

# Unmasked:

## *Identifying Autistic Traits in Kinky Clients*

by Dr. Kade Sharp, PhD, LICSW, RPT-S, CMHS





# ◆ ——— **Table of contents** ——— ◆

**01**

## **Introduction**

Who, why, and what.

**02**

## **Screening**

From intake and moving forward.

**03**

## **Diagnosing**

Strengths-based criteria (The 5 S Framework.)

**04**

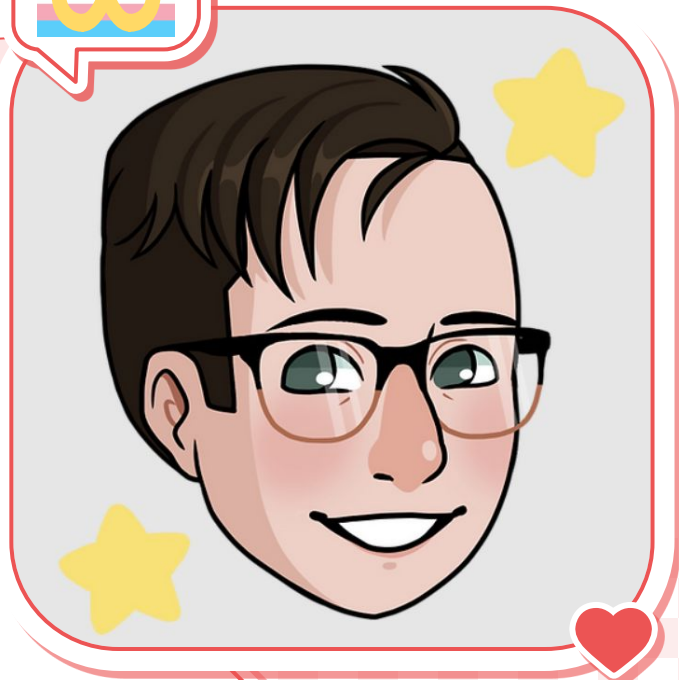
## **Resources**

Assessments, tools, my dissertation, etc.

**05**

## **Q&A**

How can I support you?



## Who am I?

- White fat autistic trans/genderqueer queer/demi poly person
  - Primarily left of the slash
  - Diagnosed later in life
- PhD in Clinical Sexology
- Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (WA)
  - Supervisor credential
- Registered Play Therapist-Supervisor™
- Child Mental Health Specialist
- Practicing virtually & in Richland, WA



**1 in 36**

children in the United States are autistic...

