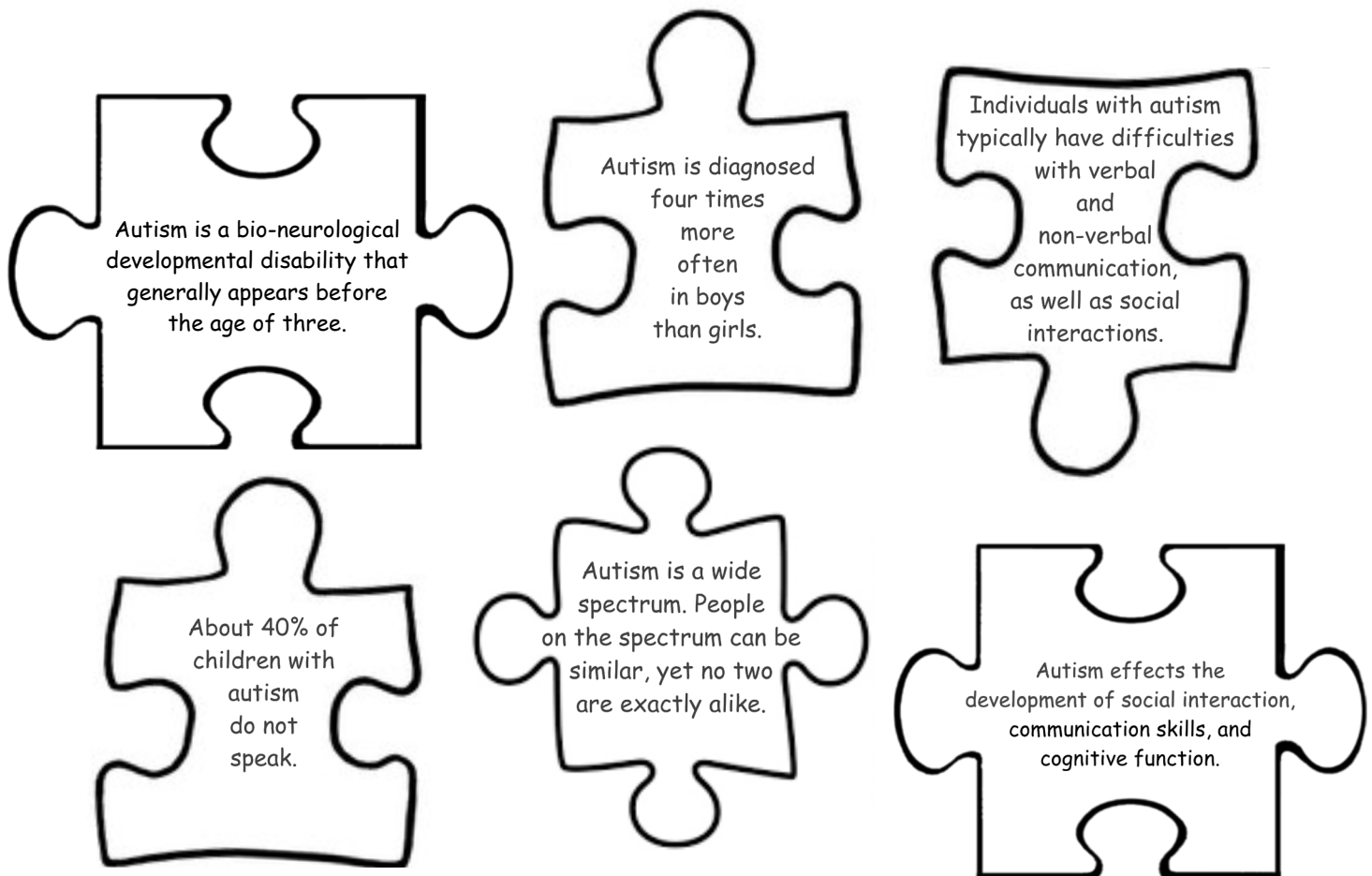


UNDERSTANDING AUTISM

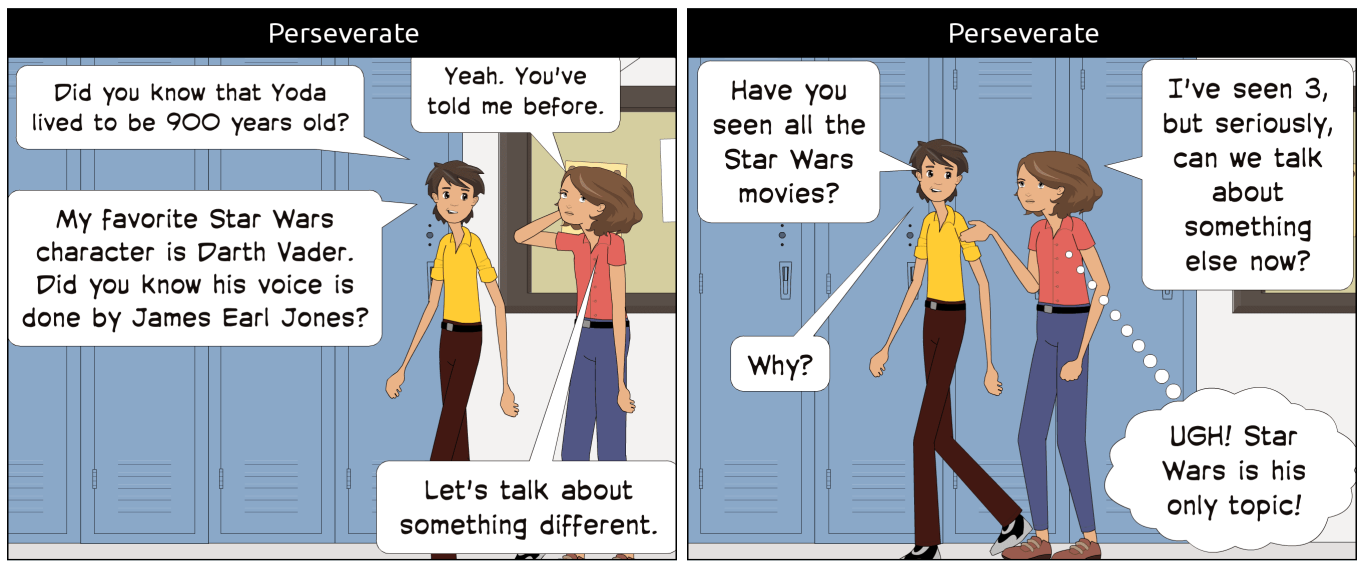


Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that affects 1 in 68 children in the United States, but people all over the world are affected by it. 1 in 42 boys and 1 in 189 girls are affected by autism within the United States.

Autism is not a disease. People are born with it so you can't "catch" it and it is a lifelong disability. It is a spectrum disorder. This means that the symptoms and characteristics of autism can present themselves in a wide variety of combinations, from mild to severe. Although autism is defined by a certain set of behaviors, children and adults can exhibit any combination of the behaviors in any degree of severity, the level of developmental delay is unique to the individual. Two children, both with the same diagnosis, can act very differently from one another and have varying skills.

More on Autism: Find interactive comics, essays by autistic writers, webisode series for kids, resource guides and more at www.geekclubbooks.com

