



Autism & Self Awareness: Promoting Emotional Intelligence in Autistic Youngsters

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Introduction: Autism & Self Awareness

- All children, including children with autism, have the potential to be more socially aware of themselves and others
- All parents want their children to become more socially able, more empathic, capable of friendship and intimacy
- For children and adolescents on the spectrum this is often challenging. Research bears this out.
- Over the years of coaching families, I have used a developmental framework for promoting Self Awareness (SA) and Emotional Intelligence (EI)
- I will use video case studies to share this framework and provide practical ways to help children and adolescents on the spectrum become better emotional thinkers.



Research on Empathy and ASD*

- Atypical empathic behavior in early childhood is a key symptom of ASD in children
- Atypical self-processing has been reported for ASD both on the neural and behavioral level
- Empathic abilities, emotional responsiveness and social behavior improve during adolescence and early adulthood in patients with ASD

*Shattuck et al., (2007); Farley et al., (2009)



What makes autism autism?

- Autism is a genetic condition, influenced by the environment, that causes the brain to have 'under or over connected' neurons, a neurodivergent brain
 - Like a loose network of nerves that can't capture the complexity of the world (especially the social world)
- This creates the tendency of the child toward repetition and the need to 'keep the world the same'
- The child with autism tends toward social self absorption and repetition



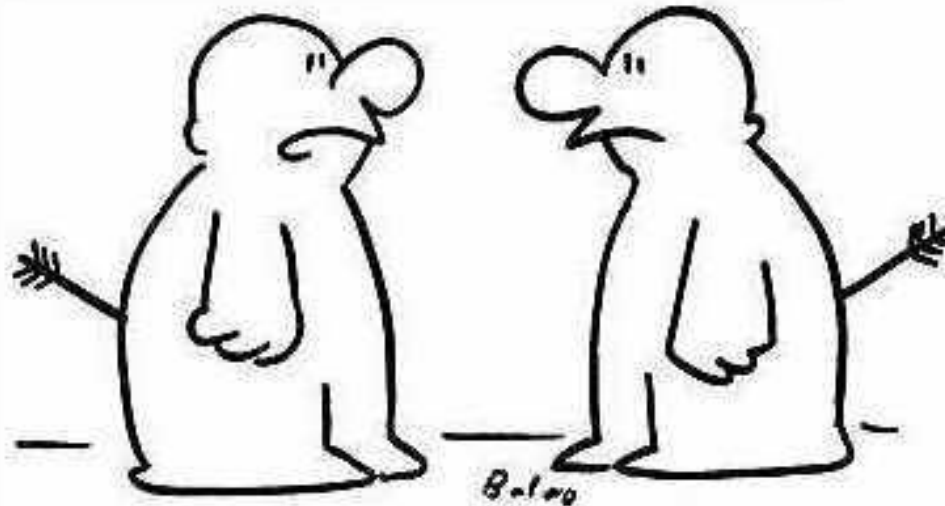


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- Over the years of coaching families, I have used a developmental framework for promoting Self Awareness (SA) and Emotional Intelligence (EI) for autistic children
- I will use video case studies to share this framework and provide practical ways to help children and adolescents on the spectrum become better emotional thinkers with an emphasis on empathy.



Self Awareness Leads to Empathy



"I know exactly how you feel."



Cycle of Self Awareness





Julian & His Mom



Julian's First Interactions



9 Functional Developmental Capacities*

1. **Self regulation and shared attention (FDC 1)**
2. **Engagement (FDC 2)**
3. **Two-way Communication (FDC 3)**
4. **Complex two-way Communication (FDC 4) (18m)**
5. **Shared Meanings & Symbolic Play (FDC 5—2y)**
6. **Emotional Thinking (FDC 6—3-5 year olds)**
7. **Multi-causal Thinking (FDC 7—5-7 years old)**
8. **Shades of Gray Thinking (FDC 8—8-12 year old)**
9. **Thinking off an Internal Standard (FDC 9—13+ year old)**

*Greenspan S., Weider S. (1997)



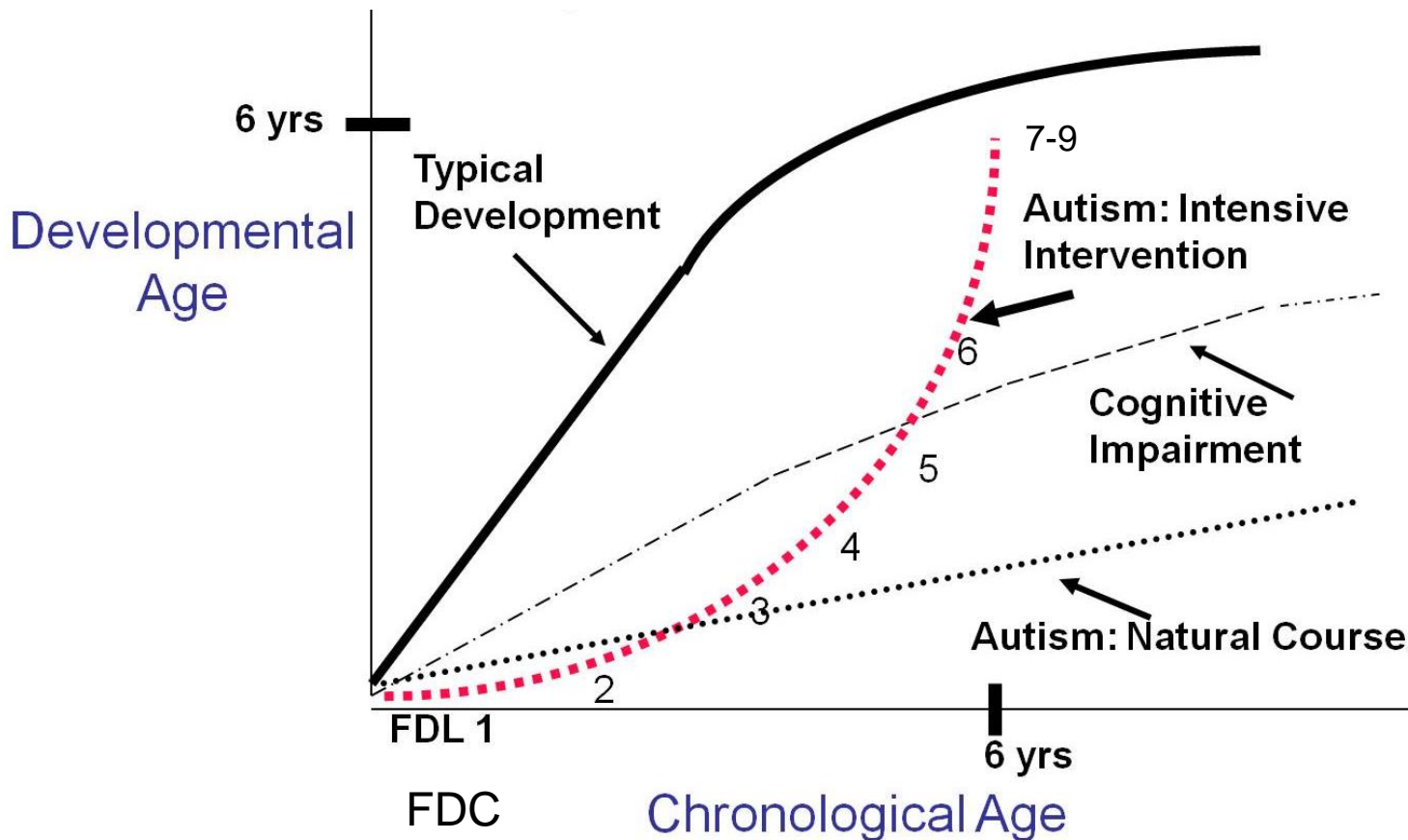
The Nature of Development

- Functional social development follows a natural course described by Greenspan and Weider regardless of age
- The affect diathesis hypothesis
 - **Like a growing flower**
- We should embrace the child's unique profile
- It's all about relationship





Developmental Course of Autism



Age is much less important than FDC



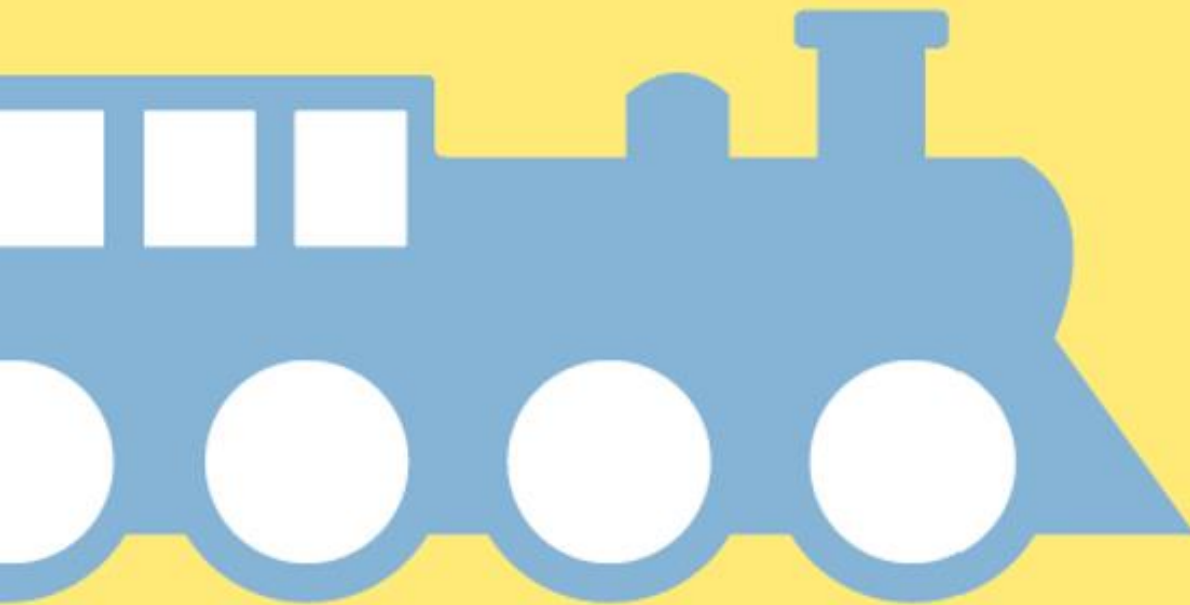
Self Awareness: The Framework

- Introduction: Autistic people can become self aware, emotionally intelligent, and empathic just like anyone else (neurodiversity perspective)
- Definitions and Development of Self Awareness (SA), Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Empathy
- 9 Practical ways to promote SA & EI for autistic children and adolescents
- Video case studies



