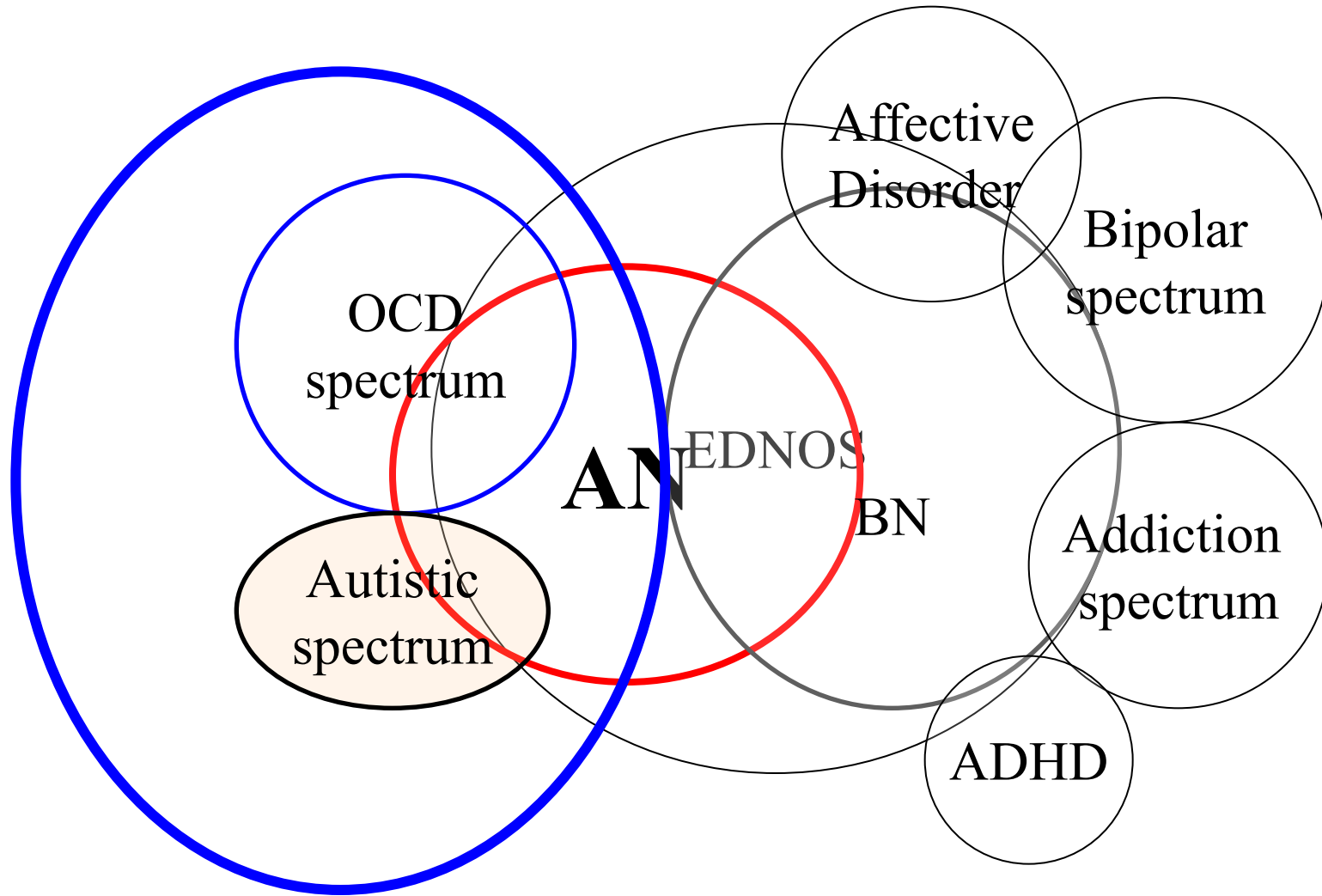


Link between Autism and Eating Disorders and why it matters?

