

Supplementary Information: Autism

The social and psychological impact of autism on the individual and other people can be profound. Strategies based on control will be detrimental in most cases. Assisting an individual with their distress through scaffolding resources impacts on the individual's experience of stress at a fundamental level. Reducing stress leads to a reduction in restrictive practice from carers. Providing knowledge around replacement behaviours is key to reducing restrictive practice in autism.



Developmental models and history

From typical development to the development of the atypical brain. In this section participants explore the main elements of autism and the impact autism can have on the person and those around them. We discuss the history of autism and vulnerability to stress.

Aim:

Participants gain an overview of autism through a lens of typical and atypical development.

Objectives:

- Participants gain an overview of the history of autism and diagnosis
- Participants will gain an understanding of typical development
- Participants will gain an understanding of atypical development
- Participants understand that we see a range of conditions within a developmental context
- Participants understand the drive to communicate and autism

Models of Stress

Coping with stress is about having the resources to cope. The number of demands that are placed on us relate to the stress we experience. We all experience stress however some individuals may lack the resources necessary to deal with the stress leading to an experience of immense stress when another individual may have more resources and therefore not experience stress to the same degree given similar environmental experiences.

Aim:

Participants will understand the transactional model of stress.

Objectives:

- Participants will understand the meaning of psychological stress
- Participants will understand how wellbeing and stress interact
- Participants will understand stress in relation to autism
- Participants will understand how aberrant behaviours link to an attempt to cope
- Participants will understand the biological effects of stress and cortisol
- Participants will understand why people with autism may be more vulnerable to stress
- Participants will understand how to assist an individual with their distress through stress reduction strategies

Positive Psychology

For the last few decades the positive psychology movement has grown from strength to strength. Positive psychology is not about finding out what is wrong with you, it is about finding where an individual is and creating a better experience for that person through simple exercises that measurably improve wellbeing. Focussed on improved wellbeing, this area of psychology applies to everyone.

Aim:

Participants gain an understanding of Positive Psychology

Objectives:

- Participants understand the PERMA model of wellbeing
- Participants understand how to implement "what went well" exercise for themselves and others
- Participants gain an overview of wellbeing exercises

Autism and Coping with Stress

A typical individual encounters and learns to deal with stress over an extended learning history. This individual has experienced life changes at various points and has learnt coping strategies from these elements. People with additional needs may have altered experiences leading to a marked difference in coping with stress. Within this section we discuss coping, control and mirror neurons.

Aim:

For participants to understand the transactional model of stress and strategies for stress reduction.

Objectives:

- Participant will understand different systems of managing stress
- Participant will understand the effect of our emotions on those around us
- Participant will understand that an individual's perception alters their ability to deal with stress
- Participant will understand how to assist themselves and others with stress

Diagnostics and Associations

With the May 2013 publication of the DSM-5 diagnostic manual, all autism disorders were merged into one umbrella diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. In the UK ICD-10 is mainly used for diagnosis which still has the separate diagnoses.

Previously, they were recognized as distinct subtypes, including:

- Autistic disorder
- Childhood disintegrative disorder
- Pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS)
- Asperger syndrome

ASD can be associated with literally anything but notably:

- increased prevalence of certain genetic conditions such as:
 - Fragile X syndrome
 - Tuberous sclerosis
 - epilepsy

- depression
- ADHD
- schizophrenia
- intellectual disability
- difficulties in motor coordination and attention
- physical health issues such as
 - sleep issues
 - gastrointestinal disturbances

Legislation

Autism Act 2009

This Act was the first disability specific Act of Parliament in England. The Act did two key things:

Put a duty on the Government to produce and regularly review an autism strategy to meet the needs of autistic adults in England.

Put a duty on the Government to produce statutory guidance for local authorities to implement the strategy locally.

The strategy focuses on :-

- Ensuring more people are aware of and understand autism.
- Developing a clear and concise pathway for the diagnosis of autism.
- Making it easier for individuals with autism to choose how they live their lives, and that they get the support to do this.
- Helping individuals with autism to get employment.
- Enabling local service providers to develop plans and services relevant to adults with autism in their area.

The Autism Act can be read in full on this web address - [d8.is/bl11](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101241/autism_act_2009.pdf)

The National Autistic Society has information on its website - [d8.is/bl12](https://www.autism.org.uk/about-us/our-voice/autism-act-2009)

The Scottish Government's Strategy for Autism website can be found here - [d8.is/bl19](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/healthandcare/autism)

Unfortunately, (at the time of printing) the Welsh Assembly Members stopped the Autism Bill becoming law in Wales (17 January 2019).

Guidance and Further Reading

National Autistic Society - <https://www.autism.org.uk/>

Autism [QS41] - <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs51>

Autistic Spectrum Disorder in the under 19's: Recognition, Referral and Diagnosis [CG128] NICE

This guideline covers recognising and diagnosing autism spectrum disorder in children and young people from birth up to 19 years. It also covers referral. It aims to improve the experience of children, young people and those who care for them. - <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg128>

Autism Spectrum Disorder in Adults: Diagnosis and Management [CG142] NICE

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg142>