

# THE ASD CLINIC

A team of Psychologists specialising in Autism  
Spectrum Disorders

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**Stop press!! We are moving  
to Kew East soon –check  
website for details**

# Understanding Autism and Asperger's Syndrome

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# AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

## 3 PERVASIVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Autistic Disorder

Asperger's Disorder / HFA

PDD NOS

# AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

## DELAYS IN 3 AREAS OF FUNCTIONING

Social Interaction and Understanding

Communication

Imagination / Play

# AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

IQ / Age 



ALOOF

PASSIVE

ACTIVE BUT ODD

ALOOF

PASSIVE

ACTIVE BUT ODD

Socially Cut Off

Often interested in people  
but shy or placid

Often socially keen

In Own World

Play in parallel

Talk *at* rather than *with* you

Often Don't Talk

Often delays in language

Often good at construction

Echolalia

Struggle with social use of  
language/Literal

Often full of ideas

No Imaginative Play

Play is often copied

Director of play

Sensory Play

Often inflexible in play

# The Autism Spectrum

Many different presentations of autism along a spectrum.

All are linked by impairments in their social, communication and imagination skills.

Social Interaction and Understanding

Communication

Imagination / Play

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Sensory Processing

Gross / Fine Motor Skills (Dysgraphia)

Obsessions / Rituals / Routines

Executive Function

# Executive Function

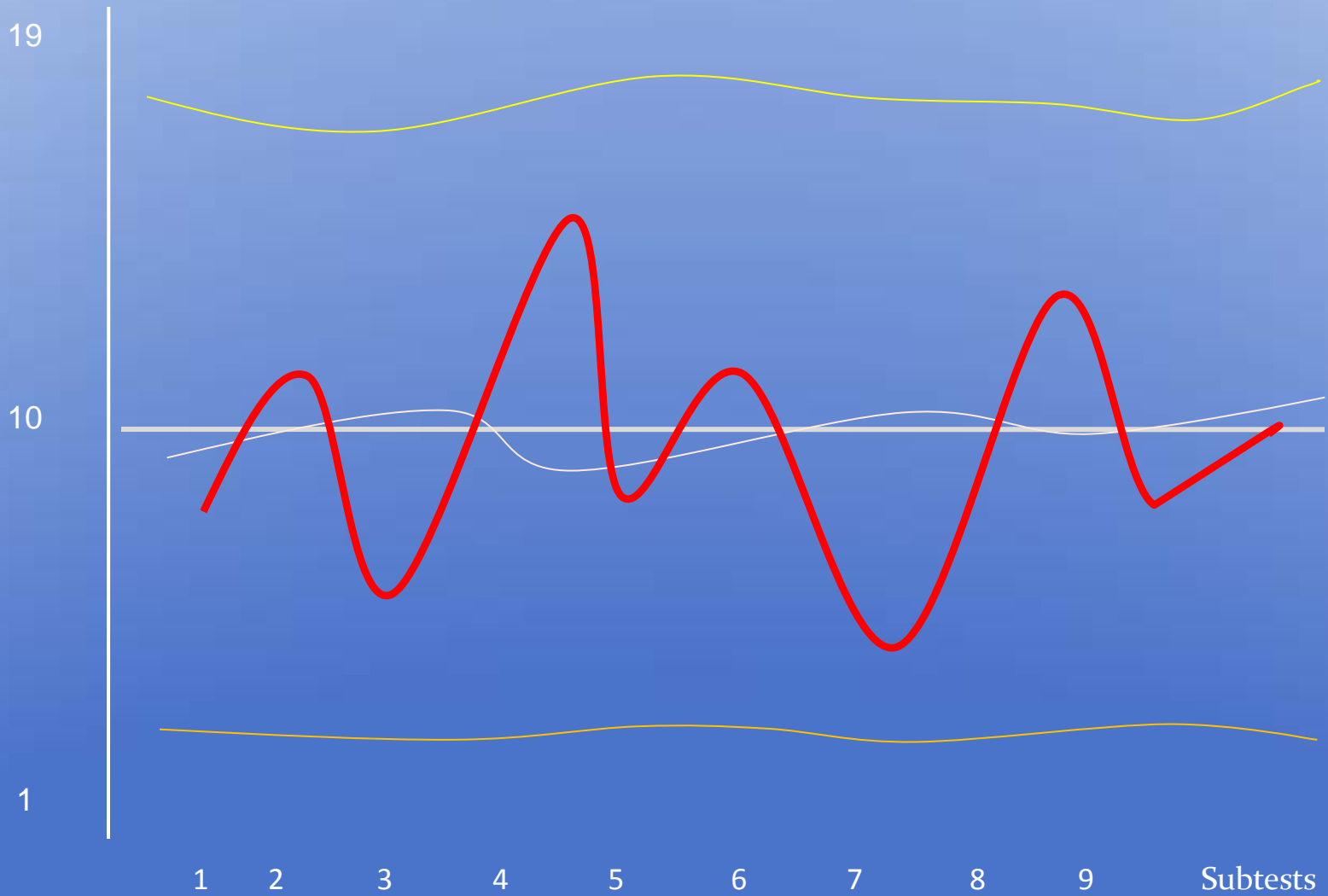
Four common weaknesses experienced with ASD and ADD or ADHD children

- 1) Organisation and Planning skills
- 2) Impulse Control
- 3) Distractibility (Weak attention and concentration skills for non-obsessive activities)
- 4) STAM - Short Term Auditory Memory

