



# PTSD and **First Responders'** interaction with people on the **autistic spectrum**

# What is autism? ASD?

**Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)** refers to a range of conditions characterised by some degree of impaired social behaviour, communication and language, and a narrow range of interests and activities that are both unique to the individual and carried out repetitively.



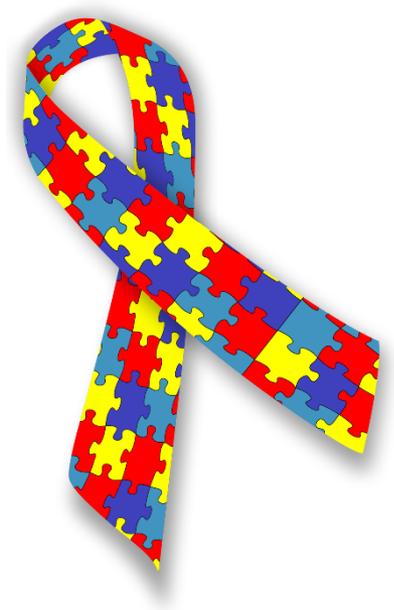
# What does it mean?

An autistic person can not prioritize for herself which factor from the environment is more important for herself and needs to focus on that direction.

For example, we are going to school, stay on a chair and focus our attention on what the teacher says.

The autistic person will be invade in the same time by the all factors like: what the teacher says, what the colleagues are saying slowly, what the kids are shouting outside, the noise made by cars, etc!

**HARD!**



# How can we identify a person with ASD, especially a child, in an emergency situation?

- ❖ Shake the hands/fingers, jumps all the time
- ❖ Go around in circle without any direction or purpose
- ❖ Self aggressive or agresives towards others that try to go near them/unknown people
- ❖ Dont have visual contact/dont ask for help
- ❖ Do not emphatise with others
- ❖ Speech troubles(repete what we are saying, use **you** instead of **I**, echo speech, can used a stereotype and obsesive speech, limited capacity of understanding send to you
- ❖ They are not affraid of danger but some may be affraid of animals, noises
- ❖ You might think they can not hear you or the noise! **False!**
- ❖ They are using you to reach their goals

# What can be difficult to do for an autistic person?



- To say a lie - cannot detect your lie, what it is or to say one
  - To empathise with your problems
  - To understand other people intentions
- To observe the interest of a people who listens while other speaks
  - To observe confusion
- To understand the hidden reasons behind human behavior

# How do you interact with an autistic person to reach to him?

- Speak clearly, simple, using few words
- Obtain the fully attention of the child
- Offer clear, short instructions, giving time to react
- Your facial expression has to reflect your message



Even that person can't speak/appear it doesn't listen she can understand, most of the time, your message.

# Example of verbal instructions that might be useful in your work:

- Stop! Wait!
- Good hands! Be careful! Wait!
- Do like me! Do like that!
- Sit down!  
Come! Eat!  
Drink!  
Close/open the door!
- Come! Come to the car! Come to see your mother/father! /carers name!



# What we must know...

- They can tolerate a big pain or scream when is a soft touch
- They might cry/laugh without a reason
- They might cover their ears when hearing a song and not react when they hear a loud noise
- They might accept to smell something nasty but be aggressive or reject a person using a certain perfume
- They might play piano like a teacher but won't be able to tie the shoelaces
- Behavior, language/communications and social interactions will make the difference between an ASD person and one without ASD
- They can read/write but cannot make a circle
- They might communicate a message, tell about an event but not always as it happened in real life; depends of their level of perception, understanding, development

# At the courthouse

- ❖ EVERY AUTISTIC PERSON IS "UNIQUE"
- ❖ You have to explain step by step to the autistic person what it will happen, what will be expected from him/her
- ❖ **Remember:** an autistic person will not say lies but the information will be explained from his/her point of view, from the capacity to understand what it been seen/heard; will not accept the things happen differently because of his obsessive/rigid way to understand the events
- ❖ Talk to the carer: about his level of understanding, what knowledge has, how you must talk and ask to obtain the informations

# In case of a fire

- Remember: you will identify an autistic person not from his look but from the way he communicate, interact with people and things and the way he behaves





## In case an autistic person calls 112/991

- An an operator you must listen very carrefully, look for keywords/keyphrases
- **Remember** : they might repeat to you what you are saying, they might say to you: you are doing instead of i do, etc
- Try to ask more questions but **offer them time** to answer after every question
- **Inform** your colleagues that they will meet an autistic person

# Autistic person and the medical staff that works in the emergency room

- **Remember** : an autistic person might have high tolerance of pain therefore they might not react to cold/hot conditions, they might be sensitive to touch or pain
- Please **move as slow** is possible around them, explain step by step what is going on
- **Ask help from his carer** if possible
- **Remember** : they might hold an object to help them manage the situation so, if is posible, let them hold it



# In case of an missing autistic person



**MISSING**



- ✓ The person that investigate the case must have minimal knowledge about autism
- ✓ When the person is localised, *dont expect* to answer when you call his name
- ✓ **Remember:** some people with ASD are not affraid of danger and might do things that will put their life in danger after you find them
- ✓ Try to find out what has happend, when is posible, using a clear, direct language with few words and give time to answer after every question

# In case Police is involved...

- Autistic people might feel fear seeing uniforms, police cars with lights on and sirens, new people, new places, changes in their routine
- Some people with ASD might not understand the danger so they might jump in front of a car, police dogs, etc
- They might avoid visual contact, might display strong and often stereotypes
- They don't have inhibitions: to take clothes off for example
- They might display crisis similar epilepsy



# What to do when you meet an ASD person, child or adult

- **Be patient**, give them space when is possible
- **Talk clearly, short sentences/questions, and give them time to answer**
- **Try to identify the disturbing factor and to eliminate it if possible**
- **Dont touch/look him** unless is absolutly necesarly
- **Talk to the carer** how to obtain informations



# Facts about autism

- The autism colour is BLUE
- Autistic people, most of the time, don't have a hearing problem
- They don't ask/display affection, most of the time
- If they do a 1000 pieces puzzle means they know how to get dressed correctly
- Remember: They are impressive, unique and lovely when you get to know them



AUTISM

A hand is shown holding the word "AUTISM" in large, colorful, hand-drawn letters. The letters are blue, yellow, green, red, purple, and red. The hand is holding the bottom of the letters, particularly the 'M'.

THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