Professor Kate Tchanturia
Consultant Clinical Psychologist/ Principal Investigator of PEACE
Pathway – King's College London

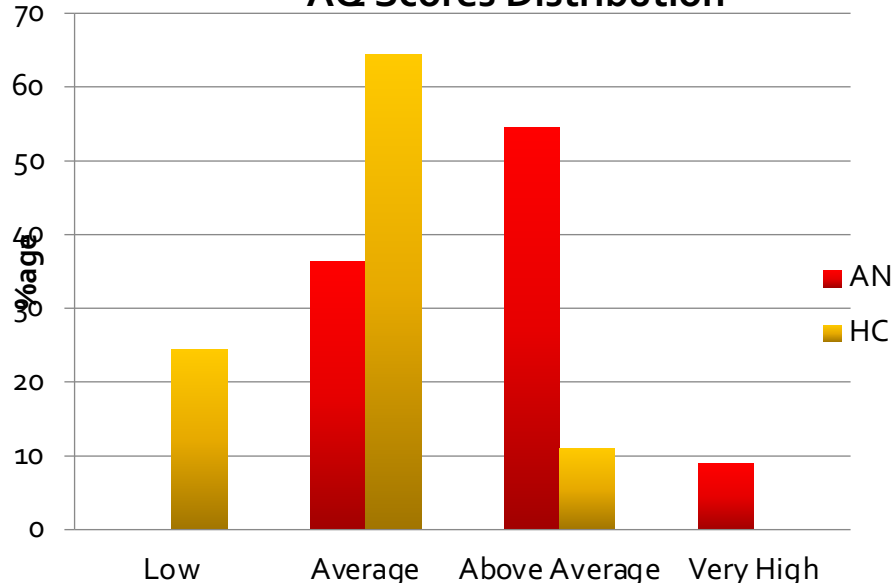
7th September 2021

The comorbidity of Eating Disorders

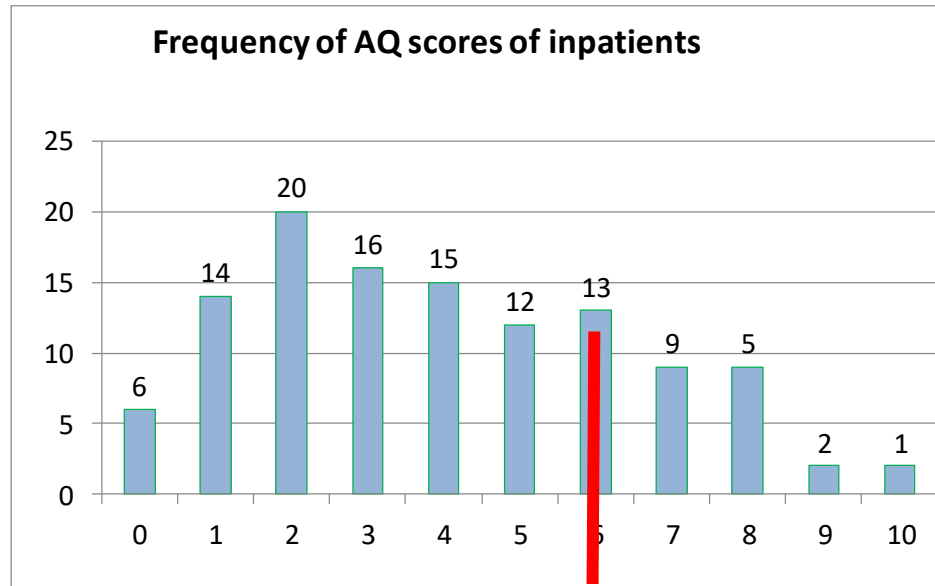


Why we started to look at it systematically? Importance of the audit!

