

ADHD & ASD

Nicola Ryan

CAMHS Clinical Nurse Specialist and Child CBT Therapist

Senior Lecturer in Mental Health Kingston University & St Georges University of London

Private practice: www.nicolaryan.net



Some difficulties experienced in ASD & ADHD

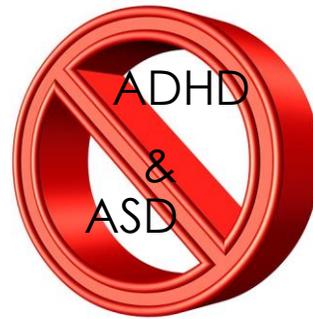
ADHD

- Attention to detail
- Concentration & Listening
- Following instructions & Organisation
- Distraction and forgetting
- Fidgeting restlessness
- Noisy, excessive talking
- On the go blurting out
- Waiting turns, interrupting

ASD

- Reciprocal social and emotion interaction
- Non verbal communication
- Developing and maintaining and understanding relationships
- Repetitive movement, play and speech
- Routines and rituals
- Fixed or obsessive interests
- Sensory difficulties

Previous DSM 1V did not accept diagnosis of ASD & ADHD together



This is because research has addressed the overlap of the two-

- Shared problems with communication and repetitive behaviours

Clark et al 1999 and Santosh et al 2004

- Neurophysiological similarities in structure of cerebellar

Brieber et al 2007



The overlap:

Those with both diagnosis have greater functional impairments

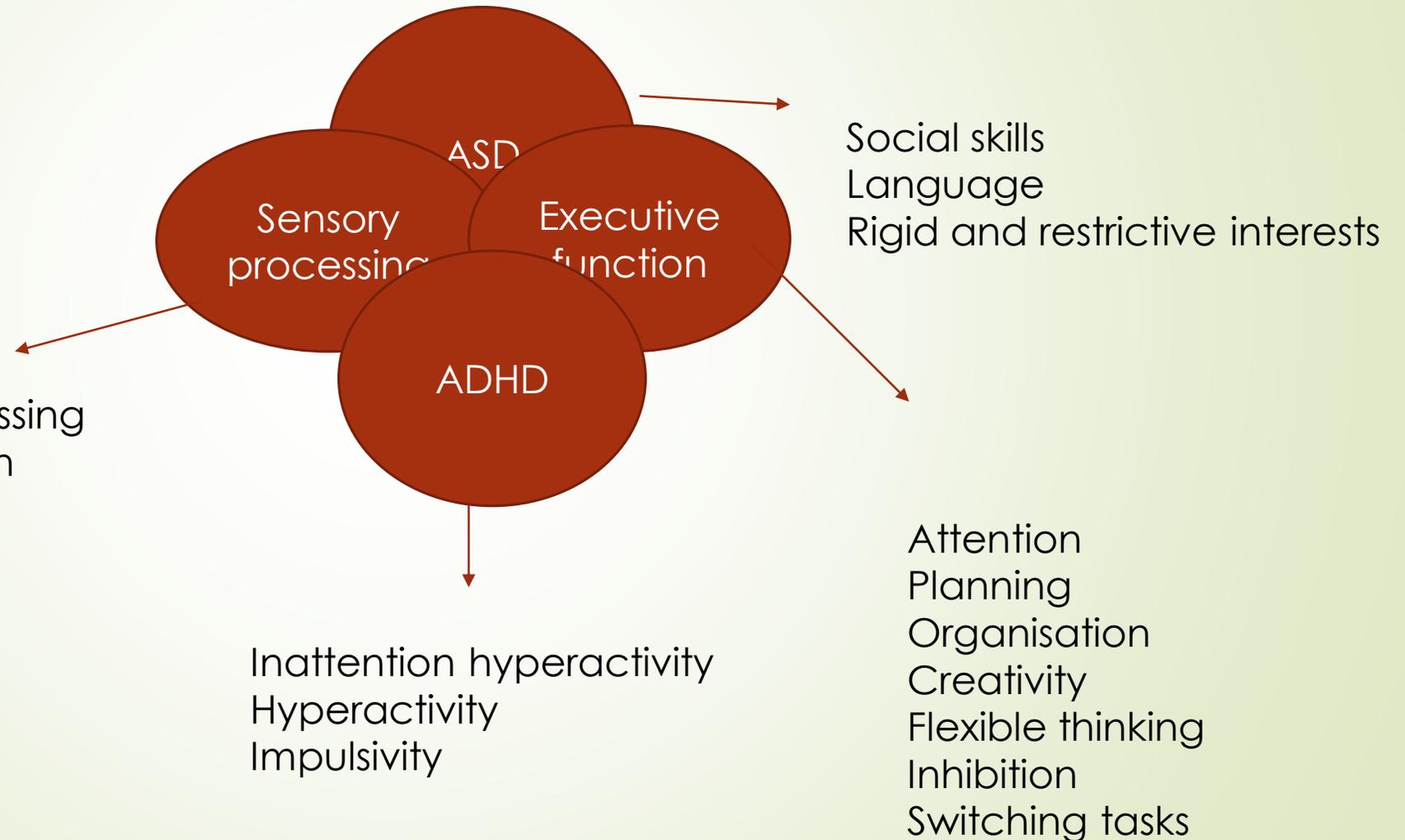
➤ ASD with ADHD

ASD symptoms having more impact

➤ ADHD with ASD

ADHD symptoms having more impact

The overlap



ASD & ADHD assessment

Watchful waiting

General developmental assessment

ADOS 2

ADI/3DI

Observation in clinic and at school

Screening tools- Connor teacher and parent and self report

Social Communication Questionnaire

Misdiagnosis

Learning difficulty, Tourettes, tics disorder, anxiety, depression, hearing impairment, behavioural disorder, genetic conditions, brain injury





