



AutismInitiativesUK

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A self prompt system to support social understanding

Kate Silver

Speech and Language Therapist

Director Autism Initiatives UK



I don't do people

I can't read body language



People with Aspergers can't read facial expression

I'm a mug

Common beliefs of people with Asperger syndrome
.....




So, we teach....

- Labels to apply to certain positions of a often non familiar face
- Labels to apply to certain positions of the body
- Rules about what to do in certain social situations



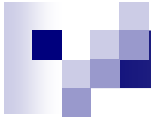
The problem with this teaching....

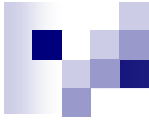
- Research repeatedly shows that people with ASC have difficulty applying mentalising labels
- Research shows that people with ASC can learn to apply mentalising labels, often with limited generalisation to the real world. Success?
- People with ASC learn that this 'labelling' is something they 'should do' as the 'key to understanding people.
- People can learn social rules, but generalisation is difficult



What may be the root of problems with this teaching?

- It is from the perspective of the person without AS
- What is a mentalising label? What information does it provide? Is this useful?
- Does the face always reflect the true feeling?
- Do all angry people look the same/act the same?







The reality for people with AS

- Community living
- Increased independence
- May remain vulnerable, despite teaching
- Often lack confidence/become anxious in unfamiliar social situations
- Often feel uncomfortable in social situations

- Is this teaching preparing people to be an adult with AS?



So think again.....

- Move away from the deficit model of ASC
- Listen to people with AS about what may be useful to know
- What do people know already and how do they know this?
- Acknowledge the heterogeneity of autism




Social situations

People feel most relaxed when..

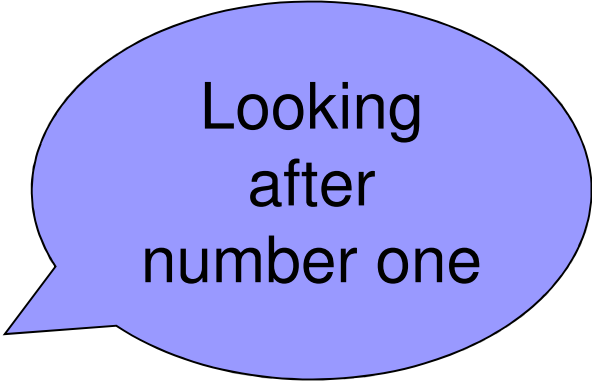
People and the situation is familiar.
Shocks and surprises are unlikely

People are less relaxed when

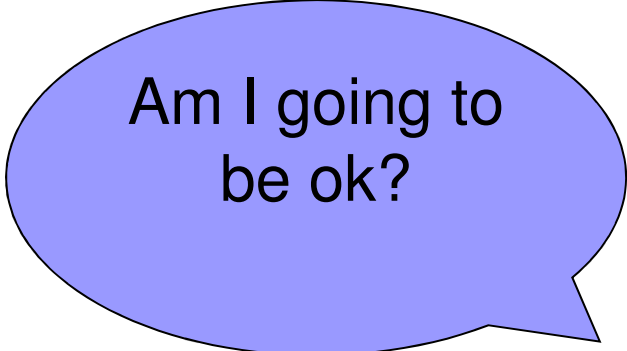
People and the situation is not familiar



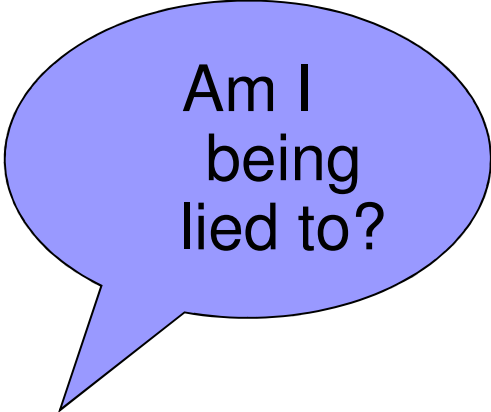
Important to people with AS in social situations...



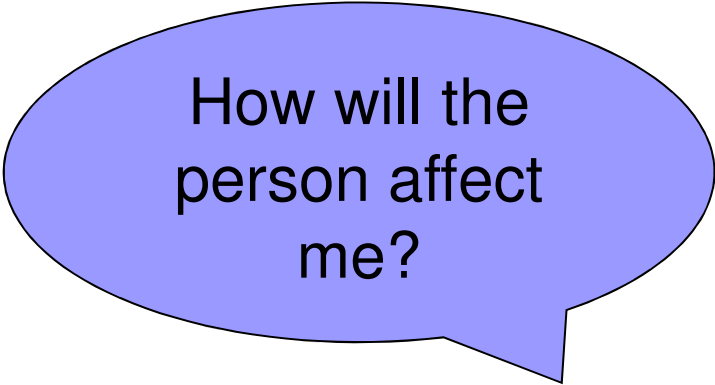
Looking
after
number one



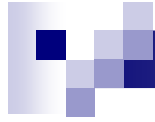
Am I going to
be ok?



