

# Autism



**Wistaston Academy**  
Primary and Nursery School  
Together We Learn • Together We Achieve

## Things a child with autism wishes you knew:

Help me with my social interactions. Encourage other children to invite me to join them. I do best with structured play activities.

Remember to distinguish between won't (I choose not to) and can't (I am not able to). It isn't that I don't listen to instructions, it's that I can't understand you. Don't shout across the classroom to me but tell me directly what you want me to do.

I am a concrete thinker. This means I interpret language very literally. Don't tell me something is a piece of cake if there isn't cake in sight.



Be patient with my limited vocabulary. It's hard to tell you what I need when I don't know the words to describe my feelings.

Because language is difficult for me, I am very visually orientated. Please show me how to do something rather than telling me.

Or I may sound like a little professor. I have memorised things from the world around me. This is called echolalia. It has helped me compensate for my language deficits.

Help me with my social interactions. Encourage other children to invite me to join them. I do best with structured play activities.

Try to identify what triggers my meltdowns (periods of dysregulation). Remember that all behaviour is a form of communication – I am trying to tell you something. One of my senses may have gone into overload. Working out the trigger might stop me having them.

I find change really difficult. Warn me when something is going to be different. Show me if you can.

## The four key areas of difference

### Social understanding

Differences in understanding social behaviour and the feelings of others, which informs the development of friendships and relationships.



### Sensory processing

Differences in perceiving sensory information. Hypo (low sensitivity), hyper (high sensitivity), touch, sight, hearing, smell, taste, vestibular/inner ear (balance), proprioceptive (body awareness)



### Interests and information processing

Differences in perception, planning, understanding concepts, generalising, predicting, managing transitions, passions for interests and ability to absorb auditory or spoken information.

