

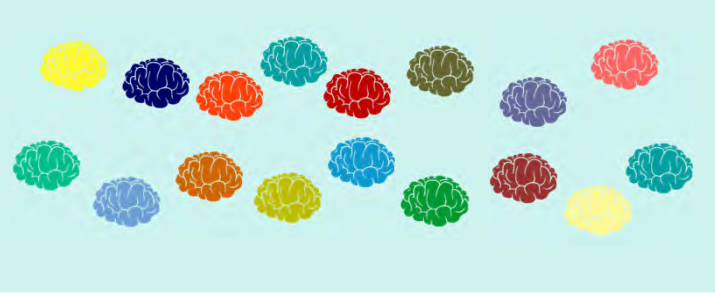
AUTISM in CONTEXT
www.petervermeulen.be




3. Nationaler Autismus Kongress
7./8. November 2025, Kursaal Interlaken



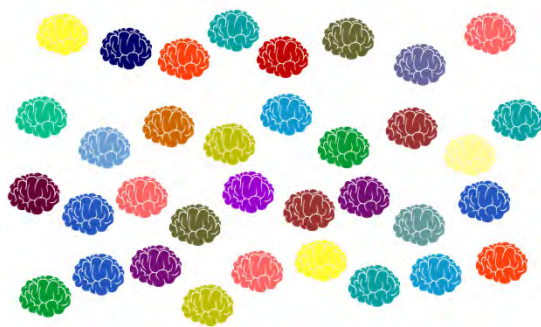
autismus schweiz
autisme suisse
autismo svizzera



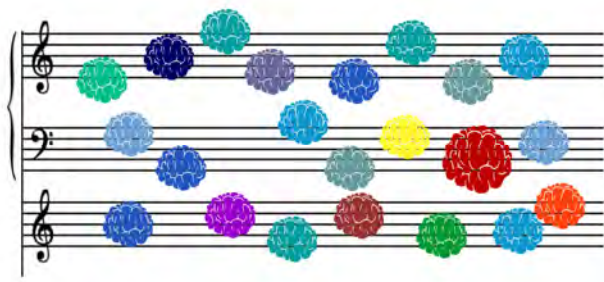
Autistically happy
From neurodiversity to neuroharmony

