

Addressing the Social and Emotional Needs of Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Social and Emotional Needs

- * Clinical Overview
- * Addressing Social Needs
- * Addressing Emotional Needs

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Pervasive Developmental Disorders
(PDD)

Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Autism

Autistic
Disorder
(Autism)

Pervasive
Developmental
Disorder, NOS
(PDD-NOS)

Asperger's
Syndrome

Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD)

Rhett's Syndrome

Nonverbal Learning Disability (NLD)

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Symptoms of Autism in the DSM

1. Socialization Impairments
2. Communication Impairments
3. Restricted Interests; Need for Sameness; Perseverative & Stereotypical Behaviors

Autism = all 3

Asperger's = 1 & 3

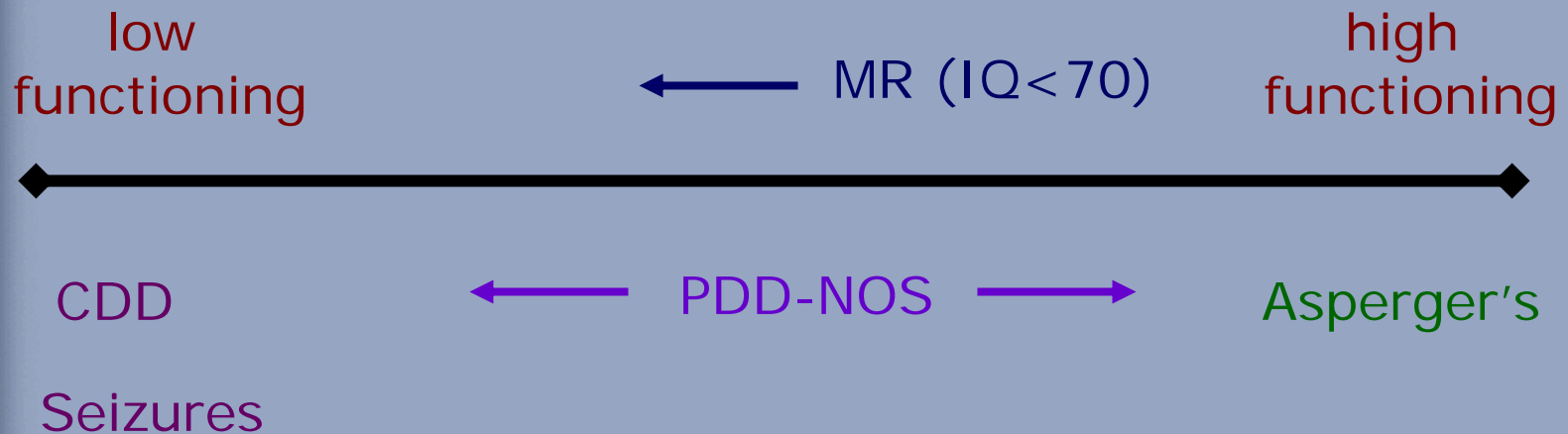
PDD-NOS = 1 + 2 and/or 3

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Autism Spectrum



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Normative Social Development

*Infants come into the world
“pre-wired” for social engagement*



- * Human face/voice are the most interesting stimuli in the environment
- * Early emergence of
 - * *Selective attention*
 - * *Social engagement*
 - * *Social reciprocity*
 - * *Attachments*
 - * *Social-communication skills*
 - * *Relationships*