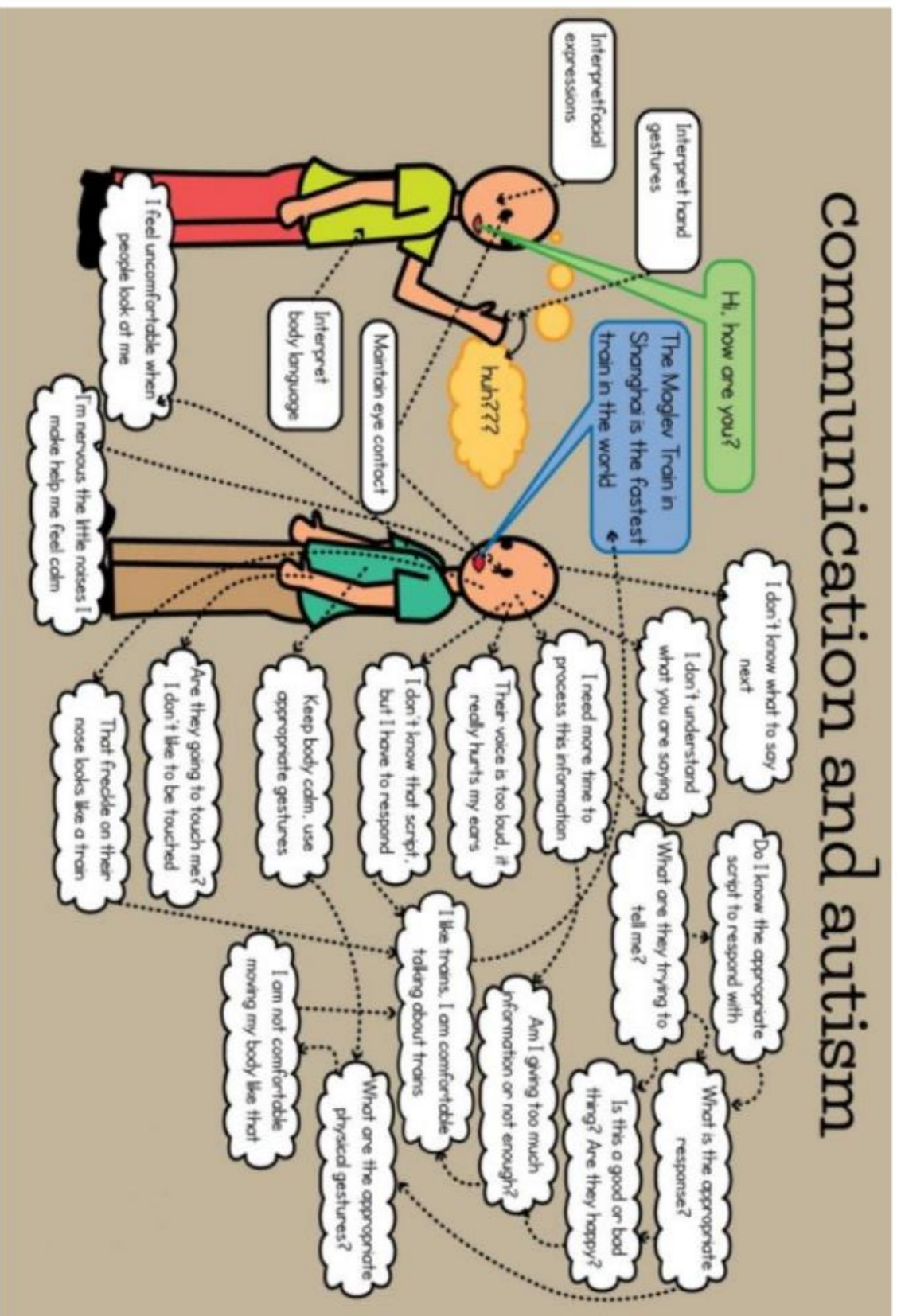


### Communication

Differences in understanding and expressing communication and language, with skills ranging from individuals who are highly articulate, to others who may be non-verbal. Good language skills may mask a deep level of misunderstanding.



# communication and autism



## A profile of one girl on the spectrum



*Sociable but can be clumsy/awkward when initiating social contact*

*Doesn't know her own strength so can accidentally hurt others*

*Doesn't realise she is invading personal space*

*Appears like the 'perfect student' at school*

*Very particular about what clothes she will wear*

*Has fits of rage that appear 'out of nowhere'*

*Struggles to leave the house or the activity she's doing*

*Can be very loud but dislikes unexpected loud noises*

*is very caring*

*Hates making mistakes*

*is very literal*

*Masks when away from home*

*Suffers from anxiety*

*is very funny*

**Little  
Miss H**

## A profile of one girl on the spectrum



*struggles with physical co-ordination*

*has multiple physical & verbal stims*

*is considered socially and emotionally 'immature' for her chronological age*

*little awareness of danger*

*developmentally delayed*

*struggles to self regulate particularly when struggling to communicate*

*has multiple sensory aversions*

*needs visuals and time to process*

*hyperfocused on fixed interests*

*doesn't read social cues*

*no inhibitions, no filter*

*incredible imagination, spends much time in fantasy/role play*

*extremely demand avoidant*

*history of being non-verbal, used sign language to communicate*

*is hyper-empathetic*

*is very literal*

*is hilarious*

**Tiny  
Miss H**



## Helpful approaches for a PDA profile of autism

Conventional support strategies, including those often recommended for ASD, are often ineffective and counter-productive with a PDA profile. In place of structure, routine, firm boundaries, praise, rewards/consequences, it's a person-centred approach based on negotiation, collaboration and flexibility.



