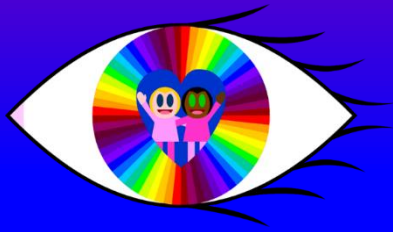


A Different Perspective CIC August 2024 Issue 14



In This Issue:

PhD Conferences.

Human Needs.

Listening to Children.

Inside Out Blog by Lauren Smith.

Autistic Identity.

Autistic Burnout.

Social Groups.

Inclusive Organisations.

Dr Phil Hammond's Daily Clangers:

Connect.
Learn/Love/Laugh.
Be active.
Notice.
Give back.
Eat well.
Relax & Sleep.

Please get in touch:
[differentperspectives98
@gmail.com](mailto:differentperspectives98@gmail.com)

Hi Everyone,

Welcome to the latest edition of our company newsletter.

We hope you are all enjoying the summer break and are looking forward to the next chapter in September.

Aside from immersing myself in nature's beauty, I have been continuing my PhD focusing on autism and education. I am a firm believer in making the most of all opportunities! This quote resonates with me:

"Time is the only currency you spend without ever knowing your balance. Use it wisely."



Conference Attendance:

As part of my PhD, I have recently attended conferences in Manchester and Northampton. These conferences focused on alternative provision and outdoor learning for young people. Alternative provision is education arranged for pupils who are unable to attend mainstream or special school and who are not educated at home, whether for behavioural, health, or other reasons.

Alternative Provision:

Alternative provision could be seen as an opportunity rather than punishment; 'support, not sanction.' Some reflective questions include: What resources do we have to effect change? Are we meeting children and young people where they are at? Are we really working together to support outcomes? Who are we really listening to?

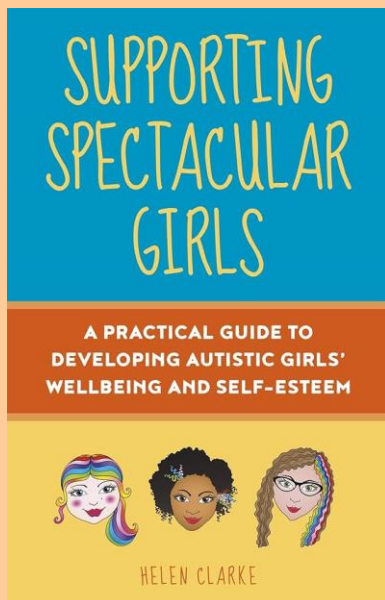
Outdoor Learning:

Outdoor learning can be a golden thread to help motivate learners, promote engagement and raise attainment. It is important to consider the best learning environment for each child; getting a balance of indoor and outdoor learning is vital. Young autistic people need opportunities to reset and regulate throughout the day. *"When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower"* - Alexander Den Heijer.



A Different Perspective Community Interest Company
A Limited Company. Reg No: 12369485 © 2024
Registered in England & Wales.

Book Recommendation:



Supporting Spectacular Girls. A Practical Guide to Developing Autistic Girls' Wellbeing and Self-Esteem by Helen Clarke.

"If one truly loves nature, one finds beauty everywhere" – England (1874).

Reflection:

What do you want to stop?

What do you want to start?

What do you want to do less of?

What do you want to do more of?

The Autism Arena: Human Needs.

You may have heard of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow believes that physiological and safety needs are the foundation of all other development.

Wilding Theory of Psychological Regulation:

The Wilding Theory presents needs as a wheel, representing how we all experience these needs at differing degrees, at all times and the intensity of need varies from person to person. Our needs drive our behaviour.



Listening to Children:

According to Clark (2017), the mosaic approach, a combination of different research methods to gather views and experiences from children, reframes children as:

- Being the 'experts in their own lives'
- Being skilful communicators
 - Being rights-holders
 - Being meaning makers.