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Autism in Infancy

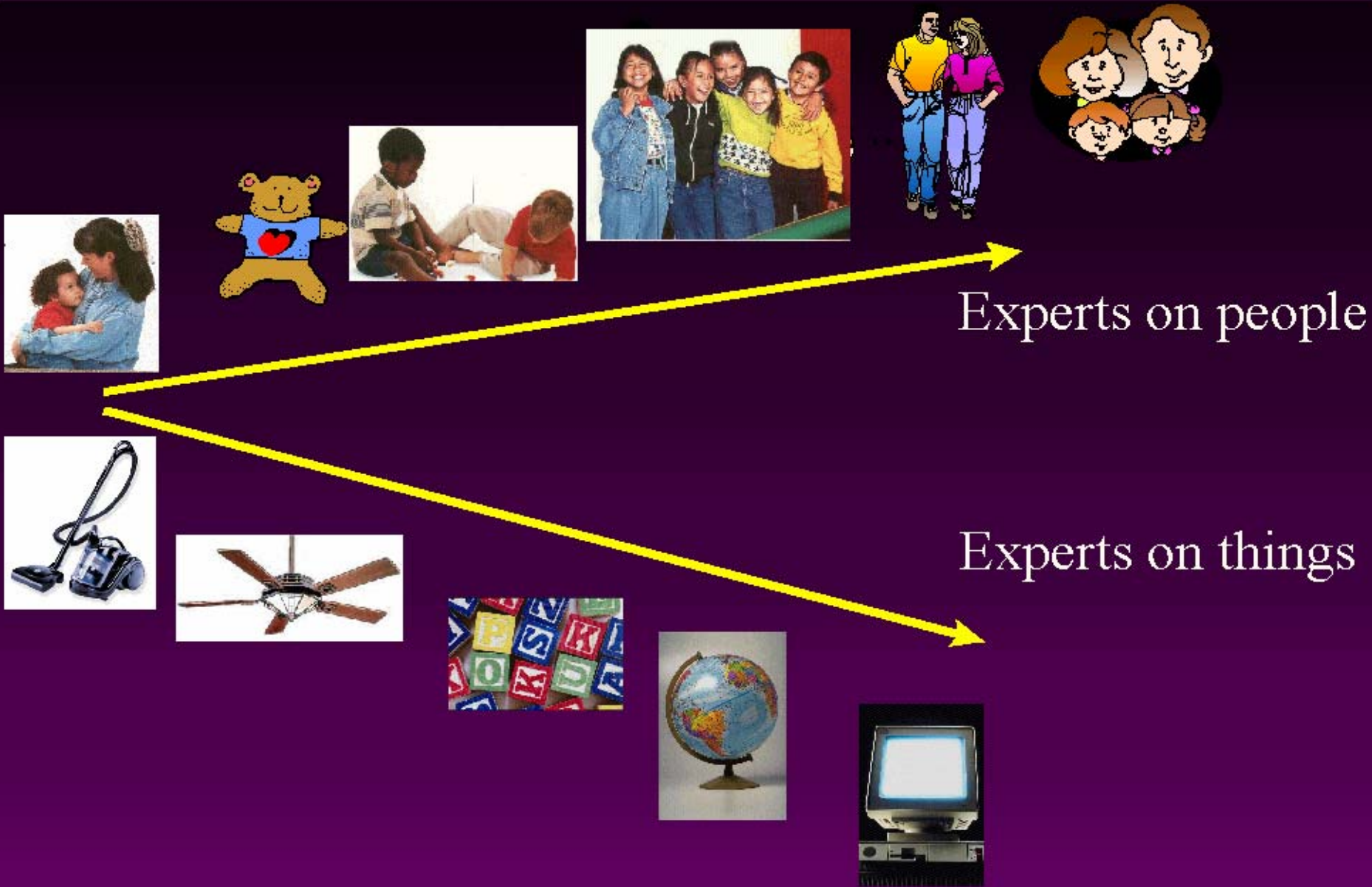
- * No babbling or cooing by 12 months
- * No single words by 16 months
- * No spontaneous two-word phrases by 24 months (not including echolalia/scripting)
- * No use of social gestures by 12 months (point, wave, grasp)
- * No response to name
- * Loss of any language/words or social skills at any age