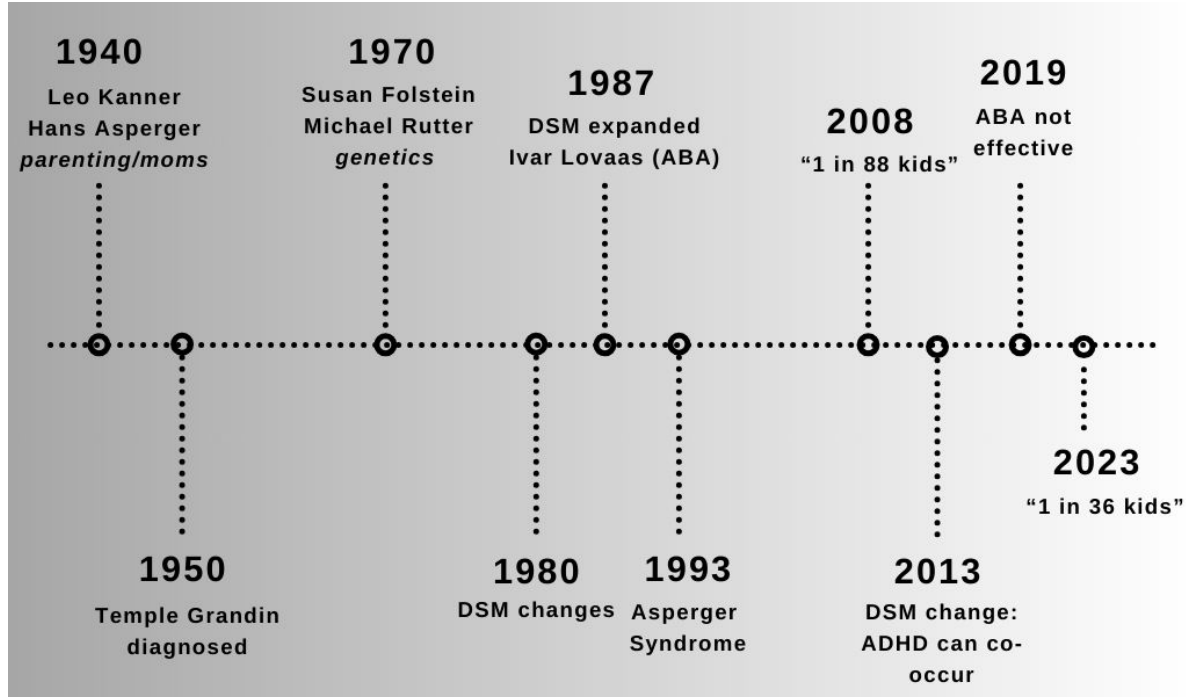
# Kink & Sex Stats

## Autistic folks...

- were the majority in a puppy play community
- are more likely to be into S&M
- are more likely to be exhibitionists or enjoy public play
- are more interested in sex when it's interest-driven
- are more likely to enjoy "defeat to victory" scenarios in kink
- are more likely to be asexual
- tend to masturbate more often than allistic people



# A Brief History of Autism



# What Is Autism? by Dr Nick Walker

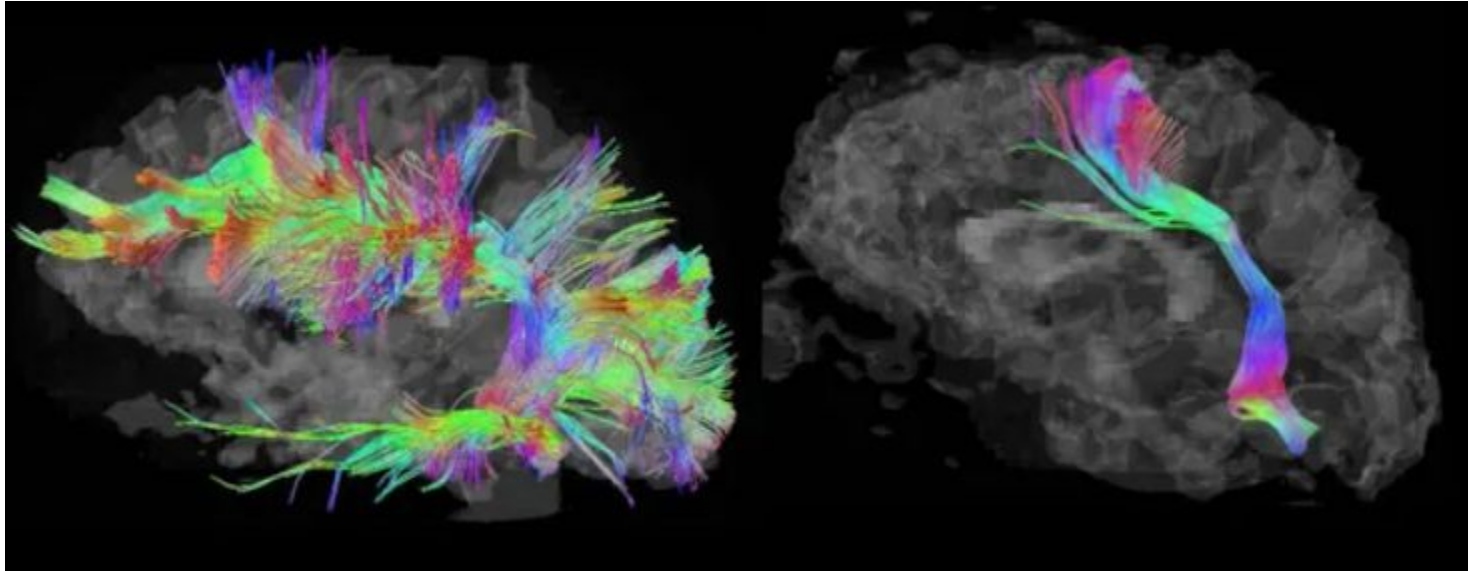
“Autism is a genetically-based human neurological variant. The complex set of **interrelated characteristics** that distinguish autistic neurology from non-autistic neurology is not yet fully understood, but **current evidence indicates that the central distinction is that autistic brains are characterized by particularly high levels of synaptic connectivity and responsiveness.** This tends to make **the autistic individual’s subjective experience more intense and chaotic** than that of non-autistic individuals: **on both the sensorimotor and cognitive levels,** the autistic mind tends to **register more information,** and the **impact of each bit of information tends to be both stronger and less predictable.**

