



**The Circle of
SEND**



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Difference or Diversity?



- Thinks about the details
- Perceives information independent of context
- Logic/cognition focused
- Enjoyment of known/preferred experiences/ideas
- Focus on self and preferred people, objects, places, experiences
- Concrete, logical thinker
- Literal interpretation and use of language

- Thinks about the big picture
- Perceives the context of information as well as the information
- Feeling/emotion focused
- Enjoyment of new/novel experiences and ideas
- Enjoyment of and focus on social interactions
- Abstract, emotional thinker
- Social and contextual use of and interpretation of language

What is autism?

Autistic people have differences in three areas of development. These are:



Social understanding
and communication



Flexibility, information
processing, and
understanding



Sensory processing
and integration

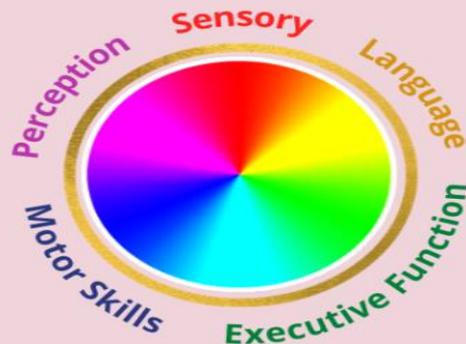
We need to look at these differences in terms of both the strengths and challenges that might arise.

AUTISM IS A NON-LINEAR SPECTRUM

It does **not** look like this:



Autism is much more **complex** and **dynamic**. Every autistic individual is **unique**, and so are our traits and support needs. We all have varying degrees of autistic traits. Some may have serious sensory issues, while others have none, and so on. There is **endless variation**, and they change and evolve throughout our lives, even from day to day.



It looks more like this



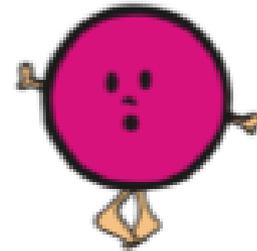
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Our Senses



Interoception



The sensory system that gives us
information regarding the
INTERNAL CONDITION
of our body.

