



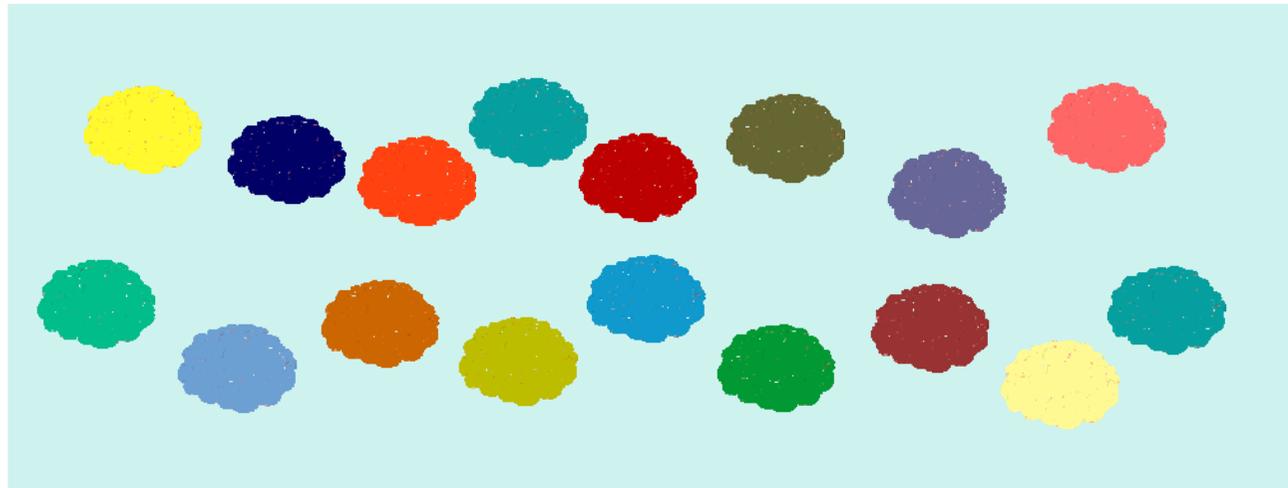
AUTISM in CONTEXT

www.petervermeulen.be

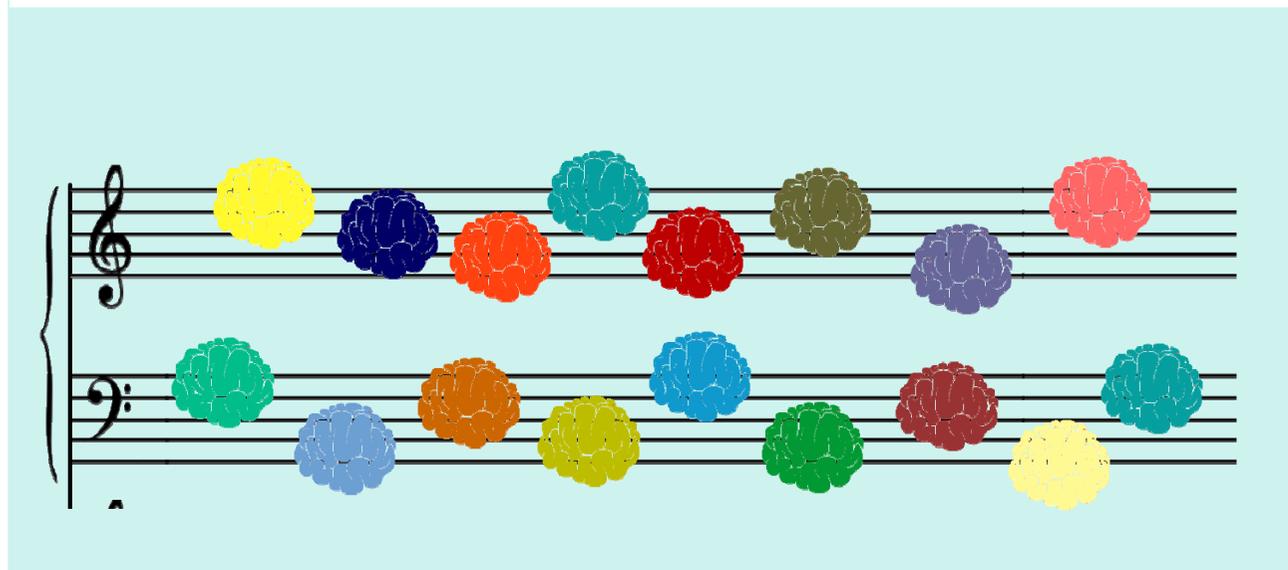