Although their 'voice' can be perceived as threatening, particularly if it highlights a message that adults do not want to hear (Wood, 2019), Morgan and Costello (2023, p17) ask that this is reframed; they question whether 'square pegs' are in fact "*canaries in the mine, alerting us to the mounting problems in our education system.*"

Inside Out – The Movie.

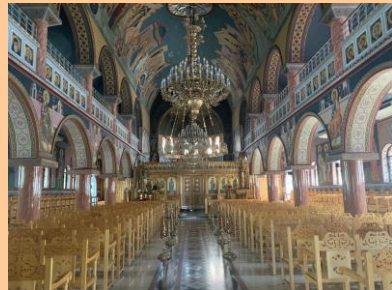
I have recently watched Inside Out 2. I believe that this film may be useful for autistic people to understand their emotions and the process of developing an identity.

This film is set within the context of a girl growing up and beginning secondary school. The onset of puberty can bring a range of new challenges and emotions, including anxiety, boredom, embarrassment, envy and sarcasm, which is portrayed throughout the film. In my experience, challenges in puberty included understanding changing bodies, experiencing new emotions that can be hard to identify, changing aspects of myself to try to fit in and wanting to belong to a friendship group, being desperate for connection, not knowing what to say in conversation, worrying about being judged and becoming overwhelmed by new pressures and expectations. Puberty can be like a rollercoaster ride with many highs and lows.

The film introduces the idea of core memories and beliefs. To access these, we need to enter the 'stream of consciousness.' Memories help shape our beliefs, and our beliefs help to create our sense of self. Building a sense of self can take time and can be a learning journey.

Our feelings and thoughts are separate to who we are; we can give our emotions a name. All our emotions have a purpose; they are all valid. Remember to make space for all your emotions, even the hard ones; feelings that feel uncomfortable will pass. Suppressed emotions can often cause more harm than good. The body expresses what the mind suppresses (Hoffman Institute). Emotions can co-exist; we can be both sad and happy or anxious and excited at the same time. Fear helps us to plan for things that can be seen. Anxiety, the thief of joy, is an emotion that many autistic people experience daily; this can be debilitating, exhausting and affect all areas of life. Although anxiety helps us to plan and tries to protect us from real or perceived threats, we should not allow anxiety to have all the power. Instead, it is important to think about what we can control. Although people may experience less joy as they get older, remember to look out for glimmers of hope every day.

Focusing on the present moment is vital. As Mo Gawdat (2017) shares *"you tell your brain what to do, not the other way around. Just as you are now instructing your brain to focus on the words on this page, you can always tell it what to focus on. You just need to take charge and act like the boss."* When something happens, respond with 'is that so?'; this gives an acceptance of the moment and an understanding that everything can change (Suryacitta, 2019). Imagine waiting for a bus – when a bus comes along, we can notice it, let it pass or decide if it is useful and consciously get on it. The bus is just like our thoughts. We can choose to be mindful and take only what serves us.



Blog and photos by Lauren Smith.

Please follow me at 'A Different Perspective CIC' on Facebook and X/email me at: differentperspectives98@gmail.com

The Parent Network:

Our Facebook page – The Parent Network - provides autism information, resources, and regular updates on parent meetups in North Somerset. We offer a safe space for parents to meet likeminded people, share experiences and gain support.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/parentnetwork21>

A Different Perspective Community Interest Company
A Limited Company. Reg No: 12369485 © 2024
Registered in England & Wales.

Autistic Identity:

The following table of terms and definitions can be found in an article by Davies et al. (2024) – Autistic identity: A systematic review of quantitative research.

