contents

1. Understand and effectively respond to autistic thinking styles
2. Understand barriers to learning and hacks to support learning for autistics.
3. Understand how to plan, implement and assess interest based learning


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Autistic thinking styles

- Black & white
- Concrete/fixed/rigid
- Over/under generalised

Get a drink of water	Get a drink
Get a drink of water	Get a drink
Get a drink of water	Get a drink
Get a drink of water	Get a drink
Get a drink of water	Get a drink
Get a drink of water	Get a drink
Get a drink of water	Get a drink
Get a drink of water	Get a drink





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Useful strategies to address concrete thinking

- Teach the importance of context to meaning
- Scaffold generalisation and the 'exceptions to the rules'





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Autistic thinking styles

- What/who you can't see doesn't exist
- Delayed object permanence – often perceived as separation anxiety



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Useful strategies to address poor object permanence

- Photos of home/family on daily visual timetable at home time or in pocket of individual
- Video recording of mum; "Have a nice day at school/day service. Enjoy your learning. See you later. I will pick you up at 3pm".
- Text/phone/email contact to prompt reconnection to your existence




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Autistic thinking styles

- What you see/hear is what you get (LITERAL)

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Useful strategies to address literalness

- Aim for positive self-fulfilling prophecies
- Explicitly teach the meanings of idioms
- Explain implicit meanings

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Autistic thinking styles

- Now is forever/broken record
 - If I have to stop gaming, I will never be able to game again
 - If it is my turn now, it will always be my turn
 - If I lose my phone it will be lost forever

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Useful strategies to now is forever

- Be explicit about the impermanence of everything
- Model being present in the moment (mindfulness)
- Be explicit about change
- Be explicit about what will happen when
- Teach turn taking in small increments:
 - your turn, my turn
 - Your turn, my turn, waiting for your turn

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Autistic thinking styles


- Social justice as a priority

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Useful strategies around social justice


- Facilitating volunteer opportunities
- Develop advocacy and self-advocacy skills
- Teaching who and when to report 'infringements' to
- Set aside time for problem solving/hackathons

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Autistic thinking styles

- Logical
- IF \Rightarrow THEN



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Useful strategies around logic


- Utilise IF \Rightarrow THEN thinking to help generalising and applying new skills and knowledge
- Model/demonstrate the use of emotion in decision making as an additional skill/way to understand others
- Say what you mean and mean what you say
- Teach new skills through forwards chaining or backwards chaining *

(* example on next slide)

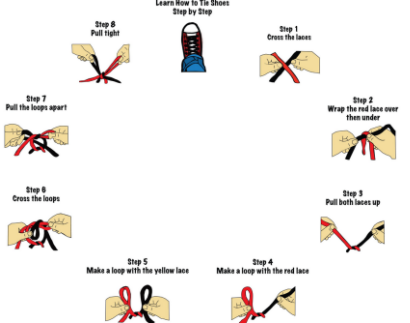
How People Make Decisions




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Learn How to Tie Shoes




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Barriers to learning Strategies

- Communication differences
 - Difficulty filtering
 - Difficulty prioritising
 - Auditory processing issues
 - Literal understanding
- Set up 'reasons to communicate'
- Ensure person knows you are about to communicate
- Do NOT require eye contact
- Say what you mean and mean what you say
- Use single step instructions
- Use visual supports inc. sign




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Barriers to learning Strategies

- Police officer/anarchist
 - Teach social structures/hierarchies, roles & responsibilities
 - Focus on rules/norms/laws that personal safety and safety of others first
 - Ensure individual has a safe person to report issues/rules breaks too
 - Be patient




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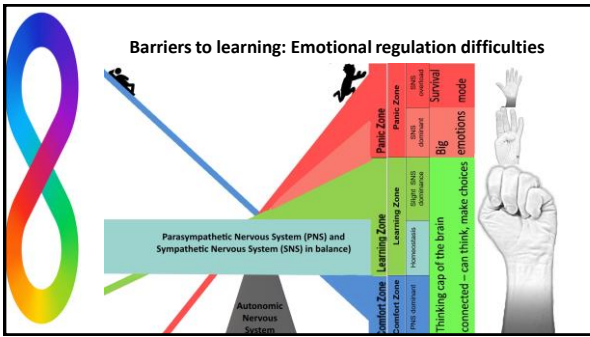