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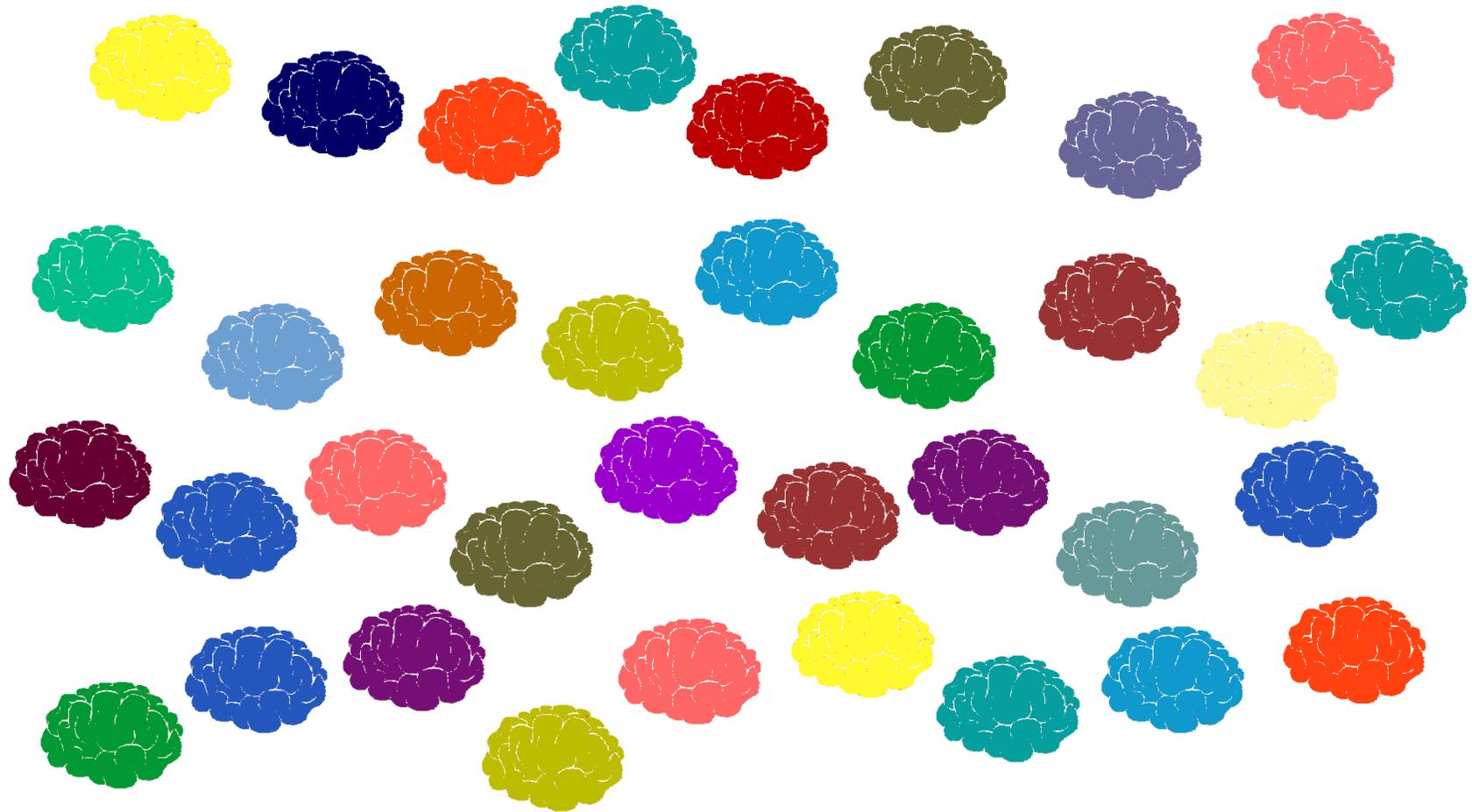
[peter_autisme](https://twitter.com/peter_autisme)