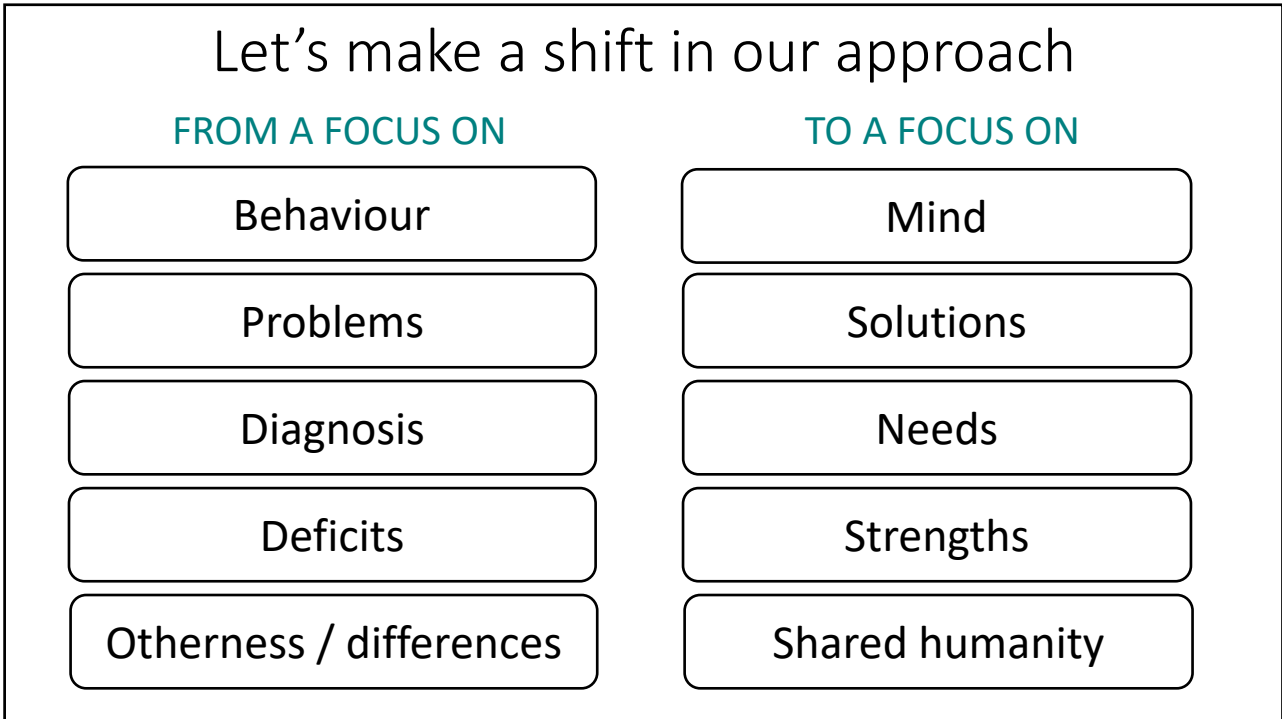


From
neurodiversity



To
neuroharmony





It is time to start focussing also on the similarities,
not only the differences

We are not so different in terms of



behaviour



mind



needs

All of us have much more in common than we think

There is no such category as “autistic behaviours,” only “human behaviours”.

Let’s start from a shared human experience.

Barry Prizant

Universal human needs: Maslow's hierarchy

Abraham Maslow



United Nations

International Day of Happiness
20 March

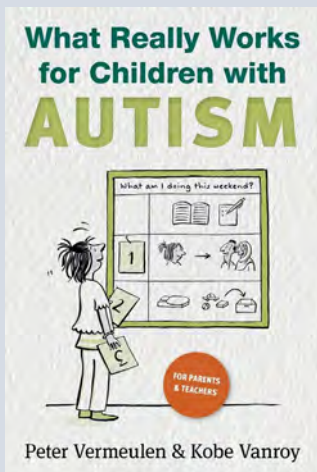
What is the International Day of Happiness?

It's a day to be happy, of course! Happiness is a fundamental human goal. The United Nations General Assembly recognizes this goal and calls for "a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth that promotes the happiness and well-being of all peoples."

Governments and international organizations should invest in conditions that support happiness by upholding human rights and incorporating well-being and environmental dimensions into policy frameworks, such as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The effectiveness of governments in upholding peace and social order, as well as in the fields of taxation, legal institutions and delivery of public services, strongly correlates with average life satisfaction.

The United Nations invites each person of any age, plus every classroom, business and government to join in celebration of the International Day of Happiness.

Ten basic needs of autistic children



-  Being understood
-  Clarity
-  Predictability
-  Autonomy
-  Connection
-  Good agreements and rules
-  Positive self-esteem
-  Contentment
-  Meaning
-  Encouragement

Focus on mental health **issues**

THE LANCET
Psychiatry

This journal Journals Publish Clinical Global health Multimedia Events About

ARTICLES - Volume 6, Issue 10, P819-829, October 2015 [Download Full Issue](#)

Prevalence of co-occurring mental health diagnoses in the autism population: a systematic review and meta-analysis

[Meng-Chuan Lai, MD](#) ^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50,51,52,53,54,55,56,57,58,59,60,61,62,63,64,65,66,67,68,69,70,71,72,73,74,75,76,77,78,79,80,81,82,83,84,85,86,87,88,89,90,91,92,93,94,95,96,97,98,99,100} [Caroline Kassee, MHSc](#) ¹ [Richard Besney, BSc](#) ² [Sarah Bonato, MSc](#) ³ [Laura Hull, MSc](#) ⁴ [William Mandy, DClinPsy](#) ¹ et al. [Show more](#)

Review Article | Published: 20 October 2023

Mental health challenges faced by autistic people


[Meng-Chuan Lai](#) 

[Nature Human Behaviour](#) **7**, 1620–1637 (2023) | [Cite this article](#)

5449 Accesses | 42 Citations | 91 Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

Review

Autistic well-being: A scoping review of scientific studies from a neurodiversity-affirmative perspective