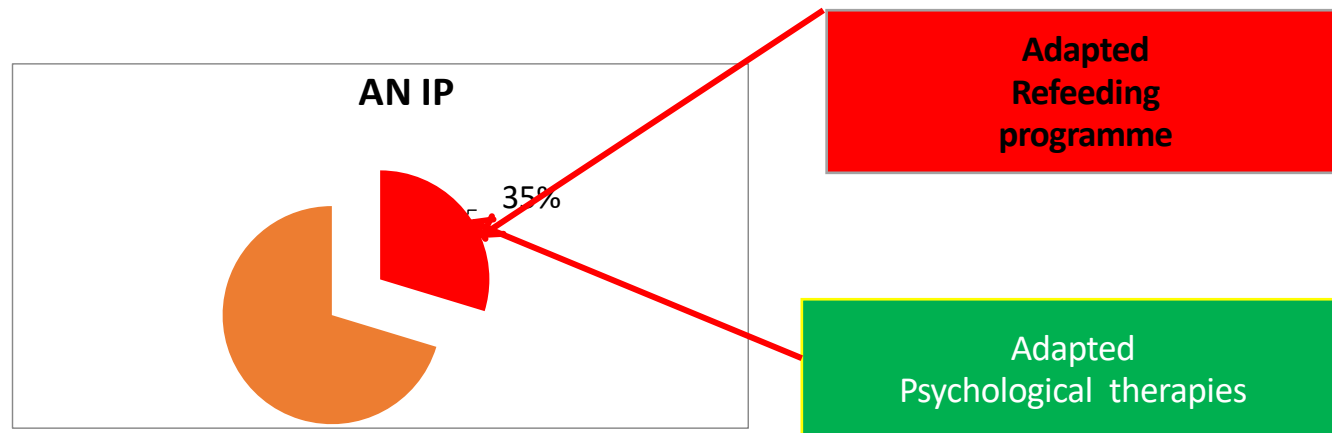
AQ Scores Distribution



Frequency of AQ scores of inpatients



PEACE 
Pathway for Eating disorders and Autism
developed from Clinical Experience



What we knew about Autism ED comorbidity influence on treatment

1. **Poorer illness outcomes** (Nielsen et al 2015)
2. **No clear pathway** (Kinnaird et al, 2017)
3. Clinicians thought (Kinnaird et al, 2017):
 - Lacked **confidence**
 - **Issues with communication**
 - **Specific modifications needed**

What can we do about it?

Patients (AN/ASD) ✓



Qualitative
interviews

Carers ✓

✓
Clinicians

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access

Clinicians' views on working with anorexia nervosa and autism spectrum disorder comorbidity: a qualitative study



Emma Kinnaird¹, Caroline Norton² and Kate Tchanturia^{1,2,3,4*}

What all stakeholders would like to improve:

Table 1: Overlap with Patients, Staff & Carers

Acknowledge

Help

Change

	Patients	Staff	Carers
	AN & ASD Interlinked	AN & ASD Interlinked	AN & ASD Interlinked
	Sensory Difficulties	Sensory Difficulties	Sensory Difficulties
	Not enough time / clinician rapport	Takes longer to build rapport	Takes longer to build rapport
	Flexible and individualised treatment	Adaptions and specific modifications	Flexible and individualised approach
	Difficulty getting diagnosis	No clear pathways for assessment	Difficulty getting diagnosis
	Clinician education	Clinician education	Clinician education

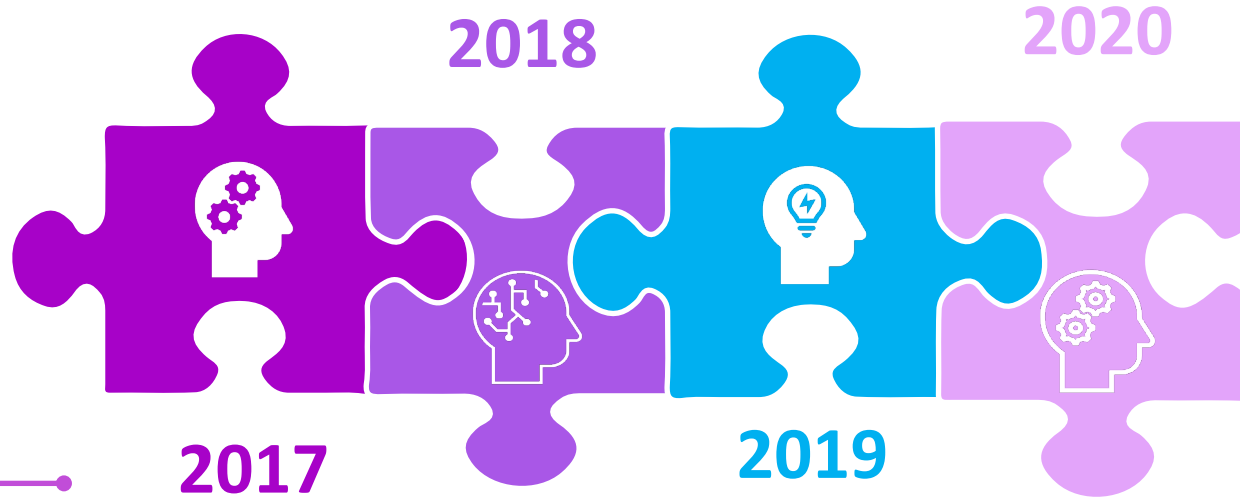
Training

2018

ASC and ED (Prof. Kate Tchanturia)
ASC and anxiety (Dr. Ann Ozsivadjian)

2020

DBT adaptations (Dr. Kate Johnson & Dr. Emmie Neophytou)
Formulation for Autism (Dr. Neil Hammond)



2017

ASC in females (Prof. William Mandy)
ASC Diagnosis and Treatment (Dr. Neil Hammond)
How we audit ASC (Prof. Kate Tchanturia)

2019

ADOS Training (Dr. Emma Woodhouse)
ADI Training (Dr. Emma Woodhouse)
CBT modification training (Dr. Ann Ozsivadjian)
CBT modification training (Dr. Debbie Spain)
Sensory Adaptations (Caroline Bulmer)

PEACE

Pathway for Eating disorders and Autism
Developed from Clinical Experience

We have done 30 clinical training sessions with EDU team:
Clinical interviews, management of autism, case formulations and much more...