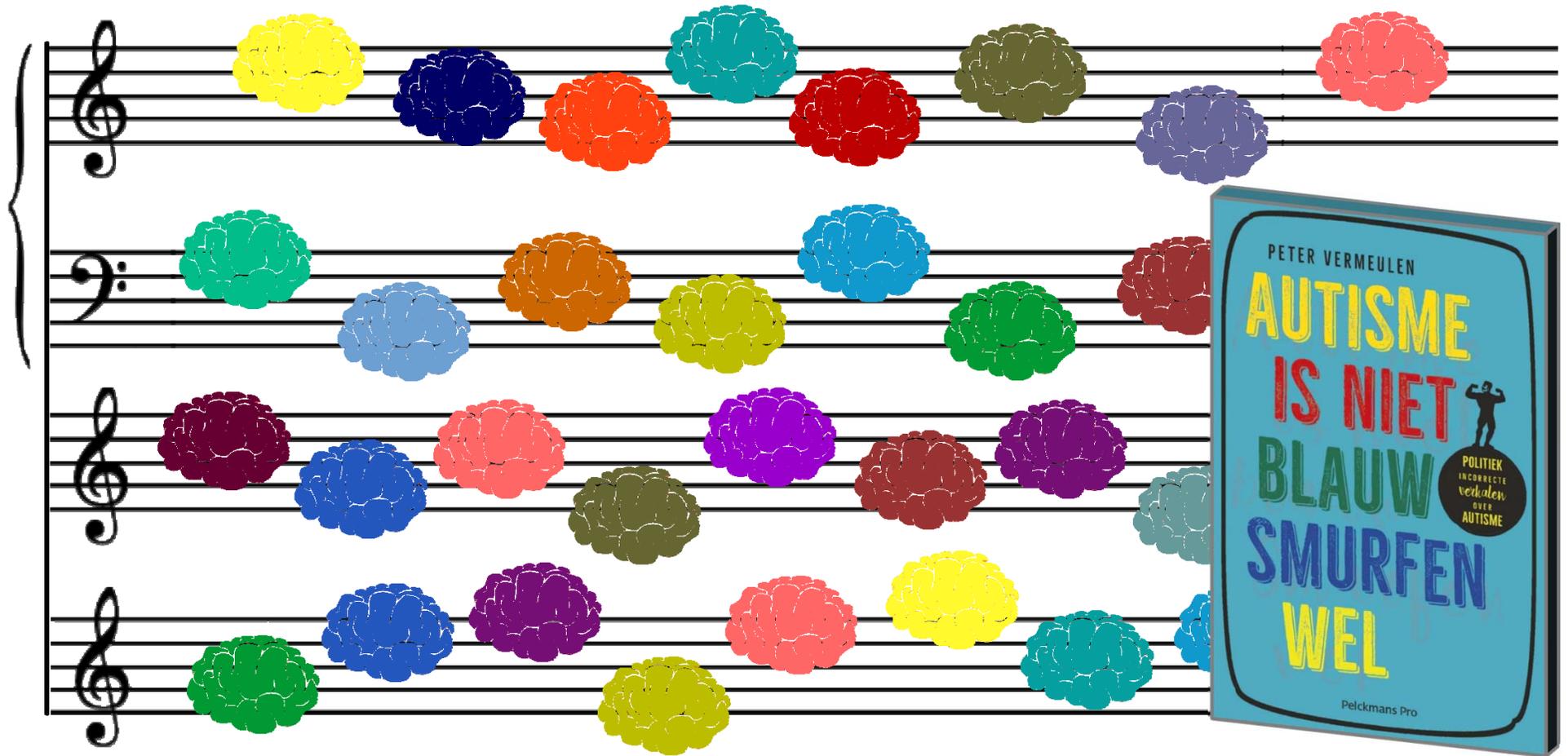
from neurodiversity to neuroharmony



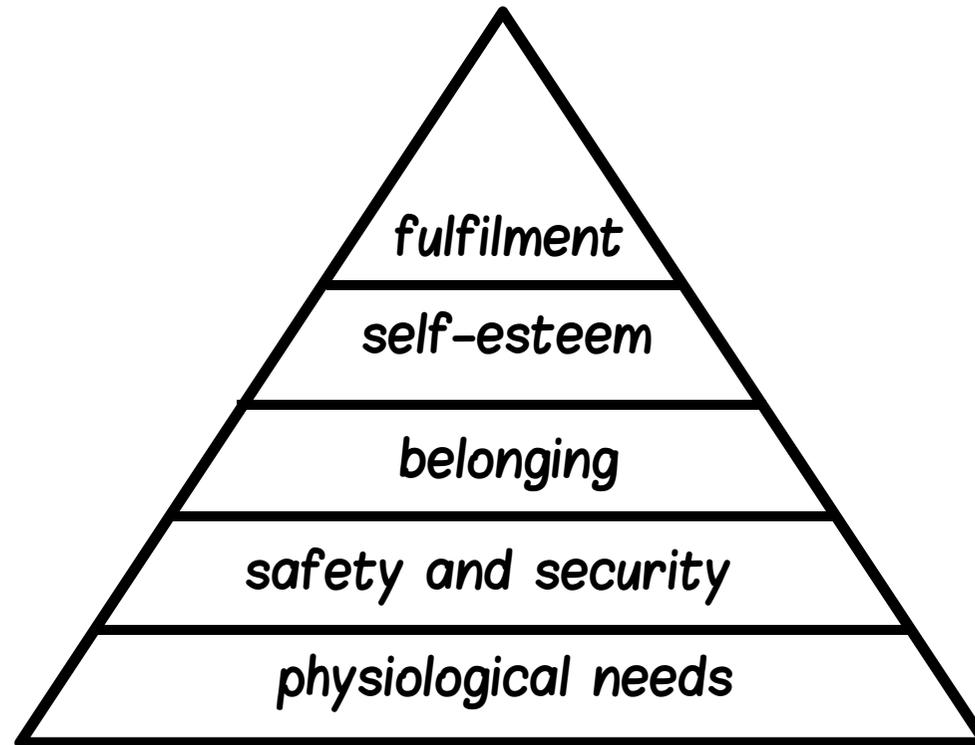
Neurodiversity



Neuroharmony



Human needs: Maslow's hierarchy



Autistic people have the same needs!

