




Dance/Movement Therapy and Autism Spectrum Disorder: The Moving Relationship

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Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge that the land on which I present this webinar are the ancestral lands of the Lenni Lenape people, whose presence and resilience in Pennsylvania continues to this day. I take this opportunity to honor the original caretakers of this land and recognize the histories of land theft, violence, erasure, and oppression that has brought the institution which I am affiliated and myself here.



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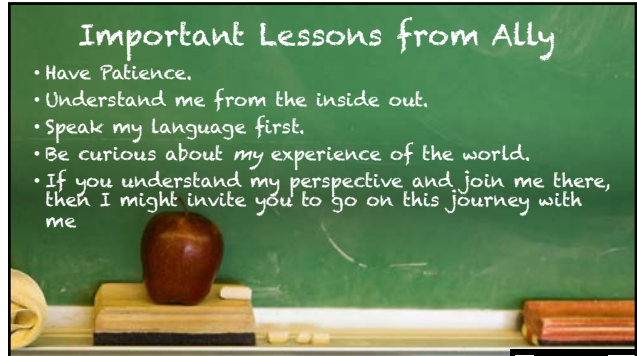
When I say the word “autism”
how does your body feel?

To answer, go to <https://www.menti.com/>
Enter Code: **82 26 84**

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Important Lessons from Ally


- Have Patience.
- Understand me from the inside out.
- Speak my language first.
- Be curious about *my* experience of the world.
- If you understand my perspective and join me there, then I might invite you to go on this journey with me



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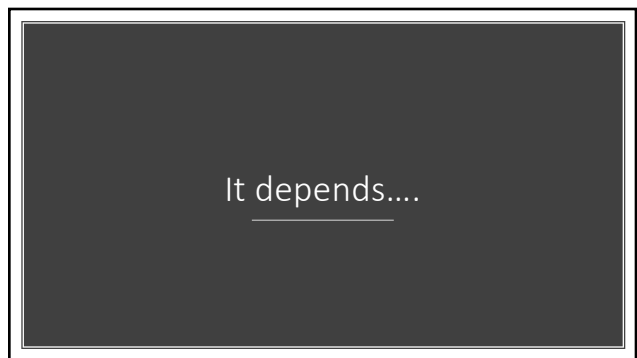
You might be asking yourself any variation of these questions....

- What do I do when the child _____?
- How do I _____ with this child with autism?
- What is the best way to _____ with this child?
- Why doesn't this child want to _____ like the other children?
- Why are my interventions/strategies not effective?
- Why did this intervention/strategy produce _____ outcome?



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It depends....

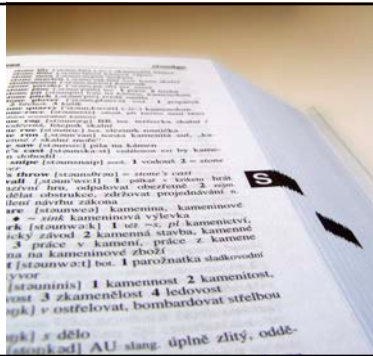


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spectrum noun

spec-trum 'spektrəm/

"a wide range."



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"a band of colors, as seen in a rainbow, produced by separation of the components of light by their different degrees of refraction according to wavelength."




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Neurodiversity

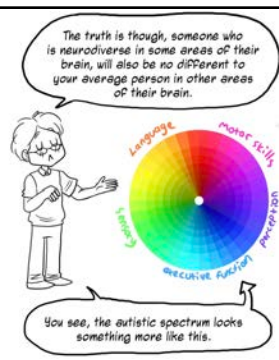
Neurodiversity is the diversity of human brains and minds – the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species.

(Walker, 2014)



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The truth is though, someone who is neurodiverse in some areas of their brain, will also be no different to your average person in other areas of their brain.



You see, the autistic spectrum looks something more like this.

Understanding the Spectrum: The comic book explanation
<https://www.autism.com.au/understanding-the-spectrum>

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"If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism."

— Dr. Stephen Shore

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****Disclaimer****

Any intervention approach with autism requires recognizing the complex nature of everyone's unique differences, including strengths and challenges.