Autism is a developmental phenomenon, meaning that it begins in utero and has a pervasive influence on development, on multiple levels, throughout the lifespan. **Autism produces distinctive, atypical ways of thinking, moving, interaction, and sensory and cognitive processing.** One analogy that has often been made is that autistic individuals have a different neurological “operating system” than non-autistic individuals.

Despite underlying neurological commonalities, **autistic individuals are vastly different from one another.** ... However, in the context of a society designed around the sensory, cognitive, developmental, and social needs of non-autistic individuals, autistic individuals are almost always disabled to some degree – sometimes quite obviously, and sometimes more subtly.”



# The Autistic Brain



Temple Grandin's brain (left) compared to an allistic (non-autistic) brain showing a much larger "cables" for visual thinking.





# Screening

## Mental health

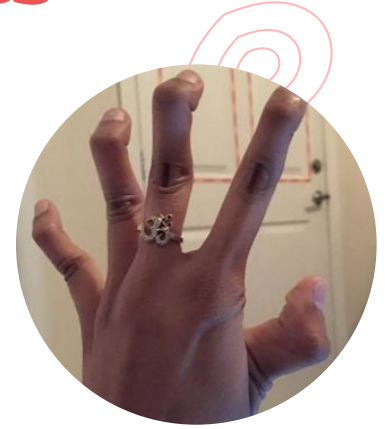
- ADHD
- Depression
  - Prenatal
- Anxiety
- OCD
- Disordered eating
- Learning challenges
- Substance use



## Physical health

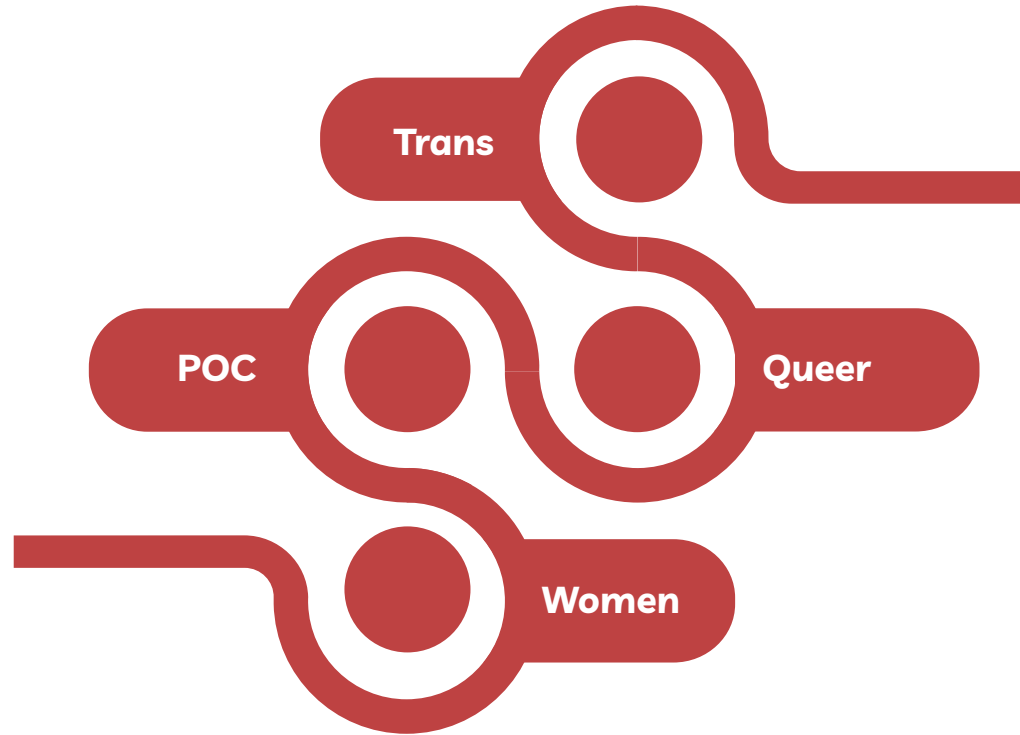
- Sleep
- Gastric challenges
- Hypermobility
  - hEDS
- Circulation
  - POTS, blood pressure
- Allergies