Happiness



Pleasant life

Positive feelings

Joy - Pleasure

Absence of pain

Safety

Activities you like



Meaningful life

Contentment

Purpose in life

Personal growth

Serving others

Life satisfaction

Find out what makes people feel good

TRIAL VERSION - FOR PERSONAL USE ONLY

AUTISM STRESS INVENTORY

PART I: STRESSORS

Judge to what extent the following situations cause stress for the person with autism.

- 1: no stress
- 2: lightly stressful
- 3: moderately stressful
- 4: highly stressful
- 5: severely stressful

Sensory stimuli

	1	2	3	4	5
Certain kinds of light, namely...					
Certain kinds of noises, namely...					
Certain kinds of smell, namely...					
Certain kinds of tactile stimuli, namely...					
Being touched					
Being hugged					
Being kissed					
Certain kinds of food					
Other:					

Autism Good Feeling Questionnaire

The questionnaire contains items referring to all sorts of things that can give a person a good feeling. Obviously, each person is different. What gives a good feeling to one person, can be very unpleasant for another person.

Below, you can indicate the extent to which things or events give you a good feeling. For each category of items, there is place to add things that are not mentioned in the list.

Each 'item' can be scored as follows:

3: This gives me a good feeling - I enjoy this very much

2: This gives me a good feeling - I enjoy this

1: This gives me a little bit of good feeling - I enjoy this a little

0: This does not give me a good feeling - I don't enjoy this in particular (neutral, I feel nothing) or I even find this unpleasant

?: I do not know if this gives me a good feeling

Obviously this list is not exhaustive. Therefore, there is room left to add things that make you feel good or that you enjoy.

Sensory aspects

	3	2	1	0	?
Certain light, namely: ..					
Certain sounds, namely: ..					
A certain kind of voice, namely: ..					
Silence					
Certain smells, namely: ..					
Certain tactile stimuli, namely: ..					
Being touched					
Being cuddled					
Being kissed					
Heat					
Cold					
Certain foods, namely: ..					
Certain beverages, namely:					
Certain items that I like to touch, namely: ..					
Certain weather conditions (please specify:.....)					
A fleece blanket around me					

Assessment of happiness and wellbeing in autism

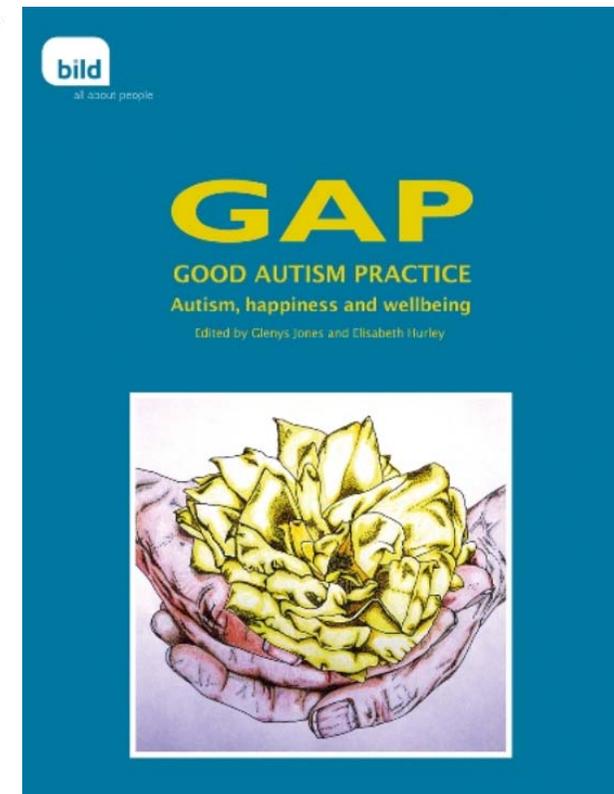
The practice of promoting happiness in autism

