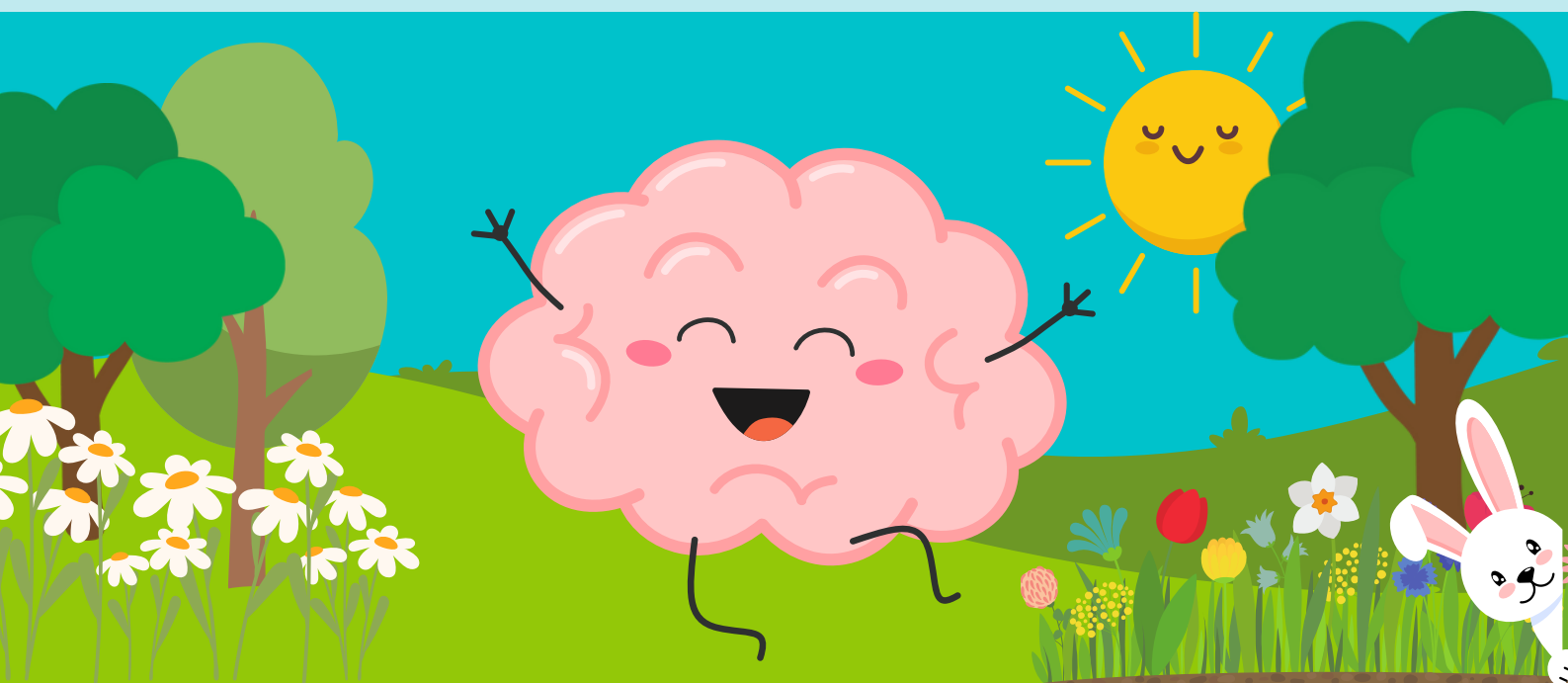


The More You Know Autism Services

Understanding Autism Spectrum Condition



A Guide For Young People



**AUTISM
SERVICES**

Empower - Educate - Embrace

The More You Know Autism Services ©

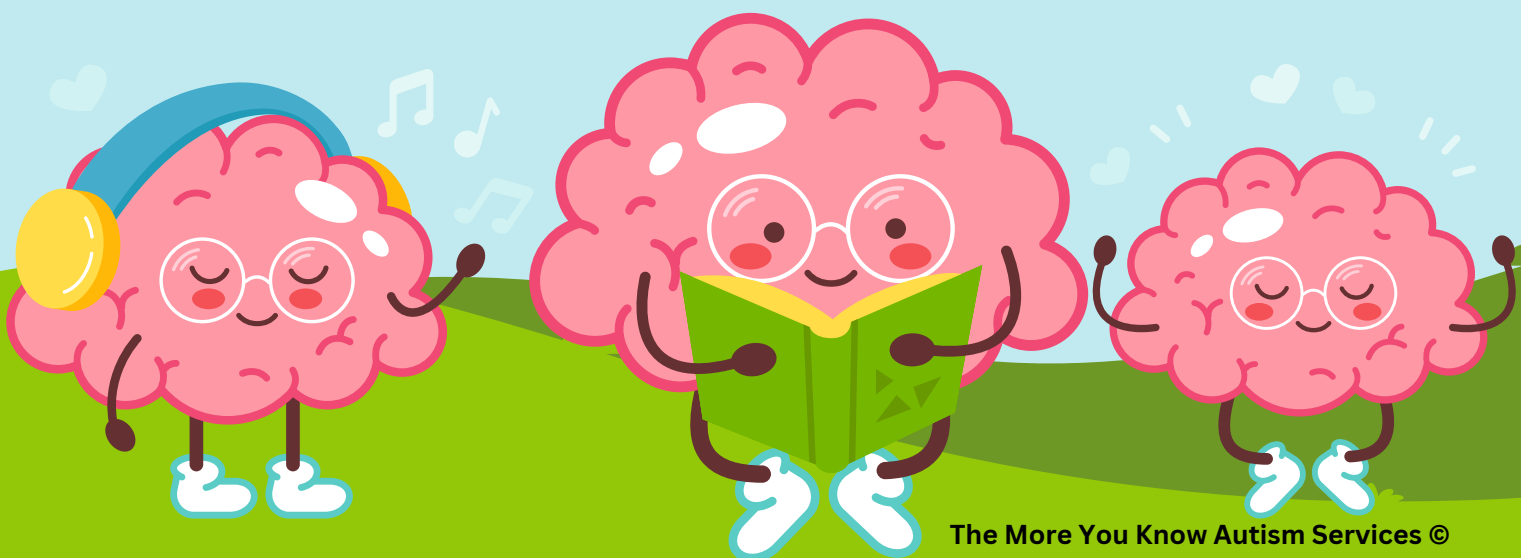
Autism Spectrum Condition (otherwise known as autism) is what is known as a neurodevelopmental condition. Put simply, this is a fancy way of saying, a