


ASD and relationships
Clarifying the challenge and the challenge of clarifying
Peter Vermeulen, PhD

SIKON 2019




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Conclusion

We will have to clarify all those things that are obvious for people who are context sensitive
in a very, very concrete way!



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How do you do it, relating?

How

- Do you see your friend is not feeling well?
- Do you know when to give a kiss?
- Do you know how close you should stand?
- Do you decide it is the right moment to talk about your feelings?
- ...

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Success in relationships:

A matter of “smart guessing”:
Guessing that is based on contextual sensitivity

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Social cognition: mainly implicit!


Neuron
Perspective



Implicit and Explicit Processes in Social Cognition


Chris D. Frith^{1,2*} and Uta Frith^{1,2*}
¹Neuroimaging Trust Centre for Neuroimaging
²Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience
 University College London, London, WC1N 3AR UK
 *Correspondence: c.f.frith@ucl.ac.uk
 DOI: 10.1016/j.neuron.2018.10.022


In this review we consider research on social cognition in which implicit processes can be compared and contrasted with explicit, conscious processes. In such cases, their function is distinct, sometimes complementary and sometimes oppositional. We argue that implicit processes in social interaction are automatic and are often opposed to conscious strategies. While we are aware of explicit processes in social interaction, we cannot always see them to override implicit processes. Many studies show that implicit processes facilitate the sharing of knowledge, feelings, and actions, and hence, perhaps surprisingly, serve situations rather than selfishness. On the other hand, higher-level conscious processes are as likely to be selfish as prosocial.


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Implicit and explicit ToM

	5 yr	3 yr
explicit:	✓	✗
implicit:	✓	✓




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The fast and implicit 'guessing' is affected

Article

Explicit versus implicit social cognition testing in autism spectrum disorder


Björn Callenbach^{1,2}, Lars Kjellin^{1,2}, Louise Rönneqvist¹ and Sven Bolte¹

Abstract
 Although autism spectrum disorder is defined by reciprocal social-communication impairments, several studies have found no evidence for altered social cognition test performance. This study examined explicit (i.e. prompted) and implicit (i.e. spontaneous) aspects of social cognition testing in autism spectrum disorder. A sample of 19 adolescents with autism spectrum disorder and 19 carefully matched typically developing controls completed the Dewey Story Test. 'Explicit' (middle-choice answering format) and 'implicit' (free interview) measures of social cognition were obtained. Autism spectrum disorder participants did not differ from controls regarding explicit social cognition performance. However, the autism spectrum disorder group performed more poorly than controls on implicit social cognition performance in terms of spontaneous perspective taking and social awareness. Findings suggest that social cognition alterations in autism spectrum disorder are primarily implicit in nature and that an apparent absence of social cognition difficulties on certain tests using rather explicit testing formats does not necessarily mean social cognition typicality in autism spectrum disorder.




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We cannot teach the fast, implicit, context sensitive processes But maybe we can take a (slower) detour...


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Success in relationships:

A matter of
"good guessing"



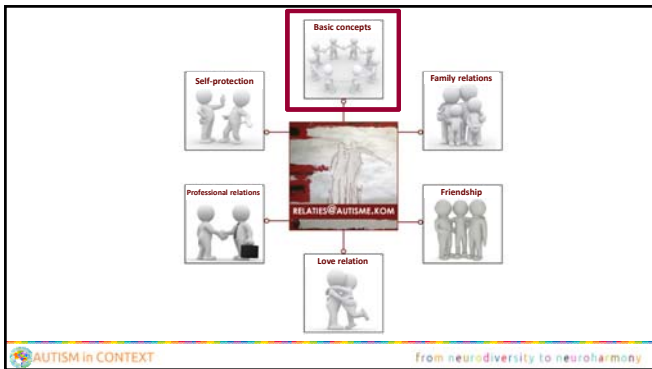
knowledge

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Knowledge is the basis!!

- Clarifying the unwritten laws and rules of relationships
- Clarifying the numerous things that are 'taken for granted' in relationships
- Clarifying those things that are thought to be 'obvious'

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Basic concepts



What is a relationship?