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The Development Of Self Awareness





Definition of Self Awareness* (SA)

- Self awareness is defined as *the capacity to to identify and understand one's own emotions*
- This ability to represent one's own mind may be fundamental to representing the minds of others
- *Alexithymia* is difficulty in identifying and describing one's own emotional experience
- People with poor emotional self-awareness also are likely to have poor awareness of their abilities
- The gap and social skills between autistic children and their peers widens during adolescence increasing the risk of social isolation or victimization

*Huggins, C.F., et al. (2021)



Mirror, Mirror On the Wall





5 Stages of SA*

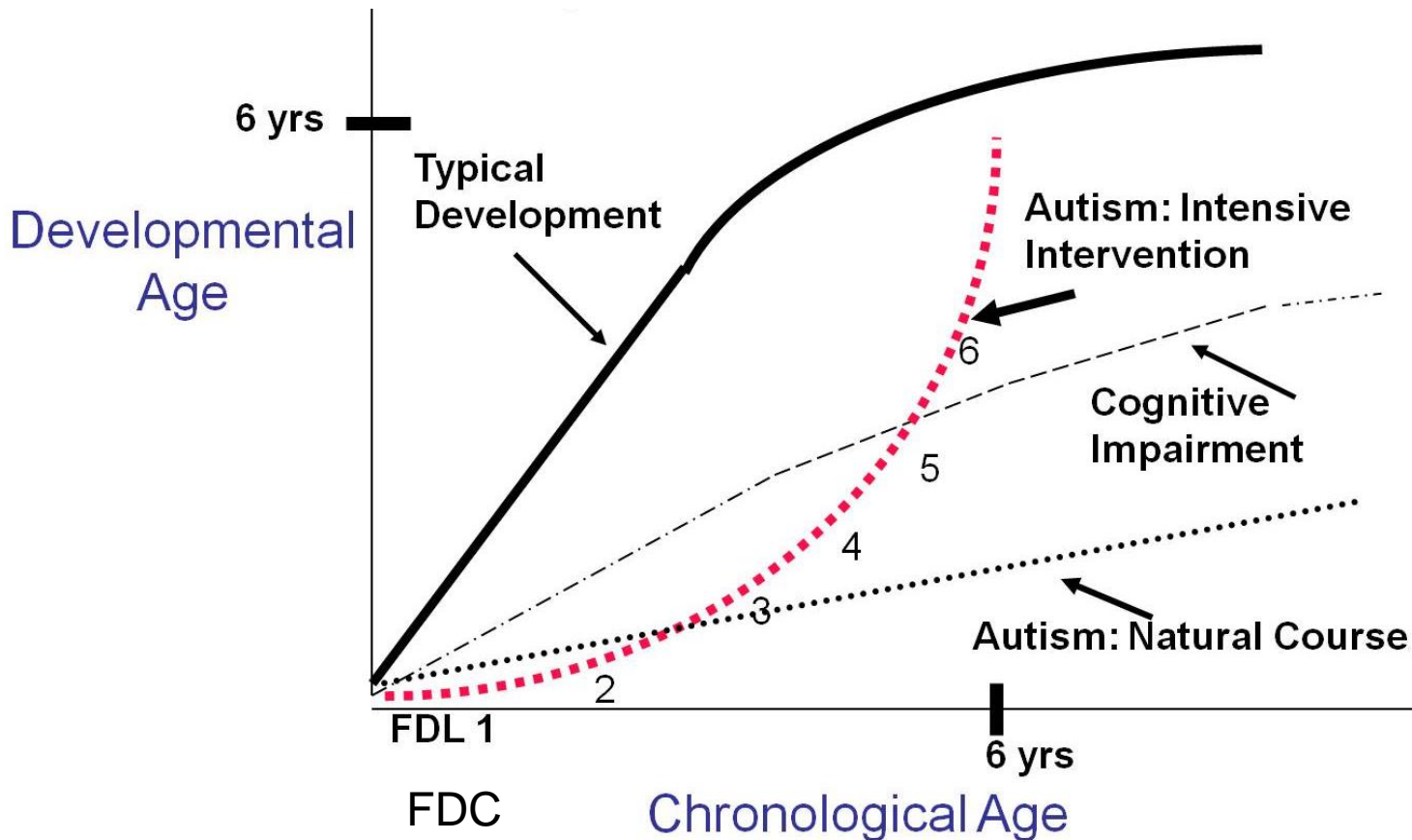
“If (neurotypical) children begin to have ‘others in mind’ by the age of two or three, the question is: how this self-consciousness comes about? I will suggest that there are at least five steps to this progression.”

“What do children see when they see themselves in a mirror? Do they see that it is themselves, or do they perceive someone else facing them?”

*Rochat, P. (2003)



Developmental Course of Autism



Age is much less important than FDC



5 Stages of SA*

- Stage 0: *No self awareness*—very early infancy
- Stage 1: *Early self awareness*. By **2 months** there is early awareness that others exist. Imitate tongue protrusions to the right or left! 4 month olds reach for objects, aware of a separate world.
- Stage 2: *Situational Awareness*. From 6-12 months self-awareness remains implicit. It is expressed in perception and action, not yet expressed via symbolic means such as words.

*Rochat, P. (2003)



Imitation Games





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Julian Becomes Self Aware



5 Stages of SA*

Stage 3: *Identification—18 months*

By 18 months something magical happens as the ‘dot on the nose rouge test’ research reveals. “Me” emerges. “There is an identity relation between the self as experienced from within and what is displayed on the polished surface of the mirror: an identified self is expressed.”

“If children identify themselves in mirrors starting at 18 months, they still demonstrate that the Me they identify in the specular image remains enigmatic and ambivalent. They appear to still oscillate between an awareness of the self and an awareness of seeing someone else facing them.”

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Rouge Test





5 Stages of SA*

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5 Stages of SA*

Stage 4: *Permanence*—Ages 3-4 years

“The **self is identified beyond the here and now** of mirror experience, not tied to the temporal simultaneity and spatial coincidence of the body. Furthermore, when asked who it was on TV, it is by four years that the children say ‘Me’ rather than their proper name suggesting a first-person stance rather than third.”

*Rochat, P. (2003)



5 Stages of SA*

Stage 5: Meta-cognitive self-awareness—Ages 5-6+

“By 5-6 years children begin to be capable of holding multiple representations and perspectives on objects and people. They can infer the age, relative sentience, temperament, and emotionality of a person by merely looking at the quality of a simple drawing.”

“The self is now recognized not only from a first person perspective, but also from a third person’s. Individuals are not only aware of what they are but how they are in the mind of others: How they present themselves to the public eye.”

*Rochat, P. (2003)



9 Functional Developmental Capacities*

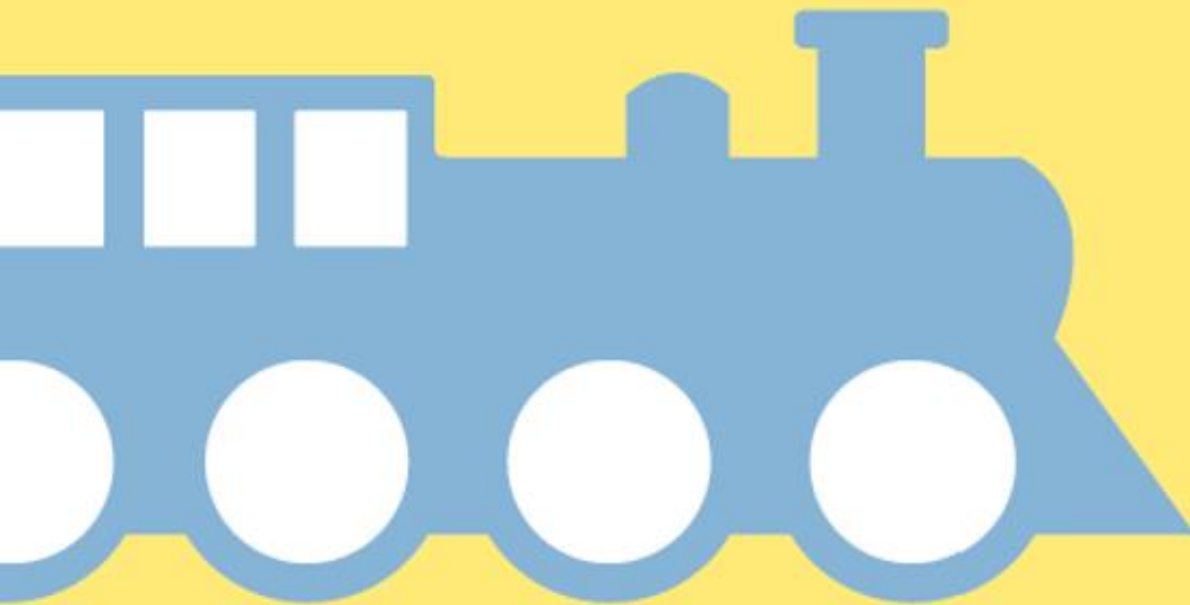
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*Greenspan S., Weider S. (1997)



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Emotional Intelligence





Definition of Emotional Intelligence

“The capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. Emotional Intelligence is the key to both personal and professional success.”*

Key: When you recognize the child's emotions, they begin to recognize others' emotions.








The flowering of self awareness and emotional intelligence is empathy.

*Goleman, D. *Emotional Intelligence* (1995)



Signs of EI

- Self-Awareness of Strengths and Weaknesses
- Self-Awareness of Feelings
- Understand Personal Boundaries
- Interested In Others
- Getting Along Well
- Operating With Integrity
- Present-Focused
- Open and Flexible
- Kind & Caring
- Self-Motivated

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 	
HIGH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	LOW EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
 Accepts self and others	 Is not accepting to self and others
 Can communicate assertively	 Uses passive or aggressive communication
 Displays empathy	 Lacks empathy

How to promote these qualities is a key focus of this talk!



