

Paying attention peacefully

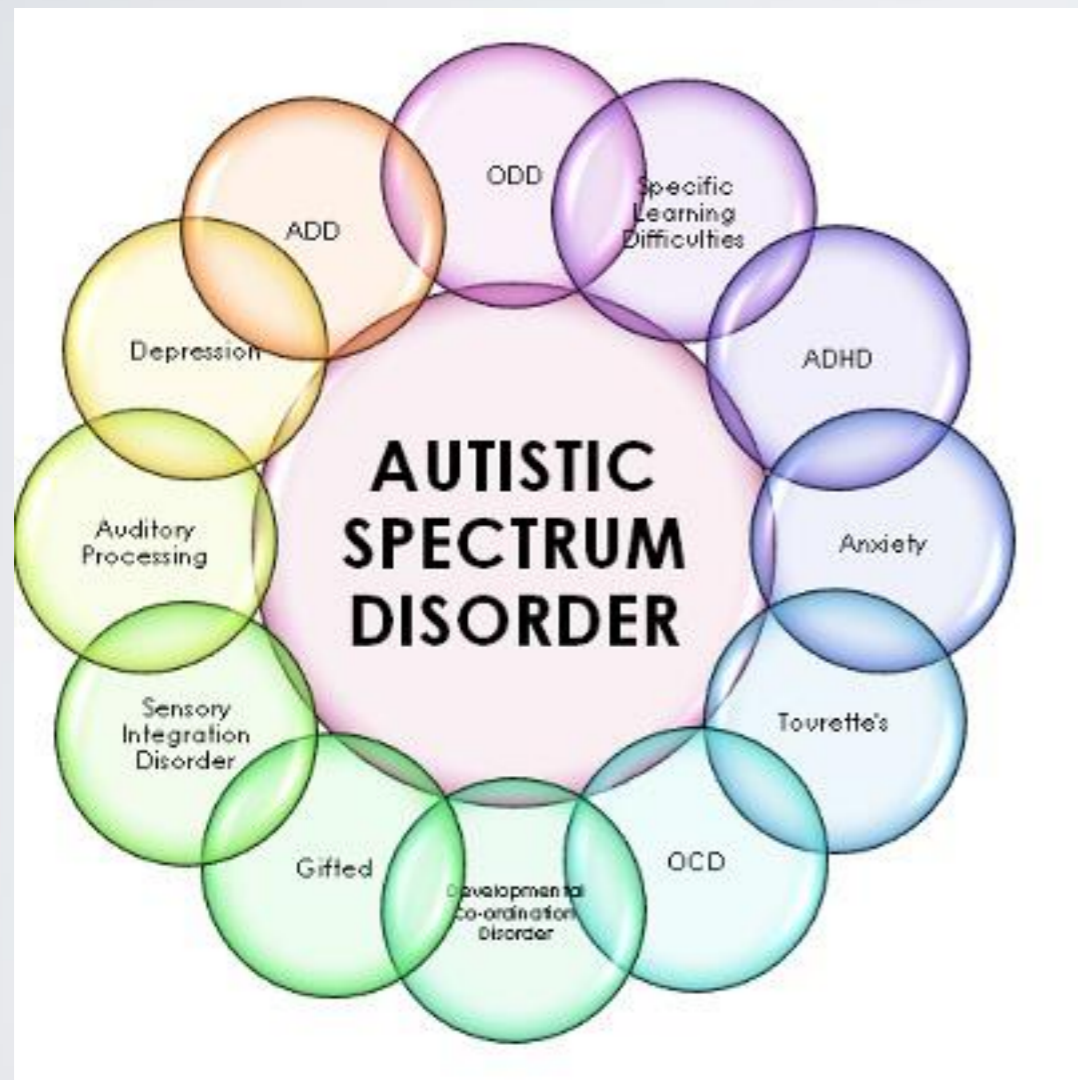


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Autism Spectrum Conditions

- What are they?
- Why yoga and meditation?
- Examples of bringing yoga into education
- Evidence base
- Keys
- Where now?

Diagnostic criteria > Finding Peace



Sensory processing

- ‘Sleeping in a bed makes Emir feel lost in space. So he sleeps on his side, on his sitting room sofa, his back against the hard surface and his legs pushed up against the raised end. He thrives on heat and eschews air conditioning for the breeze of the open window and a ceiling fan. Since the clothes he wears make him squirm, he wears as little as possible. His car radio blasts with hard rock but he cringes at the sound of someone chewing their food in a quiet room’. Heller, (2002).

Yoga and meditation

- Social interaction from an early age is fundamental to human development. Development of skills, relationships and character depend on adequate and repeated brain stimulation to enforce strong networks that support decision making for well being and protect brain from sensory overload.
- Finding balance between receptivity and detachment to others(for relationships, physical and mental health). Tuning in and out.
- Yoga, Meditation and exercise found to support this.