# Hypermobility Examples





# Intersectionality





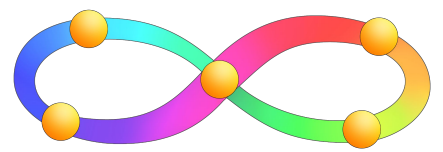
# The 5 S Framework

**01.**

**Social\***

**Sensory**

**02.**



**03.**

**Stimming**

**04.**

**Special Interests**

**05.**

**Structure**

# Social

- *Atypical communication preferences*
- *Echolalia and references*
- *Literal and/or direct language*
- Non-linear conversational path
- *"Info-dumping"*
- Gestalt learning style
- *"Scripting"*
- *Differences in body language*
- *Differences in play (parallel play)*
- *Challenges with maintaining relationships*
- *"Masking"*
- Hyperlexia



# Stimming

- *Repetitive movements (self, objects or others)*
- Repetitive thoughts
- *Repetitive speech, sounds, tones, etc.*
- *Organizing things and lining up objects*

- ★ Stimming promotes autistic well-being, as it's a way to regulate, cope, express emotions, and connect!



5 stims I've always  
done but didn't  
know were stims

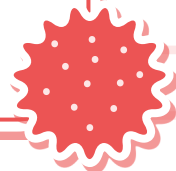
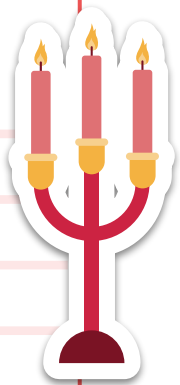
TikTok  
@neurodivergentmads



# Sensory



- *Hypersensitivities*
  - Often leads to avoiding certain sensations
- *Hyposensitivities*
  - Often leads to seeking certain sensations
- From the DSM-5: “apparent indifference to pain/temperature, adverse response to specific sounds or textures, excessive smelling or touching of objects, visual fascination with lights or movement.”
- ★ It can be very difficult to regulate mood and behaviors if sensory needs aren't being met





# Sensory Processing Checklists can help!



## Sensory Checklist for Identification & Referral Only

### Signs of Proprioceptive Dysfunction:

**Proprioceptive Sense:** input from the muscles and joints about body position, weight, pressure, stretch, movement, and changes in position in space.

#### **1. Sensory Seeking Behaviors:**

- seeks out jumping, bumping, and crashing activities
- kicks his/her feet on floor or chair while sitting at desk/table
- bites or sucks on fingers and/or frequently cracks his/her knuckles
- prefers clothes (and belts, hoods, shoelaces) to be as tight as possible
- loves/seekes out "squishing" activities
- enjoys bear hugs; loves to be wrapped in many or weighted blankets
- excessive banging on/with toys and objects
- loves "roughhousing" and tackling/wrestling games