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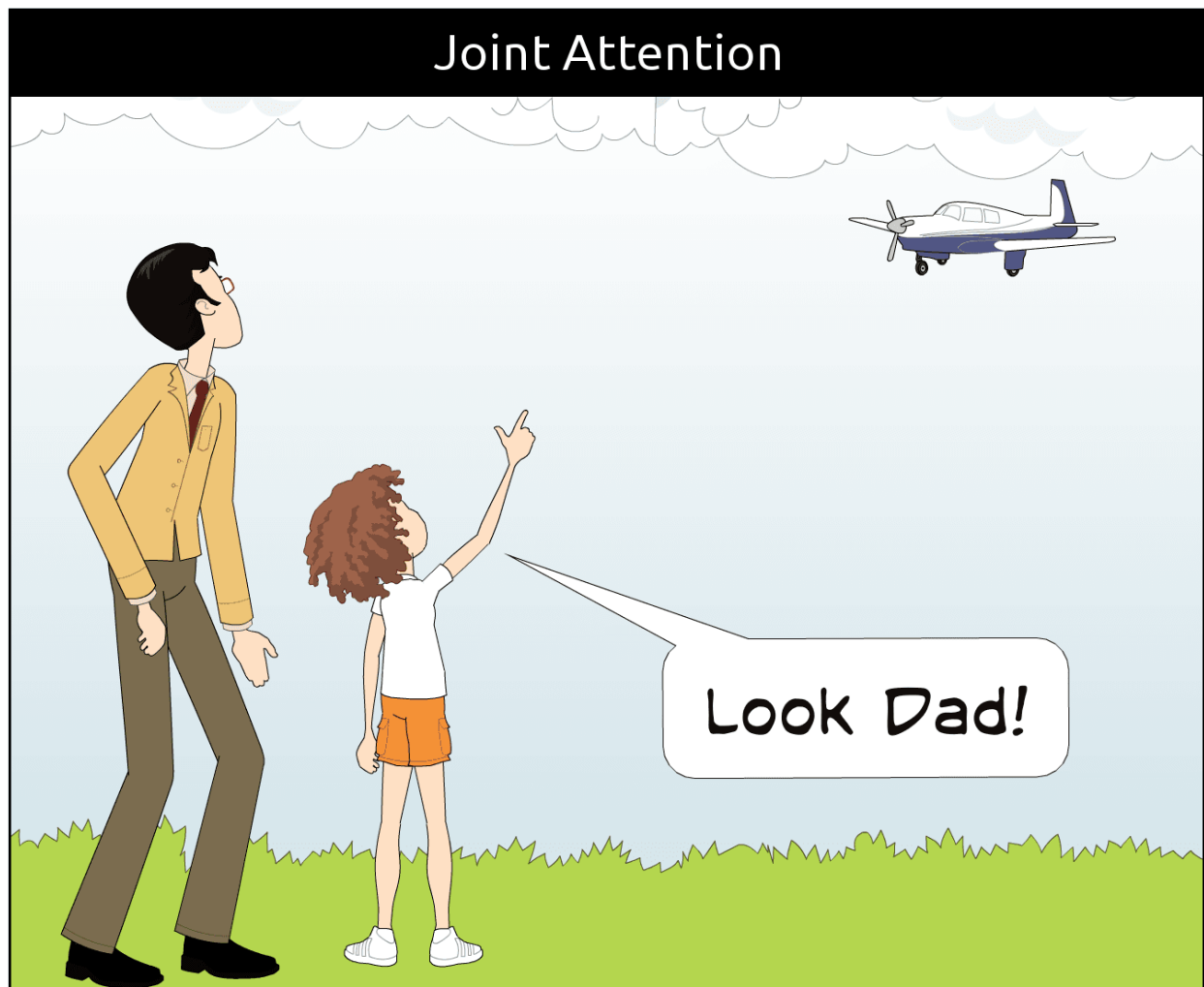
To perseverate is to become stuck on something and unable to mentally shift gears. People with autism often perseverate on a topic and alienate their peers by doing so.



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Reciprocity is a back-and-forth exchange of something for joint advantage. Reciprocity is necessary for social interaction and conversation. Reciprocity is important in a relationship. People with autism may find reciprocity difficult.