Where am I?

- The vestibular system tells us if we are moving or still, while our proprioceptive system provides awareness of our body's position in space. In many children with ASC, for example, these systems function differently. Practising yoga postures can help to regulate these difference.

Imitation

- The neural basis of reading minds and predicting other peoples' intentions is a specialised network of neurons in the frontal cortex called the "mirror system". Mirror neurons are active when one performs a certain task but also when one observes the same task performed by others (brain forms a theory of the other's mind using one's own experience).
- Enables imitation learning and explains the feeling of empathy towards other beings and plays a critical role in the formation of language and cultural inheritance.
- Imitation is an early milestone in child development and a critical part of higher cognitive functioning. In ASC we see consistent difference in neuronal development and brain synchronisation (impaired socialisation and lack of imitative play; part of diagnostic criteria).
- ? related to atypical sleep and stress mechanisms
- THEREFORE interventions using rhythm, such as dance and singing, present great potential for people with autism because rhythm inherently entrains movement through the stimulatory effect on residual mirror neuron function, and children are most receptive

autism and education

- Mainstream schools
- Specialist schools (NAS schools, ABA, SandC schools etc)
- Mainstream schools with specialist units/language units
- Private schools (Stenier)

Keys



yoga in schools

1) MYT 8 week programme



MYT 8 week programme

- 8 week course
- Nestled within a 50 minute lesson
- Age and developmentally supportive practices
- Developing curiosity and self enquiry
- Reducing co-morbid issues (stress, anxiety, low mood)

Myt 8 week programme

- 4 day training
- Realising potential
- Underpinning theory
- Outcome and evaluation tools
- Adapted and suitable for all ages and abilities
- Offered free to educational establishments

Content

- Check in, introduce theme and overview
- Meditation
- Review of home practice
- Chanting, Pranayama, Kriya, Yoga Asana, and Yoga Nidra
- 2nd Meditation
- Home practice
- Check out

Sessions overview

- 1: Introductory session
- 2: Automatic Pilot
- 3: Jumping hurdles
- 4: Who am I?
- 5: Responding not reacting
- 6: Bringing awareness to challenges
- 7: Acceptance
- 8: Follow up

2) Weekly taught sessions



3) Get ready to learn

GRTL Evaluation

CRAE and SY London

- Centre for Research and Autism Education (CRAE). Partnership between UofL, Ambitious about Autism.
- Inset day
- Behavioural observations in class
- Questionnaires completed by parents and children
- Student feedback

GRTL London

- 40 students, 5 classrooms in London, age 7-11 years.
- Consultations for specialist yoga teachers
- Teaching staff completed weekly monitoring and evaluation reports.
- Measures collected at 12 weeks, 6 months and 1 year
- Average of 39 sessions

GRTL london

- Parents'/carers' views:
 - Improvement in child's ability to regulate emotion at home
 - Improvement in their child's sleep
 - Some- yoga programme with more 1:1 input would benefit their child more
- Teacher's views:
 - Yoga helped students to be calm
 - Teachers enjoyed time to bond with students without the pressures of teaching
 - Some felt that programme could be modified to more closely match ability

GRTL Gloucestershire

- 62 children in 2 schools
- ASC age 5-11 years
- Improved communication, attention, self regulation, flexibility, sleep and behaviour.
- Parents and carers feedback, PSI

what the young people say....

- ▶ 'Yoga helps with my listening. It takes away the whirling that my body does' (Olly, 8 years).
- ▶ 'I like the sleepy time. I have a peaceful place there and it is mine whenever I feel very excited. I get calm at yoga' (Finlay, 7 years).
- ▶ 'I used to feel sick a lot before. My back hurt and my body was stiff. My breathing helps me to manage this' (Hannah, 21 years).
- ▶ 'Since coming to Yoga I have been less impulsive. Now there is a space between my thoughts, feelings and behaviour. I can make wise choices' (Mandy, 34 years).

1) 1:1's



Benefits

- “I look towards the next person whose turn it is so they know I am meaning them” (communication skills).
- “I can be in a group with other young people and wait my turn in the chanting” (social skills).
- “I am more flexible and stronger” (physical skills).
- “I am waiting to take my turn” , “I can sit still and listen to instructions” , “I am peaceful and do not talk now during relaxation.” (social skills).

A way forward

- Engaging staff and families
- Yoga as part of the curriculum
- Yoga on prescription
- Affordable and accessible: training options, funding, 'free'

Training/CPD

- Yoga and Meditation for ASC in Gloucestershire, Brighton and London. specialyoga@gmail.com
www.specialyoga.org.uk
- Yoga for the Special Child www.specialyoga.com
- Skype consultations