# Sensory Processing Checklists can help!

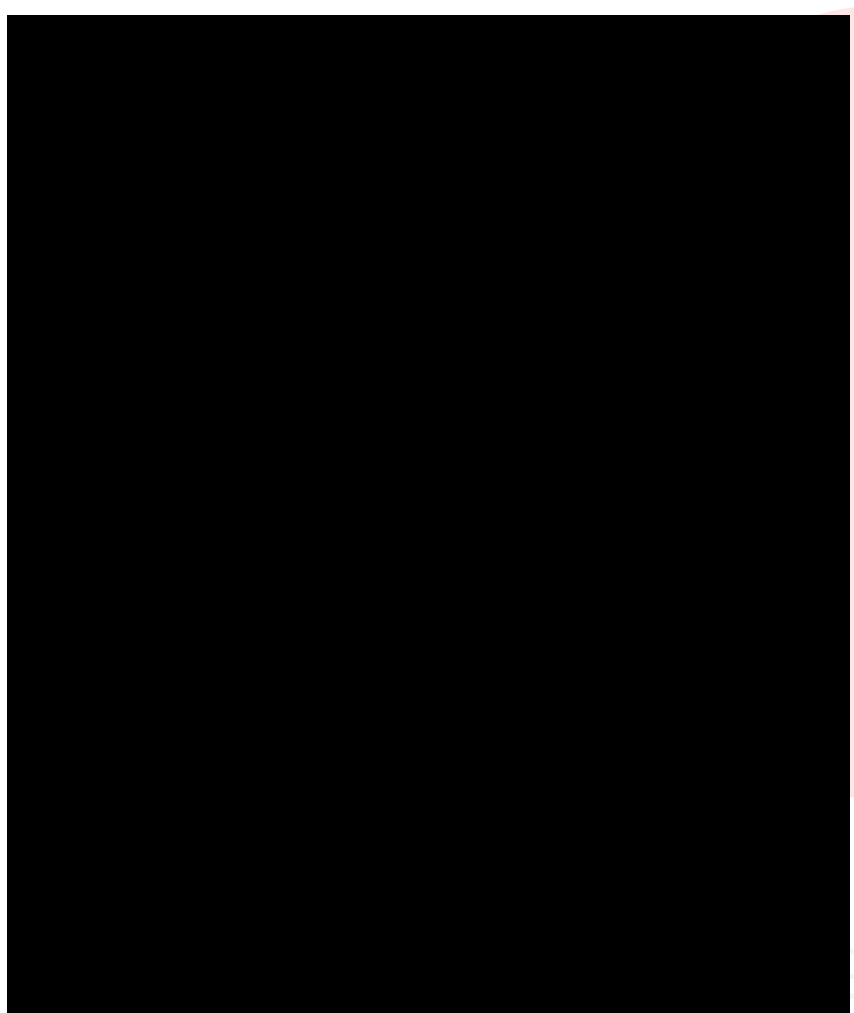
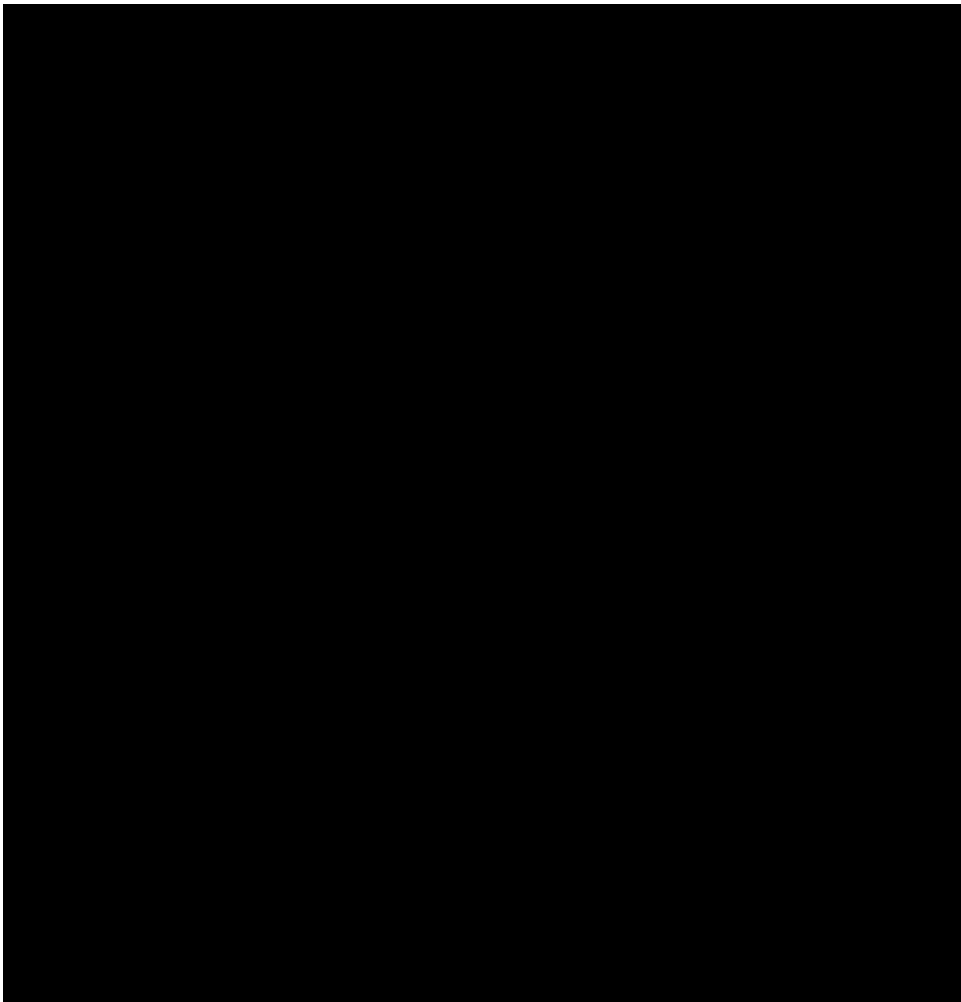