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EI & Empathy





Introduction

- It is generally believed that children with autism cannot learn to be empathic
- Empathy can be promoted in children with ASD if we take into consideration
 - Developmental levels
 - Relationship building
 - Imagination and pretend
 - Strategies to promote empathy

*Excuse me, doctor? It hurts
my feelings when you say
autistic people like me
don't have empathy.*

*Are you sure?
According
to my
research,
you don't
have
feelings
to hurt.*

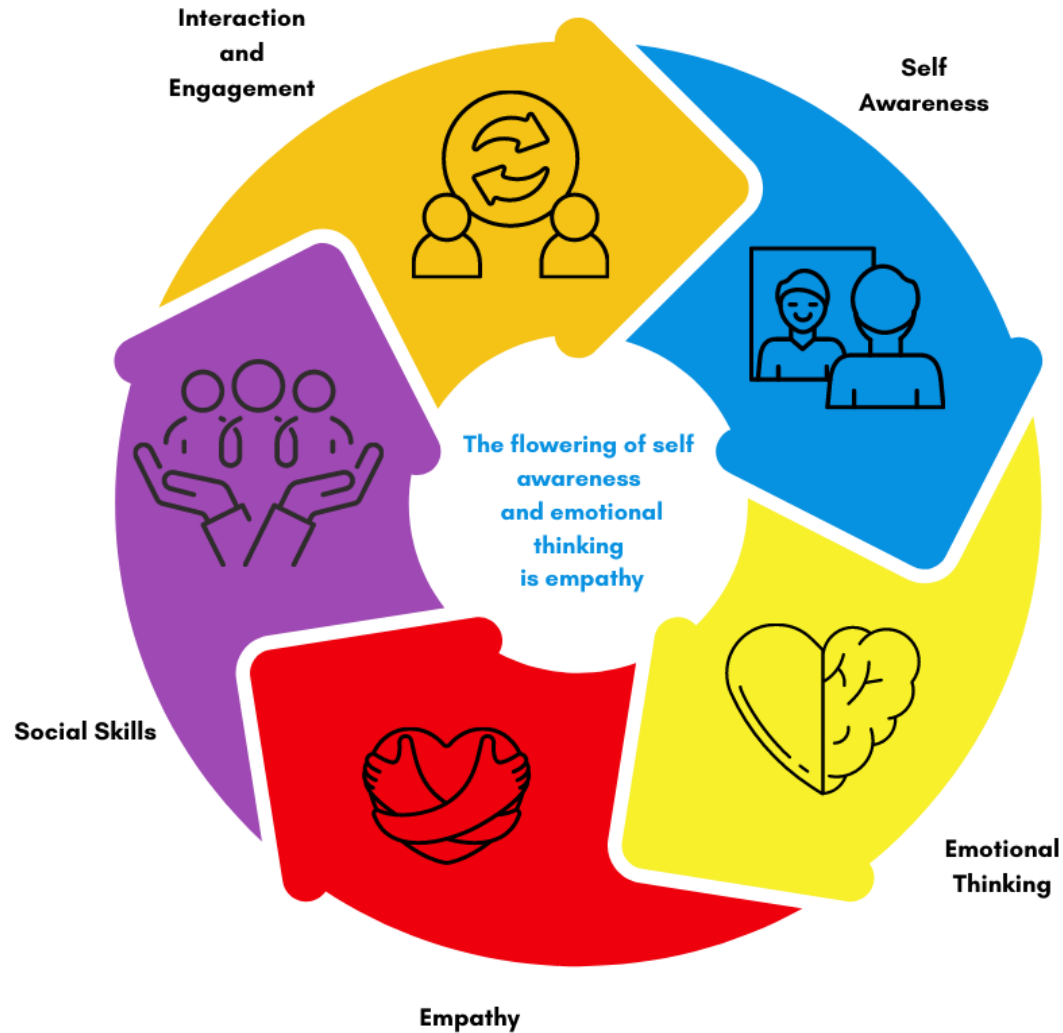


Introduction

- It is generally believed that children with autism cannot learn to be empathic
 - **THAT IS WRONG!**
 - **BUT IT IS CHALLENGING. . .**
- Empathy can be promoted in children with ASD if we take into consideration
 - Developmental levels
 - Relationship building
 - Imagination and pretend
 - Strategies to promote empathy



Cycle of Self Awareness





Empathy: Definitions

- *Empathy*: Psychological inferences about other persons' mental and emotional states, allowing for socially appropriate emotional responses like shared affect, perspective taking, and self-other distinctions
- *In short*: Understanding how other people feel
- *Theory of Mind (ToM)*: Ability to represent other persons' intentions, beliefs and desires as different from one's own
- ToM tasks have been shown to be more difficult for autistic people but. . .



Empathy: Definitions

...There is a growing uncertainty among scientists about the importance of the underlying theory-of-mind hypothesis that individuals with ASD can't have ToM*

*Tager-Flusberg, H. (2007)



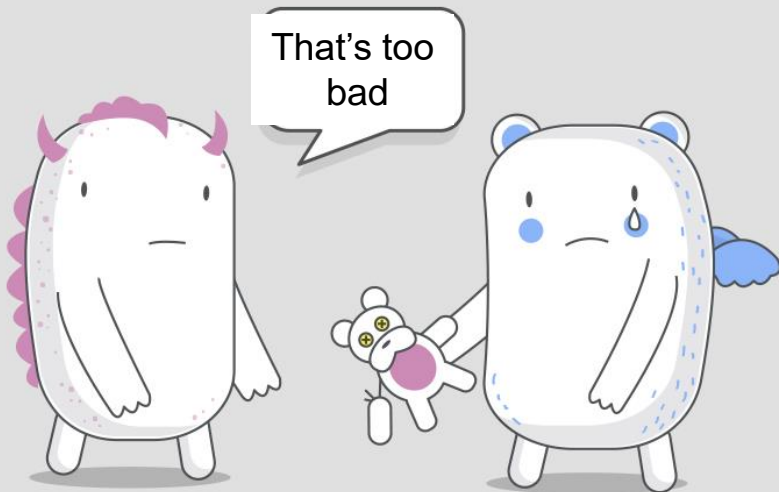
Sympathy vs Empathy

- **Sympathy:** Having a concern or feeling of sorrow for the other person, not necessarily feeling the same emotions as the other is experiencing in that moment
- **Empathy:** Feeling what someone else is currently feeling, an experience akin to “walking in someone else’s shoes”

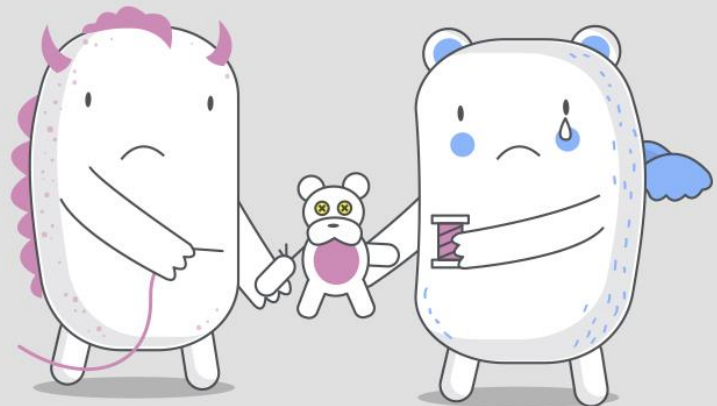


Sympathy vs. Empathy

HOW TO BE SYMPATHETIC



HOW TO BE EMPATHETIC





Empathy & Parenting

- Many studies show that empathy and other emotional behaviors stems from parents' own use of empathy towards their children
- **Sympathetic parents** help to show their children how to cope more effectively with distressful emotions than do **non-sympathetic parents.** **
- **Empathy can be learned!!**

**Eisenberg, et al., (1991)



Empathy & Parenting*

- A secure attachment to primary caregivers is fundamental for empathy. Autistic children are often well attached.
- Mothers with positive emotional communication have children who are better able to take the perspective of others
- A father's sympathy was related positively to his son's empathy levels
- Younger children rank closer together on empathy scales with parents than do older children
- Empathy evolves over time

*Barnett, M.A., King, L.M., Howard, J.A., & Dino, G.A. (1980)
Spinrad, Losoya, Eisenberg, Fabes, Shepard, et al., (1999);
J. Strayer, W. Roberts, (2004)



Developmental Research & Empathy

- When caregiver acted sad or stressed out, children as early as two years of age were showing signs of emerging empathy as evidenced by children helping, sharing, providing comfort, and attending to others in distress*
- **Empathy is hard wired!**

*Zahn-Waxler, C., Radke-Yarrow, M. (1990)



Neuro-imaging & Empathy





Four Stages of Empathy Development

- 1. Global empathy (Age B-1 y/Greenspan FDC 1-3):** Develops in infancy
 - Babies cry or become visually anxious when they hear the sounds of another infant crying
- 2. Egocentric Empathy (2-3 y/Greenspan FDC 4-5):** Develops at age 2
 - Child understands another person is upset, not themselves. May try to comfort the other person
 - Children still believe what is helpful to them would be helpful to other people as well

Hoffman (as cited in Lightfoot, Cole, & Cole, 2009)



Four Stages of Empathy Development

3. Early Childhood (4-6y/Greenspan FDC 6-7): Develops when child's role-taking skills increase

- Less egocentric and now know someone else's feelings from their own emotions entirely

4. Middle childhood (7-11y/Greenspan FDC 8-9): Develops when the child begins to use past experiences to understand feelings known by the other person in question