Barriers to learning Strategies

- Need for control
- Need for predictability
- Perfectionism
 - Anxiety
 - Fear of failure
 - Fear of looking stupid
- Give choices/options
- Timetables, visuals, planners
- Proactively manage anxiety with interoception & mindfulness
- Model learning through mistakes
- Use self-correcting learning materials
- Backwards/forwards chain new skills
- Video modelling
- Don't use words like stupid



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Strategies

<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/supporting-students/health/safety-and-wellbeing/health-support-planning/managing-health-education-and-care/neurodiversity/interception>

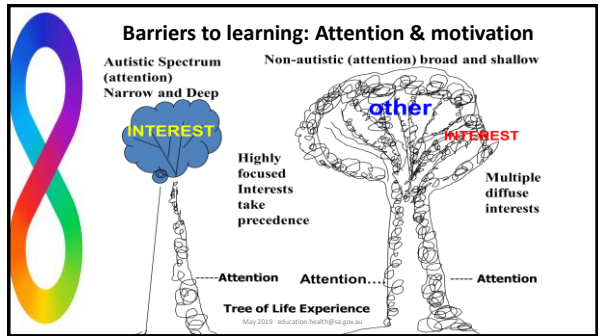
Emotional regulation difficulties are due to a range of factors including atypical interoception – when you don't know you are getting angry you can't do anything about it. Do:

- Interoception 3 times a day
- Additional go-to interoception activities
- Map regulation scale for both co-regulation and to scaffold self regulation

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Regulation zone	Why do I feel like this?	What signals am I getting from my body (interoception)?	What can I (or someone else) do to help?
Panic Zone	Nothing is working	Body is hot	Give me space
	Can't do anything	Body shaking	Go to sensory room
	Someone yells at me	Head hurting	Get quiet
Learning Zone	Loud noises	New learning	Have a break
	Something changes	Head hurts	Ask for help
	Safe and happy	Warm hands	Have a drink
Comfort Zone	Playing Lego	Shoelaces tangled	Keep working

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Gamma needs to be anchored to learn & this only happens in autism when interested.

Excess GAMMA brain autistic brain scans

Anchored GAMMA in non-autistic brain scans

From Dr Wenn Lawson

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Interest based learning

- Ensures gamma will be anchored
- Decreases anxiety
- Increases focus
- Minimizes risk of dysregulated behaviours
- Maximizes enjoyment in learning
- Increases strengths without making individuals feel bad about their 'weaknesses'

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Interest based learning

- Plan for interest based using inquiry based learning or project work or action research (learning by doing)
- Broaden and deepen learning via prompting
- In schools learnings will be presented in a range of ways; models, posters, drawings, ppts, written work, videos etc
- Assess learning in education via the Early Years Learning Framework or the National Curriculum Framework

Foundation Year Achievement Standards	Year 1 Achievement Standards	Year 2 Achievement Standards
<p>Achievement Standard</p> <p>By the end of Year 1, students describe objects and events from the perspective of their own position, and the effect of their own actions on others and objects. They describe objects in their own environment and the effect of their actions on others and objects.</p> <p>By the end of Year 2, students describe objects and events from the perspective of their own position, and the effect of their own actions on others and objects. They describe objects in their own environment and the effect of their actions on others and objects.</p>	<p>Achievement Standard</p> <p>By the end of Year 1, students describe objects and events from the perspective of their own position, and the effect of their own actions on others and objects. They describe objects in their own environment and the effect of their actions on others and objects.</p> <p>By the end of Year 2, students describe objects and events from the perspective of their own position, and the effect of their own actions on others and objects. They describe objects in their own environment and the effect of their actions on others and objects.</p>	<p>Achievement Standard</p> <p>By the end of Year 1, students describe objects and events from the perspective of their own position, and the effect of their own actions on others and objects. They describe objects in their own environment and the effect of their actions on others and objects.</p> <p>By the end of Year 2, students describe objects and events from the perspective of their own position, and the effect of their own actions on others and objects. They describe objects in their own environment and the effect of their actions on others and objects.</p>