Neurodiversity
Volume 2: 1-26
© The Author(s) 2024
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/27546330241233088
journals.sagepub.com/home/ndy


Palwasha Najeeb¹  and Lisa Quadt^{1,2} 

Lay abstract

A lot of autism research focuses on the negative aspects of being autistic, for example, autistic people have a shorter life expectancy and are more likely to have physical and mental health conditions. There is not much research on what improves autistic well-being and quality of life. In this article, we summarize research that looks at positive factors which contribute to autistic well-being. We first asked four autistic adults which questions they think are most important to ask about autistic well-being. Together, we decided that we would look for research that is based on a neurodiversity-affirmative perspective and does not view autism as a deficit. We also decided we would look for biological, psychological, and social factors that positively contribute to autistic well-being for autistic people of all ages. We then used a specific method for searching different databases to see what other researchers had found that could answer our question. We found 89 studies that looked at biopsychosocial factors contributing to autistic well-being. Most of these were on psychological and social factors, with only a few on biological factors. We found that meaningful social connections, forms of support, and psychological factors

Happiness

Pleasant life
(*Hedonic*)

Meaningful life
(*Eudaimonic*)

Joy - Pleasure

Purpose in life

Absence of pain

Personal growth

Safety

Serving others

Activities you like

Life satisfaction

Focus on the positives

Find out what makes people feel good

Autism Good Feeling Questionnaire

The questionnaire contains items referring to all sorts of things that can give a person a good feeling. Obviously, each person is different. What gives a good feeling to one person, can be very unpleasant for another person. Below, you can indicate the extent to which things or events give you a good feeling. For each category of items, there is place to add things that are not mentioned in the list.

Each 'item' can be scored as follows:

- 3: This gives me a good feeling - I enjoy this very much
- 2: This gives me a good feeling - I enjoy this
- 1: This gives me a little bit of good feeling - I enjoy this a little
- 0: This does not give me a good feeling - I don't enjoy this in particular (neutral, I feel nothing) or I even find this unpleasant
- 7: I do not know if this gives me a good feeling

Obviously this list is not exhaustive. Therefore, there is room left to add things that make you feel good or that you enjoy.

Sensory aspects

	3	2	1	0	7
Certain light, namely: ..					
Certain sounds, namely: ..					
A certain kind of voice, namely: ..					
Silence					
Certain smells, namely: ..					
Certain tactile stimuli, namely: ..					
Being touched					
Being cuddled					
Being kissed					
Heat					
Cold					
Certain foods, namely: ..					
Certain beverages, namely: ..					
Certain items that I like to touch, namely: ..					
Certain weather conditions (please specify: ..)					
A fleece blanket around me					

© AUTISME CENTRAAL



AUTISM in CONTEXT

from neurodiversity to neuroharmony

[AUTISM IN CONTEXT](#) [PETER IN CONTEXT](#) ▼ [YOUR CONTEXT](#) [H.A.P.P.Y. -PROJECT](#) [CONT](#)

[AUTISM GOOD FEELING QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

Autism Good Feeling Questionnaire

Search

Search ...

Assessment of good feeling in autism

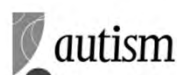
Good Feeling Questionnaire
Good Feeling Sensory Circuit
Good Feeling Street



Good Feeling Sensory Circuit
(Vermeulen, 2014)

What are we targeting?