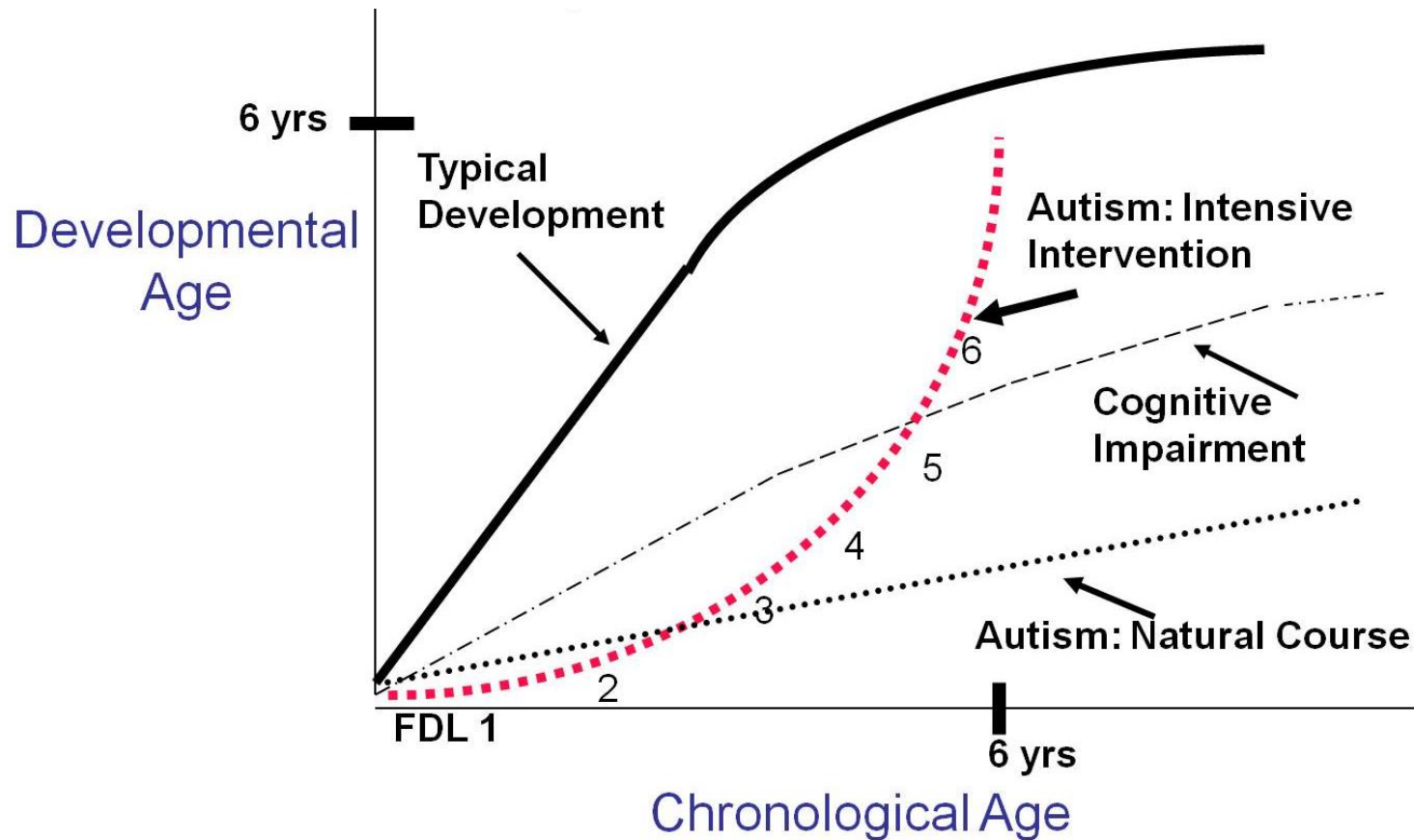
FDL, ASD, & Empathy: Implications

- Empathy in children with ASD will typically occur at later ages
 - Functional/social development is delayed
 - Autism costs on average at least 2-3 years developmentally speaking
 - I'm against 'ageism'!
- Each developmental level has it 'empathic milestones' leading to true empathy based on the 'normal' progression according to Greenspan*

*Greenspan, S.I., *The Development of the Ego* (1989)



Developmental Course of Autism





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Imagine Promoting These Feelings

Consideration

Caring

Sympathy

Kindness

Empathy

Compassion

Pity

Shame

Guilt

The Golden Rule



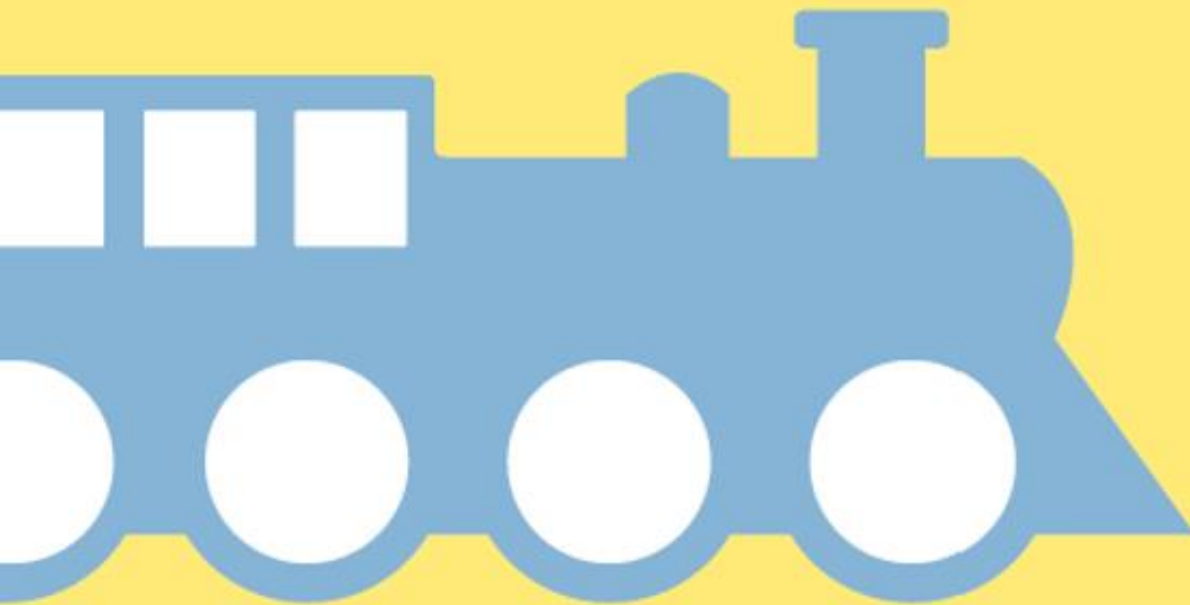
Promoting Imagination & Empathy

- Promoting does not mean forcing
- A child must be developmentally ready
- Stanley Greenspan call's it wooing
- When the child is ready they will go there naturally
- But there are several strategies that will promote the imagination that will lead to empathy. . .



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9 Practical Ways to Promote SA, EI, & Empathy





Promoting Emotional Intelligence

- All children have the brain circuits for **caring** and **play**, **fear** and **grief** (Panksepp et al, 2019)
- Can we *promote* these deep, hard-wired circuits to *grow* their neurological connections?
- There are many ways to promote SA, EI, & Empathy throughout the day for parents and for those professionals who coach families
- Here are 9 Strategies. . .

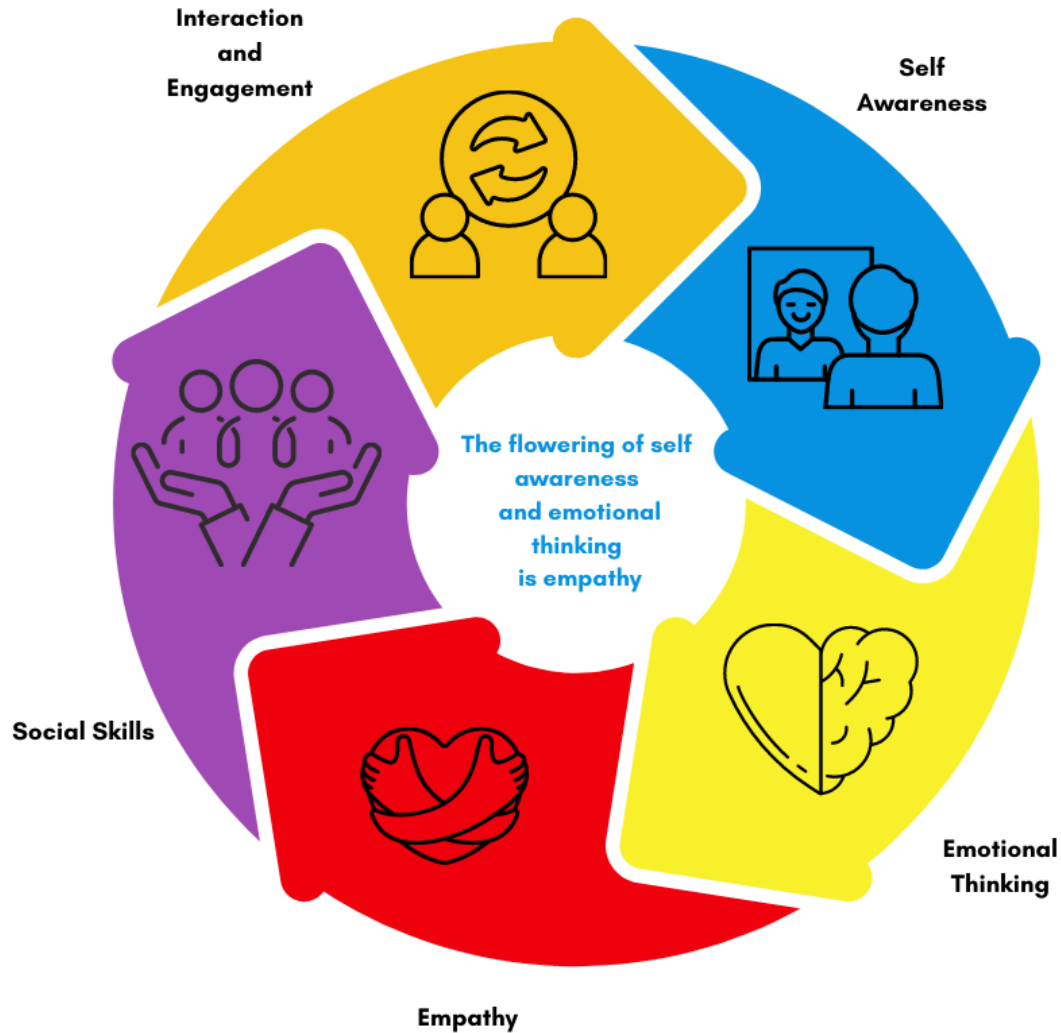


Promoting EI: 9 Strategies

1. Daily interactions (FDCs 1-9)
2. Imitation (FDC 3-6)
3. Mirroring feelings (FDC 4-9)
4. Pretend play & Imagination (FDC 4-9)
5. Misbehavior welcome!
6. Reasoning/reflecting about feelings (FDC 6-9)
7. Literacy: Books and Jokes (FDC 5-9)
8. Supervised play dates (6-9)
9. Self Disclosure & Higher-Level Self Awareness



Cycle of Self Awareness





Finn & Dad: Promoting Empathy



1. Daily Interactions

- All day long parents and siblings are interacting.
 - Be aware of the ‘interactional process’!!
- By attuning to the child, the child attunes to the caregiver, promoting **joint attention**, a social connection, the very first baby steps toward empathy
- Skillful interactions begin when parents, caregivers, and professionals use the **5 methods** of play-based developmental interventions
- The interactional process never ends!