The mix up

With an ADHD diagnosis social development such as turn taking, understanding gestures name recognition and creative play are intact. Facial expressions, humour and empathy are not affected.

Kids with ADHD may struggle with social interaction and may not respond to their name but this can be due to impulsive behaviour, inability to take turns, not paying attention when someone is calling their name but they understand the concept for the above.

In ADHD children may blurt out inappropriate things due to impulsivity and show remorse or embarrassment following this, children with ASD may not understand how what they say affects others and may show no remorse or understand the social impact.



In ASD children may not understand the concept of taking turns in conversation and conversation may not be reciprocal, may not respond to requests due to the inability to understand social rules.

Children with ASD may become hyper stimulated to a particular environment/trigger and appear hyperactive, this behaviour may settle down when removed from the trigger. In ADHD the hyperactivity is more consistent and across settings.

In ASD children may react out of proportion to the event, this is similar to emotion dysregulation in ADHD

Treatment

One disorder is treated and the symptoms of the other will then become clearer, then the right combination of therapy and medication can be calculated more accurately.

Example: ADHD medication may be given and the social difficulties may start to subside, if this doesn't happen but improves attention and hyperactive behaviours there may be underlying ASD.

Emotional regulation in ASD & ADHD

- Most children with ASD also experience a difficulty in regulating their emotions
- Evidence suggests that dysregulation of dopamine metabolism plays a role (Gadow 2014)





Support

ADHD

- ▶ Parent courses for ADHD
- ▶ Psycho education to child and school
- ▶ CBT for emotion regulation or comorbid anxiety or depression
- ▶ Family support worker
- ▶ Stimulant medication
- ▶ Adapt the environment , support in school, reduce distraction, social skills training, movement breaks

ASD

- ▶ Parent courses for ASD
- ▶ Family support worker
- ▶ Adapted CBT or behavioural therapy for anxiety or depression
- ▶ Medication for anxiety or behavioural difficulties
- ▶ Adapt the environment routine/visual timetable, time out place, consistency of approach, Control background noise
- ▶ Develop social skills i.e. social stories and communication skills, pecs, not using idioms, concrete language not open ended questions

Break (take 5)





Mental Health difficulties





Depression

- ▶ Present for at least 2 weeks
- ▶ Severe and persistent
- ▶ Flat affect (not showing range of emotion, difficult to identify in ASD but use what is normal as baseline)
- ▶ Tearful
- ▶ Physically slower
- ▶ Self neglect. Not washing or grooming self
- ▶ Poor appetite
- ▶ Disrupted sleep
- ▶ Self harm and or suicidal thinking



Anxiety



General, (anxiety about lots of things regularly)

Phobic specific situations (crowded spaces, social exposure to scrutiny or a single thing i.e. spiders)

Panic reoccurring attacks of severe anxiety with physical symptoms may not be situation specific.

What to look for?

Sounds worried, needs reassurance and has anxious thoughts, especially at night affecting sleep. Tense, shaking,, agitation or over arousal, dry mouth, sweating, over breathing, panic



Anxiety continued

OCD

- ▶ **Insight** is intact feeling that the thought is senseless and irrational and belongs to them
- ▶ **Intrusive thought** or images that cause distress i.e. contamination, switching things on or off, illness
- ▶ **Resistance** of thoughts or feelings which can increase anxiety
- ▶ **Compulsions** that are persistent and repetitive and can provide temporary relief

If stereotyped rituals more common in ASD or there is absence of intrusive thoughts and is more to reduce feelings of discomfort/anxiety



When to get help

- ▶ The level of distress to the child or family

Affecting the following:

- ▶ School performance or behaviour
 - ▶ Peer relationships and activities
 - ▶ Family relationships
- 



Questions



Resources

ADHD & Autism: What Every Parent Should Know : A Parents Aid in Raising Their Children with ASD & Autism. Shelley Lewis

The ADHD Autism Connection. Diane M Kennedy

Kids in the syndrome mix ADHD, LD, ASD, Tourettes, Bipolar and more. . The one stop guide for parents, teachers and other professionals. Martin Kutscher MD

Overcoming your child fears and worries: A Self Help Guide Using CBT techniques. Cathy Creswell

Winston Wallaby Can't Stop Bouncing K.I Al-Ghani

The New Social Story Book Carol Gray

Thankyou! www.nicolaryan.net