Review



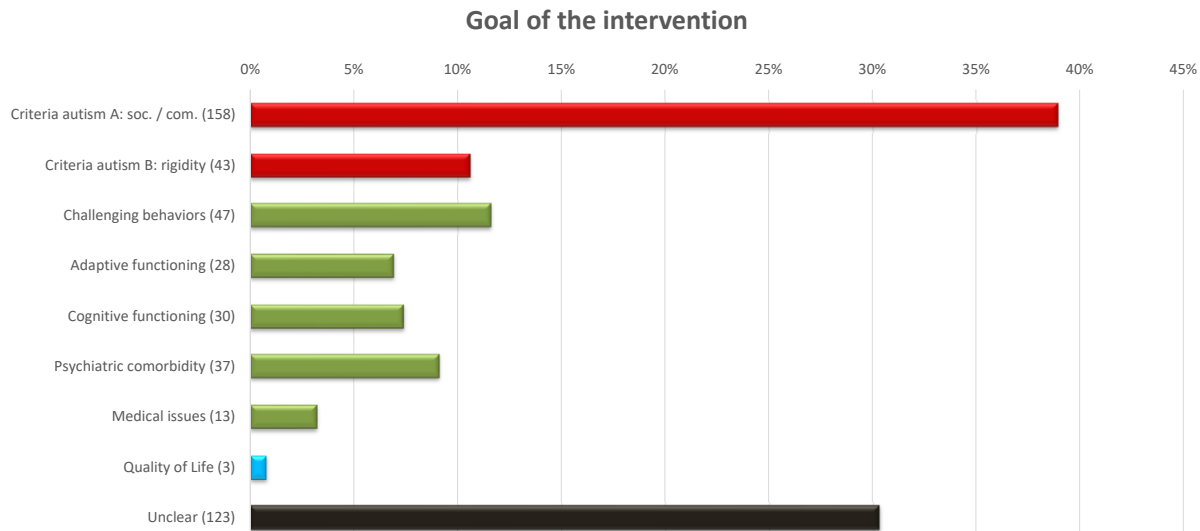
What are we targeting when we treat autism spectrum disorder? A systematic review of 406 clinical trials

Umberto Provenzani^{1*}, Laura Fusar-Poli^{1,2*},
Nataschia Brondino¹, Stefano Damiani¹, Marco Vercesi¹,
Nicholas Meyer³, Matteo Rocchetti^{1†} and Pierluigi Politi^{1†}

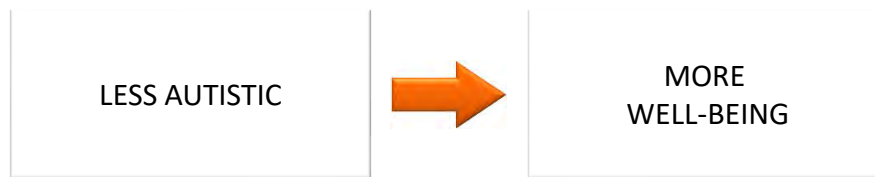
Autism
1–11
© The Author(s) 2019
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/1362361319854641
journals.sagepub.com/home/aut
SAGE

Review study 2019: 406 controlled trials
between 1980 and 2016

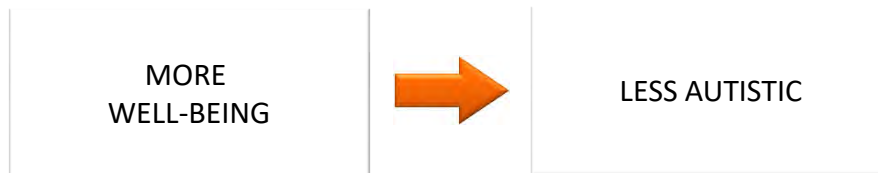
What are we targeting? (Review 406 studies)



This is how many think it works



But it works like this



What parents want...

J Autism Dev Disord (2018) 48:1041–1051
DOI 10.1007/s10803-017-3282-2



S.I. · PARENTING CHILDREN WITH ASD

Parents Suggest Which Indicators of Progress and Outcomes Should be Measured in Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Helen McConachie¹ · Nuala Livingstone^{2,3*} · Christopher Morris⁴ · Bryony Boreland⁵ · Ann Le Couteur⁶ · Paul Gillingham⁷ · Deborah Carlomagno⁸ · Gwynn Jones⁹ · Geraldine Macdonald^{10,11} · Katrina Williams⁹ · Jeremy R. Parr⁹


Published online: 31 August 2017
© The Author(s) 2017. This article is an open access publication

