

INCLUSION NEWS
APRIL 2022

Gowrie

INCLUSION AGENCY TASMANIA



From Inclusion Agency Tasmania

Early childhood education and care provides a crucial step in a neurodiverse child's educational and social journey. Educators who have an understanding about neurodiversity and adapting their teaching styles look at how the environment is set up to embrace differences, build a child's self-esteem and resilience, and provide experiences that are engaging and stimulating to support positive learning outcomes for all children.

There is a lot of variety in human brains, just as there is in human bodies. Neurodiversity refers to the reason for these differences, and includes Autism Spectrum Disorders, ADD, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Aphasia and differences that influence a child's learning style.

As April is Autism Awareness Month, this newsletter has articles and information to support educators to further enhance their understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder and provide inclusive environments for all children within their service.

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Acknowledgement



Inclusion Agency Tasmania acknowledges with deep respect the Traditional Custodians of the many lands over which we work. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging and recognise the continuing connection and contribution the palawa peoples make to this land, the water ways and our communities.

What is autism

This information is from the autism spectrum Australia website—<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/>

What is autism?

Autism is a condition that affects how a person thinks, feels, interacts with others, and experiences their environment. It is estimated that 1 in 70 people are on the autism spectrum.

How do we describe autism?

Autism is a condition that affects how a person thinks, feels, interacts with others, and experiences their environment. It is a lifelong disability that starts when a person is born and stays with them into old age. Every Autistic person is different to every other. This is why autism is described as a 'spectrum'.

What are the myths misunderstandings about the characteristics of autism?

There are lots of myths and misunderstandings about autism but while many Autistic people experience difficulties, with the right support [Autistic people can achieve a great quality of life](#).

There is also a misconception that the autism spectrum is linear. In fact, Autistic people can display a wide range of characteristics in their strengths, communications, social interactions, leisure and play – which can appear more like a constellation.



Strengths and interest

- Areas of strength vary but include: logical or visual thinking, persistence, eye for detail, good skills with technology, memory for facts and figures
- Very strong focus on specific interest areas
- Deep interest in typical topics such as Pokémon, sport, Disney or trains or more unusual topics e.g. air conditioners or bins

Up to 20% of Autistic people have exceptional or above average skills in one or more areas such as reading, math, art, mechanics, music, memory etc.

Simple ways to promote inclusive play in any early learning environment.

This article comes from the Community Early Learning Australia website, - <https://cela.org.au> where they speak to Lisa Fruhstruck, speech pathologist and founder of inclusive play centre The Shine Shed, to find out how early childhood educators can promote inclusive play by rethinking indoor and outdoor learning environments.

Inclusive play environments are **essential** for children with physical disabilities and sensory processing issues, but they are important for **all** children. Every child is unique and has the right to play, learn and feel a sense of belonging.

What is sensory processing?

Sensory processing is how we process information through our senses. Children with sensory issues may have difficulties in everyday environments, which causes unusual and challenging behaviour.

Atypical sensory processing is a core feature of autism, however, many children with sensory issues are not on the spectrum. These children may be diagnosed with another condition, have a developmental delay, or have no diagnosis at all.

1. Quiet corners

Quiet corners can be used by any child who needs time alone to unwind. All you need is a quiet, calm, low-light space in your classroom. Lisa suggests using a teepee or pop-up tent with some cushions and a sensory toy box with fidgets, squishy toys, and a massager.

2. Movement breaks

Children may have an urge to move their bodies, especially on rainy days when everyone is stuck indoors.

“Provide opportunities for movement breaks by having a mini trampoline to bounce on, large cushions to crash on and a pod swing hanging in the room,” says Lisa.

3. Heavy objects

“Heavy work is craved by lots of kids and can have a calming effect,” says Lisa, who recommends these experiences:

- encourage children to pack away heavy objects, including outdoor and indoor play equipment
- provide things to push, like bikes, weighted trolleys and wheelbarrows
- place crash mats next to climbing frames so children can climb and jump.

More Information

What is Autism?

