Putting Autism in Perspective
Parent View, Child View

Ellen Notbohm
Author, *Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew*
REACTION

Disbelief
Relief
Grief
Start here:

Same child
You can do this
Time is on your side
Listen to your inner voice
Strike a balance
You will always have choices
Parent as caseworker:

The Ol’ Seven-on-One
Defining “expertise”

Seven layers
(and counting)
Autism - a SPECTRUM

It’s not just for children anymore ;o)

Every child
Every parent
Every educator
Every service provider

… a different point on the SPECTRUM
Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew
1. I am a child
Perspective

Tragedy or opportunity?
Expectation

Too high

Too low

Too sideways
2. My sensory perceptions are disordered
Sensory Processing

Familiar:
Visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory
Sensory Processing

Less familiar:

Thermoception (heat, cold)
Nociception (pain)
  Pain on the skin
  Pain in the bones and joints
  Pain in the organs

Processing in multiple modalities
Vestibular disorder may cause

- Dizziness/vertigo/ loss of balance
- Nausea (chronic "seasickness" or "hangover")
- Distorted hearing
- Visual disturbances
  - Stationery objects or print material appears to be moving
  - Distance focus difficult
  - Glare from lights exaggerated
  - Night blindness
- Chronic fatigue
- Disruption of cognitive function
  - Difficulty with memory
  - Inability to focus
- Emotional health problems
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
3. Distinguish between won’t and can’t
Won’t:
I choose not to

Can’t:
I am not able to
I process in one main modality

I need to see it to learn it

Words = steam
If I don’t respond “appropriately”

I don’t have the knowledge
I don’t have the skill
I’m not able to retrieve the information
The information is not presented in a manner I can understand
Not able to retrieve because

I’m not able to sort information
I’m not able to generalize information

You think: general to specific
I think: specific to general
I am a concrete thinker.
I interpret language literally.
Concrete thinking
language traps

Idioms, metaphors, slang
Homophones
Phrasal verbs
Non-specific instructions
Sarcasm
5. Be patient with my limited vocabulary
“Suppose you say that I said that she said something quite different; I don’t see that it makes any difference, because if she said what you said I said she said, it’s just the same as if I said what she said she said.”

Slow-Solid Turtle to Painted Jaguar in Rudyard Kipling’s “The Beginning of the Armadillos”
Functional communication
in whatever for it may take
All children with autism require adaptive communication
6. I am visually oriented
SHOW ME
how to do something rather than just telling me

SHOW ME MANY TIMES
Visual supports

Change as level of representation changes

Must be consistent across venues
7. Focus and build on what I CAN DO rather than what I CAN’T DO
REFRAME

Rigid behavior
Food
Clothing
Routine – sequential/temporal aspects

Inflexible or ---
INDEPENDENT

Bryce at 14

Cooks breakfast and dinner items, packs lunch
Grocery shops, handles checkout
Does own laundry, cleans own bathroom
Handles school transport including securing house and navigating public transportation (age 16)
Self-manages medications
8. Help me with social interactions
Theory of Mind
(social pragmatic) skills

Social conversation – initiating and sustaining talk or play

Appropriate emotional responses, identifying emotions

Etiquette
Non-language social communication issues

Vocalic

Kinesthetic

Proxemic
Resources

- Michelle Garcia Winner, SLP
  - Think Social!
  - Thinking About You Thinking About Me

- Jed Baker, PhD
  - The Social Skills Picture Book: Teaching play, emotion and communication to children with autism
9. Identify what triggers my meltdowns
Four trigger clusters

1. Sensory overload
2. Underlying physiological cause
3. Underlying emotional cause
4. Poor examples from adults
10. Love me unconditionally
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