Reviewing and asking:
Tell us what will support You?

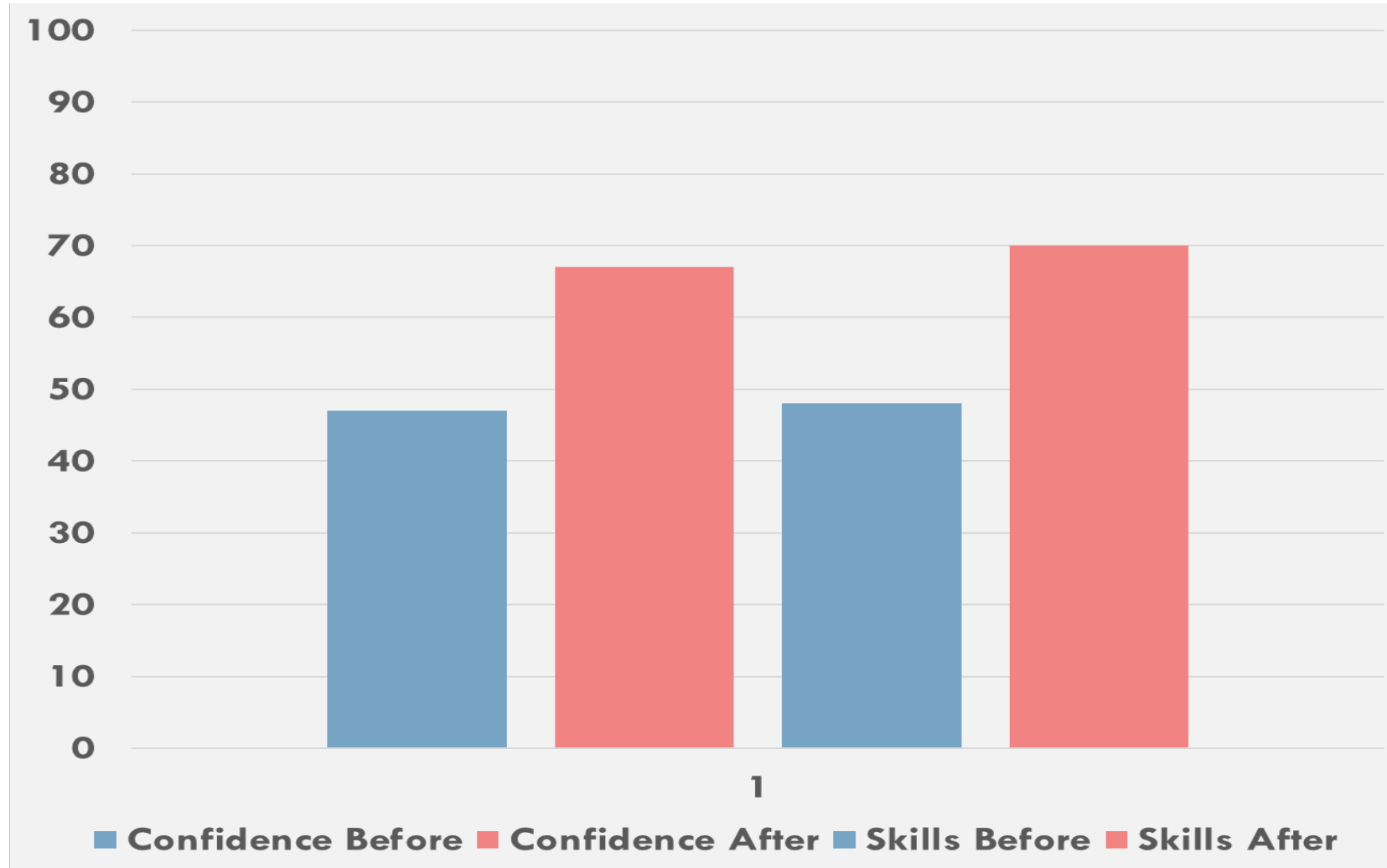


PEACE pathway implementation in the clinical work



- “PEACE- gained momentum and it has really helped at bringing the MDT together”
- “I am now thinking about things I might not have thought about”
- “Extended huddles are very important”
- “Looking back at previous patients, I wish I had known then what I knew now”
- “I have now included questions around it in my standardised assessment”

