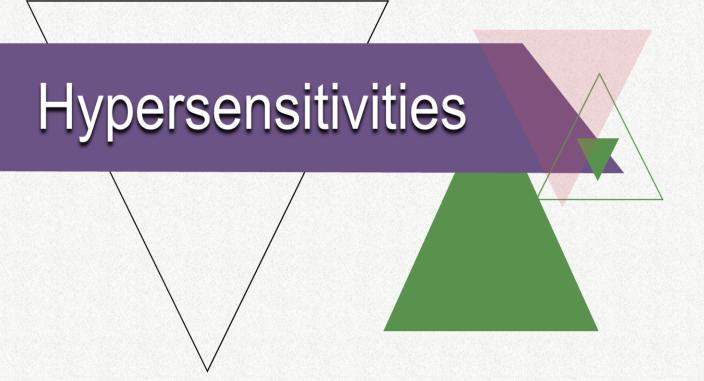


But think about it: all day every day overstimulated and unsure where to look or what to attend to.

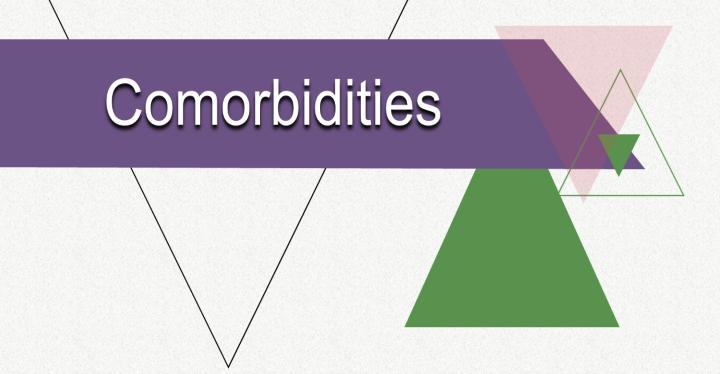


Smells
Textures
Unusual sounds
Emotional responses
Density of surrounding people
Visual distractions
Ordinary sounds
Qualities of light
Tastes



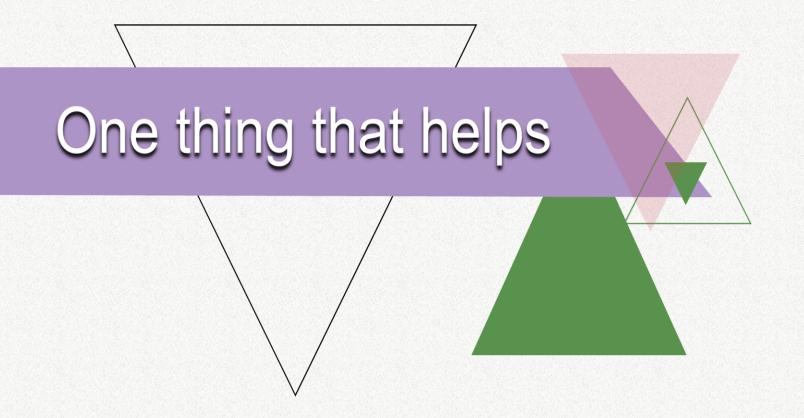
Smells
Textures
Unusual sounds
Emotional responses
Density of surrounding people
Visual distractions
Ordinary sounds
Qualities of light
Tastes

Sometimes autistic people have some areas of near-insensitivity as well in these same domains.



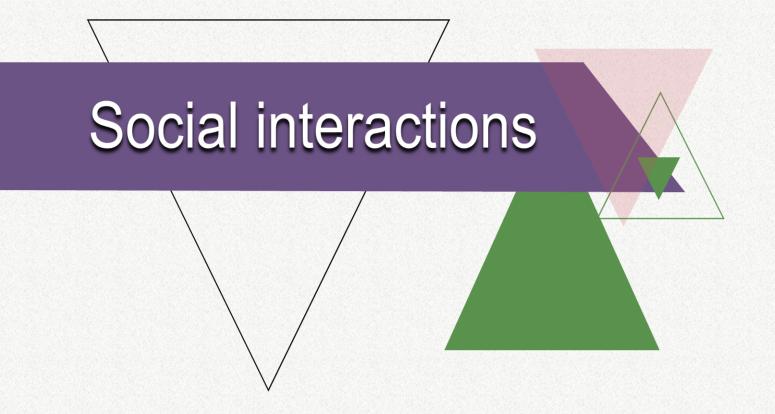
Not all people with these conditions are also autistic, but there's a lot of overlap, and many autistic people have:

- OCD
- Anxiety disorders
 - ADHD
 - Dyslexia
- Auditory processing issues
- Other neurological/ neurosocial issues



- OCD
- **Anxiety disorders**
 - ADHD
 - Dyslexia
- Auditory processing issues
- Other neurological/ neurosocial issues