# Theory of Mind

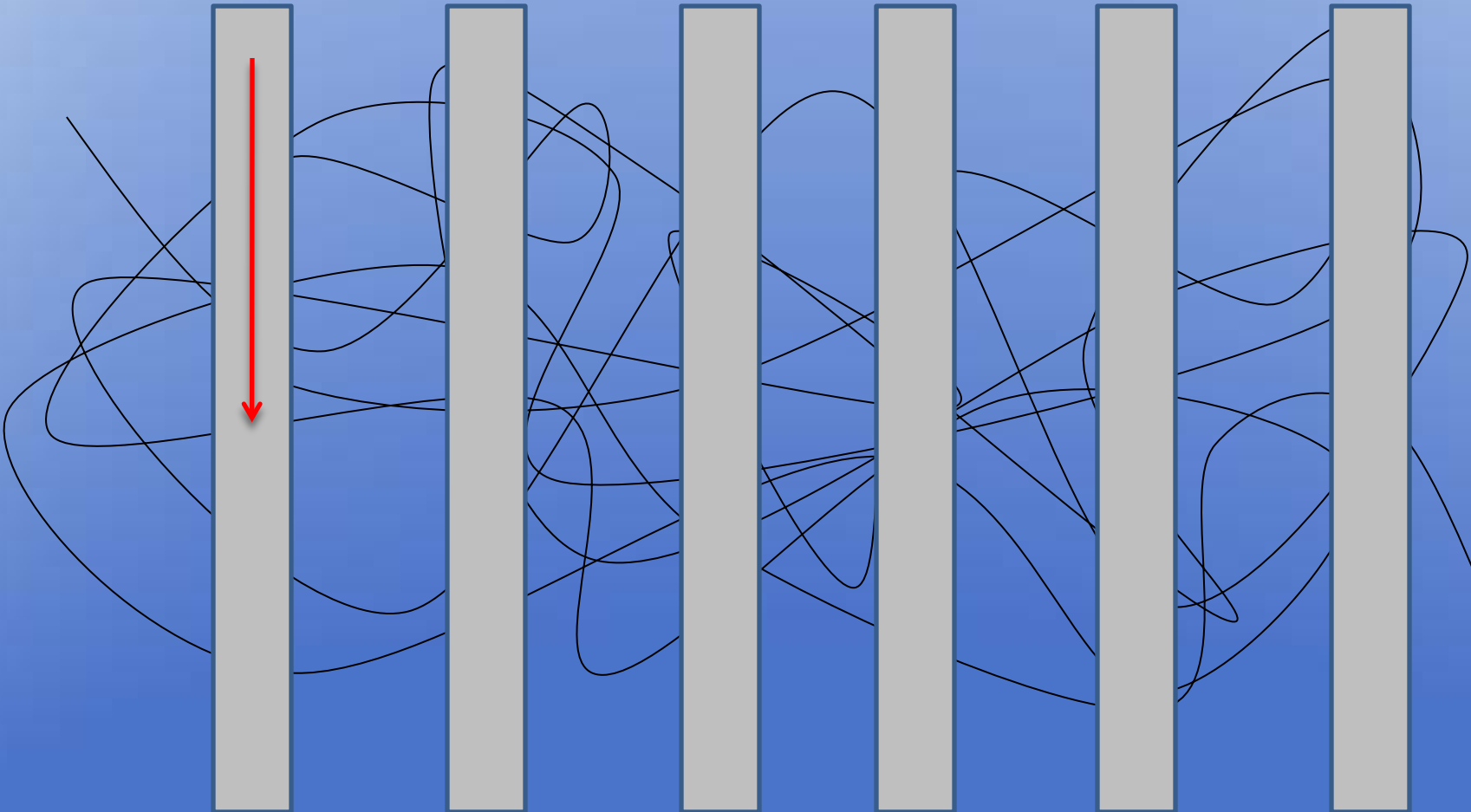
- Definition: A person's ability to think about what someone else may be thinking about.
- Young children are able to pass Theory of Mind (ToM) tests by 3-4 years of age.
- ASD children regularly fail ToM tests.
- A lack of ToM may explain social and communication impairments found in people with ASD.

# Typical Cognitive Profile



# Structure In Chaos

18 %



# The problem with school?

- We are lucky they come!
- How do we not turn off these children from learning in a mainstream school environment?
- Why the high rates of anxiety/depression/school refusal/behaviour problems? – well-intentioned parents and teachers?
- An academic ASD adult with mental health problems is often 'disabled'

# ASD 'friendly' schools

- Is there an understanding of the child's 'real' age?
- Is the playground the best place to rest?
- Are there clubs and structured activities?
- Is there a chill-out zone? Is there a place to engage in stress-reducing activities?
- Is there a focus on strengths? – “Expert syndrome”
- Is there a focus on homework?
- Is there a focus on modifying the workload? i.e., “less is more”

# ASD 'friendly' schools

- (Do all engineers and computer programmers understand Shakespeare? The Factual vs. Creative child)
- Can VCE be done over three years?
- Is there a focus on technology/IT to assist with work output?
- Is there a strong anti-bullying policy?
- Is there a focus on inclusion for those who are different?

# ASD 'friendly' schools

- Is there a focus on 'unpacking' behavioural incidents?
- Is there a good communication system between home and teacher? PSG/SSG
- Do teacher's understand the "Jekyll and Hyde" presentation?
- Is there a focus on negative consequences for 'bad' behaviour or have you tried "bribery/rewards/incentives" for better behaviour?

# Something to think about?

Those of us who live and/or work with children and adults with autistic disorders have to try to enter their world, since they cannot find their way into ours. We need to learn to comprehend and empathise with autistic experiences in order to find ways to help each individual cope with a system of social rules that is alien to them.

The reward for the effort involved is a deeper understanding of human social interaction and an appreciation of the wonder of child development. The key to autism is the key to the nature of human life.

- Lorna Wing, Psychiatrist  
“The Autistic Spectrum”, 1996.