Communication

- Communicate honestly and directly
- A dislike or difficulty with small talk, sarcasm or understanding jokes
- Repeating words or phrases in a way that can seem out of context
- Not using or understanding gestures like pointing
- Using sounds, signs, gestures or pictures to communicate instead of spoken words
- Taking extra time to understand spoken information

Social interactions

- Discomfort in busy complex social situations
- Might prefer to play alone or next to others more than with them
- An ability to pay attention without making eye contact
- Using or responding to body language differently
- Social interactions are often misunderstood by non-autistic people

Leisure and play

- Preference for leisure based on passions
- Non-traditional play such as repetitive lining up of toys
- Preferring to do things in the same way
- Comfortable socialising through technology such as phones, video conferencing or online chats and games

Sensory

- Being constantly aware or more aware of some sensations (sounds, smells, tastes, touch etc.)
- Feeling distressed or overwhelmed if there are too many sensations at once (loud noises, lots of touching, bright lights etc.)
- Working hard to avoid distress by covering ears, hiding in quiet places, etc. to block out sensations
- Discomfort with touch such as materials of clothes, tags or light touch from others
- Seeking sensory experiences by smelling food, flicking fingers in front of lights
- Not noticing internal sensations like hunger or pain

Thinking

- An uneven pattern of thinking abilities
- An ability to focus on one thing for a very long time;
- Difficulty switching from one thing to another
- An ability to notice specific details, patterns or changes that other people are unaware of

Experiencing and displaying emotions

- A strong, sometimes overwhelming, emotional connection to others
- Repeating movements such as flapping hands or pacing around to show excitement or to help cope with stress
- Delay in learning to understand and regulate emotions
- Difficulties understanding how non-autistic people think in some situations (Just as non-autistic people have difficulty understanding autistic people)

Rather than thinking of the autism spectrum as a line, it is more like a 'constellation'.

[More Information](#)

Simple ways to promote inclusive play in any early learning environment.

4. Deep pressure

Deep pressure is a technique used to calm anxious and highly aroused children. Some children like big hugs and rough play because it calms them down.

“Lycra tunnels and body socks are great for getting a good squeeze in,” says Lisa, “but if you don’t have access to these, a nice blanket to roll the kids up in firmly can be just as fun and beneficial.”

5. Sensory swings

Swings can be calming or alerting for some children and they will have a preferred direction of movement.

“Swings are great for sensory input, you can hang a swing in your classroom or from a tree using appropriate attachments,” says Lisa. “There are also cost-effective portable swing frames that can be purchased.”

6. Messy play

Lisa says traditional sensory activities, like painting, playdough and messy play, may be beneficial for children who are sensitive and reluctant to touch.

“Build up their tolerance by providing tools and implements they can touch and poke with till they are ready to get their hands dirty.”

In order to be inclusive, early childhood environments should:

- provide a wide range of learning experiences
- allow children to choose their own experiences
- be adaptable, so all children can fully participate
- encourage relationship building
- Be safe



[More Information](#)

Spotlight on girls with autism

This article comes from Yellow Ladybugs website— <https://.yellowladybugs.com.au> together with the Department of Education and Training Victoria, in collaboration with autistic females, parents, teachers, allied health professionals and academic researchers.

Autism is the lens through which a person on the spectrum sees and processes the world. The autistic brain develops differently from conception and this can affect the individual's language and communication, cognition, sensory processing, motor control and social behaviors. Official figures show that about 1 in 68 children have an autism diagnosis, with emerging research suggesting rates of autism could be around 1-2 percent. Statistics show that boys are almost four times more likely to receive an accurate autism diagnosis than girls – a prominent gender difference.

Accurate rates of autism in girls are harder to measure. The challenge of receiving a proper diagnosis for their daughter is an early hurdle faced by many parents. Boys are often diagnosed in early childhood, whereas girls often receive their diagnosis later, with an average age of diagnosis being nine.

This difference in diagnosis ratios has been attributed to

- Girls with autism presenting differently
- Gender bias in existing screening tools and diagnostic criteria
- Existing stereotypes about how autism presents
- Lack of clinician's training and experience in recognizing autism in girls

The hidden presentation

Although there are some shared traits in both boys and girls with autism, girls often present differently. This can result in girls being misdiagnosed, misunderstood, or missed completely. Because girls with autism are less identifiable and diagnosed later than boys they may not receive appropriate and timely support.