Table 2 Parents' top ranked 10 constructs for measurement of progress or outcome

Parents: important areas to measure	Rank
Happiness	1
Anxiety, unusual fears	2
Discomfort with being touched, too much noise, bright lights, certain tastes, etc. (hypersensitivity)	3.5
Positive views of self (self-esteem)	3.5
Distress	5
Understanding visual information and solve problems using visual reasoning (nonverbal ability)	7
Relationships with brothers and sisters	7
Parent stress (body symptoms, poor sleep, etc)	7
Fighting, hitting others (aggression)	10
Long time to fall asleep; wake up in night	10
Experiences rejection by others; is bullied (social exclusion)	10

Source: Helen McConachie et al., 2018

**Not less autistic,
but
“autistically happy”**

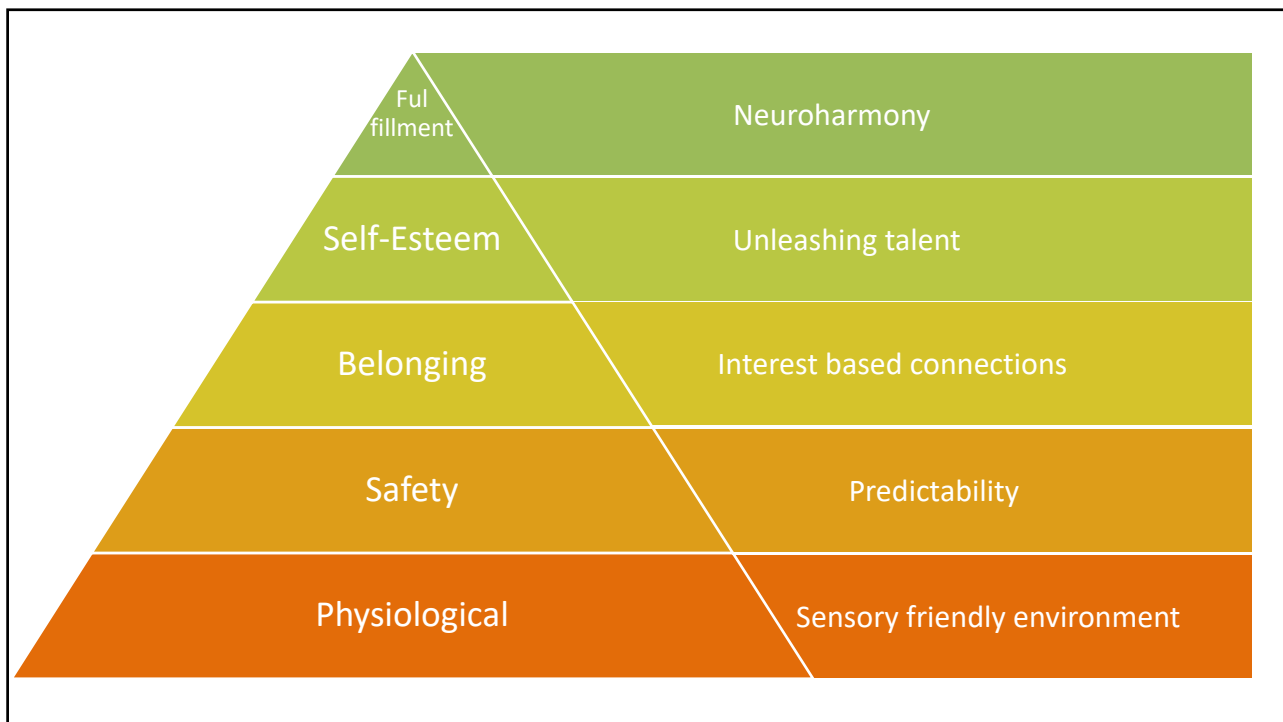


H.A.P.P.Y.