difference in the way your brain developed while you were growing in the womb.



As humans we all have similarities,
and differences, but it is the
differences that make us unique and
special.

If we were all the same, things would
get rather boring very quickly. We'd
all look the same, think the same, and
like the same things.

What things make you unique?



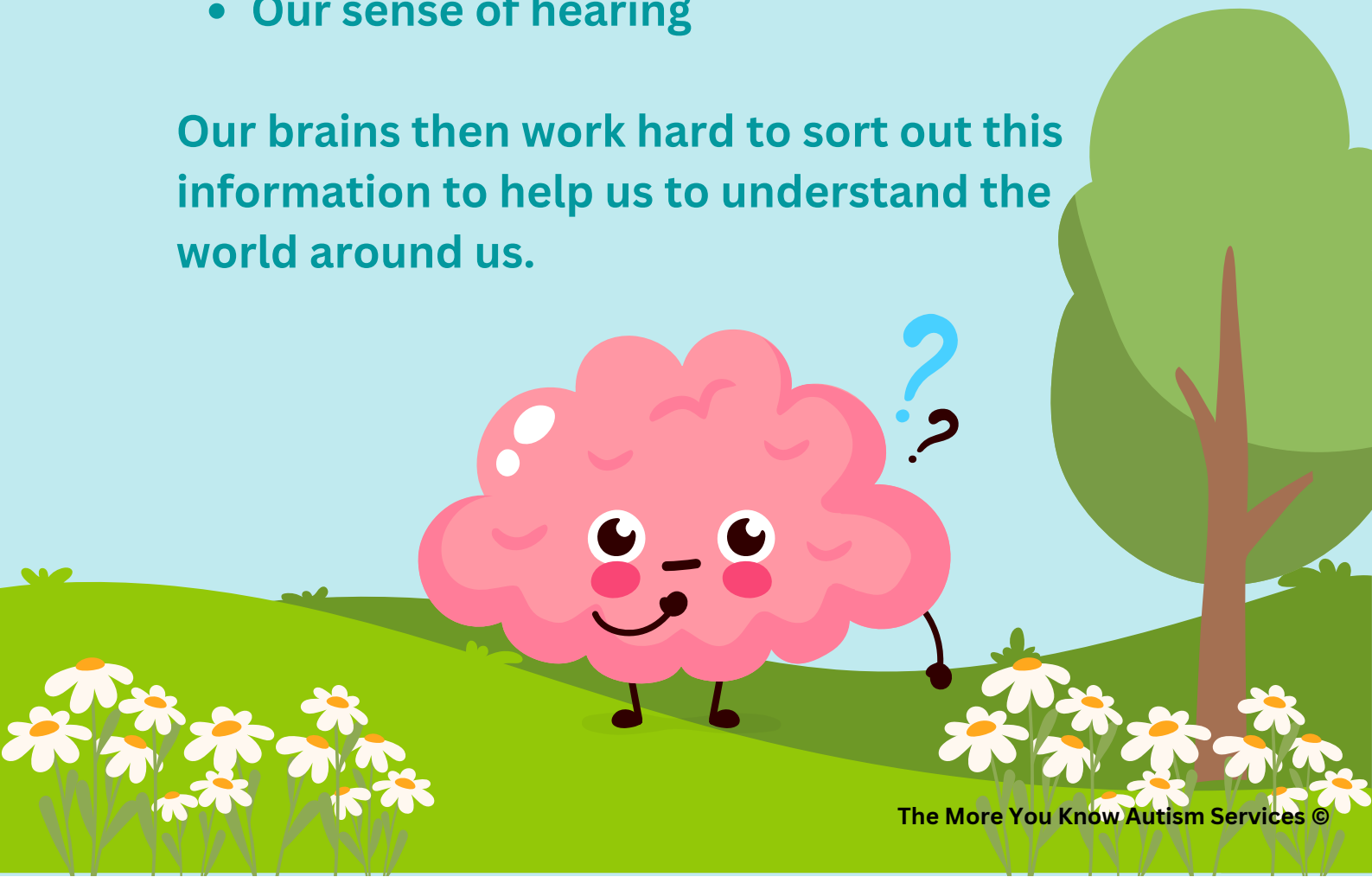
What is Autism?