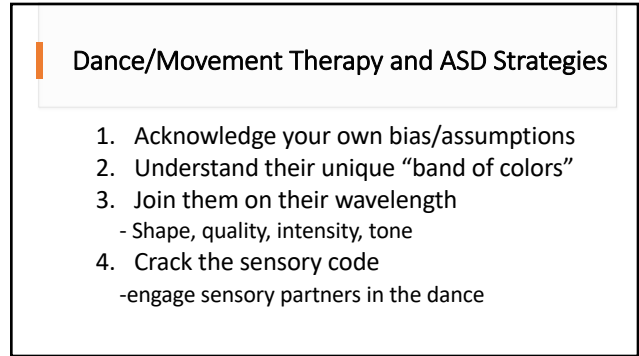
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DMT Goals and Intentions

DMT work is to utilize our interventions to **support social communication** and also assist in **organizing sensory input** so clients can be present in relationships and in the environment in a self-regulated way.

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Dance/Movement Therapy and ASD Strategies

1. Acknowledge your own bias/assumptions
2. Understand their unique “band of colors”
3. Join them on their wavelength
 - Shape, quality, intensity, tone
4. Crack the sensory code
 - engage sensory partners in the dance

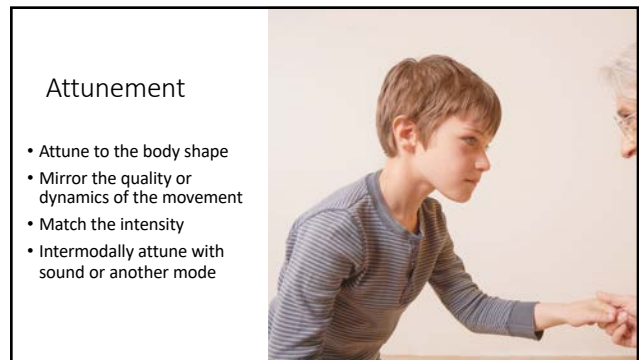
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Take Away Principle #1:

Understand from the Inside Out
 Speak their language first

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Attunement

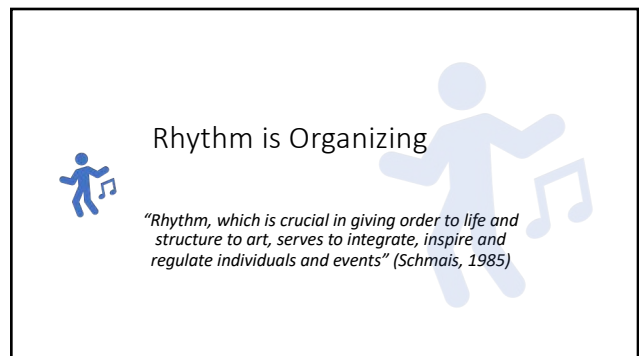
- Attune to the body shape
- Mirror the quality or dynamics of the movement
- Match the intensity
- Intermodally attune with sound or another mode

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- Play a game of “statues”
- Follow the leader
- Match movements with sound/instruments
- Individual Hello greetings
- Dance improvisation
- Exploration with props/tools

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Rhythm is Organizing

“Rhythm, which is crucial in giving order to life and structure to art, serves to integrate, inspire and regulate individuals and events” (Schmais, 1985)

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Rhythm and the Body


- The circulatory system and other major bodily functions, including brain waves, and muscle action, can be characterized by rhythm.
- Some anthropologists believe that primitive (in the sense of first) dance was an external response to internal rhythms (Hanna, 1970).



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Rhythm and Movement

- Beginning and ending rituals
- Obstacle courses
- Singing in between transitions
- Music with strong down beat

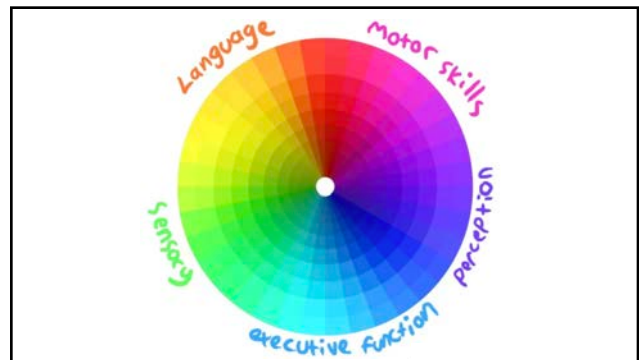


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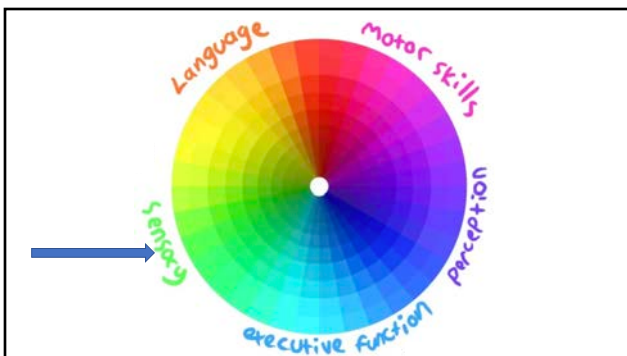
Take Away #2: Engage Sensory Partners in the dance