Term:	What it Means:
Autism centrality.	The importance one places on their autistic identity.
Autism solidarity.	How positively one feels about their autistic identity.
Individual self-stereotyping.	How similar one feels to other autistic people.
In-group homogeneity.	The extent to which one thinks that autistic people are like one another.
Autism acceptance.	The extent to which one personally accepts themselves as an autistic person.
Spectrum abilities.	The extent to which autism is perceived as being associated with positive abilities.
Autistic community connectedness.	How connected to the autistic community one feels.
Autism/Autistic pride.	The perceived importance of, or pride in, being autistic.
Autistic acculturation.	The extent to which one identifies with autistic culture.
Changeability.	The extent to which one feels autism is something that can be changed if desired.
Collective strategy use.	The extent to which one positively re-defines autistic people compared with non-autistic people.
Enrichment.	The perception that being autistic enriches one's sense of self and life.
Identification with the autistic community.	The extent to which one identifies with autism as a social group.
Perceived benefits.	The extent to which one perceives there to be benefits associated with being autistic.
Positive difference.	The extent to which autism is perceived as a positive difference as opposed to a challenging disability.
Internalised stigma.	The extent to which one rejects their status as an autistic person.
Context-dependent.	The extent to which one perceives their autism to be context-specific (e.g. salient in some contexts and not others).
Engulfment.	The extent to which one feels being autistic dominates or invades all domains of life.
Exclusion and/or dissatisfaction.	Rejection and/or dissatisfaction with being autistic.
Helplessness.	The extent to which one feels their autism results in a lack of control and helplessness.
Individualistic strategy use.	The extent to which one dissociates from other autistic people.



Sending positive
vibes. Remember
to rest and
create time for
what you enjoy!

I recently attended a webinar with Spectrum Gaming focusing on autistic burnout. This is an important topic to discuss considering the impact it has on the autistic community.

What is Autistic Burnout?

Autistic burnout is a state of complete mental, physical and emotional exhaustion due to chronic life stress. Burnout occurs when stressors exceed people's ability to cope; people use their internal resources until there is nothing left. Just getting through the day depletes all energy and leads to profound exhaustion, both mentally and physically. Causes of burnout are different for everyone however they may include sensory overwhelm, social pressures, trying to understand their identity, masking, academic demands, developmental trauma, puberty and big life changes. Burnout can be short term or long term, lasting for months or years. To put it succinctly, burnout is when *"you crash, and you keep on crashing"* (The Autistic Advocate).

How Does it Affect People?

Burnout affects everyone differently. Generally, people can become physically exhausted and can regress. Some people may withdraw gradually and may end up being unable to attend school. Autistic people may have greater sensory sensitivities during a burnout; they may only be able to wear specific clothes and food choices may become more restricted. Autistic people may experience pains and sleep difficulties. People may have extra difficulties with self-care, may lose some skills and may lose speech and may have additional challenges with executive functioning. Also, autistic people may experience more meltdowns with a nervous system that feels unsafe and an intense internal monologue. Burnout can be distressing and isolating. It can contribute to a lost sense of self.

Burnout Recovery:

People are often told to push through as it is important not to reinforce anxiety, for example, the aim is to get young people back into school as soon as possible. However, rest is vital. The first step of burnout recovery is recognition and acceptance. It is important to seek appropriate support and return to daily routines gradually. Reducing environmental barriers and social demands can help. It is vital to foster positive, trusting relationships, either internally or externally. Rest and recuperation are imperative; please remember, there are different types of rest including physical, mental, emotional, sensory, creative, social and spiritual rest. Time, self-compassion and patience is needed. Journaling thoughts, feelings and experiences can be useful and can help people reflect and learn from what has happened. Spending time with interests and hobbies and only focusing on one small thing each day may aid the recovery process. Burnout recovery is not linear; breaking things into tiny steps is important. *"Just because you can't see someone's support needs, it doesn't mean they don't exist"* (Ellie Middleton).

