

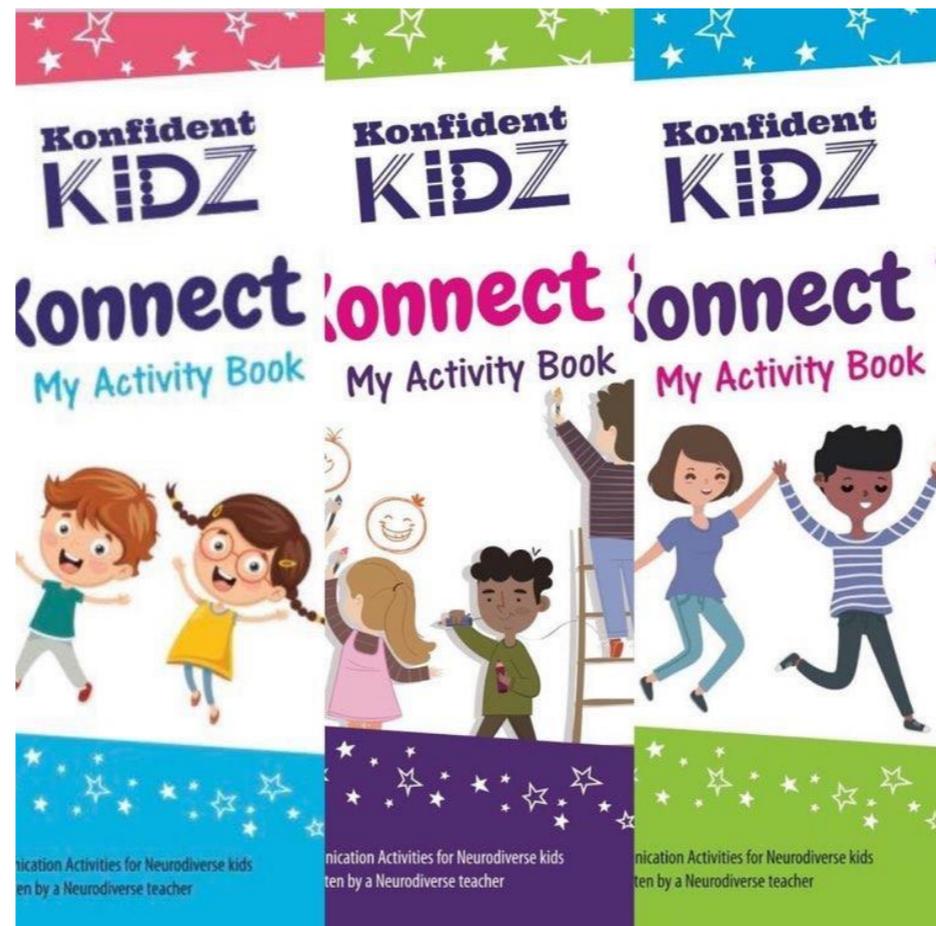
Autism and Anxiety

Sense-ability Series June 8th

Evaleen Whelton

www.ausometraining.com





5 Models

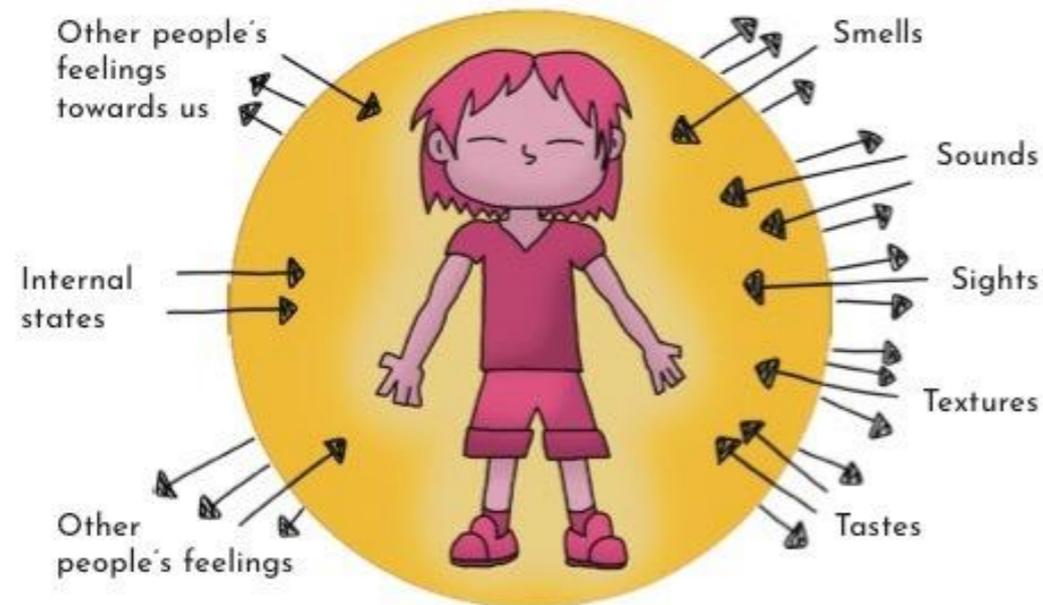
- Medical Model
- Social Model
- Human Rights Model
- Minority Stress Model
- The Munster Model of Autistic Living



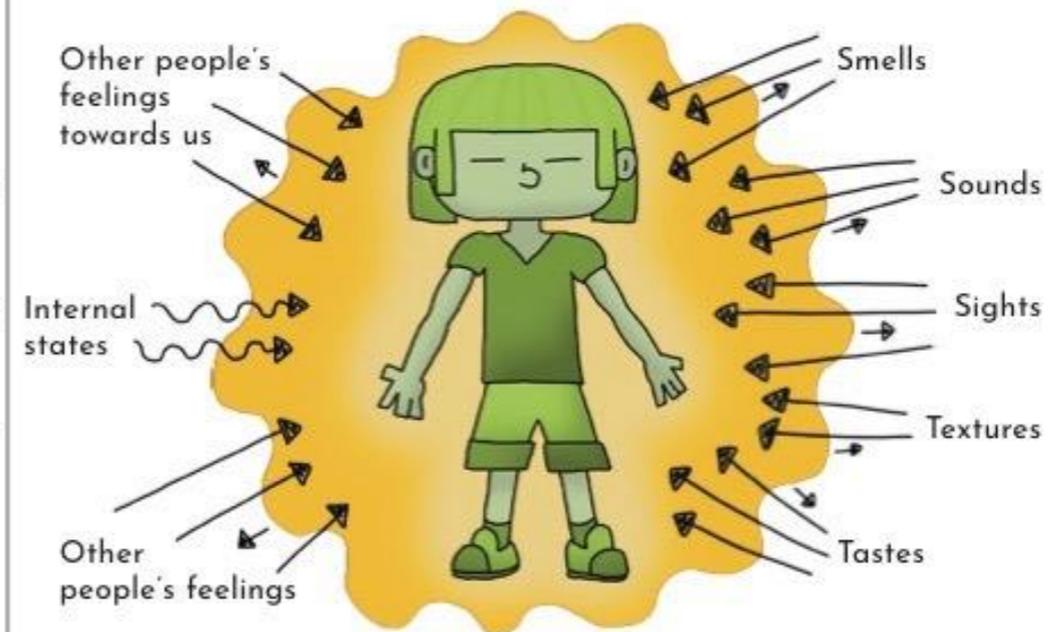
“**Autistics** are human beings who have a different sensory system to non-autistic human beings. We interact with our environment differently to non-autistic people. We have our own language and culture which we are only beginning to explore as a community. We communicate in our own language with other Autistics but our language is often misinterpreted by non-autistics. Autistics have an ability to hyper focus and to become experts on a subject because learning for us is an emotional experience. ”



NON-AUTISTIC



AUTISTIC



What is Anxiety?