Course of a relationship

Different kinds of relationships

Feelings

Expectations


Intentions & effects

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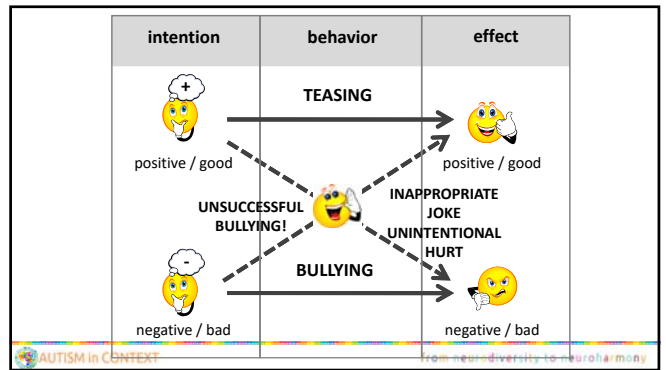
Relaties@autisme.com

Friendship

- **Friendship** is the relationship you have with a **friend**
- A **friend** can be a boy or a girl
- A **friend** can live nearby or far away



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Feelings change over time...

An emotion is transitional
 An emotion comes up and goes away.

Sometimes an emotion goes away quickly, but an emotion can also stay longer...

An emotion can also come back...



Example: On his way to school, Jaden misses his bus in the morning. He gets very angry. He feels angry the whole day long. Only the next morning his anger has gone and he feels again normal.

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Expectations

- What are expectations?

Expectations in a relationship

An expectation = when you think and hope that something will happen.


When you have a relationship with someone, you have expectations towards the other person. You hope that he / she will do certain things for you.

Examples:
 You hope that your friend will invite you to his party.
 You hope your father will help you repairing your car.

The other person also has expectations towards you. He / she hopes you will do certain things.

Examples:
 Your friend hopes that you will come to his party.
 Your sisters hopes you will be quiet while she's studying.

In a relationship, both sides have expectations.



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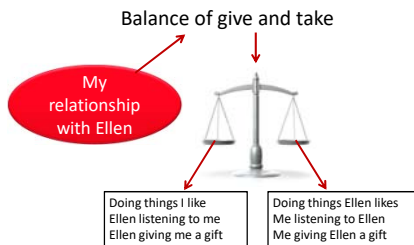
Expectations

- What are expectations?
- What people expect in a relationship
- Different expectations in different relationships

Contextualize everything you teach!

- In ASD, abstraction is even easier than concretization
- When teaching, make things so concrete that you can 'see' it
 - Concrete in situations (where and when?)
 - Concrete in people (who?)
 - Concrete in behavior (what?)

Make it concrete



Make it concrete, visual and mathematical



Don't forget to make it concrete!

Supporting each other

Practical support

Emotional support

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Contextualize

Supporting each other: chores in the household

Chores	I do it	Who does it now?	
		My partner does it	We do it together
Cooking			
Doing the dishes			
Shopping			
Vacuum cleaning			
Washing			
Financial administration			
Gardening			
Washing clothes			
Ironing			
Taking kids to school			
Helping kids with homework			

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Contextualized teaching

- Contextualize emotion recognition training
- Contextualize social skills training
- Link behaviours always to contexts

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Link emotions to context!

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Link emotions to context

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com
ScienceDirect
 Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 93 (2013) 1148 – 1153

Procedia
 Social and Behavioral Sciences

3rd World Conference on Learning, Teaching and Educational Leadership – WCLTA 2012
Interpreting social contexts and emotions and ASD
 Rosalyn Adamowycz, MA, BCBA^a, Sorcha Parker, MSc, BCBA^b

^aMarlin Coaches, 38 Colby Lane, Stratford, Prince Edward Island, C1R1J1, Canada
^bPrivate Practice Consultant, 65 Kenning Drive, Lower Sackville, New Brunswick, B3C2E4, Canada

Abstract
 Deficits in social skills are a feature of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). An eight year old with ASD and disruptive behaviors was taught to recognize ranges of emotions in different situational contexts to improve functional social skills. A lesson from the Feuerstein Instructional Enrichment (FIE) Program was modified according to applied behavioral approaches (ABA). The Social Skills Rating System, lesson results and interviews indicated improvements in social skills after intervention, specifically in cooperation, self-control, responsibility, and empathy. This teaching intervention focusing on situational contexts and emotional ranges may enhance social skills and thus warrant further investigation and research.

