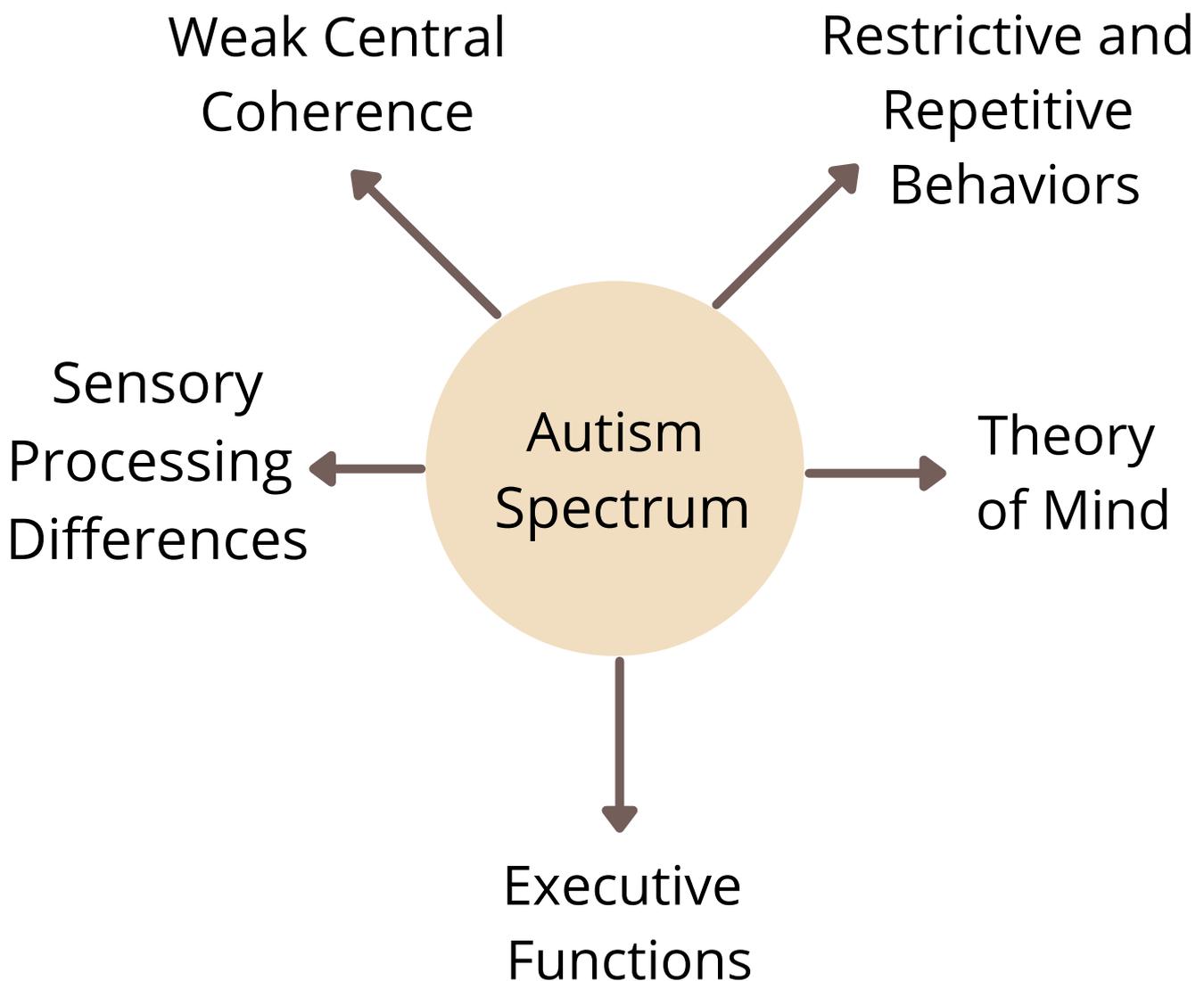


AUTISM SPECTRUM AND LEARNING SUPPORT

A brief summary of the way (the below) cognitive and mental characteristics affect the learning of a young person on the autism spectrum and how to support them.



Create a personalized learning profile.



Central Coherence

Whereas most neurotypical persons have a need for central coherence, that is seeing the whole picture and integrating information so it makes sense as a whole, children on the ASD spectrum have a preference for a detail-focused cognitive style.

This can mean challenges with seeing the big picture (affecting comprehension), and a preference for tasks with fewer components.

Support strategies include breaking down tasks into simple steps, and making use of visuals.

Executive Functions

Focusing attention may be a challenge for many children on the autism spectrum. They may find it difficult to:

- regulate attention in a “busy” environment,
- plan and organize their work,
- self-monitor,
- inhibit impulsiveness.

Strategies that may support them include:

- striving to limit distractions,
- supporting them in organizing their work,
- making use of reward charts to increase their motivation (e.g. for staying on track),
- having realistic expectations.

Theory of mind

Children on the autism spectrum may find it difficult to read complex intentions, emotions, or body language, or understand situations from another person's point of view.

This skill improves over time with continuous learning, and children on the spectrum may be supported via discussion about others' points of view and what may be some helpful things to do and say in response.

Sensory

“children with ASD display different brain processing mechanism to auditory stimuli” (Crasta et al., 2020)

It is easy to attribute a child's lack of listening to behavioral reasons such as being "lazy," many can underestimate the effort it takes for a child on the autism spectrum to filter out irrelevant stimuli.

Children may be sensory seeking, avoidant, or a combination. To be able to concentrate and feel comfortable, they may need to seek or avoid varying stimulation (whether it is movement, sound, or tactile).

Consider how the environment can respond to a child's needs, for example by accommodating movement breaks or supplementing verbal instruction with visuals or modeling.

Repetitive Behavior

Children on the spectrum may find it soothing to follow routines and engage in specific interests and behaviors and may find coping with changes more stressful than neurotypical peers.

Sometimes adults try to suppress autistic children's special interests or behaviors, however, many believe that these can actually support them in feeling calm and regulated, and also can be valuable motivators for engaging in nonpreferred tasks.

When it comes to children's well-being, it is important to measure a child's outcome according to their individual potential, and not solely in comparison to norms.

Consider making use of the following profile template to support significant people in your child's lives to better understand his or her needs, with suggestions for how to modify their learning environment and interactions to meet your child's needs.

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PROFILE

	Strengths	Challenges	Strategies
Communication			
Social			
Repetitive Behavior or Special Interest			
Sensory			
Learning			