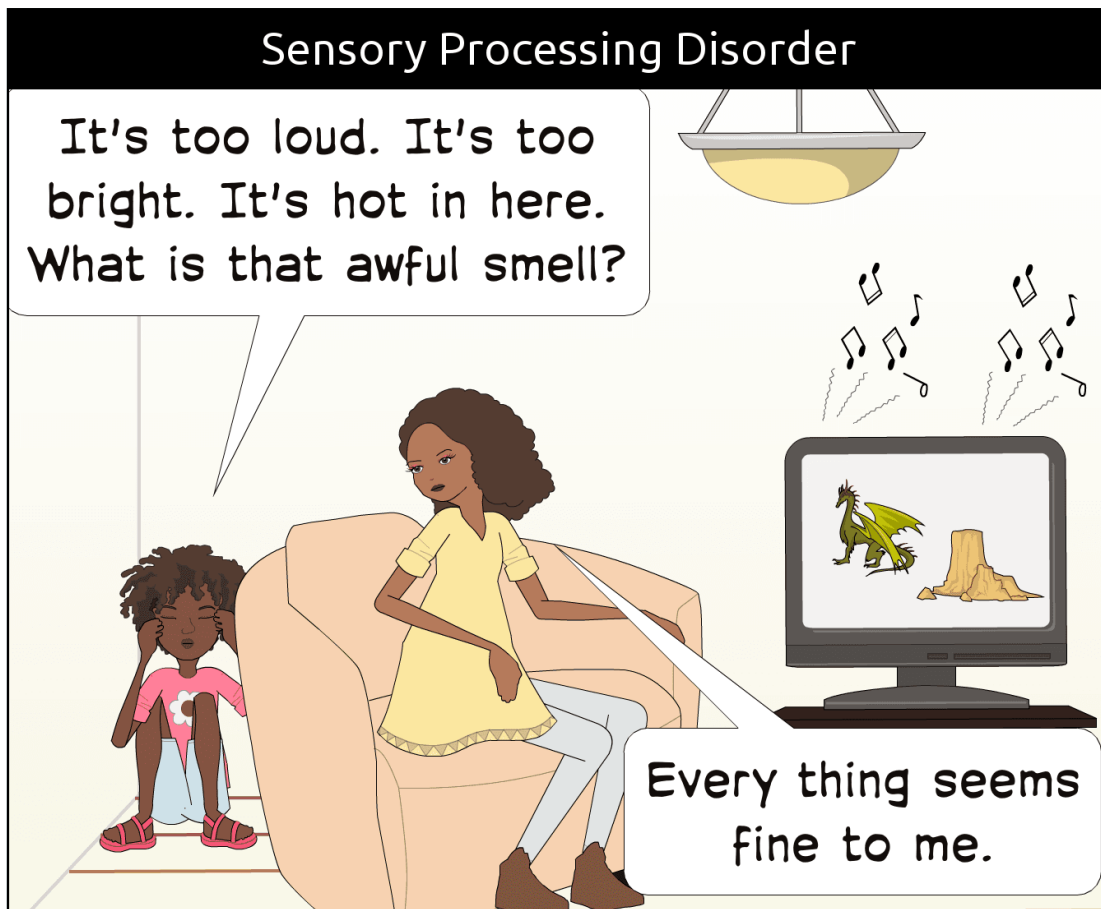
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Joint attention includes pointing, sharing interests, and following the eye gaze of others. Most small children like to say, "Watch me" to others as they play. They point things out in their environment so they are sure others are seeing what they see. Children with autism often participate in little or no joint attention.