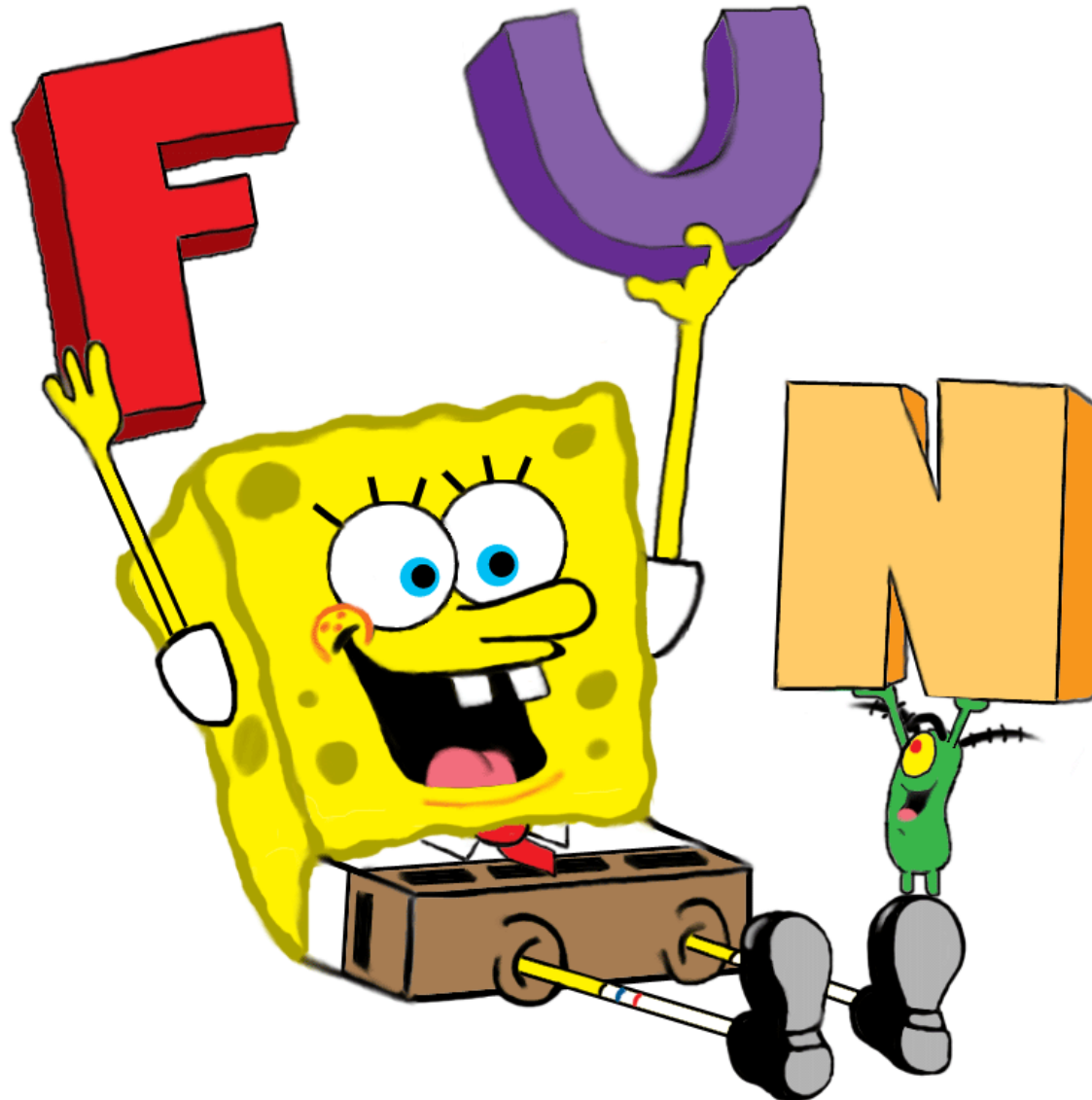


5 Basic Methods of Interaction

1. Follow the child's "lead" i.e. their intent or idea
2. Slow down the pace to wait for the child's idea
3. Then, respond in a way that follows the child's intent or idea
4. Think about the interactional process in order to get back and forth 'circles' of communication
5. Expand on the child's intent/idea in a **fun** way to keep the interaction going



Fun Promotes Empathy





What it Leads to . . . Playfulness



The 5
Characteristics
of Play



Joyful

Engaging

Social

Meaningful

Iterative



Focus on Relationships

- Drive development
- Individualize interaction
- Lead to engagement and interaction

When you do what the child loves
the child will love
to be with you and others!





How It All Starts... Acceptance

It all starts
with...
**The
Acceptance
Paradox**

By accepting the child exactly where they're at developmentally, that is the best way to help the child make progress toward their full social potential!





2. Imitation

- True imitation is not evident in infancy
 - Though they can stick out their tongues at T. Berry Brazelton!
- Imitation emerges in the second year of life around 12-14 months
 - Greenspan FDL 3-4
- Promoting imitation begins with imitating the child
 - This leads to the child imitating others
- Without imitation children cannot learn empathy



Finn Imitating



Imitation Games

- Simple imitation
 - Clapping, waving, high fives, kissing, running, singing
- Imitation songs
 - Head, shoulders, knees, and toes
 - Wheels on the bus
- Simple pretend involves imitation
 - Feeding a baby, listening to a phone
- Complex imitation
 - Making silly faces in a mirror
 - Simon says
 - Games and sports



Imitation Games





Imitation Games

- 3 way modeling
 - Using others to model
 - Daddy you do it. Mommy you do it. Brother you do it.
- Eventually simple imitation leads to complex imitation
 - Making silly faces in a mirror
 - Simon says
 - Games and sports
 - Theater



Imitation Implications

- At a fundamental level, imitation is the ability to consider that the 'other' exists
- Imitation is closely allied to identification, the ability to learn by watching others and modeling after them
- This leads to more and more complex capacities like imitating caring, and empathy





3. Mirroring Feelings

- Mirroring feelings is a form of complex labeling where the caregiver tells (not asks) the child how they are feeling
 - “You look so sad. Your brother took your toy and you want it back, now!!”
- This form of sympathetic listening is perhaps the most important form of parental empathic interaction especially when followed by caring interactions



Faber, Adele, et al. *How to Talk so Kids Will Listen & Listen so Kids Will Talk*, 2012



Mirroring Feelings





Rena & The Crying Game



Mirroring Feelings

- Mirroring feelings introduces the child to a range of feelings **by name**
- The child will begin to recognize and label a range of basic emotions **in themselves AND others**
 - Mad, sad, happy, disappointed, frustrated, etc.
- This ability forms the substrate of empathy
 - “If I have feelings, others have feelings”

Faber, Adele, et al. *How to Talk so Kids Will Listen & Listen so Kids Will Talk*, 2012



FDC 4-5

- As the child progresses to FDC 4-5 and turns 4-5 yrs. old
- The Big 3 Developmental Domains:
 - **Interaction**
 - **Imagination**
 - **Emotions**
- Imagination
 - Pretend/Make believe
 - Sense of humor
 - Imagining the past and future
 - Imagining how others feel





4. Pretend Play

- All the above strategies can be incorporated into pretend play
- Greenspan identifies 3 types of pretend
 - Imitative (FDL 4)
 - One thematic (FDL 5)
 - Two thematic (FDL 6)
- Thematic play promotes the understanding of feelings



Autism, Empathy, & Imagination





Simple Play



Simple (One Idea) Imaginative Play



- Everything come alive
- Trains that make train noises
- Animal sounds and pretending to be an animal
- Babies that eat
- Swords
- Monster chase
- Puppets with big mouths that talk and eat
- Doctor shots



Julian and the Scary Dinosaur



Pretend Play

- In **two-thematic pretend (FDC 6)** there is a story with a plot
- There is 'reasoning about feelings'
- Thematic pretend examples include:
 - Good guys and bad guys (Why are good guys good?)
 - Injury and going to the hospital
 - Sickness and going to the doctor
 - Being hungry and going to dinner





Pretend Play

Our ultimate goal is for children with ASD to be able to 'imagine' how people feel, to imagine the future consequences of their actions, and to use their imagination to be creative.





Promoting EI: 9 Strategies

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5. Misbehavior Welcome!

- Whining
- Tantrums
- Arguing
- Obsessing
- Being anxious
- Not listening
- Stubborn and wrong
- Lying
- Being destructive
- Fighting

I welcome them all!
I don't like them at all!



Anxiety and Autism

- When children with autism misbehave it is often because they want the world to be predictable and orderly
- They are often overwhelmed by sensations, demands, transitions, their own feelings, thoughts, and obsessions
- All these reactions to life are legitimate but can result in the forms of misbehavior listed
- That are disruptive to family, friends, school, and even the public domain
- Can result in the autistic person feeling sad, depressed, anxious, guilty, outraged. Feelings hard to manage.



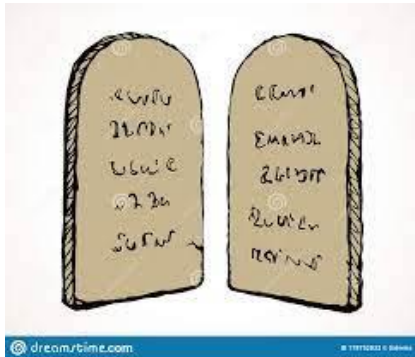
From Immaturity to Maturity

- Misbehavior is the immature expression of a legitimate feeling (see #6 Below)
- Few things can improve emotional thinking more than helping children learn how to manage these 'dark side' impulses and feelings
- When parents teach autistic children the 'rules with reasons' they can help the child use words to express feelings
- Mirroring feelings (#3 above) is the beginning of the process
- Establishing rules with reasons and consequences is the end goal
- My positive parenting approach is called *The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly*



Rules, Reasons, and Consequences Chart

Rules



Reasons



Consequences





From Immaturity to Maturity

- Misbehavior is the immature expression of a legitimate feeling (see #6 Below)
- Few things can improve emotional thinking more than helping children learn how to manage their negative impulses
- When parents teach children the 'rules with reasons', they can help the child use words to express feelings
- But first, it is crucial to 'mirror feelings' (#3 above) is the beginning of the process
- Establishing rules with reasons and consequences is the end goal
- My positive parenting approach is called *The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly*