“Anxiety is a term used to describe uncomfortable feelings of nervousness, worry, and tension, which we all feel from time to time.

Anxiety can affect anyone. It affects our thoughts, physical reactions, moods and behaviours.

Anxiety can be a normal response to a stress in our lives and some degree of anxiety can improve our performance in certain stressful situations.

However, if anxiety occurs too often or for little reason, or if it begins to interfere with our life and prevent us from doing things, then it has become a problem.”

www.irishpsychiatry.ie



I didn't know I had Anxiety until I heard it described as...constantly thinking negative thoughts...



What causes anxiety disorder?

A big event or a buildup of smaller stressful life situations may trigger excessive **anxiety** — for example, a death in the family, work **stress** or ongoing worry about finances.

Mayo Health Clinic



So, what is going on in the
lives of Autistics to lead to
such levels of Anxiety?



Asking Autistics: What makes you anxious?

Social Situations: judgement, rejection, gaslighting, misinterpreting my words
plans changing
not being in control
busy, noisy places
the future
going somewhere new
sudden loud noises
talking on the phone
people showing up unannounced



- **HAVING** to do things. e.g. official forms
doing something wrong
flashing lights
when I'm late, when others are late
eye contact
vague use of language
raised voices
mood changes in others
being touched, even a pat on the head
time limits



Many of the answers “what makes you anxious” are normal human responses of any anxious person, not the actual CAUSES.

Being anxious about change is a sign of Anxiety, not the cause. Most people’s comments were related social interaction. (60 took part)