Clinical team reported 40% increase in confidence & skills after trainings



What all stakeholders would like to improve:

Table 1: Overlap with Patients, Staff & Carers

Patients	Staff	Carers
AN & ASD Interlinked	AN & ASD Interlinked	AN & ASD Interlinked
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Clinician education	Clinician education	Clinician education

What we can implement straight away!



?



Sensory awareness and skills workshops

Sensory differences can be a good thing!

- Important for self-regulation
- One-off sensory wellbeing workshops
 - Psychoeducation
 - Discussion around how our senses make us feel
 - DIY sensory wellbeing tool kits
- Accompanying sensory wellbeing booklet-
basic information and tools for self-
exploration



Nutrition

thanks to Kate Williams

Individual care plans

To choose from a menu of foods with bland flavours and odours, homogeneous textures, neutral colours, controlled portions.

For presenting foods in whatever way is most acceptable, eg different items not touching on the plate; or on separate plates; all elements of the meal given at the same time....

To eat away from the dining room...?



Adaptations

“The combination of autism and starvation is like autism on steroids”

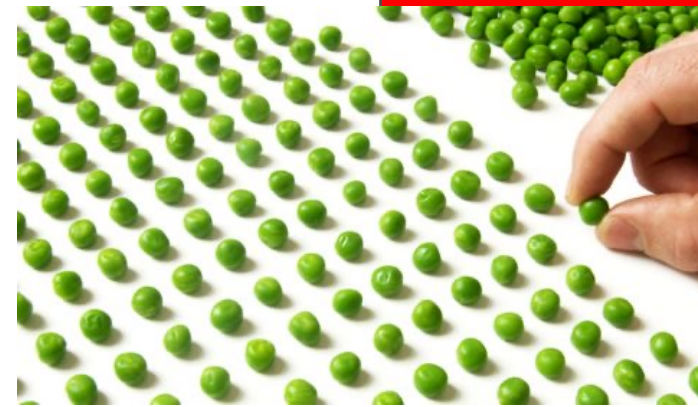
01
Literal
language

02
Longer
processing
time

03
Written
communication

04
Focus on
thinking
styles, not
thoughts

05
Separate
autism from
the MH
condition



Little changes making big difference

Open-Ended

How was the presentation?
(in your own words)

Multiple Choice

How was the presentation?
(select one)

- Great
- Pretty Good
- OK
- Pretty Bad
- Terrible

“I think in pictures”

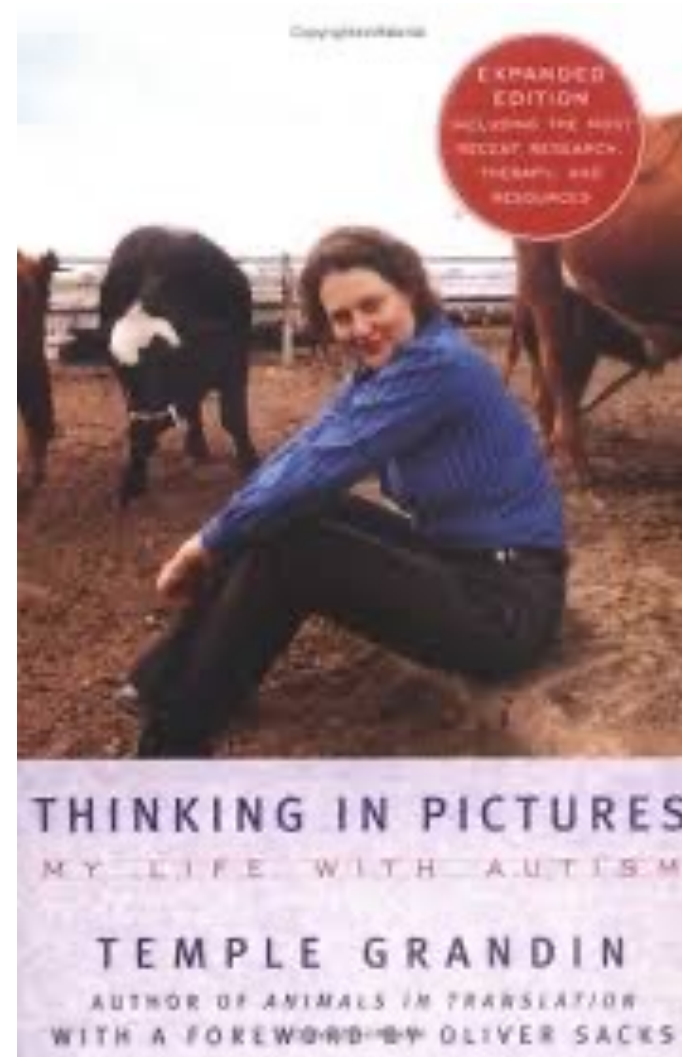
“I am what I do instead of what I feel”