Am I
being
lied to?



How will the
person affect
me?



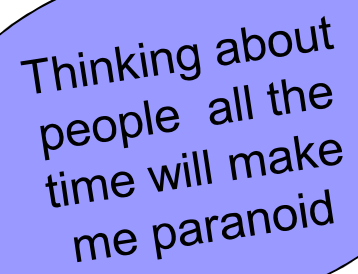
What may happen next?

In all other situations, it is well documented that people with ASC need to know what is happening next to reduce anxiety

Would this reduce anxiety in social situations?



Thinking about what may happen next



Thinking about people all the time will make me paranoid

1. When do you need to know what someone will do next?

2. How will you know it?



1. When to think about what may happen next....



When the alarm bells ring!



Need to support people to ...

Think ahead...

- Know what to expect in a situation
- Know what to expect from a person

Then


- Spot the unusual

Then

- Ring the alarm bells/go on alert



I can learn all the skills I like, I can learn to plan, I can learn to do things in the house, I can learn how to get a plane, but unless I can stop being a mug, I may as well fall from the highest sky to the deepest ocean.....
My alarm bells don't work do they?

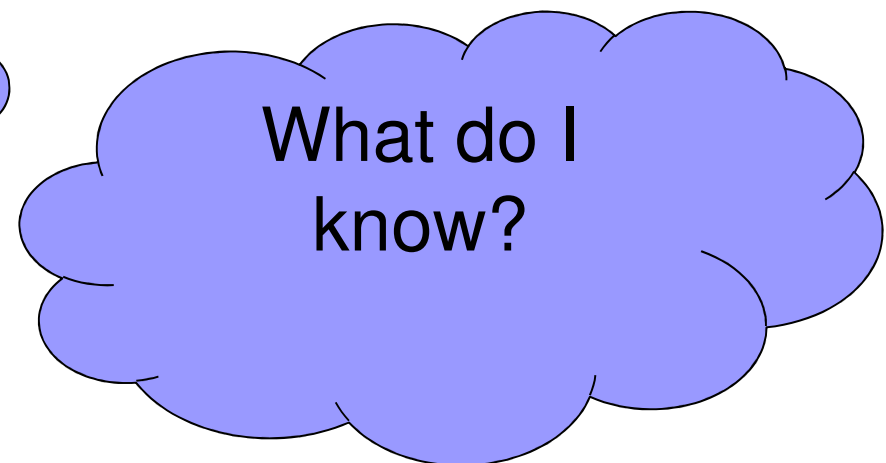


On alert.... then what?

Guess what will happen next Will it affect me?

How?

↓
Draw on existing knowledge





Support people to...

1. Spot the unusual/unexpected ... go on alert
2. Use existing knowledge to guess what is going on/what may happen next



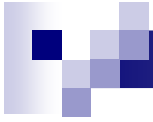
3. What shall I do?



What are
my
choices?



Use existing choice making skills.



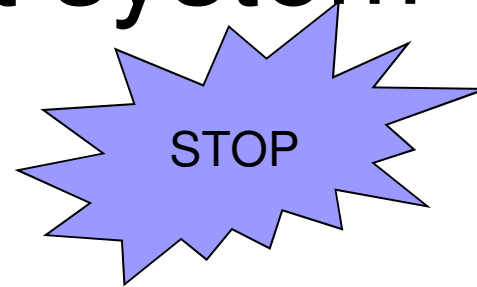
Action?



The self prompt system

1. Spot the **unusual**


Alarm bells



2. Think...

... What may **happen next**? ... What are the choices?

3. Do



This self prompt system has been useful because

- It uses existing strengths/knowledge
- It is generalisable... not rule based for specific situations
- It supports knowing when to 'tune in'
- It can be personalised
- Different aspects of the system can be most important for different people
- It enables people to know what is useful to know



Main points...

Support people to

1. Know what is 'usual'
2. Get the alarm bells working!
3. Know what they know
4. Use choice making and what they know to make a best guess



Finally....

‘...Like a treasure trove ... you never know what abilities you will find’

Focus on what people **can** do and what people **do** know to support social understanding.