The practice of promoting happiness in autism

Peter Vermeulen, Autisme Centraal, Gent, Belgium

Editorial comment

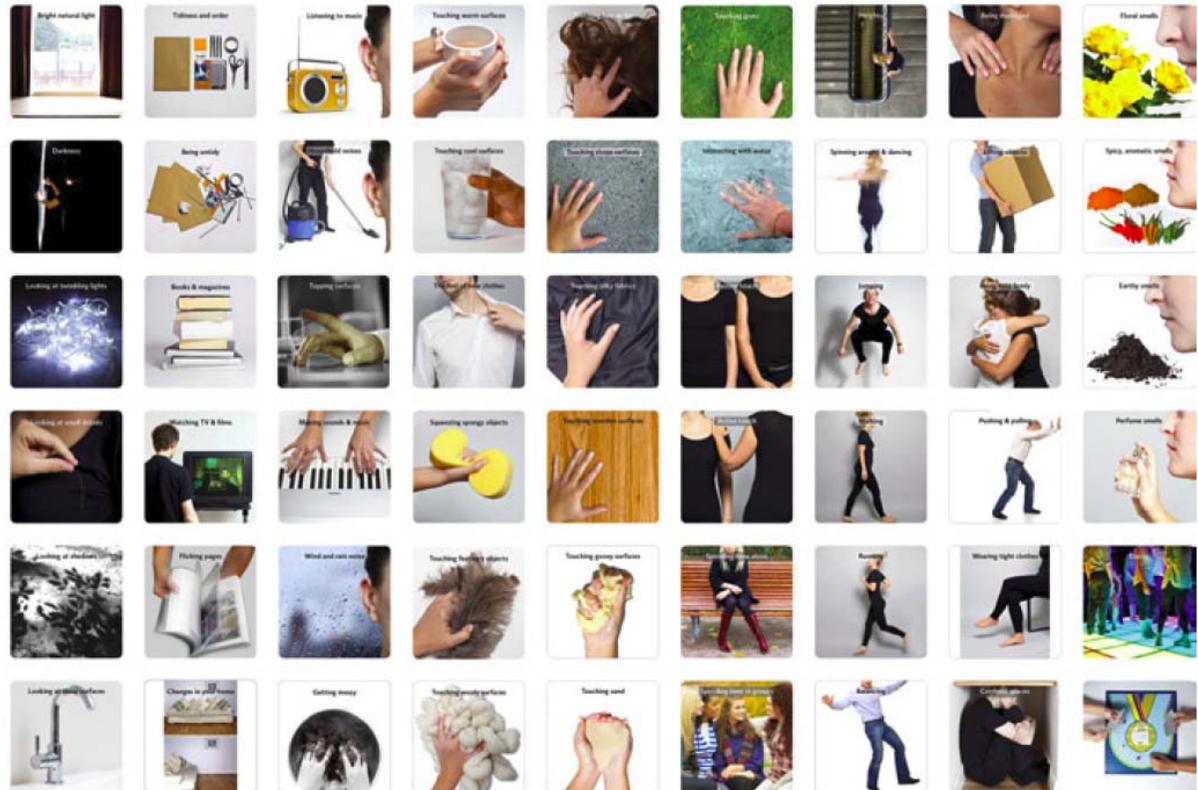
Emotional wellbeing and happiness have received little attention in the field of autism. When the focus is on wellbeing, it is often from a negative perspective, namely the lack of wellbeing and quality of life in autism. Based on the principles of positive psychology, Peter Vermeulen argues for a change in focus and suggests that instead of concentrating on the lack of emotional wellbeing in people with autism, strategies to facilitate their feeling of happiness should be developed. In this article, the main focus is on the first and most important step in promoting happiness in people with autism, namely the



Assessment of sensory preferences

This gives me a good feeling

SMELL	
TASTE	
SEE	
TEMPERATURE	
TOUCH	
HEAR	
BODY MOVEMENTS	



Good Feeling Sensory Circuit
(Vermeulen, 2014)

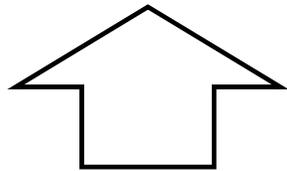
Kingwood Sensory Preference Cards
(Brand & Gaudion, 2012; Gaudion, 2015)

Find out what makes people feel good
and create opportunities for joy, pleasure and comfort

- Sensory pleasure
 - E.g. snoezelen, shampoo or shower gel with favourite scent
- Cognitive pleasure:
 - E.g. Happy memories wall

Autism friendly environment

Wellbeing



Autism friendliness



Meaningful and purposeful life

What can society offer to autistic people?

What can autistic people offer to society?

Every autistic person has something to offer.
So, therefore society can expect them to contribute to society.

Employment may be therapeutic

Employment may lead to improvement in autism symptoms and enhances well-being and quality of life

J Autism Dev Disord
DOI 10.1007/s10803-013-2010-9

ORIGINAL PAPER

Engagement in Vocational Activities Promotes Behavioral Development for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders

**Julie Lounds Taylor · Leann E. Smith ·
Marsha R. Mailick**

Employment is a predictor of QoL

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Predictors of Quality of Life for Autistic Adults

David Mason, Helen McConachie , Deborah Garland, Alex Petrou, Jacqui Rodgers, and Jeremy R. Parr

Abstract: Research with adults on the autism spectrum is as yet limited in scope and quality. The present study describes quality of life (QoL) of a large sample of autistic adults in the UK and investigates characteristics that may be predictive of QoL. A total of 370 autistic adults from the Adult Autism Spectrum Cohort-UK (ASC-UK) completed the WHOQoL-BREF, and the Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS, autism symptom severity), along with the ASC-UK registration questionnaire giving information on mental health and their life situation. QoL for autistic adults was lower than for the general population for each WHOQoL domain. Younger participants reported higher QoL than older participants in psychological and environment domains. Males reported higher physical QoL than females, and females reported higher social QoL than males. **Significant positive predictors of QoL were: being employed** (physical QoL), receiving support (social and environment QoL), and being in a relationship (social QoL). Having a mental health condition and higher SRS total score were negative predictors of QoL across all four domains. Autistic adults require access to effective mental health interventions, and informal and formal support for their social difficulties, to improve their quality of life. *Autism Res* 2018, 0: 000–000. © 2018 The Authors Autism Research published by International Society for Autism Research and Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