The brain of a person with autism is wired slightly differently to someone who does not have autism. Autism relates to the way our brain takes in, stores and uses information.

We all take in information from the world around us through our senses;

- Our sense of touch
- Our sense of taste
- Our sense of smell
- Our sense of sight
- Our sense of hearing

Our brains then work hard to sort out this information to help us to understand the world around us.



Sensory overload

Sometimes a person with autism's brain will take in too much information from their environment, which might leave them feeling overwhelmed, tired or frustrated, like their brain is going to pop like a balloon.

We call this sensory overload.

Do you ever feel this way?

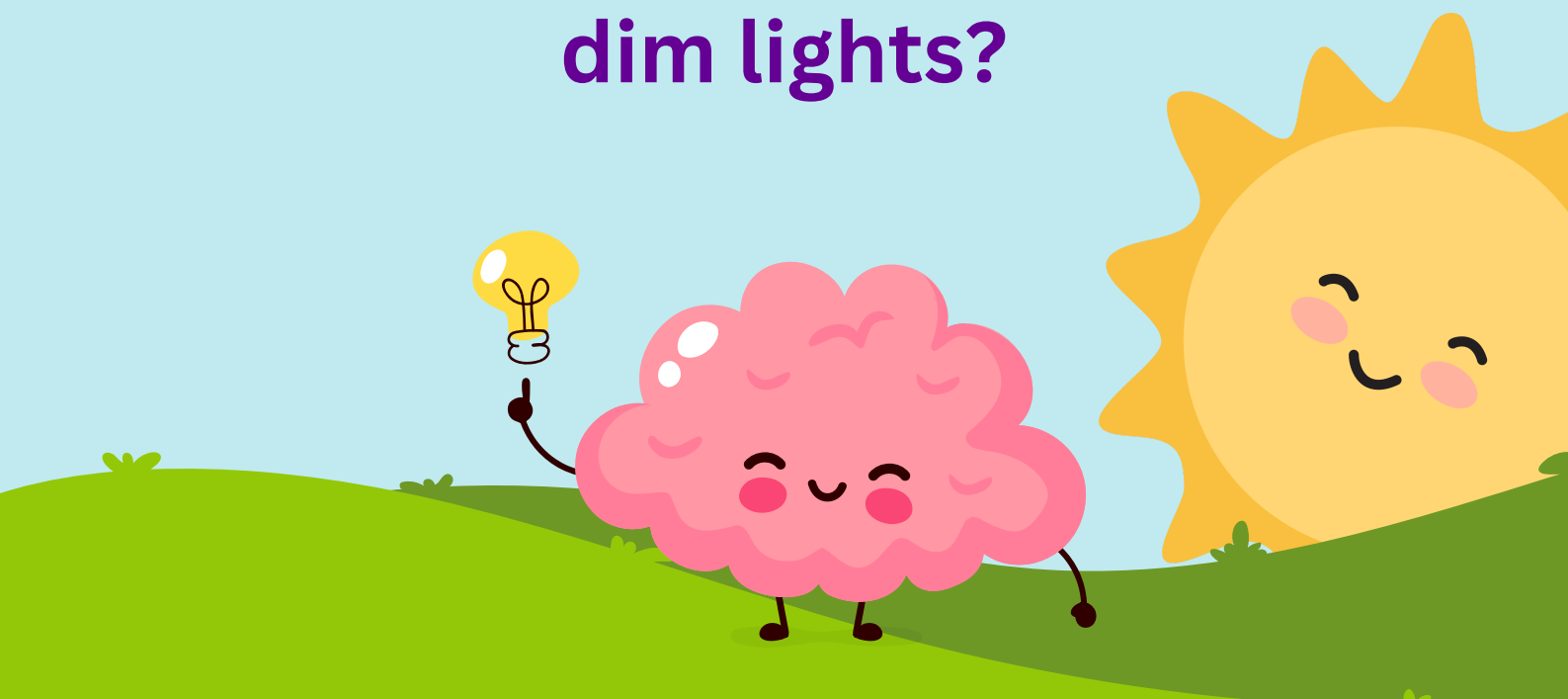


Lights

Some people with autism find that lights can bother them. They may not like bright lights or flashing lights.

