

**Presentation by: Wendy Lawson**  
**“The Passionate Mind – How People with Autism Learn”**  
**22 June 2011 (Karalyka Theatre, Ringwood, hosted by Irabina Autism Services)**

Notes by: Emma Howden

Workshop set out to cover:

- Whole spectrum of Autism in easy to understand language
- How to build bridges between neurologically typical and autism spectrum worlds.
- Understanding the social demands and interaction of autistic individuals.

Learning methods: People learn via one of following types (or combination) of either:

- Visual
- Auditory, or
- Kinesthetic/Tactile

Group exercise: Recall your earliest childhood memory.

- Some audience members could remember early babyhood memories.
- Wendy claims to remember being born! It seems people on autism spectrum have very early memories.
- If you're noticing a feeling state, you won't notice a thinking state.
- We substitute in pretence (the nothing for something).
  
- Autistic kids are still learning through **play** BUT they are playing differently.
- Spontaneity – They don't see the point of it.

Example: Difficulty for Autistic child is told in school: “Look where you're going”.  
Result = Literal translation...NOT HELPFUL. He/she will look where going and knock into things along the way! Solution: Schools should paint doors/walls different colours to show where walls end and doors begin to assist.

- IRLIN lenses can be helpful to autistic people. Wendy uses them. For sensory difficulties with light/colour perception? Not sure.

CARE with using **Terminology** around the children:

- Autistic kids are different, not deviant!
- Use “Autism Spectrum” NOT “Disorder”.
- Provide warnings for change – depends on child how long needed, but EVEN 3 MINS better than no warning at all!

COMFORTING –

- Traditional methods don't work. Their sensory system is very alive and usual methods can make things worse.

#### Learning Styles: Umbrella Terms:

<b>Autism spectrum</b>		<b>Neurotypicals</b>
• Single-focused		Multi-tasking
• Single minded		
• X No Multi-tasking		
• Most are visual		
• Don't use speech for visual learners		
• Books & reading are 2 different things, may		
Be interested in the books, but not reading them – flicking pages.		

#### Reach Auditory Learners via:

- Speech – e.g. songs, tapes – video & audio tape.
- Speaking clock – you can load these on the PC
- CD with instructions.

#### **Summary/conclusion:**

- Understanding learning = winning
- Find something that takes on speech qualities. May mean using Images => Speech (augmented speech)
- Find a way to get to know what works for each child

#### **Websites/Resources:**

- [www.autismandcomputing.com](http://www.autismandcomputing.com)
- iPad/iPhones wonderful for people who haven't got much/any speech. Several applications which can be purchased to assist non-speaking people to communicate!
- E.g. [www.proloquo2go.com](http://www.proloquo2go.com) – Software for iPad/iPhones – kids can communicate without speaking.
- [www.wendylawson.com](http://www.wendylawson.com) – Lots of useful content. Warning – Website = 1 very long page! ½ way down page – See video from the U.S. video Wendy showed called “Autistic Teen finds inner voice” of a 11 year old teenager (non-speaking) who learned to communicate for first time via typing on a computer and using some apps to assist.
- MP3 players/iPods - Output/music/noises are great to help kids to block out unwanted INPUT e.g. noise while travelling on bus to destination
- PECS – Picture Exchange Communication System – augmentative/alternative communication system

- **Squease Jacket** - <http://www.trendhunter.com/trends/squease-autistic-spectrum-disorder> This remarkable invention is a special jacket which inflates and deflates and has an MP3 player built into it. It is designed to calm senses. Can be worn under normal clothes.

### **AUDIENCE Q & A SESSION:**

**Q: How do I teach the child common sense?**

A: Keep him/her safe, keep in touch with the family. Get to know the video games he/she likes and relate to him/her. Join them where they're at! POPULAR video game – "Second Life".

Prioritise: Hurting self/others. Families should write these down and have a family meeting to prioritise what issues need to be worked on first.

**Q: Wendy, how did you shift away from your study of sparkly string? (to become more functional).**

A: I have a drawer at home which is filled with sparkly things! I have learned that where, when, how and who to do this with through a series of steps to age 60 and working.

**Q: How do I manage my very aggressive 3 year-old who has very few words?**

A: He is terrified. The world is not making sense to him. He feels invaded. He is only young and will develop obsessive interest probably. He will be overwhelmed by sounds. Give him simple, structured days. Prepare him a short preparation time in advance of things and use music to help him cope. Don't give in to his aggression

I have a 4 year old client who taught himself to use ProLoQuo2Go on my iPad in a matter of minutes and learned to communicate with me and his mum this way!

**Q: Teacher's aide - I have a Grade 5 boy who won't eat at school. He understands that when he gets hungry he feels pain, but still won't eat. How do I help him?**

A: Offer him a quiet place alone. Have something he likes playing with e.g. Leggo for him if he will eat while he plays it....or tell him it will be offered when he finishes.

**Q: What is your view on medication use?**

A: My views are strong on this. There are no trials yet of the outcomes on anti-psychotics. Some medications have been linked to tumours and heart failure. Although acknowledge that 0.5-1 mg seems to result in some people coping with their day. Listen to the kids reaction to it.