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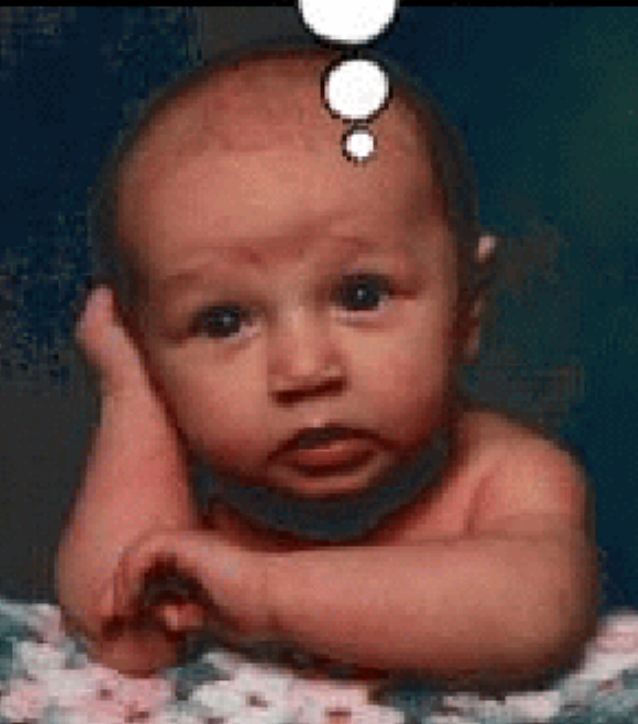
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Developmental Trajectories



Thinking about people

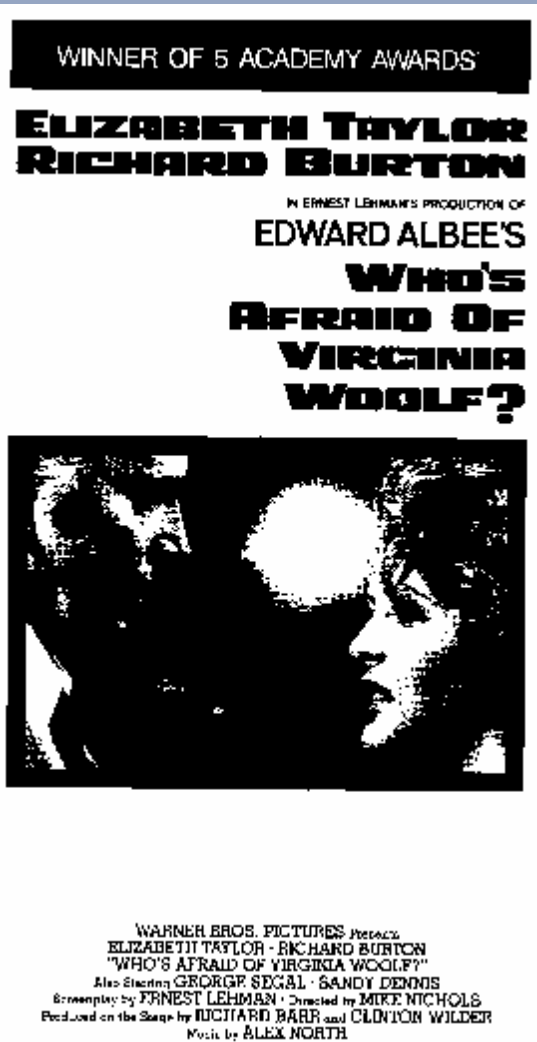
Thinking about things



It is a social disability!