Other people may find that light can help them to relax or feel calm, such as lava lamps, twinkly fairy lights or LED lights.

**How do lights make you feel?
Do you like bright lights or
dim lights?**



Sound

Some people with autism can find some sounds to be very distressing, such as loud, sudden or high pitched sounds.

Some people with autism find that they can't block out background noises, such as clocks ticking or people talking in a busy room.

Some people with autism like certain sounds and find them to be relaxing.

How does sound make you feel? Are there any noises that you don't like? Do any sounds help you feel calm?



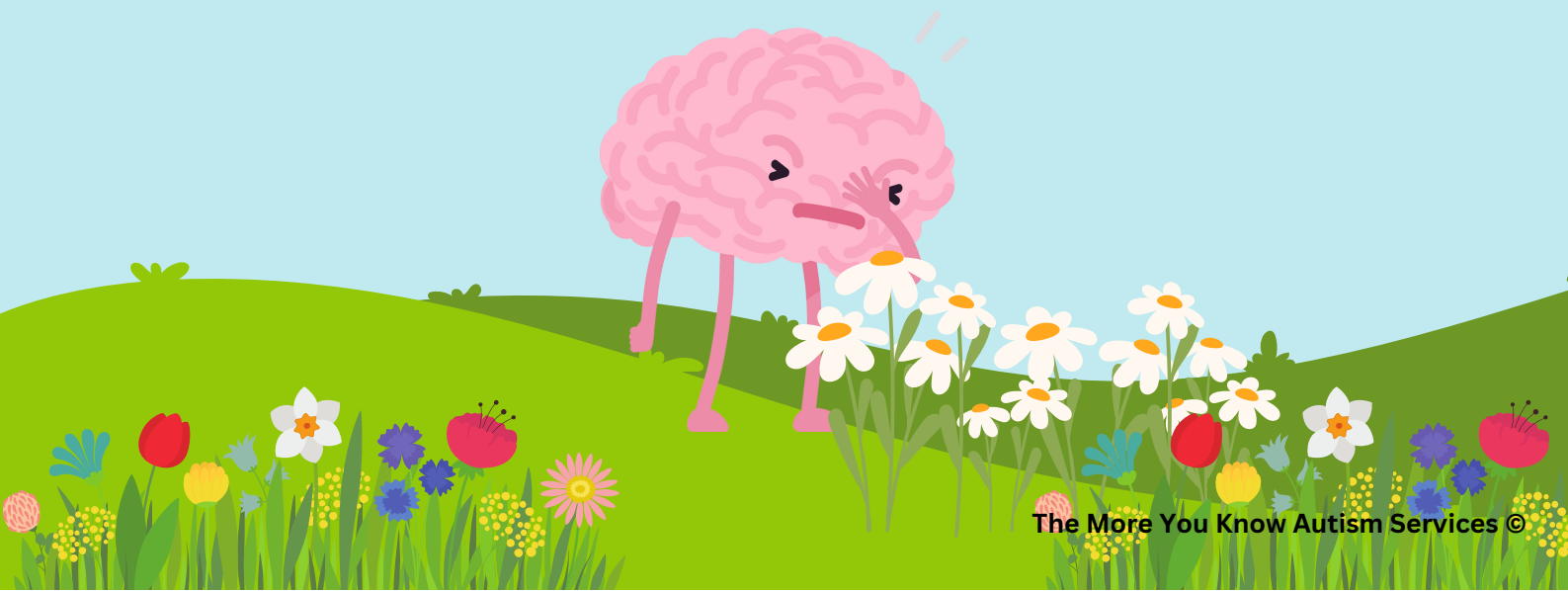
Smell

Some people with autism find that they are more sensitive to smells than other people. There may be some smells that they really do not like or that makes them feel sick.

There may be other smells that they really do like or that help them to feel calm

Are there any smells that you do not like? How do they make you feel?

Are there any smells that make you feel calm or relaxed?