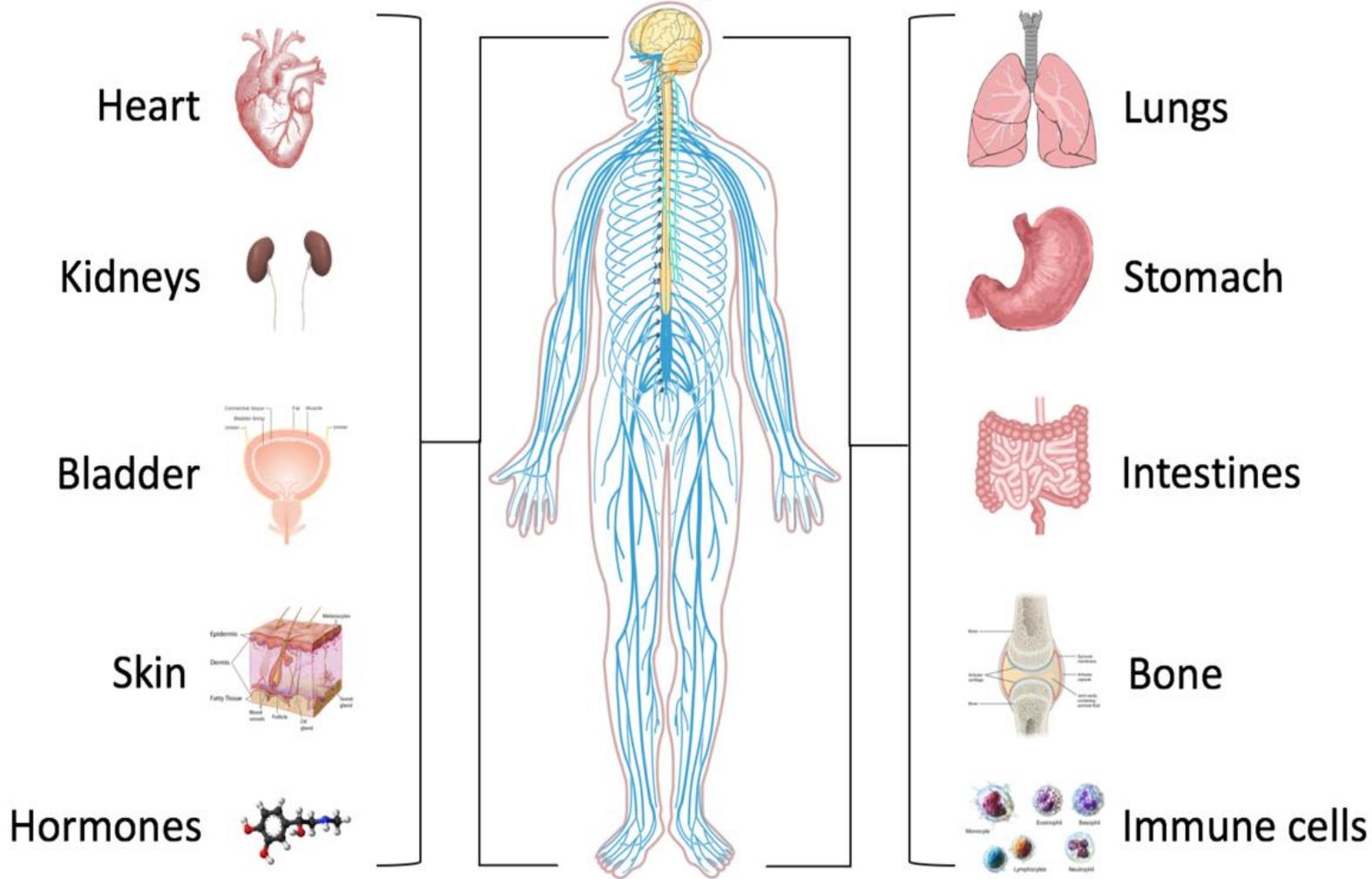
Craig, 2002

Mahler & Brevener 2018

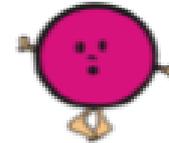


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Interoception



Interoception



Hunger

Fullness

Thirst

Needing the Bathroom

Nausea

Constipation

Pain

Illness

Sleepiness

Body Temperature

Itch

Heartbeat

Air Hunger

Muscle Tension

Sexual Arousal

Physical Exertion

Sensory Overload

Emotions

Craig, 2002

Mahler & Bravener 2018



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*'It is the sensory system that gives us information regarding **BODY – EMOTION** connection'*



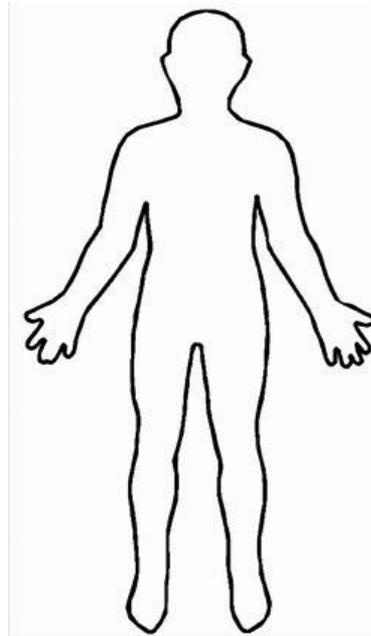
happy



Sad



in love



hungry



Poor Interoceptive Awareness: Connected to Many Conditions

- **Anxiety**
- **Depression**
- **SPD**
- **ADHD**
- **Eating Disorders**
- **Obesity**
- **Schizophrenia**
- **Dementia**
- **OCD**
- **Trauma Disorders**
- **Panic Disorder**
- **Suicide Attempters & Planners**
- **Drug & Alcohol Addiction**
- **Chronic Pain Syndromes**
- **Autism**

Mahler & Bravener 2018



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Girls can be overlooked...



- Diagnoses are being drawn from the old stereotypes, or symptoms that are common in boys
- The signs and symptoms in girls don't fit within the autism narrative and are misinterpreted as something else, such as mental health issues



And remember...

- Physicians and health care providers might not be versed in new autism research, so they might miss symptoms present in autistic girls



Issues which might underlie autism in girls

- Issues with parents
- Anger issues
- Self-harm
- Eating difficulties
- Obsessive thinking
- Behaviour and aggressive outbursts
- Possibly psychotic episodes (catatonia)
- Situational mutism



Masking

Socially

Emotionally

Behaviourally



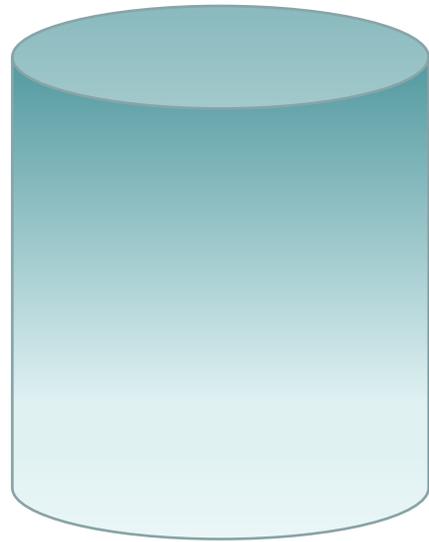
Social masking is...