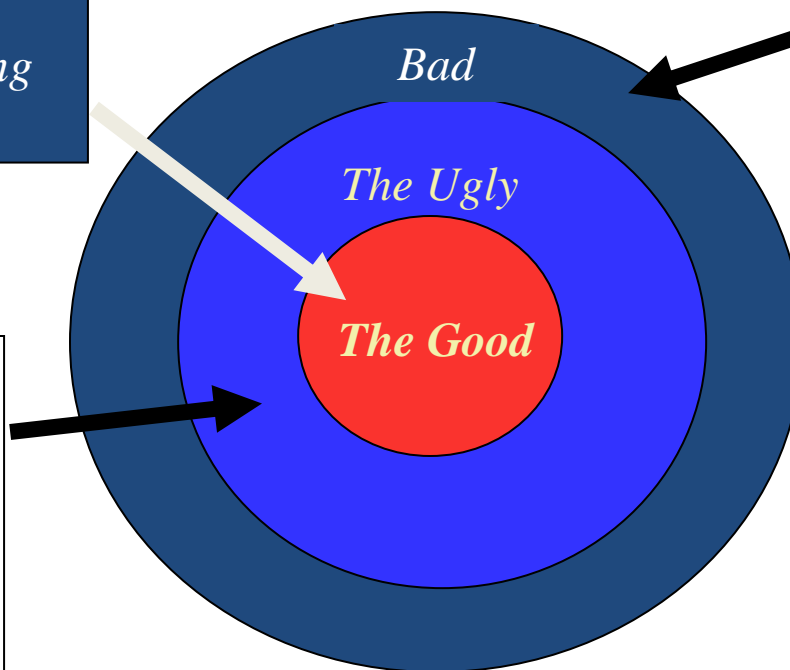


The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

*Attend to **The Good**. Follows the rules. Use a positive parenting approach.*

*Discipline **The Bad**. **Bad** breaks the rules. Decide ahead of time what you will do. Then do it!*

*Ignore **The Ugly**. Not good or bad. If you pay attention to ugly behavior it will increase.*



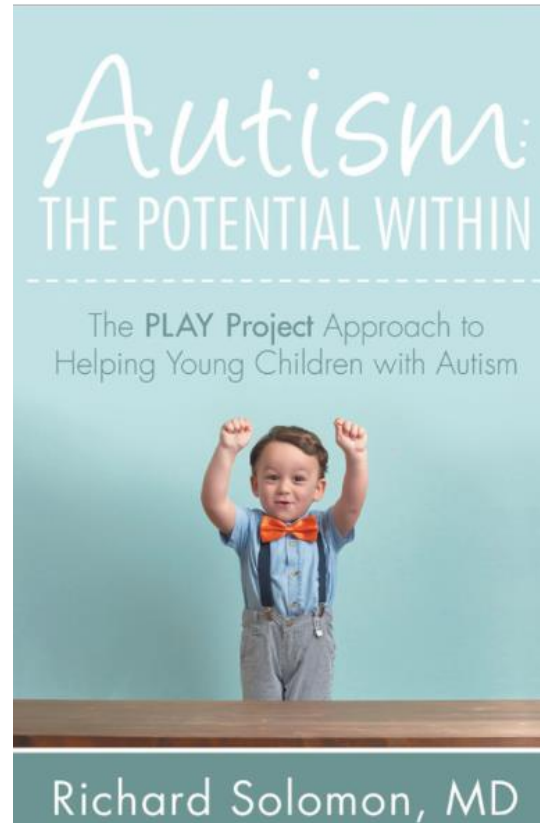
<https://playproject.org/project/good-bad-ugly/>



Check out my book:

Autism: The Potential Within

How Jacob goes from diagnosis to kindergarten through a series of office visits with Dr. Rick



*Available on our
website at
www.playproject.org*



6. Reasoning/reflecting about Feelings

- The key to improving misbehavior is to reason about and reflect on feelings
- **Reasoning** means putting two ideas together, and involves the logical consequences of one's actions
 - When you don't share with your brother that hurts his feelings (empathy) AND he's not going to want to play with you AND he won't want to share with you
- **Reflecting** means talking **about** how you feel
- **Alexithymia** means having trouble sharing what you feel, not uncommon in autistic people
 - By 'mirroring feelings' parents can help dramatically improve Alexithymia

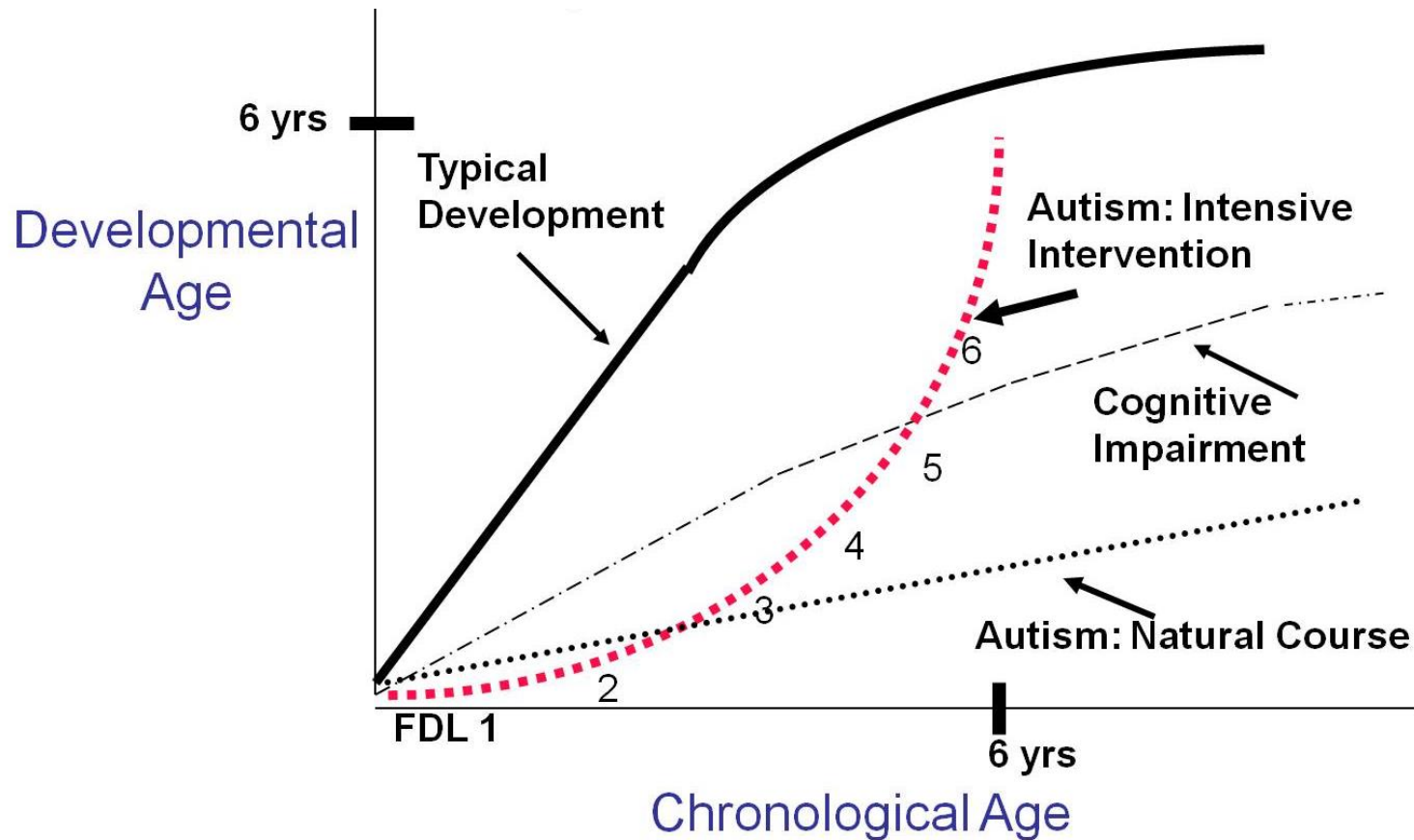


Emotional Thinkers can Reason (FDC 6)

- Talking in short to long sentences
- Can ask and answer 'Why' and 'when' questions
 - Understands cause and effect; Builds bridges between ideas
 - Two ideas connected logically
 - Lives in time. Can recall the immediate past (what did you eat for breakfast?)
- Identifies own and others' feelings
- Recognizes relationship between feeling, behavior, and consequences
- Two thematic play
- Can carry on simple conversations
- Can play with peers
- Misbehavior as developmental accomplishment



Developmental Course of Autism





Modeling Caring/Empathy

- Once a child has the capacity for complex imitation, the ability to model, pretend, and to understand basic feelings (FDC 6-7), parents can begin to **model caring and empathy for others**
- Throughout the day be aware of opportunities for demonstrating care for others' feelings
 - When someone gets hurt
 - When someone is emotionally upset
- Use video to show modeling of feelings



6 Rules for Sharing

1. You don't have to share
2. If you have a special toy you don't want anyone to play with, put it away, otherwise. . .
3. Toys, games, etc. are 'first come, first serve'
4. If I want the toy, game, etc., parents should invoke the 10 minute rule:
i.e. you get to play with the toy/game in 10 minutes, or 'when your brother is done'
5. If both parties arrive at the toy/game at the same time, flip a coin
6. It's nice to share. If you share with your brother, your brother is more likely to share with you and it will make your brother happy



Golden Rules	
<u>DO</u>	<u>DO NOT</u>
Be gentle	Hurt anybody
Be kind and helpful	Hurt people's feelings
Work hard	Waste your or other people's time
Look after property	Waste or damage things
Listen to people	interrupt
Be honest	Cover up the truth



Adam and His Sister Have a Fight



Sharing Positive and Negative Feelings

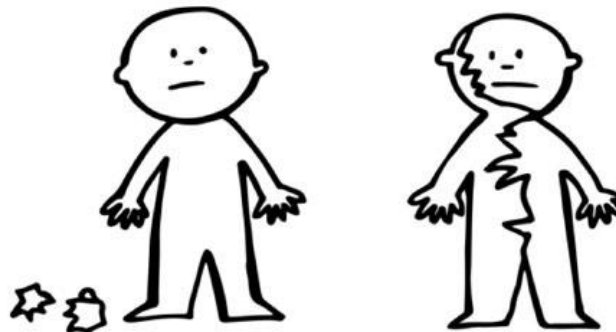
- Closely related to the modeling of caring/empathy is for parents and professionals to **sharing one's own feelings/emotions**
 - Both negative and positive emotions are good
 - The 'dark side' emotions
 - Anger, selfishness, not sharing, being mean, etc.
- Let the children know how you feel in a way that does not create shame
 - Use 'I' statements. "I get very frustrated with you when you don't listen to me."