Girls with autism may be better at masking their difficulties in order to fit in with their peers, and, in general, they present with a more stable profile of adequate social skills. Girls tend to have more cognitive resources to mask their autism, including better language and imitation skills, and a stronger ability to blend in socially than their male counterparts. Girls with autism are often less noticeably different or disruptive than boys with autism. These dynamics help explain why girls tend to fly under the radar and why so many misconceptions currently exist around girls with autism.

Common Traits in Girls

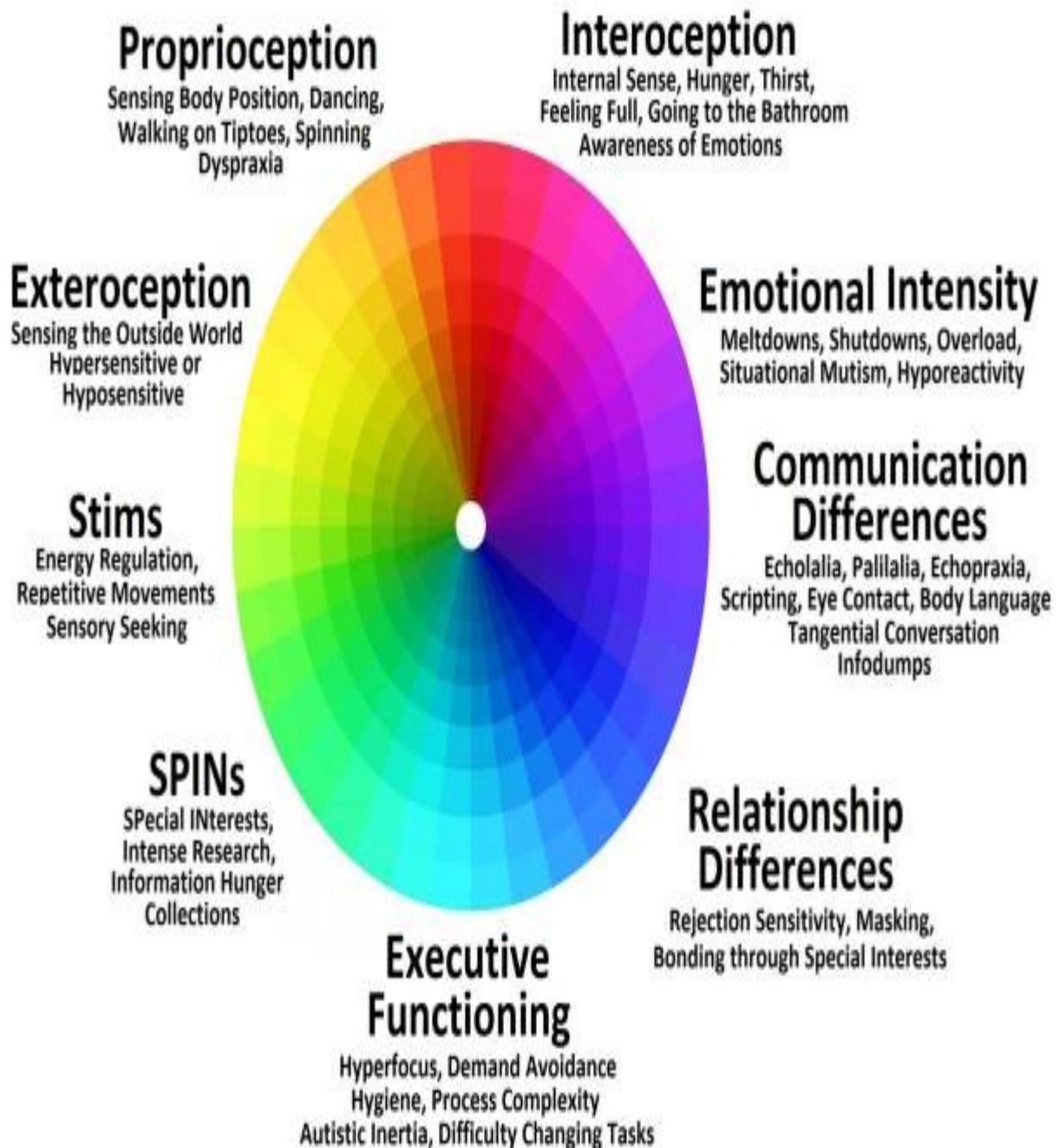
- May display extreme focus on her special interest (commonly animals, people, nature, books, art)
- May be described as being either 'extremely shy' or not aware of 'social boundaries'
- May contain her anxiety in public but then melt-down or shut-down once home
- May be overly dependent or reliant on one friend who may play a nurturing and protective role, and have trouble coping without them
- May be extremely interested in socialising, but unsure how to approach making connections
- May have sensory sensitivities (e.g., noise, food, clothing, temperature)
- May exhibit extreme reactions to minor events (e.g., changes to the classroom routine) and have difficulty controlling her emotions
- May be very controlling in social play with peers and have great difficulty with reciprocal play
- May interpret language literally. She may be more fluid in her gender identity (e.g., prefers less 'girly' clothes or be extremely 'girly')
- May be extremely empathetic, nurturing and sensitive
- May have a great attention to detail She may appear to have a good imagination. She may be a perfectionist in some areas and at the same time be disorganised with basic routine tasks
- May prefer playing with boys in physical activities and may be perceived as being a 'tomboy'. This may be because she sees girls as too socially demanding.