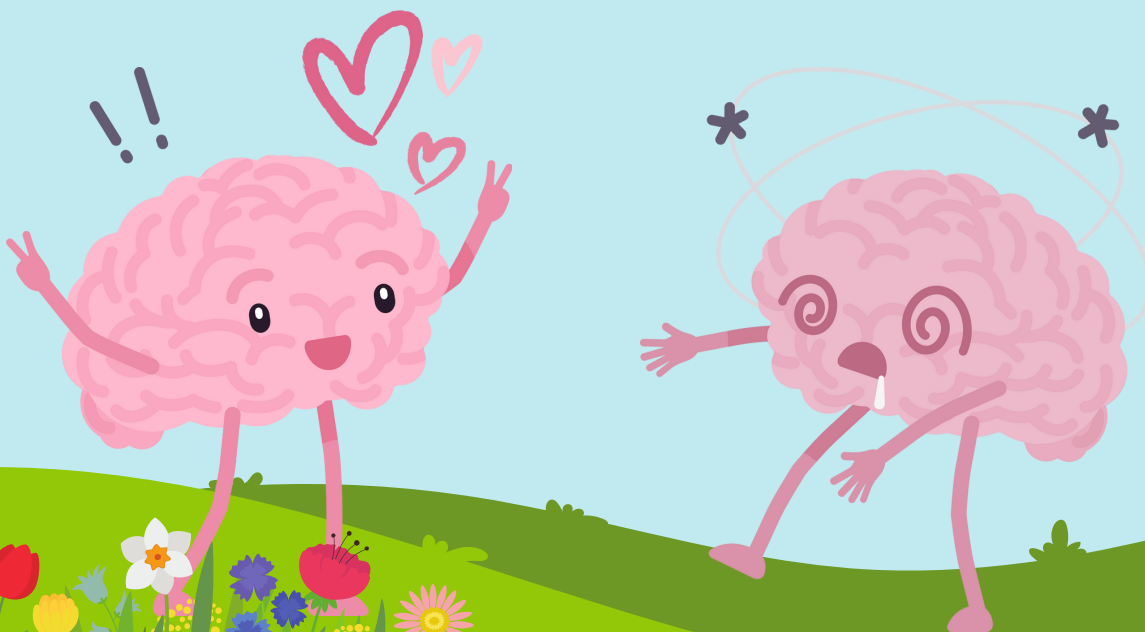


Touch from others

Some people with autism like hugs and cuddles from other people and can find them to be comforting and calming. Other people with autism do not feel comfortable being touched or hugged by others, sometimes it can even feel painful for them.

Other people only feel comfortable if they are the ones who initiate the hug or if it is someone they know very very well.

How do you feel about being touched?



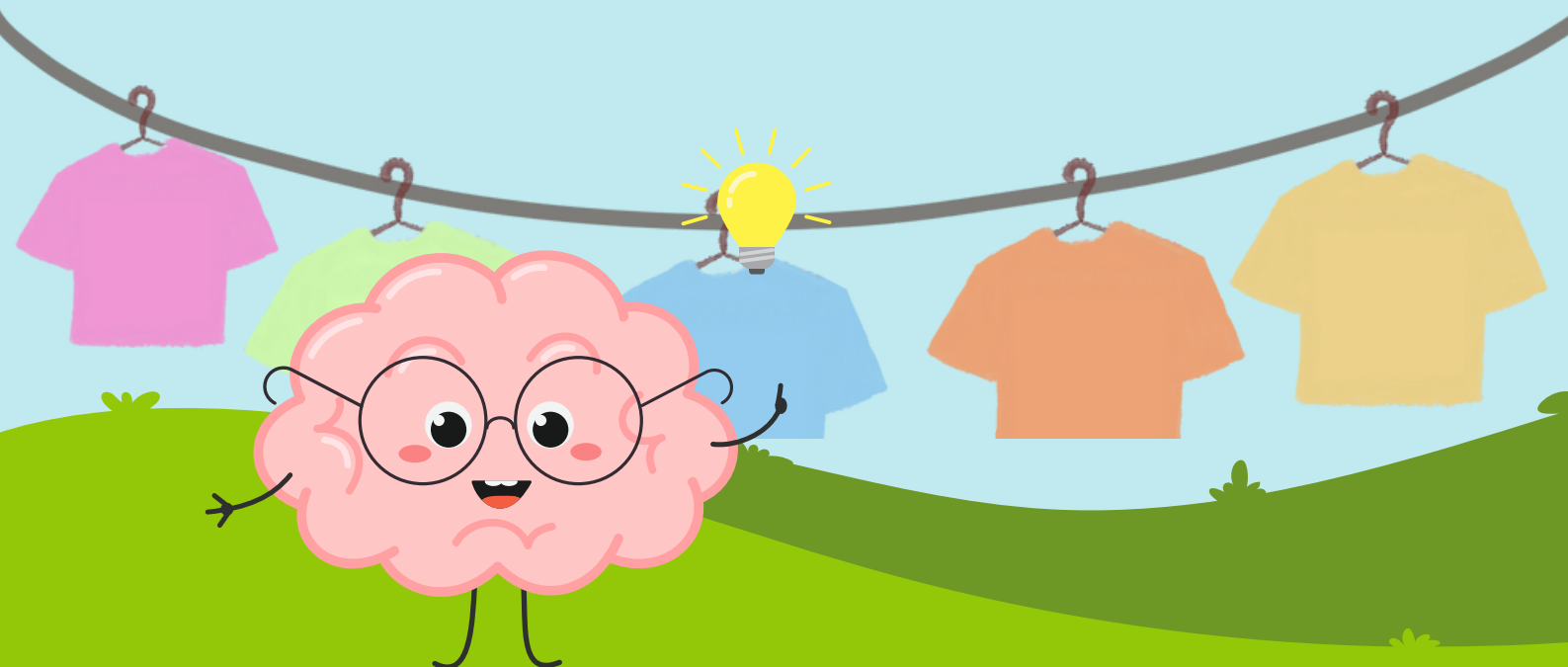
Touch (materials)

Some people with autism do not like the feel of certain materials. This might include fabrics, such as clothes, dirt, the sensation of shoes or even the feeling of brushing their teeth.