A well filled day

...prevents you from

- boredom
- getting stuck in stereotyped activities / obsessions
- worrying and anxiety
- challenging behavior

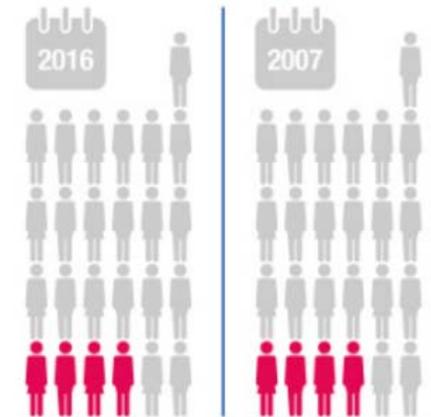
...creates opportunities to learn new skills

...reach higher levels of functioning

We're not there yet!



Only **16%**
of autistic adults are in
full-time paid work.
This has not improved
in almost a decade.



What defines job success??

- Skills
- Abilities
- Knowledge
- Hard work
- Luck

Why so few autistic people have a job

Difficulties with
Social interaction

Difficulties with
Communication

Reduced
Flexibility

Context blind brain

Autism and employment: the challenges



communication



interaction



sensory



organisation

This can never go well!!

It can go well!

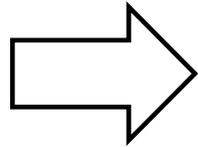
**What can we learn from the successes?
(Temple Grandin, Donald Triplett, ...)**

What can we learn from the successes?

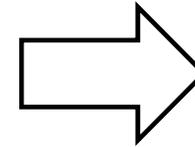
- Use interests and strengths
- Turn fixated interests / obsessions into a job
- High expectations
- Don't avoid the challenges involved
- A good transition planning

It works like this:

Learning social skills,
communication skills,
etc.



Getting a job



Having a skill or ability
that other people
need and value



Transition planning

Boosting Post-School Outcomes: Development and Evaluation of an Online Transition Planning Program for Adolescents on the Autism Spectrum

This thesis is presented for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of
Curtin University

