Nothing about me without me

Learning: what works in autism
(for professionals)

Autism means...

- I am single minded (mono not stereo; think OR feel) (restrictive interests and behaviours)
- Shifting attention to accommodate the interests of others works best around shared interests
- Communication and social interaction works best around my interests
- I am great at attending to one thing at a time

How do I like to be addressed?

I am an individual on the autism spectrum (AS) or an autistic individual. Please check with me rather than assume how I wish to be addressed.

I cannot multi-task unless I am connected by interests that motivate me.
Without motivation learning is offline.
Building interests into relationships, education and employment enables, facilitates and maintains learning for autistics.

AUTISM: THE FACTS

30% have intellectual challenges.
Learning is impacted by sensory issues

1-46% have epilepsy (compared to 1-2% of the general population)
(Spence and Schneider, 2009)

14% have attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity (ADHD)

https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/data.html
https://www.spedstar.org/basic/co-morbidity

Learning is impacted by...

- Dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia (now called specific learning disability SLD)
- Pathological demand avoidance syndrome (PDA) which causes extreme anxiety over even the slightest perceived demand
  http://www.thepdaresource.com/
- Gastro digestive problems
- Poor self esteem
- Joint pains and auto immune disorders

But the bigger role is that of motivation in autism.

The science of motivation in autism:

Autobiographical accounts by autistics demonstrate ‘interest’ has opened doors to learning in ways not otherwise available.


A study (Kiser, 2013) demonstrated autistic participants had GAMMA in excess (scattered and not available typically unless motivated). Non-autistics (NA) have access to GAMMA informing bigger picture thinking whether motivated or not. Observations showed when autistic children in the study were interested with a favourite game or topic their GAMMA was switched on and activated rather than in excess and scattered (Lawson, 2013).

GAMMA is known as the ‘binding’ brain wave enabling access to bigger picture thinking. If GAMMA is offline so is the brain’s ability to process context and forward think. Object permanence, sensory dispositions and other issues are also offline. When autistic individuals are motivated this switches on their GAMMA, and learning is switched on too!

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