## SENSORY-MOTOR PREFERENCE CHECKLIST (FOR ADULTS)

Directions: This checklist was developed to help adults recognize what strategies their own nervous systems employ to attain appropriate state of alertness. Mark the items below that you use to increase (↑) or to decrease (↓) your state of alertness. You might mark both (↑↓) on some items. Others you might not use at all.

### SOMETHING IN YOUR MOUTH (ORAL MOTOR INPUT)

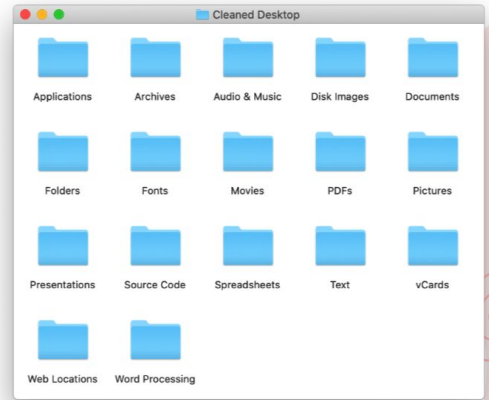
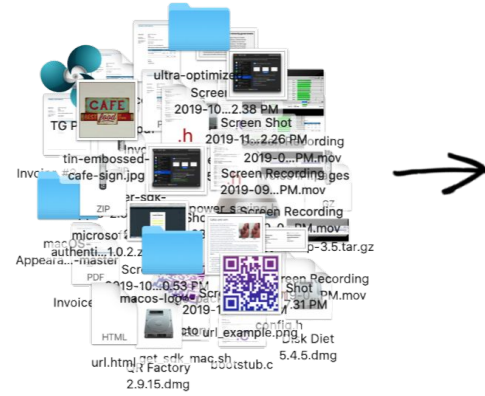
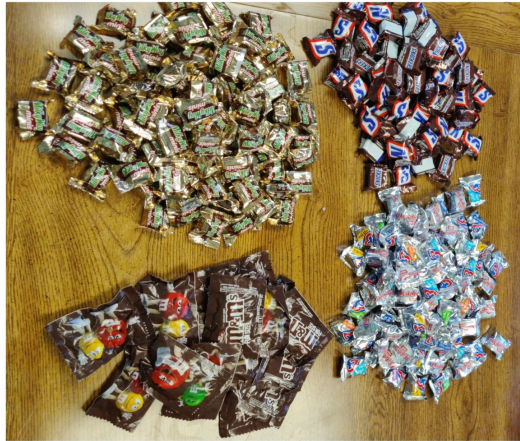
- drink a milk shake
- suck on hard candy
- crunch or suck on ice pieces
- tongue on cheek movements
- “chew” on pencil / pen
- chew on coffee swizzle sticks
- take slow deep breaths
- suck, lick, bite on your lips or the inside of your cheeks
- drink carbonated drink
- eat a cold popsicle
- eat a pickle
- chew gum
- crunch on nuts / pretzels / chips
- bite on nails / cuticle
- eat popcorn / cut up vegetables
- eat chips and a spicy dip
- smoke cigarettes
- chew on buttons, sweatshirt strings or collars
- whistle while you work
- drink coffee / tea (caffeinated)
- drink hot cocoa or warm milk
- other:



# Structure



- Appreciates *routine* (particularly self-appointed)
- Expectation sensitivity
- *Consistent “sameness” and predictability*
- Challenges with transitioning between activities/locations/etc.
  