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DSM-5 Criteria for ASD

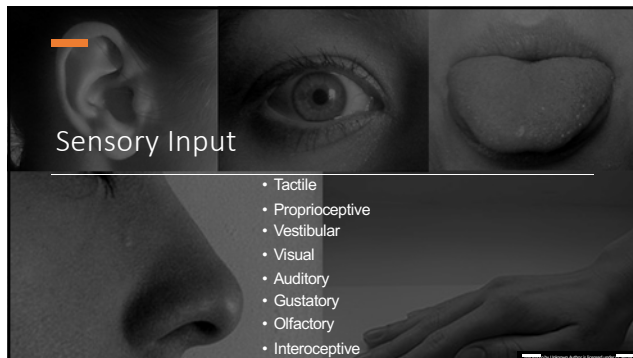
Social & Communication (must meet all 3)

- Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity
- Deficits in nonverbal communication used for social interaction
- Deficits in developing and maintaining relationships

Restricted patterns of behavior and interests (must meet 2)

- Stereotyped or repetitive speech, motor movements, use of objects
- Excessive adherence to routines
- Restricted interests that are abnormal in intensity
- Hyper or Hypo reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment (new addition)

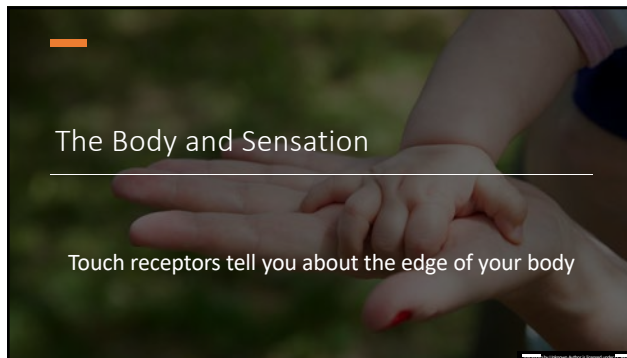
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Sensory Input

- Tactile
- Proprioceptive
- Vestibular
- Visual
- Auditory
- Gustatory
- Olfactory
- Interoceptive

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The Body and Sensation

Touch receptors tell you about the edge of your body


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Position Receptors (Proprioceptive)

- Position-sense receptors keep track or orient where your body parts are in space
- Some children with autism feel disconnected from their bodies and crave physical sensations to center themselves.
- Weighted vests and blankets can help with this,
- mini-trampolines,
- squeeze toys,
- exercise balls.
- or simply roll your child in a blanket to create a "burrito."

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Movement Sensors (Vestibular)

- Movement sensors keep track of where you are in space in relation to gravity and balance.
- Swings can be soothing and repetitive, create a sense of being cocooned, inside a blanket, stretch fabric

Movement experiences in sessions that focus on balance and (freezing in a shape/pose)


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Visual

- Visual input can be quite overwhelming. Fluorescent lights are notoriously problematic, but so too are halogen lights, flashing lights, etc.
- Keep lights incandescent and relatively dim
- provide mild visual stimulation in the form of low wattage pastel-colored lights, lava lamps, bubble columns, water fountains, or light projectors.

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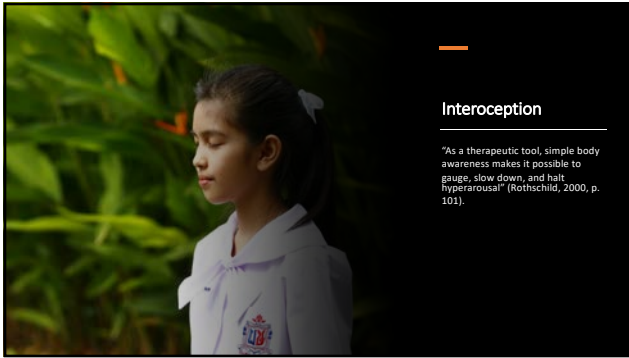


Auditory

For some people on the spectrum, soothing sounds are a wonderful tool for relaxing.