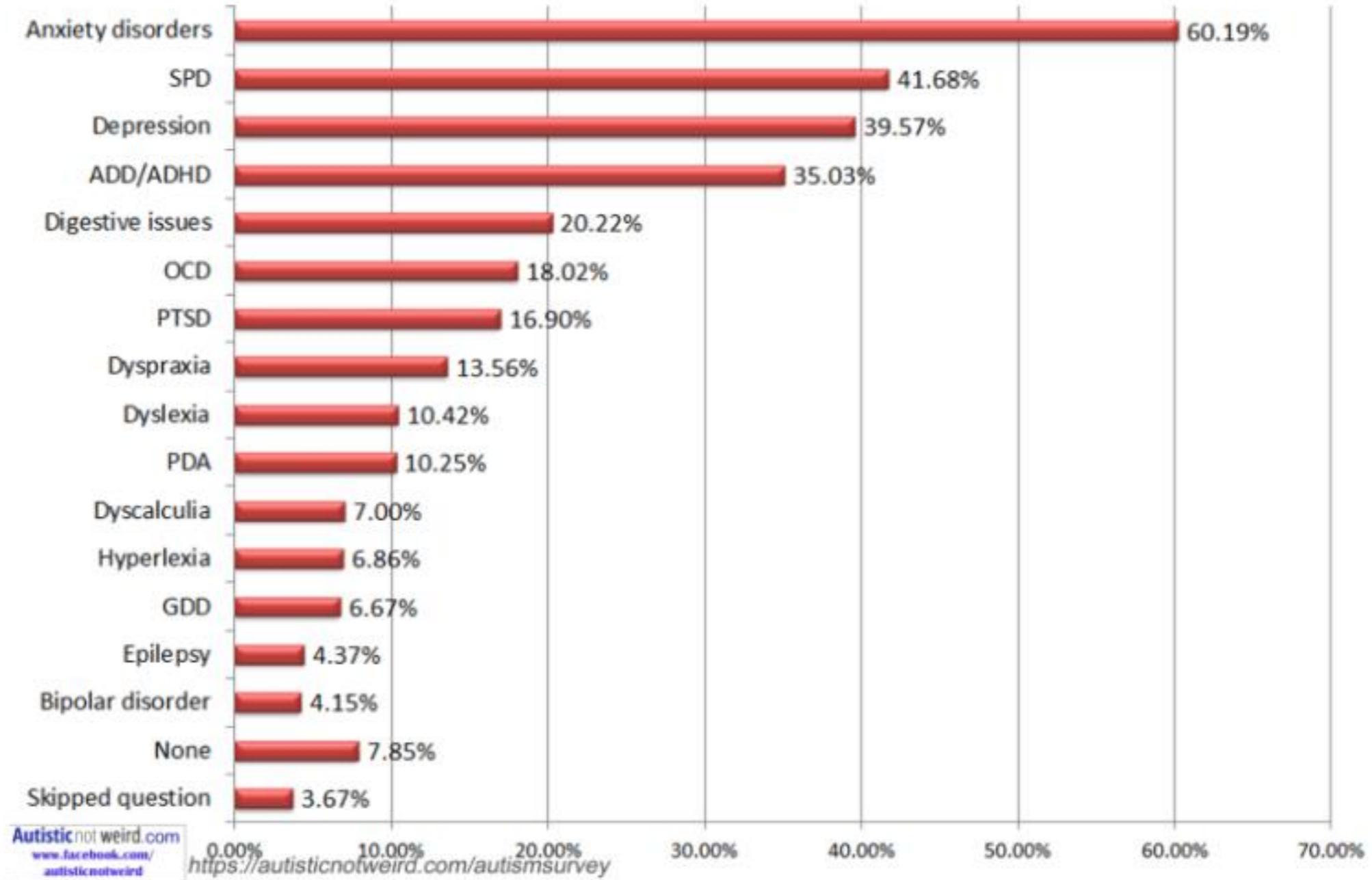


If we are 'natural problem solvers', then why the adversity to change?



