

The Atlass Programme

What is it?

Building on the low arousal approach

- Of **particular** value for those working with people with autism.
- Also of value for people with other Learning Disabilities and Mental Health Problems
- But of **particular** value for those working with those with Autism.

Developed by Dr Andy McDonnell and Dr Michael McCreadie
Directors of Studio 3



So what is so innovative?

- I will get to that.
- First of all two things that Studio 3 have pioneered for a very long time.
- The low arousal way of working
- Understanding autism and the impact it has on different people.

Two other essential keys

Typical and atypical human development.



Understanding `stress.

The foundation of understanding typical human development is essential.



- What is happening physically? Plus.....
- Motor Development
- Social Development
- Cognitive Development
- Emotional Development

We need to explore each individually for each person.

Then and only then can we really grasp.....

- The uneven developmental profile for people with autism.
- Why one may be able to draw amazingly and yet not know how to ask for a drink.
- Why another may be able to translate ancient Buddhist text from Parli into English, yet not know how to cross a road.
- Why one may be able to complete a 200 piece jigsaw face down and yet not know how to speak.
- Why one may be able to navigate their way across the UK and yet not know how to start or end a conversation unless it is about public transport.

The uneven developmental profile of Autistic Spectrum Disorder.



Why is this so important?



- The sight of a tractor brings joy and excitement to two people I know. One of them is a typically developing child of 2 years of age and one of them is a 38 year old man with autism.

- **One is indulged with tractor toys, visits to tractors and through his play learns many things.**
- **One is restrained from jumping over a fence to see a tractor, driven to see them when staff don't know what else to do with no thought that the love of the tractor could be the best learning tool because he is a man and not a child. Developmentally his relationship with tractors is that of an excited two year old.....**
- **I know he is not 2 years old BUT.....**

The legacy of normalisation

- **The emphasis on age appropriateness and the fixation on the value of choice have skewed our ability to see the significance in developmental difference.**
- **In autism this is not development delay it is developmental difference.**
- **We need to work with people where they are at developmentally and this does not sit easy with the principles of normalisation.**

So the need for a steep learning curve.....and the positive and powerful impact.

It did not seem like work to sit and cut circles with D. Now I understand this is important for him and for us to share this with him. This is where we make the connection. This is where our relationship begins.....I did not see it like that before.

**May be a tractor duvet cover would be alright
and it might even help him sleep!**



Stress is Key.

- “The autism population are especially vulnerable to stress and particularly in the following domains:
 - Communication
 - Socialisation
 - Sensory factors
 - Physical factors
 - Executive function
 - Hardiness”

June Groden, M Grace Baron and Gerald Groden from **Stress and Coping in Autism. A book worth reading.**

But first, like with human development

- We need to start with a more generic understanding of stress.
- This is exactly what happens on an Atlass Programme.
- Then we look to start a stress reduction plan for an individual with autism who each participant on the course works with. This is supported both in the classroom and on the ground.

Atlass is also a way of working on the ground.

- For example at a residential service
- Working along side staff with an individual, on shift at various times. Joining in activities, making suggestions, sharing ideas with staff.
- What is causing the stress that is experienced and how can it be reduced?

Getting down and dirty!



Atlass course

- Five days classroom learning
- Day one Typical development
- Day two Atypical development/autism
- Day three Sensory differences/Low arousal
- Day four Stress and coping
- Day five Mindfulness and stress management for staff

Two- two day follow up sessions

- Day one observation of service user
- Day two – classroom based
- Assessment – Learning log, Production of stress reduction plan,

Courses

- Ireland
- Denmark
- Masterclass x 2 UK
- Planned courses for 2013/14

Any questions? Comments
etc.