Sharing Positive and Negative Feelings

- Be careful about the difference between **guilt versus shame**
 - Guilt is based on **behaviors**
 - You hurt his feelings
 - Shame is based on the **person**
 - You are a bad boy because you hurt his feelings

Guilt vs Shame



I did something bad

I am bad



7. Literacy: Books and Jokes

- Book encompass all the methods of invoking empathy, caring, conflict resolution, etc.
- “. . .On average, a reference to emotions or social events occurred every three sentences in children’s books”*
- “Maternal expertise in choosing books is very productive and relates to both children’s empathy and socioemotional adjustment”*

*Aram, D., & Aviram, S. (2009)



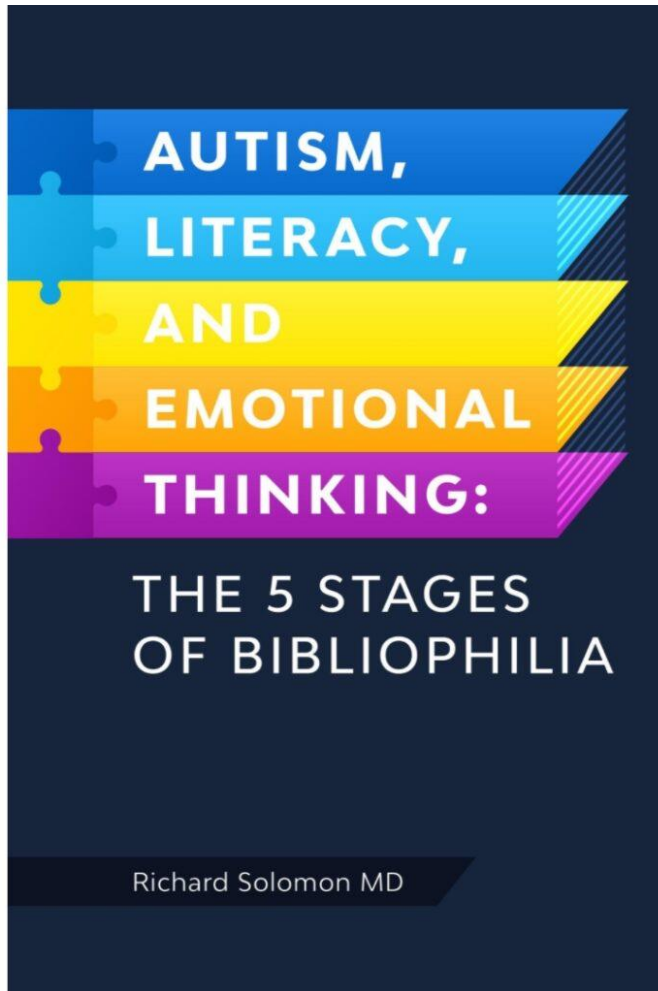
SA, EI, and Empathy: Books

One goal is for children with ASD to **love** to read books with great reading comprehension and literary insight into plot and character and write down their own opinions about what they read.





Autism, Literacy, and Emotional Thinking



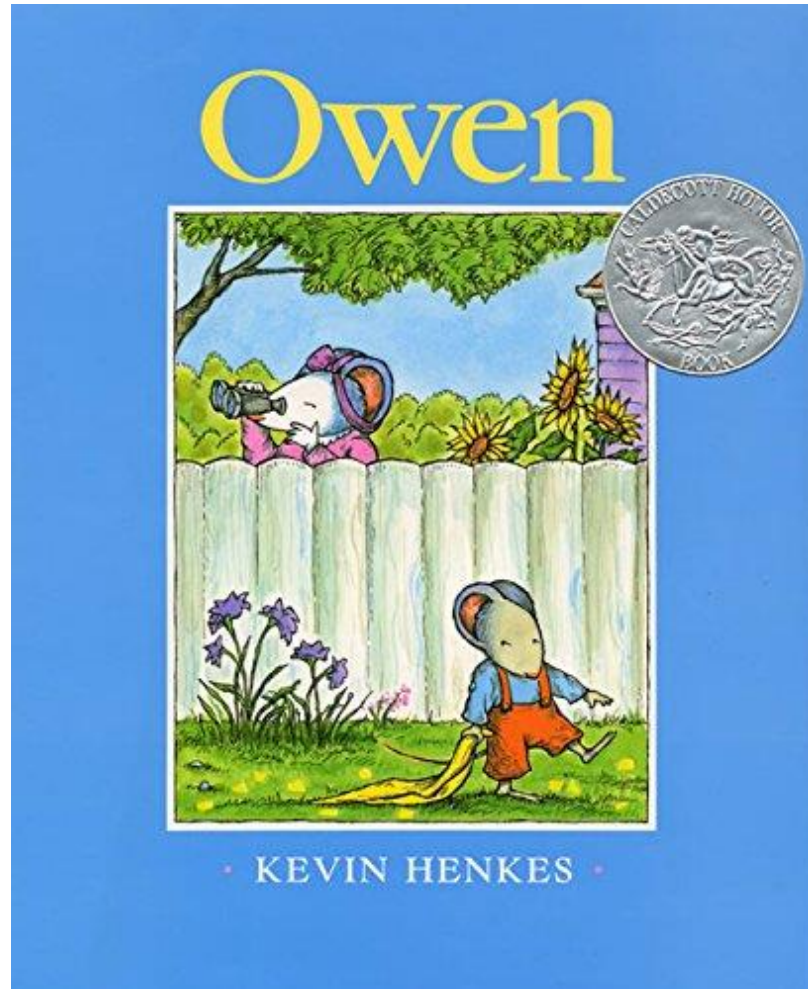
Free read!



[PLAY Online Store](#)



Books & Jokes



<https://open.buffer.com/empathy/>



Best EI & Empathy Books

1. Owen by Kevin Hankes
2. The King's Equal by Katherine Paterson
3. The Golden Rule by Ilene Cooper
4. Babushka's Doll by Patricia Polacco
5. The Very Best of Friends by Margaret Wild
6. Best Friends by Steven Kellogg
7. That's What Friends Are For by Valeri Gorbachev
8. Bully by Judith Caseley
9. George and Martha by James Marshall
10. When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really, Angry
by Molly Bang



EQ Leads to IQ and Vice Versa



**SA, EI, and Empathy
prepares children
on the spectrum
for higher order learning
beginning in 5th grade**



EQ & IQ



7. Jokes and Joking





No seriously. . .

- In fact there is a developmental progression to sense of humor that begins very early in life



- YEAH!



Developmentally funny. . .

- Tickling may be the first joke
- Then Peek-a-boo. A close third is. . .
- Chase: “I’m going to get you!”
- Slap stick—Underwear on your head, poop & pee humor, Tom and Jerry, Three Stooges, Jim Carey—almost always gets a laugh.
- Disobedience as funny
 - Being ‘bad’ — “Don’t you wake me up!”
- Irony—Meaning the opposite of what you you say. . .
- Proper Jokes
 - Knock-knock jokes
 - Kid jokes



Scatological humor. . .



Underwear





Developmentally funny. . .

- Tickling may be the first joke
- Then Peek-a-boo. A close third is. . .
- Chase: “I’m going to get you!”
- Slap stick—Underwear on your head, poop & pee humor, Tom and Jerry, Three Stooges, Jim Carey—almost always gets a laugh.
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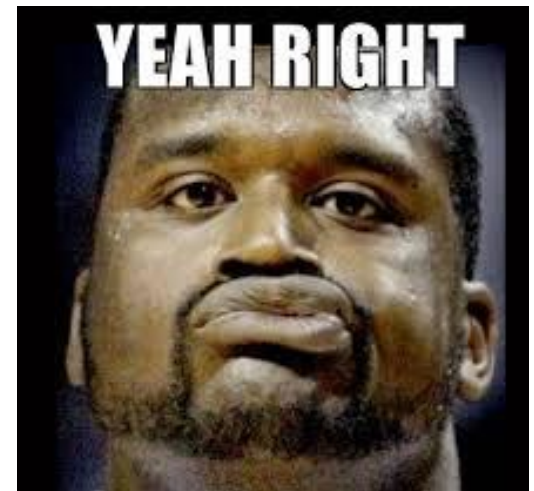


A Great Kid Joke!



Jokes and Joking

- The highest achievement of self awareness and emotional intelligence is the ability to tell a funny joke
 - Just joking
- Though *I am serious about joking and having a sense of humor* as one great measure of self awareness
 - The ability to laugh at yourself
- Your child should be able to say *why* something is funny!





Jokes and Joking

Q: What did the electrician's wife say when he came home after midnight?

A: Wire you insulate?

(Why are you in so late?)



Promoting EI: 9 Strategies

1. Daily interactions (FDCs 1-9)
2. Imitation (FDC 3-6)
3. Mirroring feelings (FDC 4-9)
4. Pretend play & Imagination (FDC 4-9)
5. Misbehavior welcome!
6. Reasoning/reflecting about feelings (FDC 6-9)
7. Literacy: Books and Jokes (FDC 5-9)
8. **Supervised play dates (6-9)**
9. Self Disclosure & Higher-Level Self Awareness



8. Supervised Play Dates

- Supervised Play Dates are one of the *real* tests of all these methods that I have presented today
- Children with autism need to practice all the skills of interaction, imitation, imagination, recognizing feeling, being able to talk about their own feelings, having a senses of humor and social reasoning, etc.
- One of the best ways to do this is through play dates that I call ---
- “A Birthday Party Without the Cake”





Birthday Party Without the Cake

- It's important to select the right child who will complement the neurodivergent child
- Characteristics include a child who is emotionally intelligent, playful, kind and maybe a little bit older
- Talk to the parents of the other child about what you're doing (see self disclosure #9 below)
- Then, set it up like a birthday party with a game, a game, a snack, and a game with close adult supervision
- Keep it short and fun. One hour
- Limit screens and electronics

My favorite social skills resources:

- [TalkAbility](#) (*The Hanen Centre*)
- [SocialThinking.com](#)



Play Date Rules and Reasons

- Have 'the talk' with your child, that an important part of a play date is staying with your friend the whole time
- Because. . .using FDC 7: Multi-causal thinking. . .
 - He's your friend, and friends don't leave friends
 - He wants to have fun with YOU
 - It's rude to not play when your friend comes over to play
- Practice the games beforehand
- The adult should supervise and help the neurodivergent child navigate the social relationship, process feelings, repair conflict, etc.
- See this as a learning opportunity to use all FDCs to promote SA, EI, and empathy



Play Date



9 Functional Developmental Capacities*

1. Self regulation and shared attention (FDC 1)
2. Engagement (FDC 2)
3. Two-way Communication (FDC 3)
4. Complex two-way Communication (FDC 4) (18m)
5. Shared Meanings & Symbolic Play (FDC 5—2y)
6. Emotional Thinking (FDC 6—3-5 year olds)
7. Multi-causal Thinking (FDC 7—5-7 years old)
8. Shades of Gray Thinking (FDC 8—8-12 year old)
9. Thinking off an Internal Standard (FDC 9—13+ year old)

*Greenspan S., Weider S. (1997)



9. Self Disclosure as Self Awareness

- Self disclosure is telling someone your child has autism or the autistic person telling someone they have autism
- This process begins:
 - At the first awareness that ‘my child is different’
 - When other people/children see the child as ‘different’
 - When the child sees themselves as ‘different’ (age 10+ FDC 8-9)
 - When the child understands that he/she has a neurological/genetic condition called autism (FDC 8-9)



Self Disclosure as Self Awareness

- How well do parents and family accept autism?
 - Does anyone feel a societal stigma?
- Should you tell your child he/she has autism? When?
- How does a parent/mentor help the child understand his 'condition'/diagnosis?
- Do you tell classmates about your child's autism?
 - Should they tell their classmates?
- When does/Should an autistic adolescent tell his peers he has autism?
- Do they tell their friends?
- What about at job interviews?