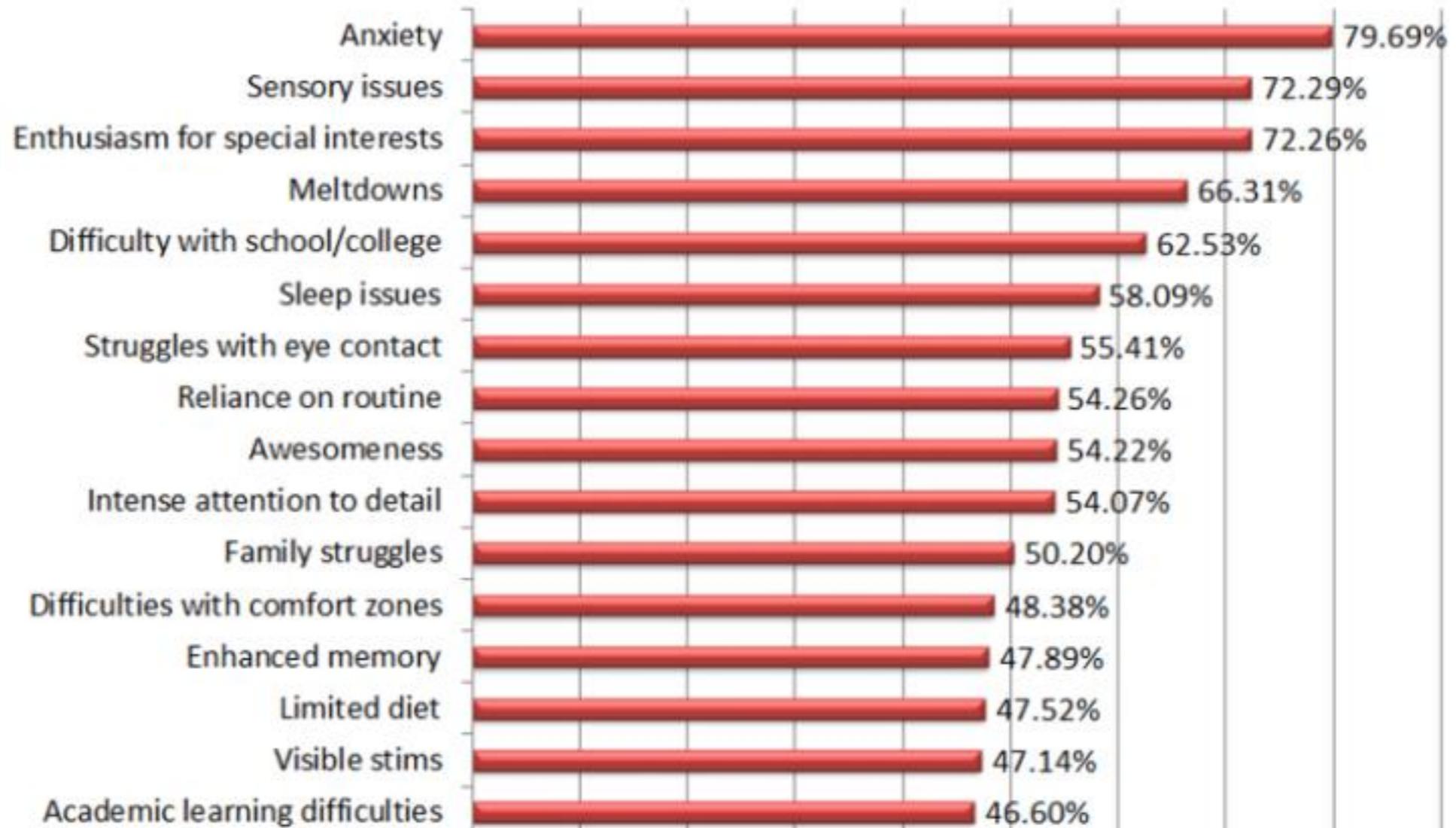
Comorbid conditions

Which other conditions do you/your autistic relative have (regardless of diagnosis)?



Autistic not weird survey

Please tick the boxes that describe how autism affects you or your relative.