Eye Tracking Studies

*Klin, Jones, Schultz, Volkmar, & Cohen (2002).
American Journal of Psychiatry*



Viewer with autism

Age: 38

FSIQ: 119

Vineland Social: 69

Typical Viewer

Age: 27

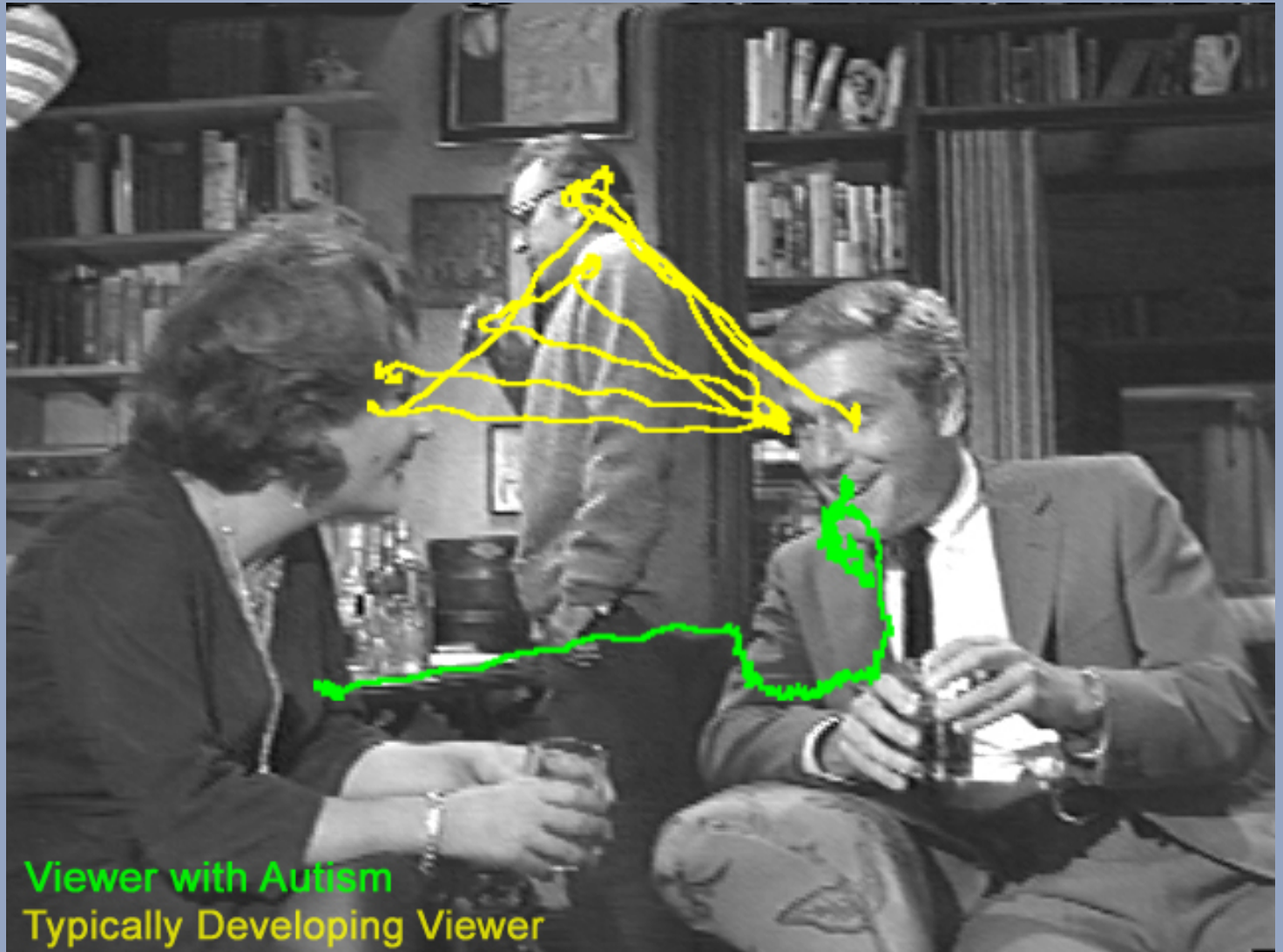
FSIQ: 110

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Tracing a Romantic Love-Triangle