- ★ Reduces feelings of anxiety (and chaos) which reduces dysregulation
- ★ Allows for trust to be built and they aren't in a hypervigilant state due to the unknown



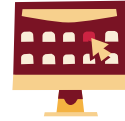
### ITINERARY

	MONDAY 7	TUESDAY 8	WEDNESDAY 9	THURSDAY 10	FRIDAY 11	SATURDAY 12	SUNDAY 13
<b>9 Sep - 15 Sep</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Work</b>	Depart Australia - afternoon	Arrive Copenhagen @ 6am	Copenhagen	Ry Copenhagen to Helsinki 9:30 - 11:00	Helsinki
<b>16 Sep - 22 Sep</b>	Floorvo	Ry Helsinki to Rovaniemi 12:05pm	Santa's Village	Hiking day trip	9:30 Ry back to Helsinki	Tollin	Day trip to Luohans National Park
<b>23 Sep - 29 Oct</b>	Bus Tallin to Riga	Riga	Day trip to Kandava Palace & Castles	One way bus to Vilnius (4 hours 10 mins)	Half Day Trip to Krakai Castle	Vilnius	Ry to Amsterdam (Depart @ 8:00am, arrive 9:35am)
<b>30 Sep - 6 Oct</b>	Aime Frank Museum Tour Amsterdam	Marken & Volendam Day Trip	Mum & Rachael - Gielthoom day trip - organized tour -	Amsterdam - canal cruise	Courtesy & Dad	Brussels to Ghent and Bruges	Brussels to Luxembourg day trip. Needs to be organized (2.5hrs by car 1.5hrs by train one way)
<b>7 Oct - 13 Oct</b>	<b>SLEEP IN DAY</b> Brussels Anshweg half day trip	Ry Brussels to Prague - 9:30am - 11am	Prague & Prague Castle	Day trip to Cesky Krumlov	<b>SLEEP IN DAY</b>	<b>SLEEP IN DAY</b>	<b>FRIDAY</b> (takes day four from Zagreb)
<b>14 Oct - 20 Oct</b>	Get up at 7am Zagreb during the day Rixbus booked for 8pm (takes 2hr 20 min plus border crossing time)	Day trip to caves, Predjama Castle or the cill or coastline towns	Lake Bled day trip from Ljubljana 8am to 6:30pm	Ljubljana during the day Ry Ljubljana to Munich - 6:35pm	<b>SLEEP IN DAY</b> Munich	Munich	Tour starts at Pam (hotel pickups commence before then) Depart Zagreb 11:50am, arrive Frankfurt 1pm Duelion 10hours (i.e. return to Zagreb of around 8pm)
<b>21 Oct to 27th Oct</b>	Lake Chemsee & Herrenchiemsee New Palace	Day Trip Neuschwanstein Castle and Linderhof (daily)	Munich to Frankfurt - depart at 9:50am (train 3hr 15 min) Arrive Frankfurt 1pm	<b>SLEEP IN DAY</b> Day trip to Black Forest (2hrs train one way) or Marburg	Depart Frankfurt at 12:30pm	Arrive back in Brisbane 7:30pm	<b>Recovery Day, back to work on Monday</b>