“Autistic Behaviour” v Human behaviour under stress



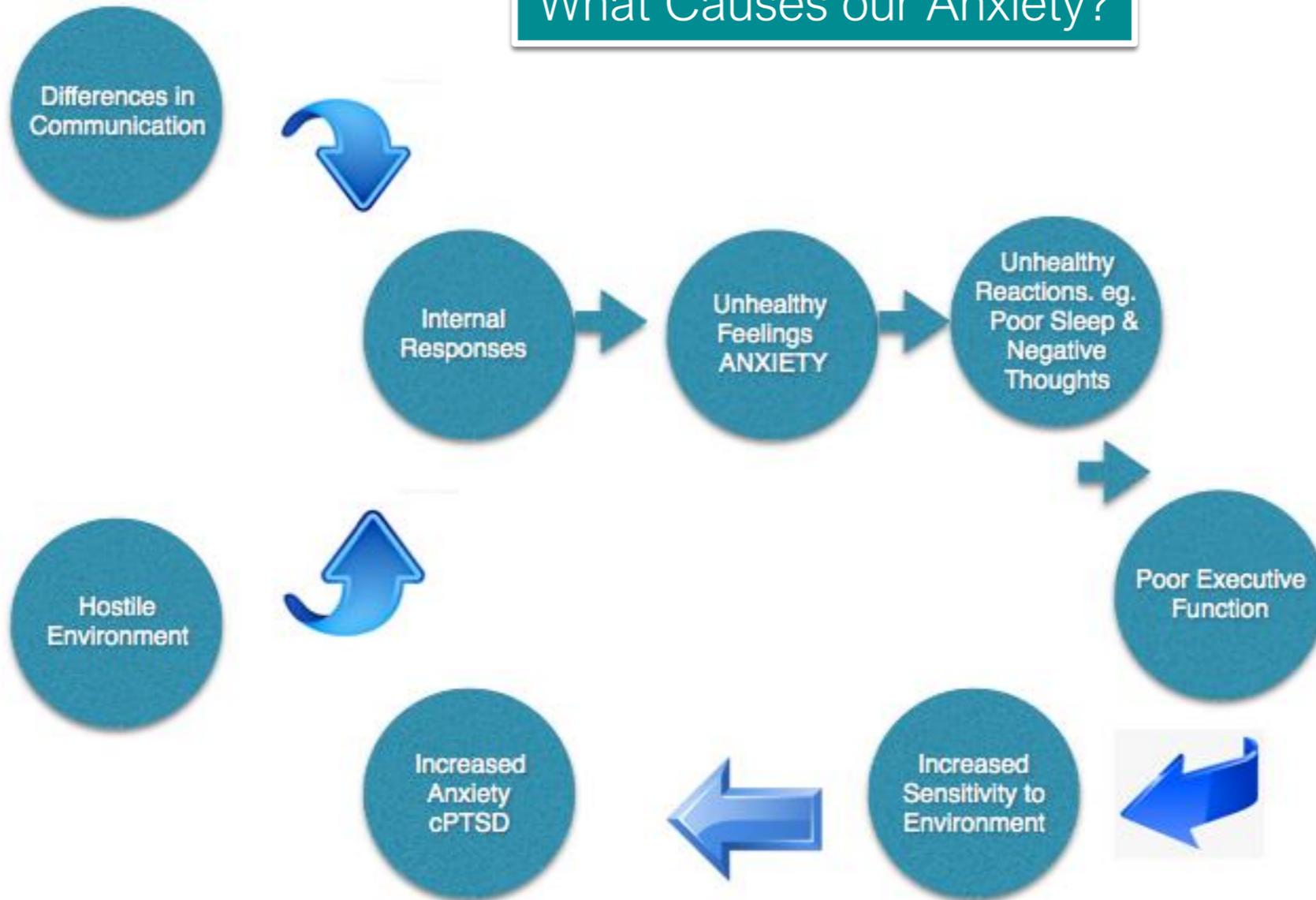
How do humans respond to threats?