“I have replaced emotional complexity with intellectual complexity”..

Advice to teachers/parents:

“develop individuals talents into skills that can turn into satisfying jobs and hobbies...”

“to help to understand autistic brain ... play with images... (music, numbers)



Our patients say:



Helpful adaptations

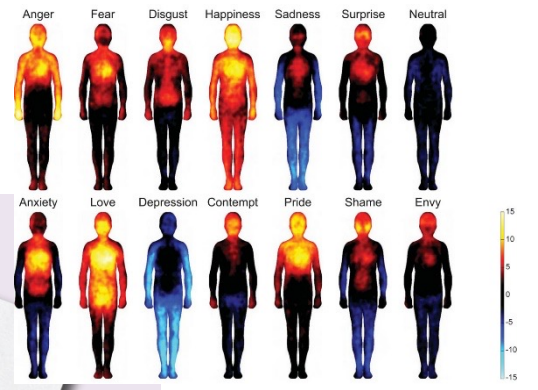
A recent systematic review of the CBT literature in ASD (Spain et al; 2015) has highlighted the need of protocol modifications for individuals with ASD.

-increased number of treatment sessions to aid with initial engagement with the therapist, to enhance emotional literacy, and to practice, consolidate and generalise techniques learnt .

-Ask questions more concrete and giving more examples rather than expecting patients to do too much guess work and struggle with open ended questions.

“I find words really difficult to describe my feelings and stuff and I find words really hard, but pictures are so much better”

Psychological therapy adaptations:



Cost savings for the PEACE Pathway:

- 01 Decreased the length of inpatient stay for patients with ASC
- 02 Improved screening for patients with autistic traits
- 03 Improved awareness of Autism on the ward
- 04 Increased clinicians' confidence in dealing with the condition
- 05 Led to a reduction in mean cost for patients with autistic traits from **£70,925 to £48,087 per patient**

Estimated total savings are in the region of £275,000 per year.

PEACE ●

Pathway for Eating disorders and Autism
developed from Clinical Experience

 @PEACE_Pathway

What we know and what we can explore to minimize the GAP between research and clinical practice? Lessons from PEACE:



- Adaptations in the PEACE pathway have positive feedback from ALL stakeholders
- PEACE pathway learning experience is beneficial for people with AN/Autism comorbidity and people without this comorbid conditions
- Autism experts and ED experts working together has positive impact on both fields
- With PEACE pathway we can make difference in care and do it effectively and cost efficiently.

WE NEED PEACE in the treatment –“bigger picture”

More detailed information about PEACE :

- Book will be out March 2021
- Peer-reviewed publications (up to 20)
- Social media
- Our website peacepathway.org



PEACE Website

- We have developed a website to share information and good practice with patients, carers, clinicians and researchers.
- Blog posts by autistic people with eating disorders.
- Autistic patients being sign-posted to the local support groups and autistic community.

PEACE

Are you someone with an Eating Disorder and Autism?
Find Out More

Are you a Carer?
Find Out More

Are you a Clinician
Find Out More

What is PEACE?

PEACE is a Pathway for Eating disorders and Autism developed from Clinical Experience. Our research suggests that around 35% of people experiencing an eating disorder may be autistic, or present with high levels of autistic traits. We hope this pathway will support autistic people suffering with an eating disorder, their loved ones and their clinicians.

Help and Support

You are now part of the PEACE Community and we want to hear from YOU! Send us a message with your feedback or questions!

team@peacopathway.org

[f](#) [t](#) [i](#)

Thank you

Kate.Tchanturia@kcl.ac.uk

www.peacepathway.org



@PEACE_Pathway