Happiness in Autism Personal Project for Young people

10 well-being strategies

1. Accepting and loving yourself
2. Good Feeling toolbox
3. Flow activities
4. Physical exercise
5. Problem focused coping strategies
6. Emotion focused coping strategies
7. Positive thinking
8. Gratitude
9. Kindness
10. Personal projects: learning something new



Sensory friendly environment



- Make stimuli **predictable** and **understandable**, so the world becomes safer
- Give **control** over the sensory environment
→ also allow stimming
- Not necessary less stimuli, but the **right** stimuli

Main source of distress in autism

Psychological Review
2014, Vol. 121, No. 4, 649–675

© 2014 American Psychological Association
0033-295X/14/\$12.00 http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0037665

Precise Minds in Uncertain Worlds: Predictive Coding in Autism

Sander Van de Cruys, Kris Evers, Ruth Van der Hallen, Lien Van Eylen,
Bart Boets, Lee de-Wit, and Johan Wagemans
KU Leuven



Absolute thinking in a highly unpredictable world



confusion – uncertainty - anxiety

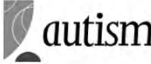
Want to make autistic people happy?

Be autism friendly:



Give **clarity** and
predictability first,



All the rest comes later

Original Article




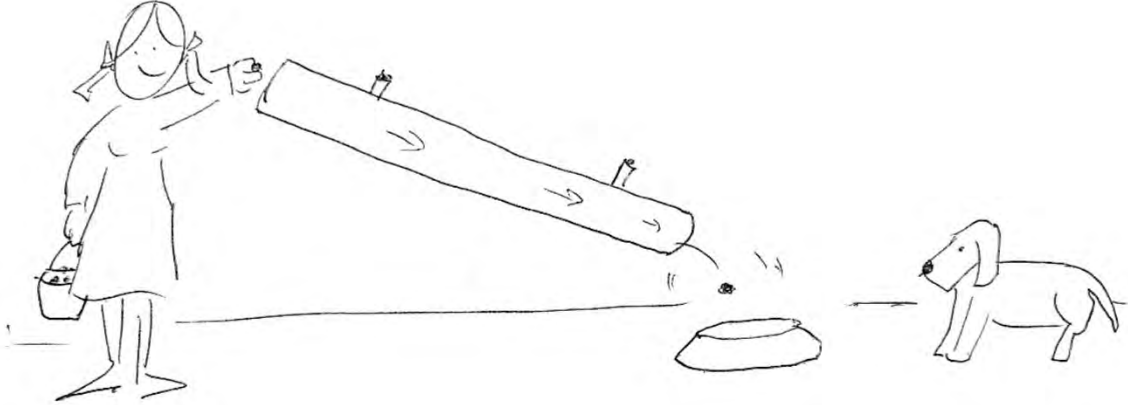
Psychological strengths and well-being: Strengths use predicts quality of life, well-being and mental health in autism

Autism
2023, Vol. 27(6) 1826–1839
© The Author(s) 2023

Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/13622613221146440
journals.sagepub.com/home/aut


Emily C Taylor¹, Lucy A Livingston², Rachel A Clutterbuck¹, Mitchell J Callan¹ and Punit Shah¹

Abstract
Strengths-based approaches to autism are increasing in research and clinical practice. Such approaches suggest facilitating autistic people to increase the use of their strengths leads to positive outcomes (e.g. improved well-being). However, despite proliferation of strengths-based clinical and educational interventions, these approaches are grounded on several assumptions that remain uninvestigated. Little is known about the specific strengths of autistic people, nor their current knowledge and use of their strengths. Critically, no research has directly tested if autistic people’s strengths knowledge and use is in fact associated with positive outcomes. Conducting an exploratory study, including the first well-powered comparisons of the self-reported strengths, strengths knowledge, and strengths use of matched autistic and non-autistic samples (N=276), we found that autistic and non-autistic participants reported similar strengths. While autistic people reported lower strengths knowledge and use, strengths use in autism strongly predicted better quality of life, subjective well-being, and lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. Thus, strength-based approaches and clinical interventions designed to increase strengths use may pose a valuable method for boosting well-being in autism. However, we suggest such approaches should focus on individuals’ strengths more generally, rather than perceived autism-specific abilities.