The social call

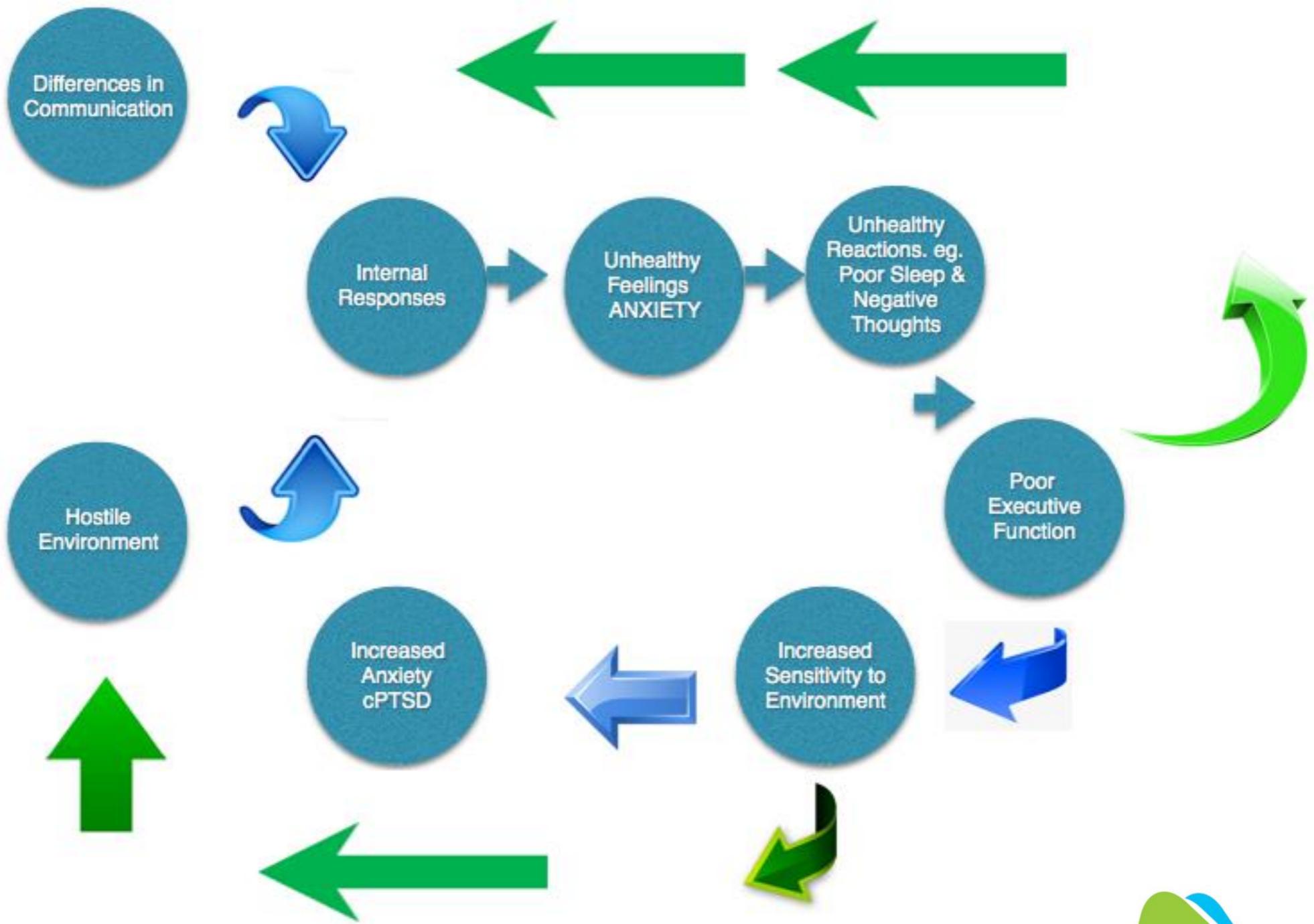
Fight, Flight, Freeze,
Fawn, Fake



What Causes our Anxiety?



The Anxiety Cycle



Confusing Communication

- Vague Phrases
- Literal Interpreter
- Sarcasm
- Tone v Facial Expression
- Body language v words
- Tone v words
- Literal Speaker-
- Words being misinterpreted
- Inaccurate motives being attached to our words
- Autistic Body Language v Non-Autistic Body Language-
- Actions being misinterpreted
Inaccurate motives being attached to our words
- Being dismissed, judged, ignored, unheard
- Social Hierarchy



Hostile Environment

- Bright Lights
 - Loud Noises
 - Smells
 - Sounds
 - Colours
 - Textures
 - Words used to describe us
 - Other People's reactions to us
 - Other People's Acceptance of us
 - Other people's judgement and responses to us
 -
- **Remember we are highly empathetic and sensitive to things others don't even notice**