Viewer with Autism
Typically Developing Viewer

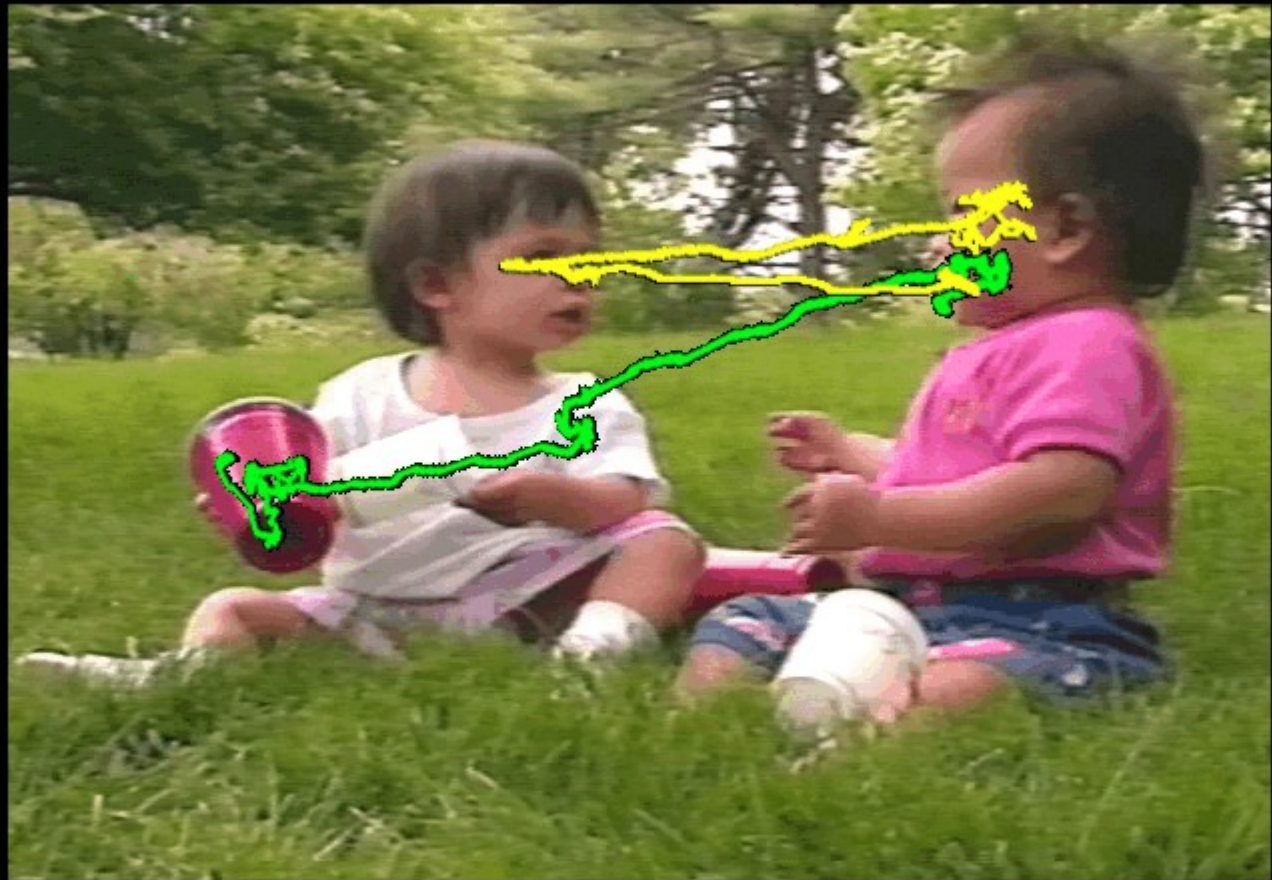
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*Klin, Jones, Schultz, Volkmar, & Cohen (2002)
American Journal of Psychiatry*

Toddler's viewing Toddlers



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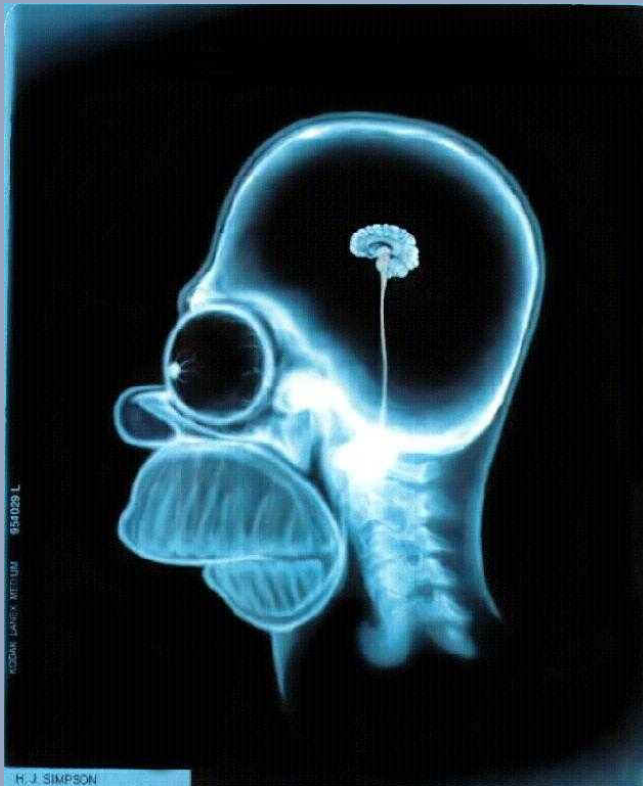
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MRI vs fMRI

(Courtesy of Jody Culham's fMRI for Newbies website)

MRI studies brain anatomy.