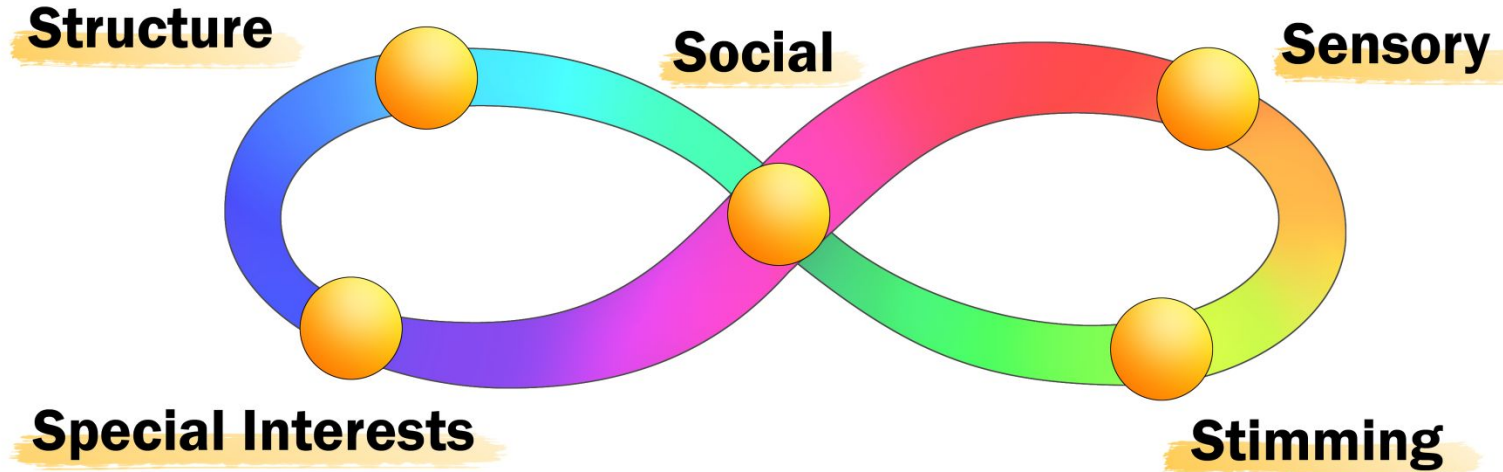


# Special Interests

- *Intensely focused interest* on certain topics
  - Can change over time or be lifelong
  - Collections relating to the interest are common
- *Affect often changes* when engaging in or talking about these interests
- ★ Special interests can lead to “flow states” and be meditative
- ★ Interests are part of autistic identity, well-being, and autistic culture!
- ★ 75-95% of autistic people have special interests



# The 5 S Framework



# The 5 S Framework

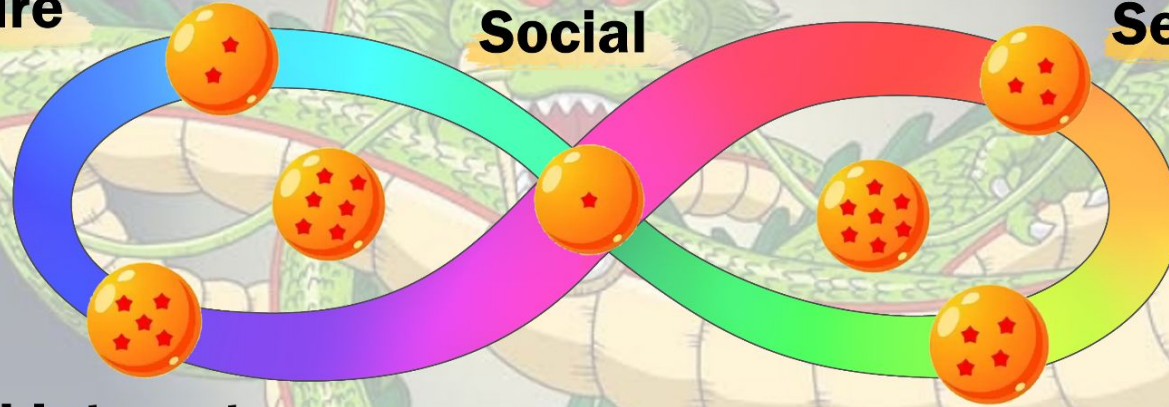
**Structure**

**Social**

**Sensory**

**Special Interests**

**Stimming**







ALL NINE SEASONS  
+  
Hours of Bonus Features



# Assessment Tools



## RAADS-R

Total score of 65 or higher is the clinical threshold.

[LINK](#)



## CAT-Q

The higher the score, the more possible distress from masking.

[LINK](#)



## AQ-10

Quick 10 question screener. (Doesn't find everyone!)

[LINK](#)



# Resources

- [A Kink in the Spectrum & slides](#)
- [Neurokink](#)
- Bex Talks Sex [Yes/No/Maybe checklist](#)
- [Dr Faith G Harper's](#) publications on sex, kink, mental health, etc.
- [Dr Emily Nagoski's](#) publications on sex
- [Dr Katie Munday's](#) research and advocacy
- Riley Morgan's [late dx autistic resources](#)
- [The Autistic Culture Podcast](#)

# Thanks!

*Do you have any questions?*

[hello@kadesharp.com](mailto:hello@kadesharp.com)

[kadesharp.com](http://kadesharp.com)

[neurokink.org](http://neurokink.org)

[@kadesharp](#) on Venmo

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by Slidesgo, including icons by Flaticon and infographics & images by Freepik