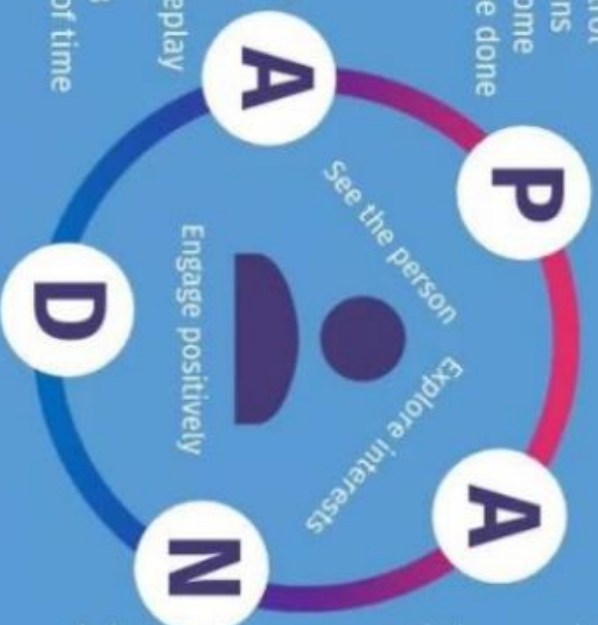
The PDA PANDA symbolises the need to tailor the environment to meet needs and our P A N D A mnemonic is a simple reminder of helpful approaches.

For more information please visit [www.pdasociety.org.uk](http://www.pdasociety.org.uk)

### Pick battles

- Minimise rules
- Enable some choice & control
- Explain reasons
- Accept that some things can't be done

Pick battles  
Anxiety management  
Negotiation & collaboration  
Disguise & manage demands  
Adaptation



### Anxiety management

- Reduce uncertainty
- Recognise underlying anxiety & social/sensory challenges
- Think ahead
- Treat meltdowns as panic attacks: support throughout & move on

### Adaptation

- Try humour, distraction, novelty & roleplay
- Be flexible
- Have a Plan B
- Allow plenty of time

### Disguise & manage demands

- Word & position requests indirectly
- Constantly monitor tolerance for demands & match demands accordingly
- Doing things together helps

### Negotiation & collaboration

- Keep calm
- Proactively collaborate & negotiate to solve challenges
- Fairness & trust are central

# Strategies:

## The ZONES of Regulation®

BLUE ZONE	GREEN ZONE	YELLOW ZONE	RED ZONE
Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited	Mad/Angry Terrified Willing/Hissing Elated Out of Control

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Scale (1 = 1 to 5)

## 5 Point Scale

**Break Card**

I am feeling upset. I need to calm down. What do I do?

I can take deep breaths.

1 2 3 4 5

I can count to 5.

I can use my break card and go to a quiet place.

**Bubbles**

Number of raffle tickets earned	I can use my raffle tickets for ...
50	An extra session with Mr Smith doing Forest activities
40	Tea and biscuit with Mrs Robbins
30	An afternoon with Class 5 with Lego
20	Football in pen for 20 minutes
10	15 minutes extra on the iPad

# Social Stories are useful:

## KS1 Example:

### Coming into school

I come to school on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.



I like school.



My Mummy or Daddy bring me to school.

*Insert photo of parent with child*

When the door opens, I will see Mrs xxxxx or Mrs xxxxx at the door. They will be pleased to see me.

*Insert photos of adults*

I will give Mummy or Daddy one more kiss and cuddle.

I will sanitise my hands and then wave goodbye.



I am ready and looking forward to hearing a story with my friends.

*Insert photo of child*



## KS2 example

### Listening to adults and doing what they say.

My name is ..... and I go to Wistaston Academy. I am in Y.....

Usually I have my teacher ..... and my teaching assistant ..... with me. There might be other adults in my class helping me and the other children. This is okay.

Sometimes though ..... may not teach me. Sometimes ..... may have to go to a meeting or sometimes she may be feeling poorly. This is okay. Everybody feels poorly sometimes.

If ..... is not in we will have a different teacher. If ..... is not in I will have a different teaching assistant with me. Usually I do not like working with different teachers.

Next time ..... is away I will try to remember that I will have a different teacher/teaching assistant.

It can be interesting to work with different people because they have lots of new things to tell us.

I will probably only have a different teacher for one day and then ..... will be back the next day. I will try to listen to the adult and I will try to do what they ask.

If I work with different teachers, ..... will be very pleased with me when she comes back into school.

My mum will be really pleased with me too.