 **Hidden talent of 'so called' stereotyped interests**



Eudaimonic happiness: a meaningful and purposeful life

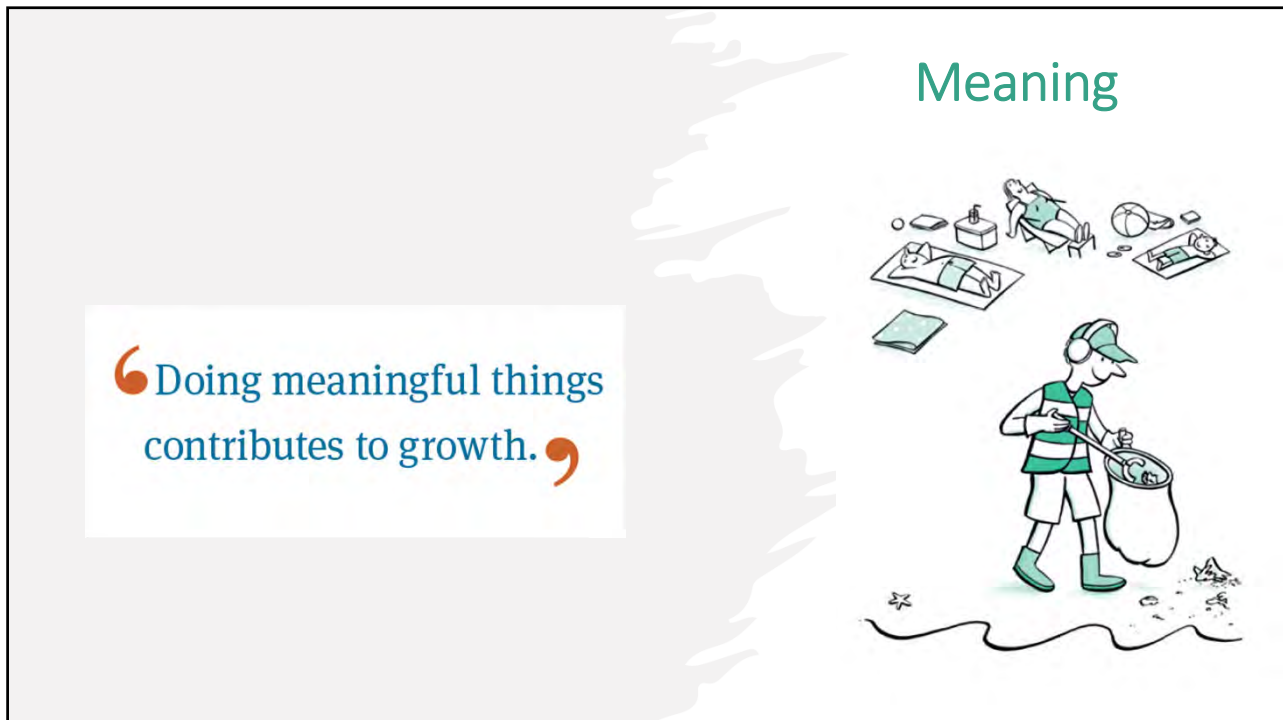


What can society offer to autistic people?

What can autistic people offer to society?

Eudaimonic happiness: making a difference

- Volunteer work
- Jobs at all kind of events (rock festival, theatre, ...)
- Running / cycling for cancer or other diseases
- Charity work
- ...





Journal of Happiness and Health
2022, Vol. 2, No. 1, 31–51

<https://doi.org/10.47602/johah.v2i1.12>
<https://journalofhappinessandhealth.com>

REVIEW ARTICLE

What Personal, Social, and Contextual Factors Promote Happiness among Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder? A Review with Implications for Researchers and Practitioners

Cheung Hoi Yan¹ and Jesus Alfonso D. Datu²

Abstract

Achieving happiness is essential to boost social emotional development among children and youth with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). However, there have been limited reviews on a wide range of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that facilitate well-being outcomes among individuals with ASD. This review article provides a summary on dispositional, social, and contextual factors that promote well-being among children and adolescents with autism. Personal factors that have been found to influence happiness among individuals with autism include personality, self-esteem, and emotion regulation. Social factors such as parents, peers or friends, and teachers also contribute to well-being among youth with ASD. **Importantly, the role of contextual and broader ecological factors such as inclusive educational policies has been elaborated.**

The first and most important label

Our name



THANK YOU
FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



AUTISM in CONTEXT

from neurodiversity to neuroharmony

www.petervermeulen.be