There may be some materials that you really like touching, that help you to feel calm and relaxed.

Are there any fabrics or materials that you do not like touching?

Are there any fabrics or materials that help you to feel calm or relaxed?

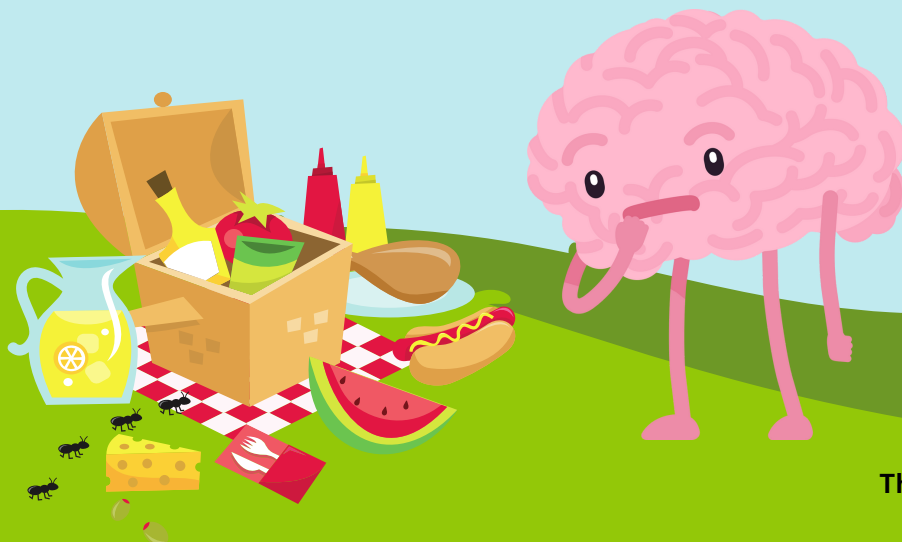


Taste

Some people with autism struggle with the taste and textures of food. There are also some people who will prefer to eat the same foods over and over again, and they may call these their “safe” foods (food they know they like and will always taste the same).

Some people with autism like very spicy foods, while others only like to eat bland or plain foods.

**How does food make you feel?
What are your favourite foods?**



Every person with autism will have different sensory needs, and these needs can change over time and that's okay. You might find that things that bother you one week, may not bother you as much the next week depending on how tired or worried you are.