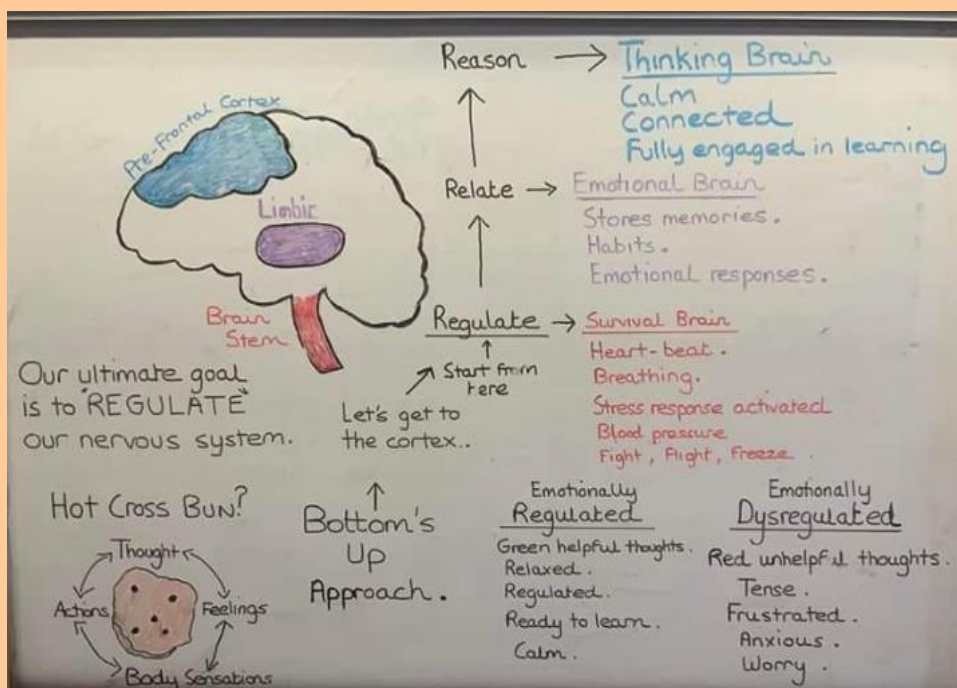


Image created
by Gerald
Diamond –
Nurture Lead
and
Mindfulness
Teacher.

Recently, we have enjoyed a trip to Airhop, Ninja Warriors, the bird of prey centre and a local walk. We are always looking to welcome autistic children and young people who may benefit from engaging and structured activities in a safe environment, to help build confidence and friendships.

We are immensely proud of Adam who recently won the National Autism and Learning Disability Award and was invited to a gala dinner in Birmingham in June. The award celebrates his passion for supporting autistic people in healthcare settings. As part of his role as the lived experience trainer for the Oliver McGowan mandatory training, Adam also took part in two NHS films sharing his experience of delivering the training from an autistic perspective. One of these films can be found on YouTube. Aside from professional achievements, Adam has enjoyed continuing running; he successfully completed the Exeter half marathon in May and recently the Frome half marathon. He is now preparing for the Burnham-on-Sea and Cardiff half marathons. Well done! 😊



What characteristics should an inclusive organisation have? – By Lauren Smith.

- Listen to neurodiverse individuals and those who are close to them. Work with them to create a personal profile of needs, preferences, strengths and challenges. Use whichever communication methods suit the person best.
- Use respectful, neuro-affirming language towards everyone, including those with gender and cultural differences.
- Show empathy, be positive, creative and flexible – be willing to adapt your practices to meet differing needs.
- Provide a welcoming, accessible environment with supportive staff.
- Enable individuals to choose the specific part of the job role they want to do; this can play to people's strengths.
- Be willing to provide individual workstations or allow people to work in a quieter part of the building if needed.
- Offer opportunities for remote working.
- Provide a safe space for regular check-ins about how people are feeling.

Please check out our website for autism information, resources, services and more!

www.adifferentperspective.info

Please get in touch with our team if you would like more information about our work or would like to get involved with our projects. We would love to hear from you!