Megan Kelly Hatfield

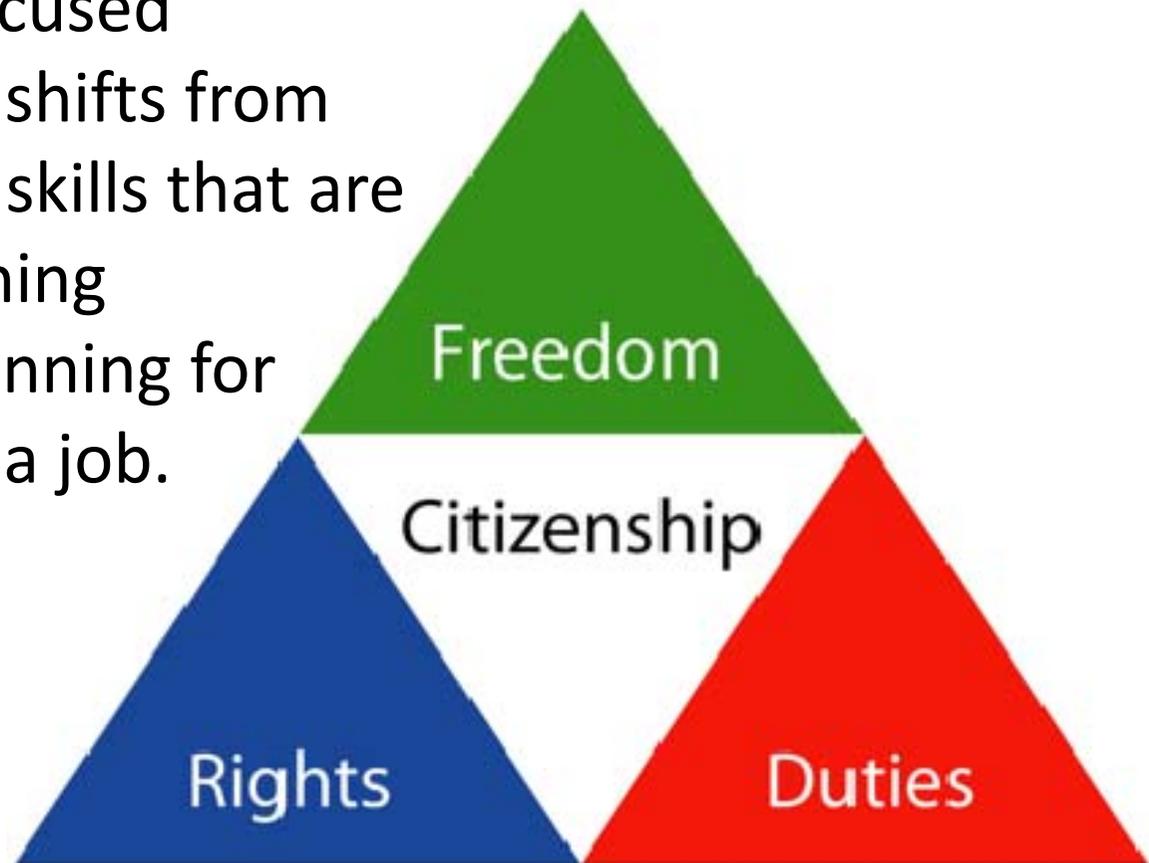
June 2017

Key elements of a transition planning (Hatfield, 2017)

- Strengths focused
- Structured process
- Concrete and visualized career exploration
- Self-determination and being allowed to change your mind
- Clarify the context and purpose of transition planning
- Contextualize the meaning of work in a concrete way through work experiences (student jobs)

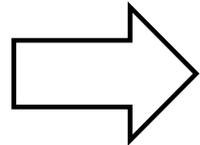
Key elements of a transition planning (Hatfield, 2017)

There is a need for a 'citizen focused curriculum' in which attention shifts from teaching academic skills to life skills that are integral in becoming a functioning member of society, such as planning for living out of home and getting a job.

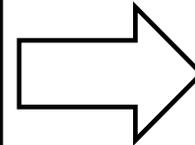


Getting and keeping a job

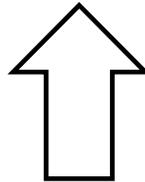
Having a skill or ability
that other people
need and value



**Getting and
keeping a job**



Learning social skills,
communication skills,
etc.



Autism friendly
workplace

Autism friendly workplace



Concrete
communication



Social
accommodations



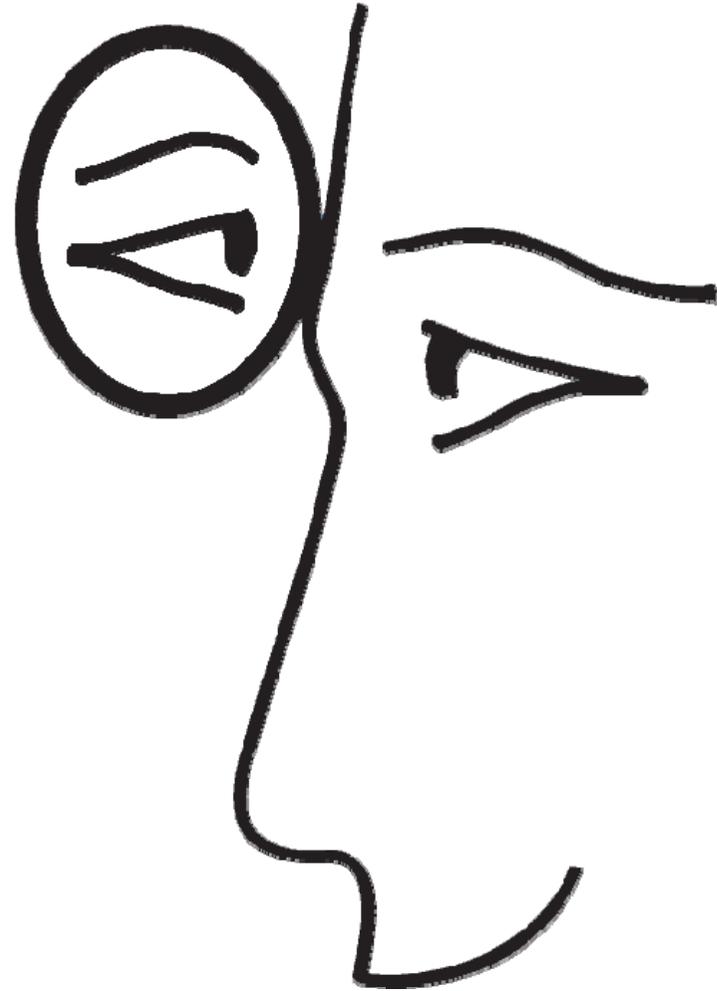
Sensory
accommodations



Tools for
organisation &
planning

Autism friendly workplace

Be autism friendly:
Give **clarity** and
predictability first,
All the rest comes
later



Being kind and grateful makes you happy

The Journal of Psychology, 2014, 148(1), 37–60
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On Being Grateful and Kind: Results of Two Randomized Controlled Trials on Study-Related Emotions and Academic Engagement

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Journal of Happiness Studies (2006) 7:361–375
DOI 10.1007/s10902-005-3650-z