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Teaching: traditional approach: generic skills

Starting a conversation

- Step 1:** Think of what you'd like to say
- Step 2:** Make sure you have the other person's attention. Look at the person.
- Step 3:** Ask a question or make a comment.
- Step 4:** Listen carefully while the other person responds.

Teaching a skill → **generalization** →

- Situation # 1
- Situation # 2
- Situation # 3

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Contextualized teaching

Does not start from skills but from contexts

Teaching context # 1 including

- Skill # 1
- Skill # 2
- Skill # 3

Teaching context # 2 including

- Skill # 1
- Skill # 2
- Skill # 3

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Contextualized teaching

Teaching and clarifying context:

- ✓ What can happen in that context?
- ✓ What can you do in that context?
- ✓ What can you say in that context?

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The Next Generation of Social Stories™:


- History & definition
- New Focus on Social Context
- Implications for Future Social Stories

Slide from Carol Gray's presentation

What if they don't have the experience?

Let them **observe** role models and good examples!




- How does X. do that?
- What is the effect of what X does?



Nobody's perfect

- Allow a margin of error
- "Good enough" relationships
- Teach social skills to the people in their environment
- Teach about "*not knowing*"

Yes-, no- and doubt-feelings

YES FEELING 	NO FEELING 	DOUBT FEELING 
When something happens that you like	When something happens that you don't like	When something happens and you don't know whether you like it or not
When something happens that makes you feel good	When something happens that makes you feel bad	You don't know if it is good or bad
My example:	My example:	My example:

What can you do when you have a DOUBT-FEELING?



DOUBT-feeling = I don't know if I like it or not what the other person does to me, or what the other person is asking me to do

When you have a DOUBT-feeling:

- Go and find someone you trust
- Talk about what happens / happened

Thinking with 2 people about a situation can help you to find out whether the situation is actually a Yes-situation or a No-situation


Who can you go to to discuss a DOUBT-feeling?

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Teaching relationship skills

So, don't try to normalize
 Teach what is helpful and functional
 Don't limit your teaching to the 'female' style of relating; think of male ways to bond as well



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What can I do with my friend(s)?

Below are all kinds of things you can do with friends.

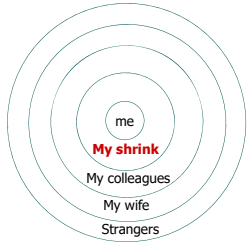

Indicate (with an) what you already do and what you want to do in the future.

	I do this already with my friend(s)	I don't do this yet with my friend(s), but want to do it in the future
Talking about what happens at home		
Going out together		
Talking about my problems		
Shopping		
Playing games		
Visiting each other at home		
Doing school work together		

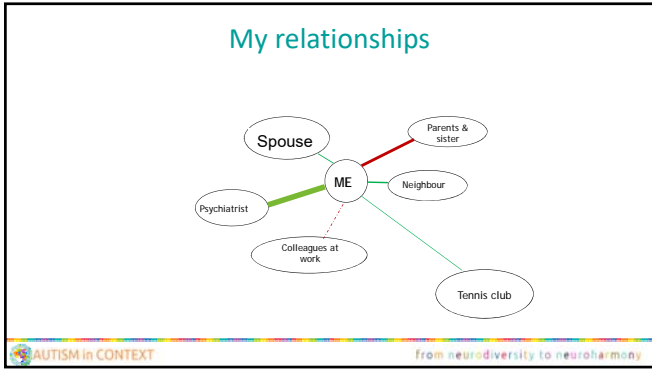


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Accept (neuro)diversity in relationships

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“Programmed intimacy”

Liz: “Do I have to write everything down? Even when I want you to give me a hug?”
Wim: “Yes, please!”

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Being yourself as corner stone of a good relationship

“The more my partner lets me do “my things”, the more I can offer him in our relationship.

In other words: the more I can be me my autistic self, the more competent I become in my relationship.”

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



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