Functional MRI (fMRI) studies brain function.



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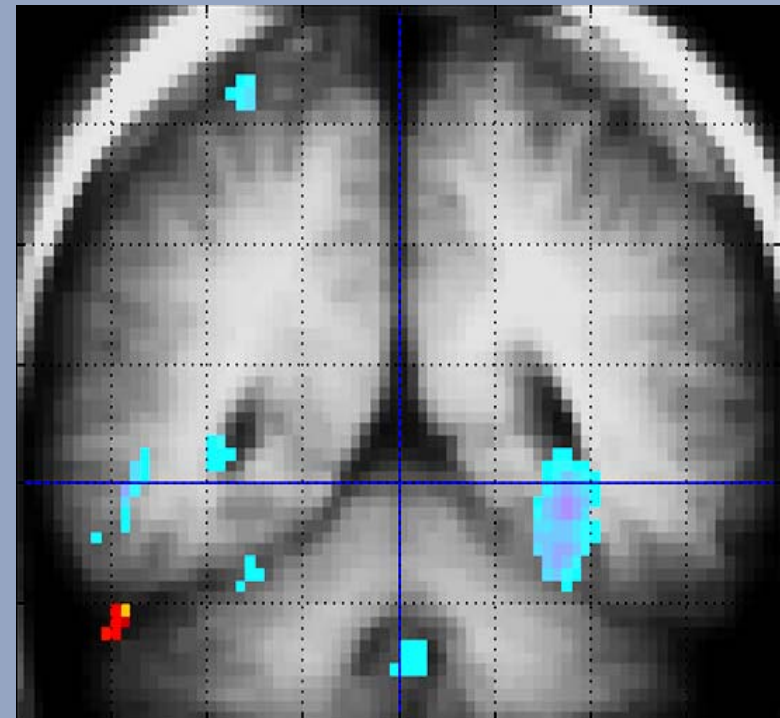
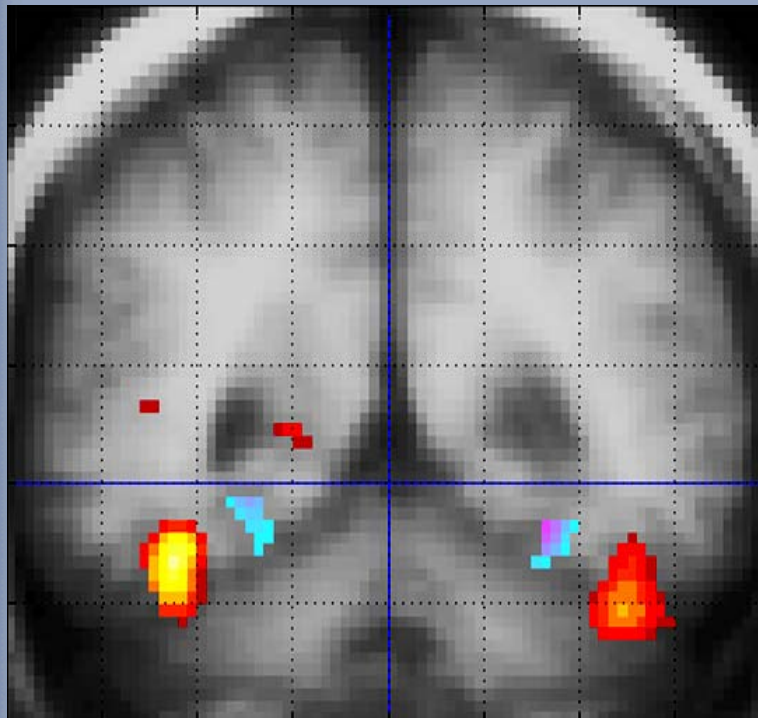
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The Neuroanatomy of Face Recognition: The Fusiform Gyrus