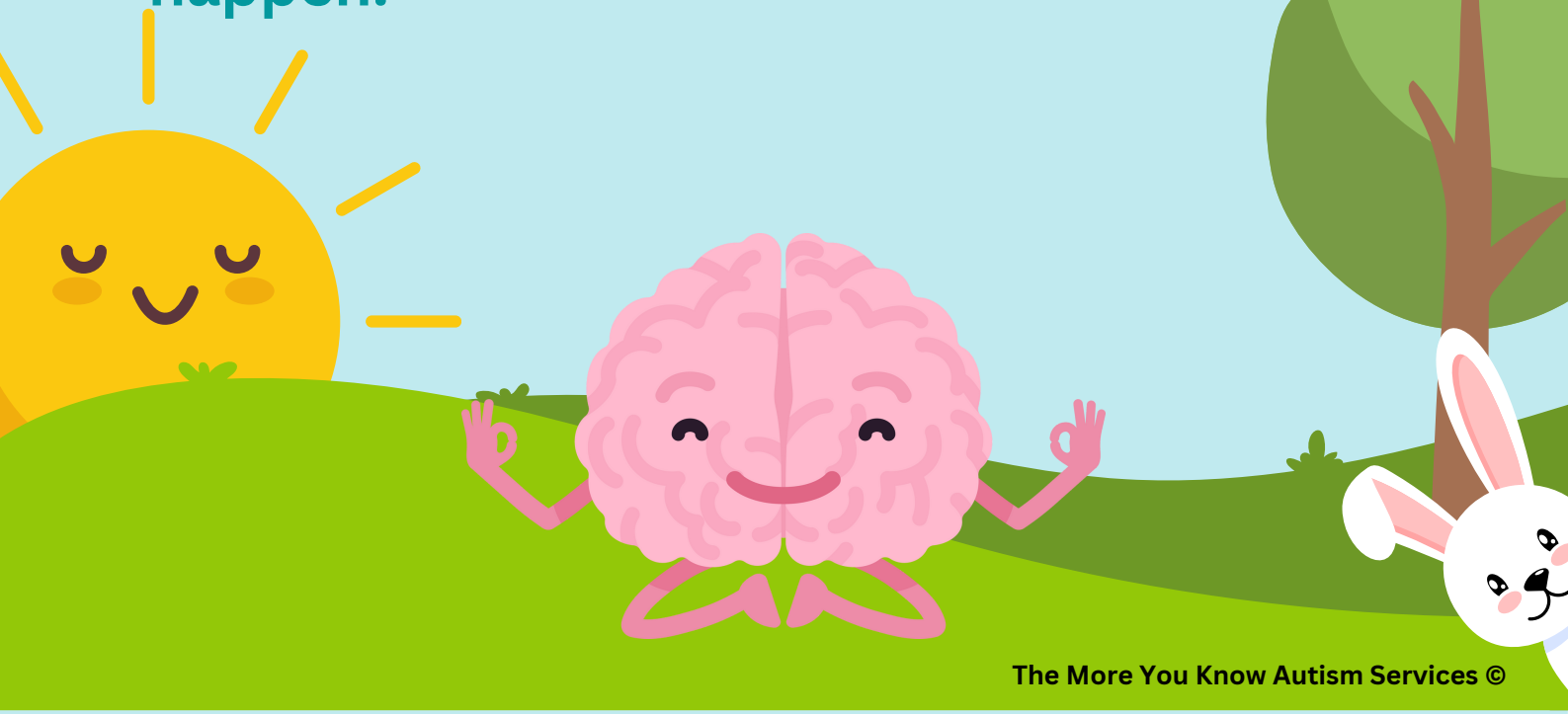
Understanding our sensory needs can be really helpful to help us to notice what makes us feel bad, and what things make us feel better.



Calming your brain

Sometimes the world can feel like a scary and unpredictable place, especially when you have autism. This is because your brain likes things to be logical and predictable.

You might notice that you like doing the same things over and over again, like to have routines and become upset if these change or don't go to plan. You might also find that your brain likes to know what is happening, when it is happening and what you can expect when it does happen.



Special interests

Many people with autism have special interests. This is something that you know lots about (usually more than most people) or maybe it's something that you spend a lot of your time doing. These may stay the same for your whole life, or change over time.

Some people find ways to turn their special interests into jobs when they are older.

Do you have any special interests or talents? How do you feel when you are doing them?