4 Square Theory of Self Knowledge

Box I

The Public Box

What you know about yourself, and others know about you.

What others know about you that you don't know about yourself

The Mentor Box

Box III

Box II

The Private Box

What you know about yourself, that others don't know

What others don't know about you, and you don't know about yourself.

The God Box

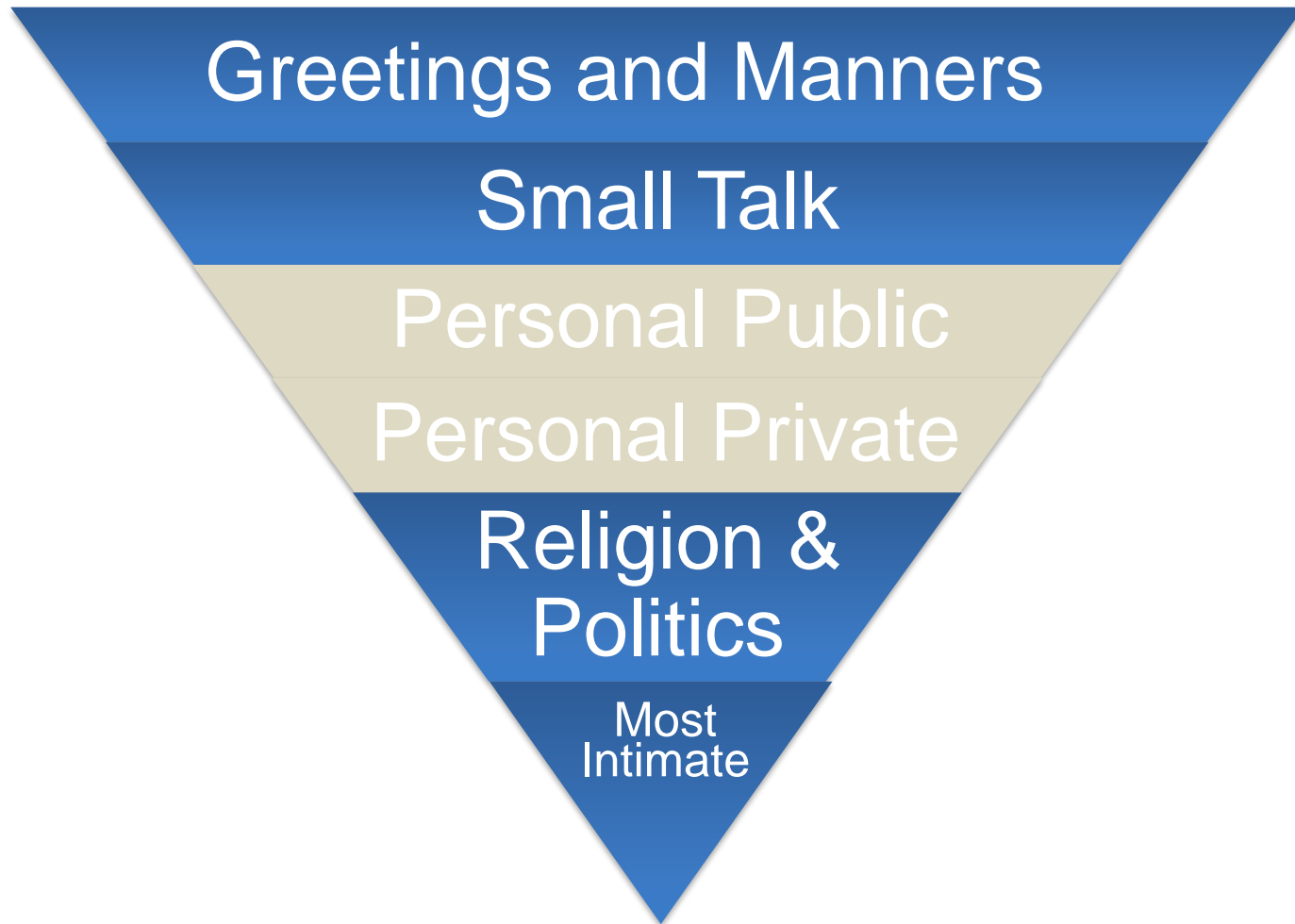
Box IV



Do You Celebrate Kwanzaa?



The 6 Degrees of Intimacy





Self Awareness: Summary

- Introduction: Autistic people can become self aware, emotionally intelligent, and empathic just like anyone else (neurodiversity perspective)
- Definitions and Development of Self Awareness (SA), Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Empathy
- 9 Practical ways to promote SA & EI for autistic children and adolescents



Promoting EI: 9 Strategies

1. Daily interactions (FDCs 1-9)
2. Imitation (FDC 3-6)
3. Mirroring feelings (FDC 4-9)
4. Pretend play & Imagination (FDC 4-9)
5. Misbehavior welcome!
6. Reasoning/reflecting about feelings (FDC 6-9)
7. Literacy: Books and Jokes (FDC 5-9)
8. Play dates (FDC 6-9)
9. Self Disclosure & Higher-Level Self Awareness (FDC 8-9)



Conclusion: Autism, Self Awareness and EI

The tendency of autistic people to keep the world the same can narrow down their life to their comfort zone and put a real limit on their potential for greater self awareness.

Self awareness as I've presented it opens life up and reduces anxiety, obsessiveness, and rigidity.

Emotional intelligence may be the single most important form of intelligence, characterized by the ability to imagine oneself as another, to be understanding of others, sympathetic, compassionate, and empathic

To be self-critical and have a sense of humor about oneself and the world.



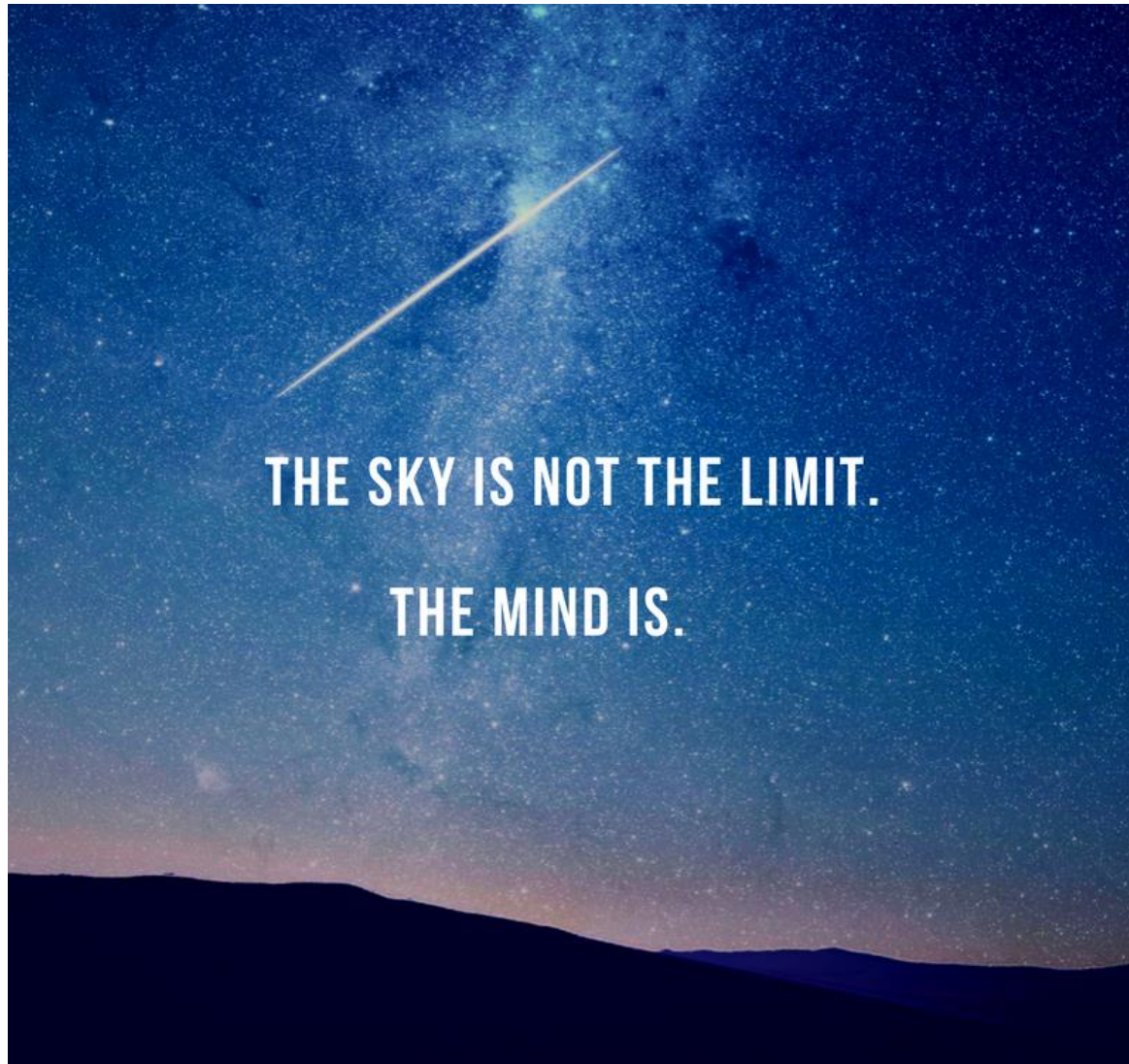
Conclusion: Autism, Self Awareness and EI

Ultimately emotional intelligence leads us to be kinder and more loving. It is the education of the heart which all children including children with autism have the potential within them to learn

I hope I have convinced you, as I have been convinced over my 25 years of caring for these children and their families, that the sky is NOT the limit



Autism, Self Awareness and EI





Thank you!

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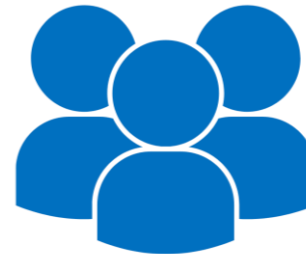
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