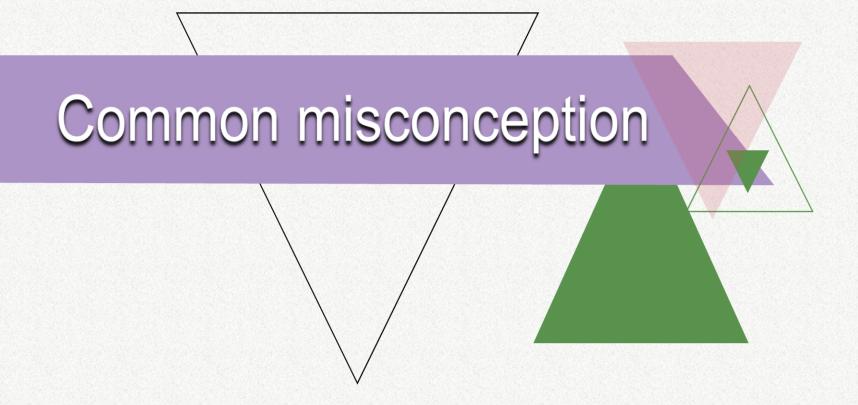
Sometimes, autistic people (and allistic people) "stim" because it helps provide a point of focus or helps provide a counterbalance to something overwhelming.



Difficulty with:

Entering conversation
Exiting conversation
Humor/lack of humor
Facial expressions
Body language
Subtlety versus directness

Autistic people usually prefer direct feedback over tact!



Difficulty with:

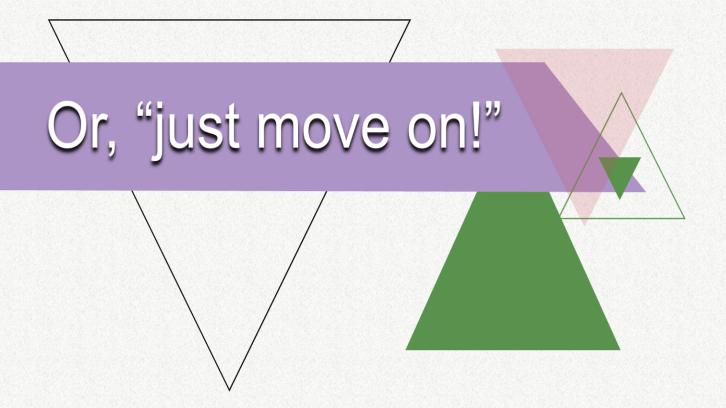
Entering conversation
Exiting conversation
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Facial expressions
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Subtlety versus directness

Autistic people are sometimes perceived, because of this, to not care about other people. This is not a correct perception.



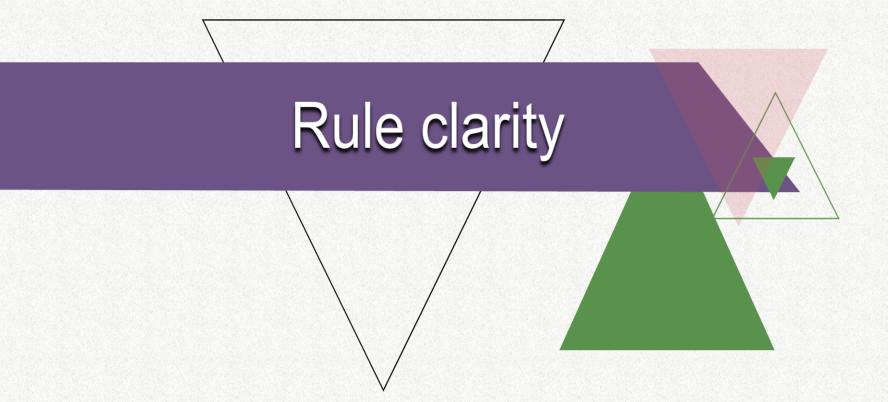
Persisting:

- Behavior
- Conversation
 - Presence
- Strong interests
- Opinions that are restated until they are points of contention



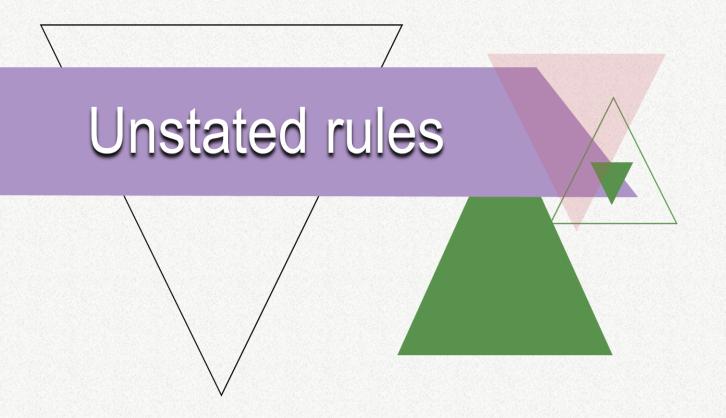
No one perseverates because they are trying to be rigid or argumentative. They are "stuck," because executive function skills in autistic people are often jumbled.

This also shows up in struggling with change in practice, policy, or routine (which all goes much better if clearly communicated).