Schultz, Gauthier, Klin, et al. (2000).
Archives of General Psychiatry, 57, 331-340

Typical Individuals

Individuals with Autism



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Addressing Social and Emotional Functioning

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Social Skills Training

- * Toddlers: (24-36 months)
 - * Play skills: prepare for parallel play: functional play skills with toys, attention to another child
- * Young children: (preschool and early elementary):
 - * reverse inclusion: bring typical peers into 1:1 setting to work on social skills training
 - * small peer groups: practice skills in small groups
 - * inclusion setting: dyads and groups

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Social Skills Groups

Established Curriculum

- Behaviorally Based
- Skills Based
- Relationship Development
Intervention (RDI)

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Social Skills Groups

Components

- FUN!!
- Teach skills and make friends
- Help children work together
- Devise individual goals
 - Eye contact, on-topic talking, etc.
- Teach and reinforce skills
- Communicate with parents and teachers

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Social Skills Groups

Activities

- Scavenger Hunt
- Hot & Cold Game
- Voice Modulation
- Emotion Thermometer
- Twister, Ungame
- Staying on-topic games (Jenga)

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Importance of Addressing Emotional Needs

- * **Immature regulatory systems:** difficulty with emotional and behavioral regulation
 - * Can not consistently use people as source of regulation
- * **Language delays:** can not understand or express needs and experiences
- * **Parts-whole processing:** difficulty synthesizing and making sense of world around them

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Mental Health Services

- * Help child develop coping skills
- * Support parents: understand child's behaviors
parenting guidance
- * Help parents and school personnel develop
and implement interpersonal and
environmental supports

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Emotion Regulation

- Awareness of internal state
 - “You feel ___ because ____.”
- Build replacement skills (coping skills)
 - Deep breathing, take space

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Environmental Support

- Structure unstructured time
- Preparation for transition and change
- Schedule
 - Words and Pictures
 - Mayer-Johnson, Boardmaker
 - Clip Art

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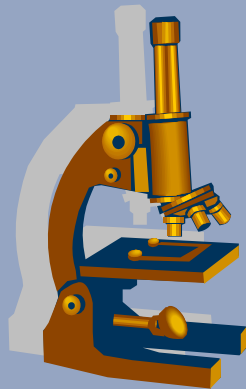
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Environmental Supports

- Planned breaks
- Breaks when needed
- “Safe place”
- During difficult times- allow child to engage in preferred activity
- Support during transitions

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Learning Readiness Skills

- Work Routine
- Adult-led Activities
- Affect Modulation
- Tolerating Frustration
- Waiting between Activities
- Eye Contact
- Vocal and Motor Imitation
- Contingency System

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Sensory Integration

- * Jane Ayres – *Tactile Defensiveness*
- * Distinguishing SI from OT
 - * *Fine motor deficits*
 - * *Sensory processing impairments*
- * Overreactivity & Underreactivity
- * Seeking out sensory input
- * “Sensory Diets”
 - * Deep pressure, weighted vests, joint compression, swinging, jumping
 - * Planned schedule vs. reinforcement

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Research Studies at YCSC

Simons Simplex Consortium Genetics Study

Ages 5-17 with at least one unaffected sibling > age 4

Contact: Monika.Lau@yale.edu

Simons Baby Sibs Project

Infant Siblings of Children with Autism

Contact: monika.lau@yale.edu

MRI Studies

Ages 10–30 Contact: Julie.Wolf@yale.edu

Infants Contact: Julie.Wolf@yale.edu

Early Social Cognition

Ages 1-2 years

Contact: suzanne.macari@yale.edu

Language Studies in ASD

Pragmatics (Ages 9-17): daria.diakonova@yale.edu

Prosody (Ages 4-7) Contact: Allison.Lee@yale.edu

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Recommended Resources

Klin, Volkmar, & Sparrow (2000)

Asperger Syndrome

Guilford Press

National Research Council:

Educating Children with Autism

<http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10017.html>

Volkmar & Wiesner (2004)

Healthcare for Children on the Autism Spectrum

Woodbine House

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