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KEIKO OTAKE, SATOSHI SHIMAI, JUNKO TANAKA-MATSUMI,
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HAPPY PEOPLE BECOME HAPPIER THROUGH KINDNESS: A COUNTING KINDNESSES INTERVENTION

ABSTRACT. We examined the relationship between the character strength of kindness and subjective happiness (Study 1), and the effects of a counting kindnesses intervention on subjective happiness (Study 2). In Study 1, participants were 175 Japanese undergraduate students and in Study 2, participants were 119 Japanese women (71 in the intervention group and 48 in the control group). Results showed that: (a) Happy people scored higher on their motivation to perform, and their recognition and enactment of kind behaviors. (b) Happy people have more happy memories in daily life in terms of both quantity and quality. (c) Subjective happiness was increased simply by counting one's own acts of kindness for one week. (d) Happy people became more kind and grateful through the counting kindnesses intervention. Discussion centers on the importance of kindness in producing subjective happiness.

Happiness



Pleasant life

Positive feelings
Joy - Pleasure
Absence of pain
Safety
Activities you like



Autism
friendliness



Meaningful life

Contentment
Purpose in life
Personal growth
Serving others
Life satisfaction

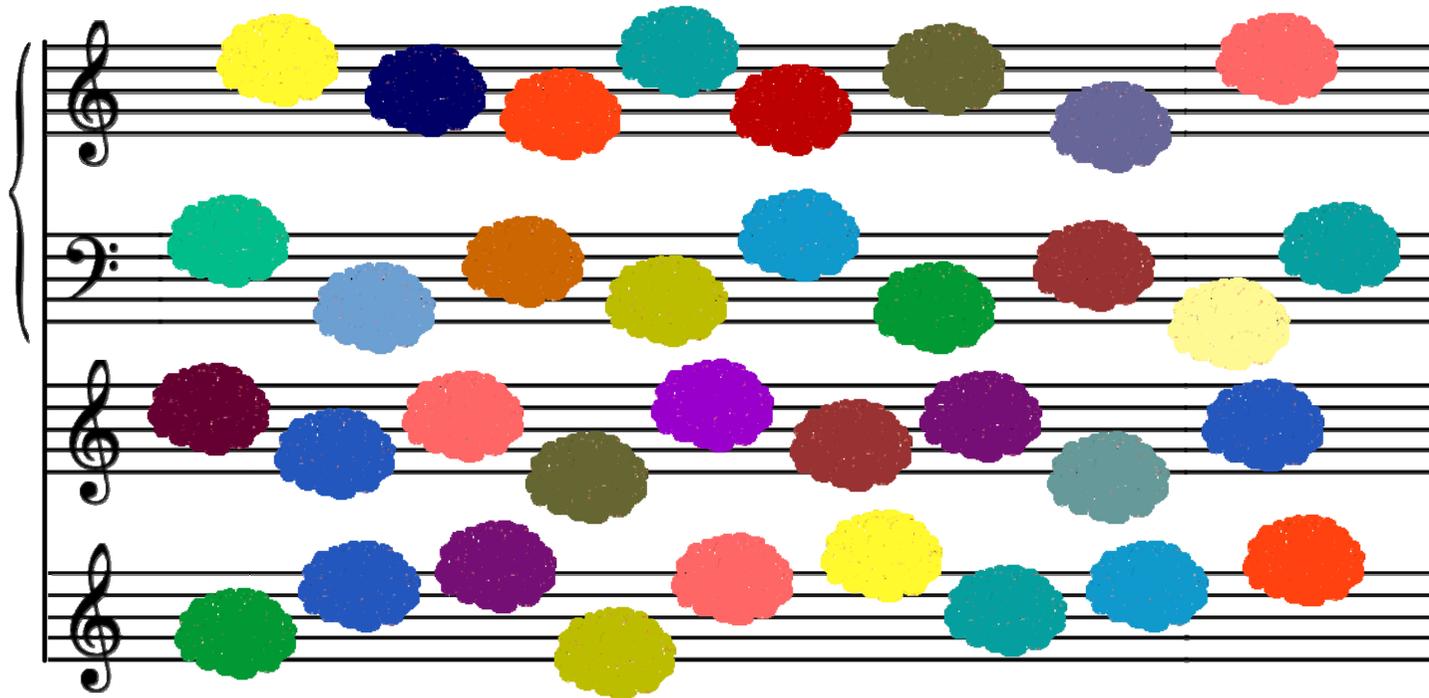


Autistic
friendliness

Many ways of making a difference

- Volunteer work
- All kind of fundraising activities
- Jobs at all kind of events (rock festival, theatre, ...)
- Running / cycling for cancer or other diseases
- Charity work
- ...

Neuroharmony



Gary Mesibov: A 'Cheers' for every person with autism

THANK YOU
FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



AUTISM in CONTEXT

from neurodiversity to neuroharmony

www.petervermeulen.be



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