- white noise machines, chimes, or nature sounds.
- Music with high frequency sounds that simulate mother's voice
- Singing, humming,

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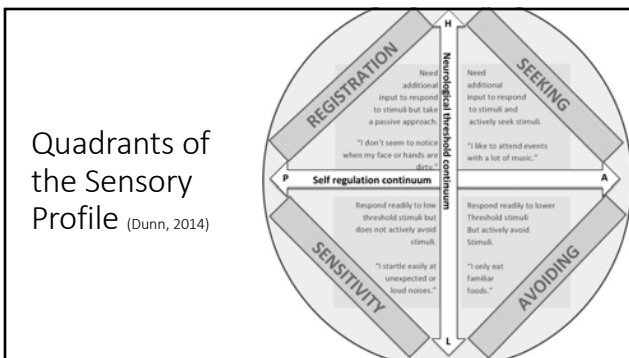


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Sensory Theories

Jean Ayres (Sensory Integration)	Lucy Miller (Sensory Modulation)	Winnie Dunn (Sensory Processing)	
		Neurological Thresholds/ Self-Regulation Strategies	
Hyper-Responsive	Over-Responsive (SOR)	Low Threshold	Active (Sensory-Avoiding)
			Passive (Sensory-Sensitivity)
Hypo-Responsive	Under-Responsive (SUR)	High Threshold	Passive (Low-Registration) (fail to notice what other people notice)
	Sensory Craver		Active (Sensation-Seeking)

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Threshold

- When people have **low thresholds** they notice input very quickly. They will be more observant or watchful than others.
- When people have **high thresholds** it takes a lot more sensory input to notice what is going on and may miss things that others notice.

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Self-Regulation Strategies

- **Active self-regulation** means that people do things to control the amount and type of sensory input they must contend with. Examples of active strategies include humming or whistling to add sound or leaving the room to get away from a noisy place.
- **Passive self-regulation** means that people let sensory input happen and then react to that input. An example of a passive strategy includes feeling bothered by the volume of the music (sensitive) or not even noticing that the volume got turned up (oblivious).

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Seekers always want more

They create excitement and change all around them.

High Threshold/
Active Strategy

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Seeker

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Avoiders

- Creating routines to keep life manageable

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The importance of building a fort



Forts can help kids regulate their bodies and emotions. Being in an enclosed, dark space with buffered sound and tactile sensations can be especially therapeutic for children with autism and those with anxiety."

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"Forts help children reset their stressed bodies and brains. The darkness inside a fort eliminates the stimulus they *do not* need and intensifies what they *do* need — such as physical comfort and solitude."

- Carol Stock Kranowitz, Author of *The Out-of-Sync-Child*

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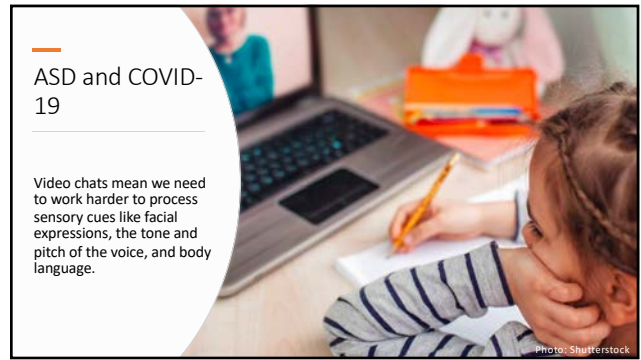
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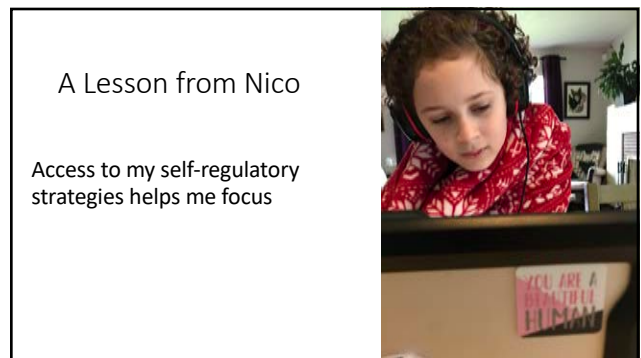
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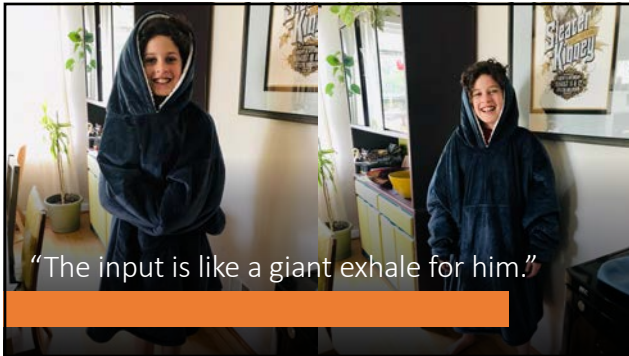
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