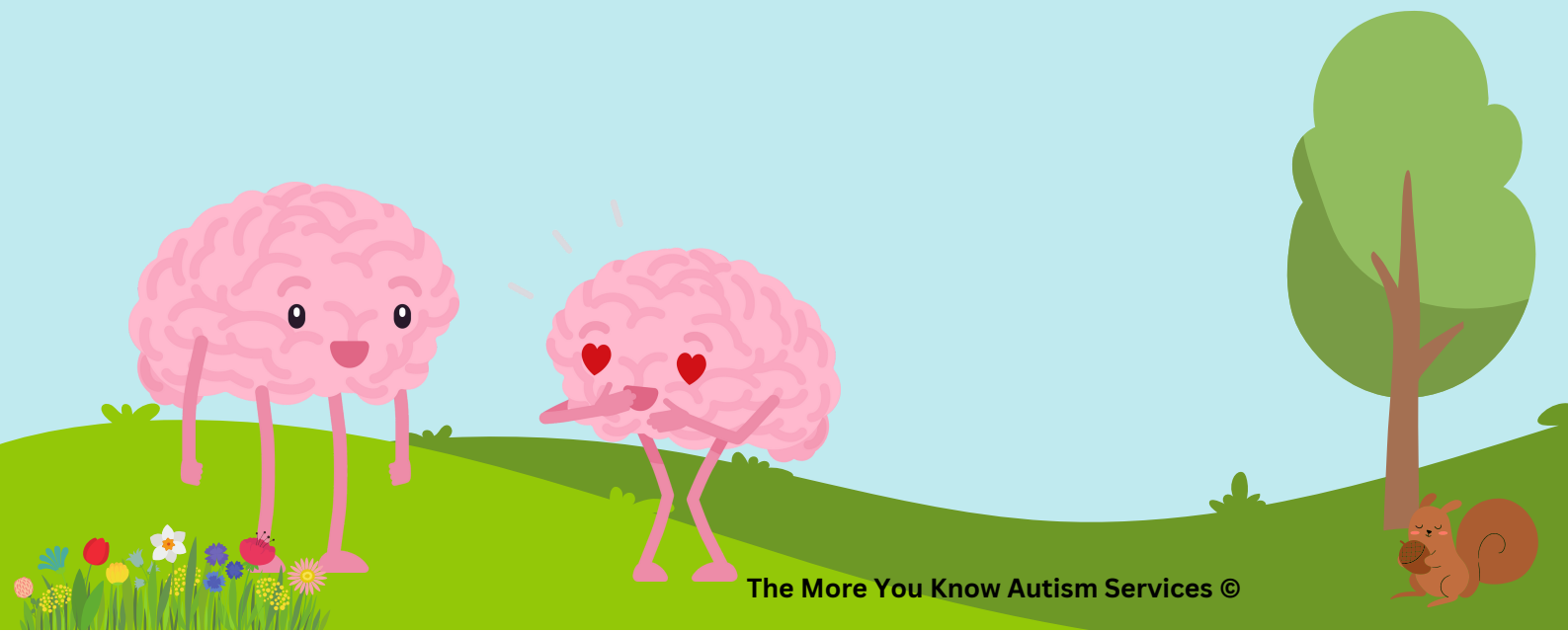
Friendships

Friendships can sometimes be tricky for people with autism. If you ever feel this way, it is important to remember that you are wonderful and have many qualities which would make you a great friend!

It might sometimes feel like other people just “get it” and it can be really frustrating if you feel like you don’t understand what to do or what the rules of being a good friend are. This can be even harder when you like things to be done a certain way and other people don’t play the way you want them to. If you ever feel like this, please know you are not alone and once you find the people who see you for the wonderful human being that you are, it can be a lot easier.

What do you think makes someone a good friend?

What qualities do you have that make you a good friend?



Communication

As humans, we communicate in lots of different ways. We communicate through our words, our actions, our body language, our tone of voice, in what we say and what we don't say. Some people communicate through sign language, some people communicate through writing. We can also communicate through art and dance (how wonderful is that?!)

What's your favourite way to communicate?



Sometimes, because your brain is taking too much information from your surroundings, it might make it difficult to communicate with other people in the moment. Your brain has to work out what someone is saying, what they mean, and come up with a response, as well as sorting out all the other information that it is taking in through your other senses.

This does not mean that you are “silly” or “stupid,” just that your brain is working really hard and might need a little bit more time to understand what someone is saying and how to respond.

You might even find communicating with others leaves you feeling very tired.



Sometimes communicating with others can be even more difficult when people say one thing but mean another. You may find some jokes or sarcasm difficult to understand. This doesn't mean people with autism aren't funny, it is because of the way your brain is wired that you will use and understand language literally.

This can be very confusing and cause misunderstandings, especially when you are talking to someone you do not know very well.



Big Feelings

Sometimes you might have big feelings, and not know why or how to explain to other people what is wrong. It's okay to have big feelings, and we can learn with help and time to manage them.

Sometimes things like noises, being touched, being over tired, or struggling to express ourselves so other people understand can cause us to have big feelings. When someone has autism, we call big feeling caused by these things “melt downs.”

Talking to an adult about the things that cause you have big feelings can really help so you can come up with a plan together to manage them.

Are there any things that cause you to have big feelings?



Some people with autism call it their super power! This is because the way their brain works means although some things can be tricky, there are other things they are exceptionally brilliant at, that without their brain being wired in an autistic way, they wouldn't be able to do.

Do you think autism is a superpower?



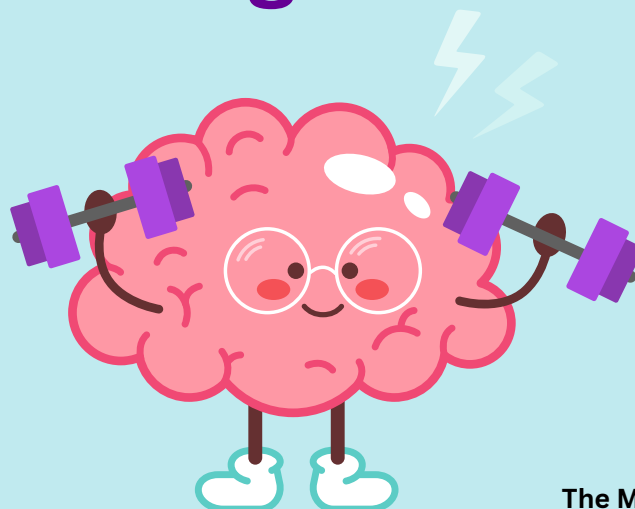
Strengths

There can also be a lot of strengths from having an autistic brain.

- You might find that you are excellent at remembering facts
- That you are very creative
- That you are brilliant at solving problems
- That you like to be challenged
- That you know lots of information about a specialist subject
- That you can think outside of the box

To name just a few!

What do you think your strengths are?



Please remember...

Although there are similarities in the way that people with autism brains work, we are all unique, and YOU are wonderful. There will be many brilliant things that make you, you!

The last page in this guide to understanding autism is just for you. Why not write down five things that make you special, so you can always remember just how splendid your brain is.



My name is

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

AND I HAVE A
SPLENDID BRAIN