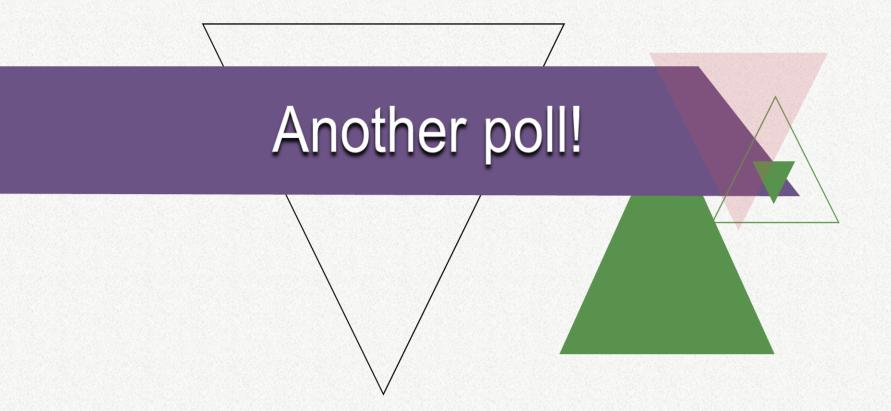


Autistic people:

- Struggle with ambiguity
- Notice ambiguity other people may not
- Usually like clear rules
- May have a hard time articulating why a rule is unclear to them when it seems clear to neurotypical people

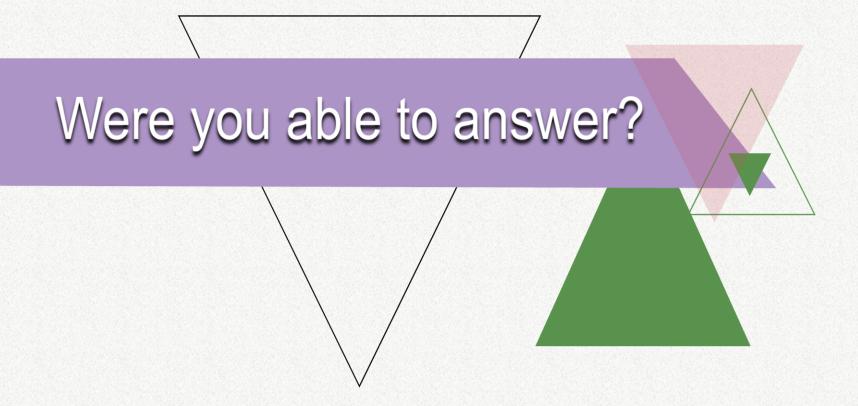


Unstated rules, many of which are social expectation rules, are particularly challenging.



Which of these items does not belong?

- A penny
- Mount Rushmore
- A \$5 bill
- A nickel



You probably didn't think that was ambiguous at all.
And yet, this is the kind of question where rules and ambiguity come into play.





Why is this of interest?

Autistic students may

- Struggle to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate responses in our spaces
- Struggle to recognize when their behavior is creating problems

Why is this of interest?

Managing autistic students' social skills is not the library's job; however, finding ways to meet their information needs despite their struggle to articulate them probably is.

Why is this of interest?

Autistic adults may seek employment with us, and because we may interpret their needs as socially odd, we may reject their applications even though they may be excellent employees.

What can we reasonably fix?

- Space design
- Information design
- Service points
- Interviews
- Interpersonal interactions

In designing spaces

- Consider creating areas of less contrast and less crowding.
- Provide a variety of shapes and textures in furnishings.
- Include different lighting options to reduce glare in oversensitive eyes.
- Provide spaces which feel less open or visible/more protected.

In presenting information

- Consider presenting information in tables or flow charts that identify relationships.
- When information is conditional, be thoughtful about the Boolean logic (a lot of autistic people love Boolean logic) behind how it's presented
- Consider describing how the information is organized at the top of the page. Don't assume it will be apparent that it's alphabetical or most-important-first.

At service points

- Offer multiple ways to "talk" (chat/email).
- Be explicit and accurate about expectations.
- Be prepared to clarify/differentiate ambiguities.
- Be prepared to redirect focus.
- Be prepared to remove from overwhelm.

In interview situations

- Offer a written copy of questions for the interviewee to refer to both as reminder and as focal point.
- Consider interviewing practices which avoid large-group inperson scenarios; consider being explicit about where to look or offering something to look at together.
- Expect and plan to redirect answers which refer to ambiguities you hadn't noticed.
- Be thoughtful about how interpersonal behavior is relevant to the posted job.

Interpersonal interactions

- Notice a person lingering and explicitly open or close a conversation or interaction.
- Be prepared to let the person know the social expectations have been met/exhausted.
- Describe next steps and set expectations for followups/continuation. Meet those expectations.
- Understand that sustained eye contact is very difficult, and that it costs other attention.

Resources

- ASAN: the Autistic
 Self Advocacy Network
- Local/Campus groups that include autistic leaders
- (Autism Speaks has a history of exclusion and is not preferred by the autism community)