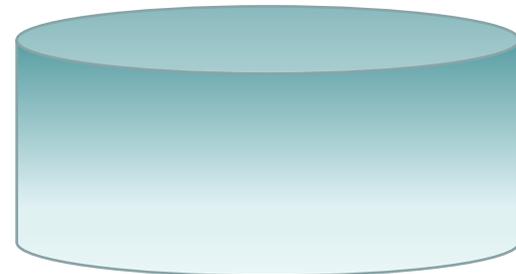
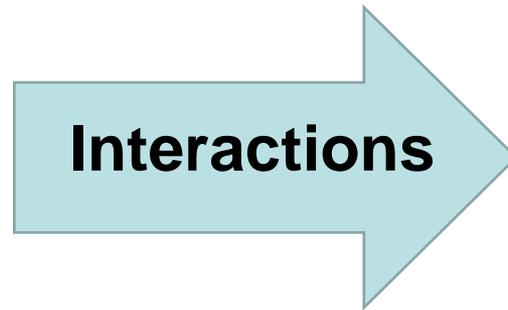
...for an autistic person, acting in ways which others see as 'normal' or 'socially acceptable', in order to gain acceptance by those others



Social energy and conventionally developing young people



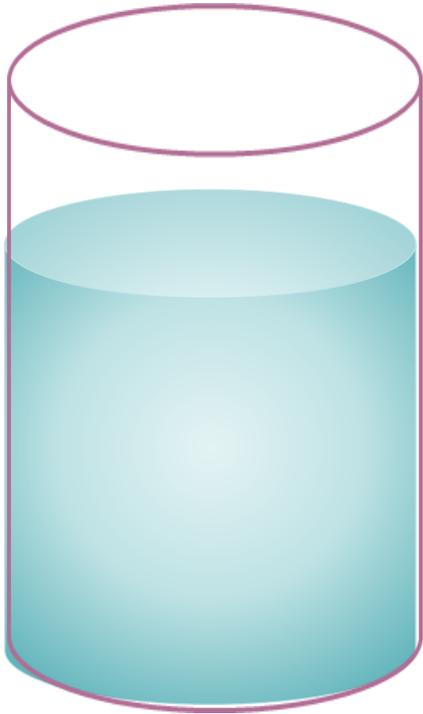
At the start of the day the 'battery' is full



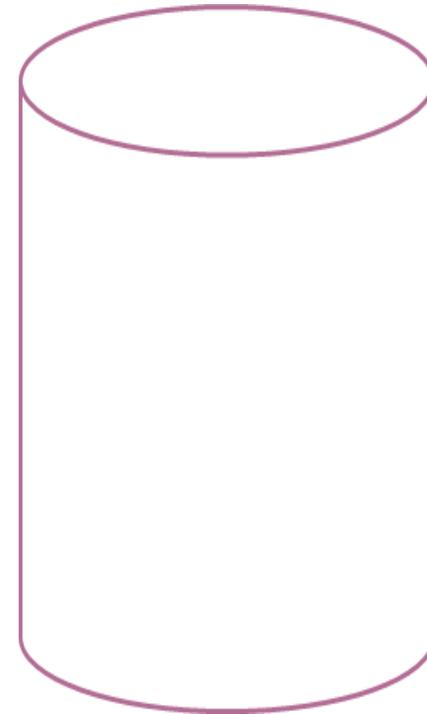
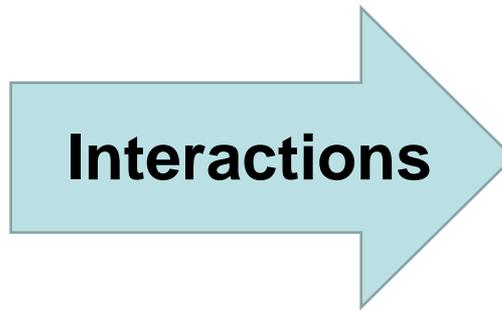
By the end of the day the 'battery' needs recharging but may still have enough energy to communicate and interaction



Social energy & autistic young people



At the start of the day the 'battery' is only $\frac{3}{4}$ full



By the end of the day the 'battery' needs recharging and there is nothing left



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Making sense of autism in Schools • AET Schools Professional Development Programme

