

## What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong condition which affects people in different ways.

Most autistic people see, hear and experience the world differently from people who do not have autism.

Seeing the world differently does not mean getting it wrong, it is simply a difference.

Autistic people experience differences in four main areas:

### 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

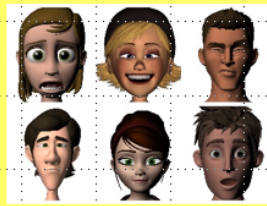
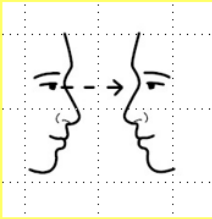
Differences in understanding and expressing communication and language, with skills ranging from individuals who are highly articulate, to others who may be non-verbal. Good language skills may mask a deep level of misunderstanding.



# Social Communication

**Autistic people can find it difficult to communicate effectively with others around them.**

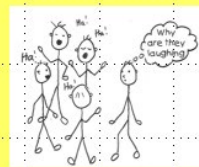
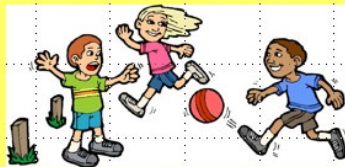
- Language is often interpreted literally so metaphorical and figurative language can be misunderstood, 'Pull your socks up!' 'It's raining cats and dogs!' 'There is a story behind that picture.'
- Non verbal forms of communication can be difficult to interpret, for example, reading facial expressions.
- Autistic people may struggle to maintain eye contact with others



# Social Understanding

**Autistic people may need help to understand how other people are feeling because they experience differences in how they understand social behaviour.**

- They may find relationships confusing and may need help to make friends
- They may need help learning to take turns in games or conversations
- They may need support and modelling to choose appropriate language for a range of social situations



# Interests and information processing

**The autistic brain processes information differently which impacts upon some of the following areas:**

- Imagining something new
- Organisational skills
- Coping with change
- Moving from one activity to another



*People with autism may have an interest that they like to know a lot about*



# Sensory Processing

**We already know that the autistic brain processes information differently.**

- This can also effect the way that their brain processes sensory information.
- Sometimes the senses can be over sensitive (hyper) or under sensitive (hypo) or even both at the same time!
- Some autistic people are sensitive to sound, smell, taste or noise.



## Strengths

**Autistic people often have a range of skills and talents, some of which could include:**

- Having an excellent memory
- Being able to be very focussed
- Picking up on small details that others may miss
- Having good problem solving skills
- Being a very loyal friend
- Being very honest