"It's not the senses, it's what the senses sense" Maqqi



How you experience things shapes how you feel



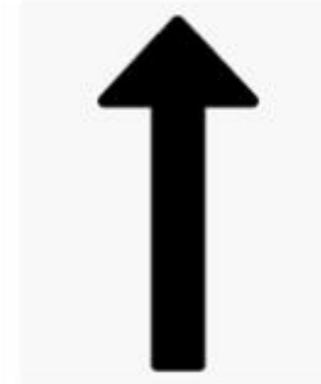
How you feel shapes how you act



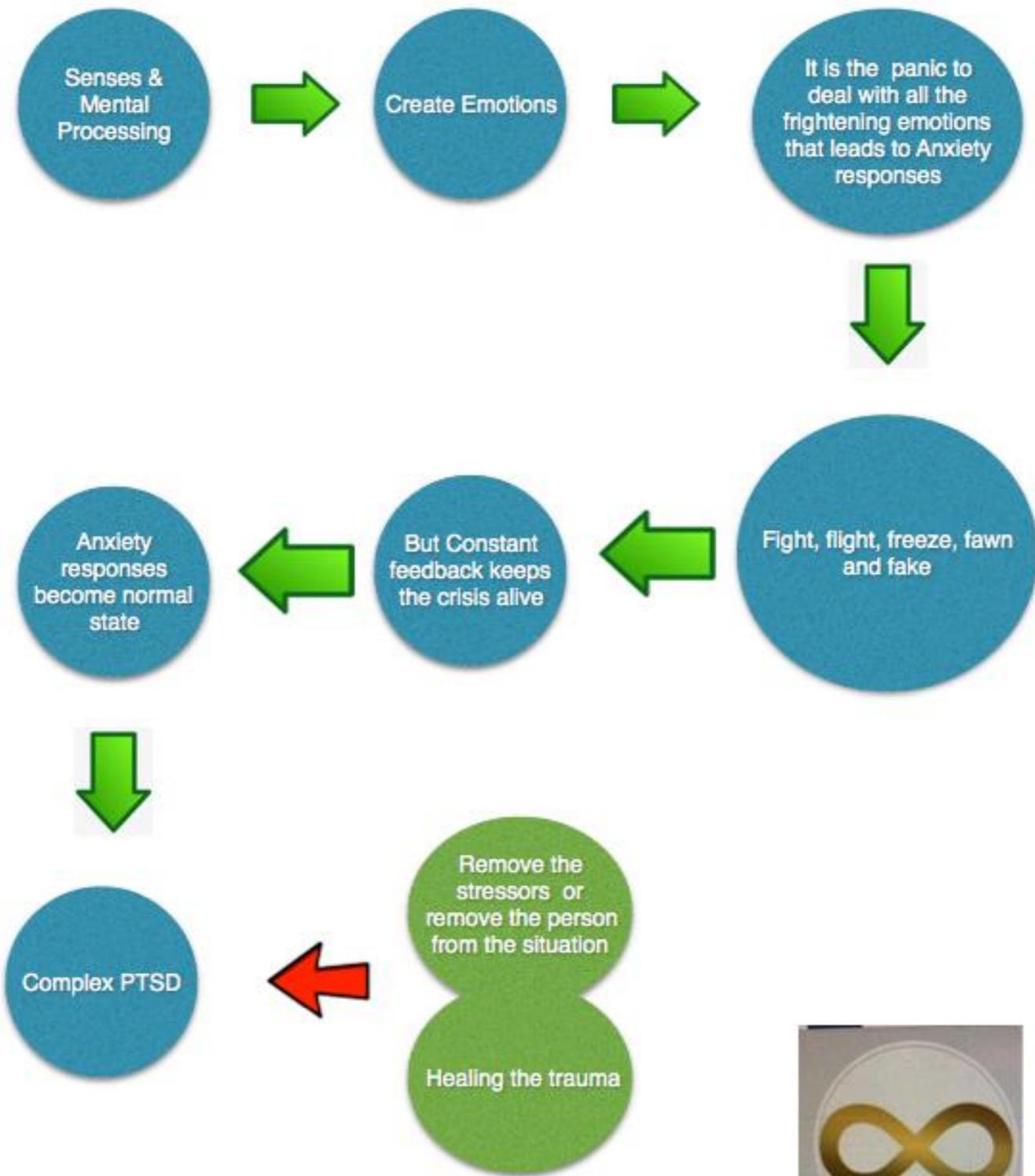
How you act changes the "environment" ie how other people respond to you



This effects how they communicate with you and treat you



Internal Responses



Solutions

**Remove the stressors
or remove the person
from the situation:
Autistic Communication
and Environment**

**Healing the
trauma**

**Autistics are
human**