[More Information](#)

The Autism Spectrum

Child & Adolescent Psychological Evaluations, LLC

Matt Lowry, LPP



Community professional development

This animation gives the viewer a glimpse into sensory overload.

[Sensory Overload - YouTube](#)



A different Brilliant is a Aspect podcast made for autistic adults and parents, educators of children on the autism Spectrum.

<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-autism/podcasts>



Special Events and Cultural Celebrations Calendar

World Autism Awareness Month/ Go Blue for Autism	2nd April 2022	<p>The 15th annual World Autism Awareness Day is April 2, 2022.</p> <p>Joined by the international community, hundreds of thousands of landmarks, buildings, homes and communities around the world come together on April 2, Autism Awareness Day, to <u>Light It Up Blue</u> in recognition of people with autism and those who love and support them.</p> <p><u>Autism-friendly events</u> and educational activities take place all month, aiming to increase understanding and acceptance of people with autism, foster worldwide support and inspire a kinder, more inclusive world</p> <p>Join us for <u>World Autism Month</u> to help us spread kindness and autism awareness! https://www.autismspeaks.org/world-autism-awareness-day</p>
Baisakhi/Vaisakhi	14th April	Vaisakhi, also pronounced Baisakhi, marks the first day of the month of Vaisakha and is usually celebrated annually on 13 or 14 April as the Hindu and Sikh solar new year. It is additionally a spring harvest festival for many Indians
Passover	15-23rd April	Passover, also called Pesach, is a major Jewish holiday that celebrates the exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, which occurs on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan, the first month of Aviv, or spring.
Easter	15-19th April	Easter, also called Pascha, Zatik or Resurrection Sunday, is a Christian festival and cultural holiday commemorating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, described in the New Testament as having occurred on the third day of his burial following his crucifixion by the Romans at Calvary c. 30 AD
Nature Play Week	6-16th April	Nature Play Week. 12 days filled with events. Getting kids into nature. Creating a sense of wonder. Organised by organisations all over Victoria and beyond. Coordinated by Kids In Nature Network. It's a week. It's a movement. Be part of the movement. https://natureplayweek.org.au/
Anzac Day	25th April	Anzac Day is a national day of remembrance in Australia and New Zealand that broadly commemorates all Australians and New Zealanders "who served and died in all wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations" and "the contribution and suffering of all those who have served"



INCLUSION AGENCY TASMANIA

Please note Lady Gowrie Tasmania Inclusion Agency has offices in all three regions of the state, however, as Inclusion Professionals work predominately in early childhood and education and care services across the state, please direct any enquiries to Head Office where we can ensure a timely reply to your enquiry.

Monday to Friday 8:00am – 6:00pm (Head Office)

Operating 51 weeks of the year

After hours by arrangement

LADY GOWRIE TASMANIA HEAD OFFICE

346 Macquarie Street South Hobart

PO Box 422 South Hobart TAS 7004

T:1800 647 718

T:6230 6840

E: inclusion@gowrie-tas.com.au

REGIONAL OFFICES

Launceston

56 Frederick Street

Launceston TAS 7250

T: 6324 1360

Ulverstone

2/66B Alexandra Road

Ulverstone TAS 7315

T: 6431 3026