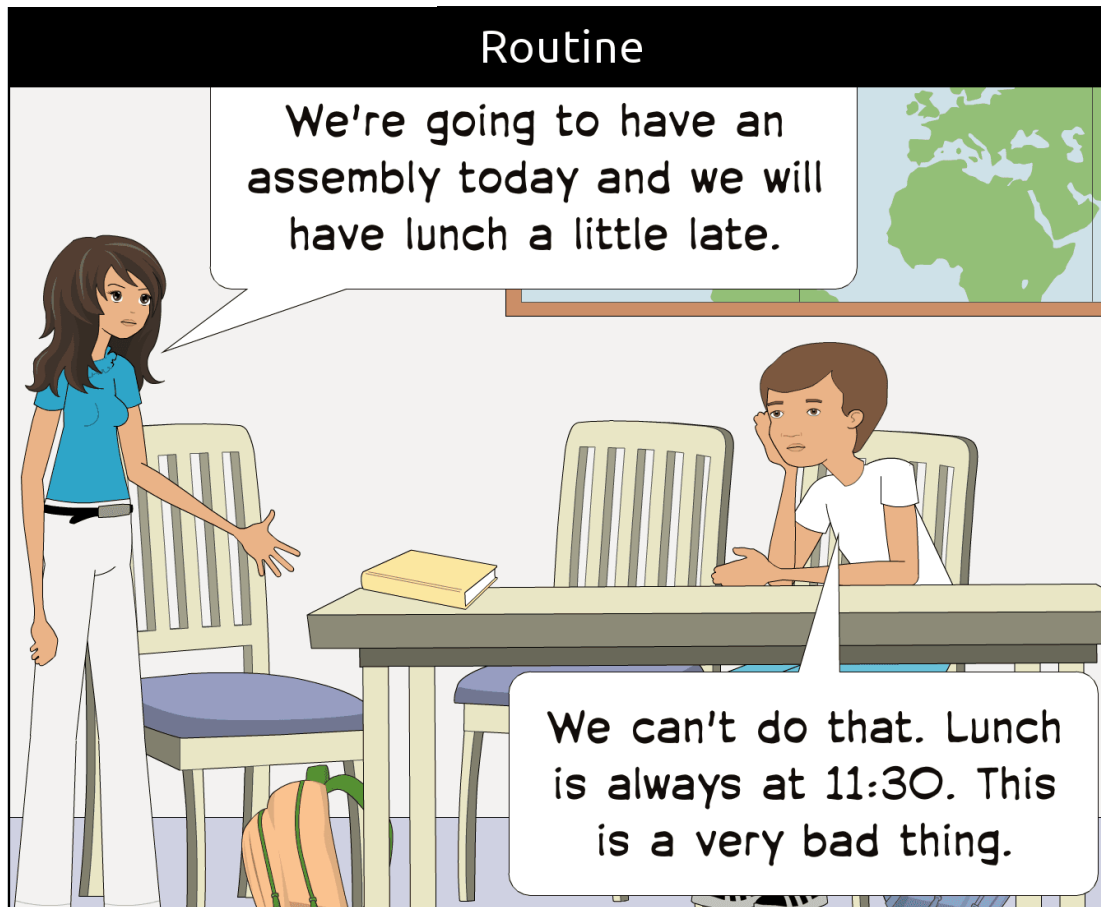
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People on the autism spectrum often have Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD). People with SPD have trouble processing information from their 5 senses and their vestibular system. Some people with SPD are sensory seekers and some are sensory avoiders.

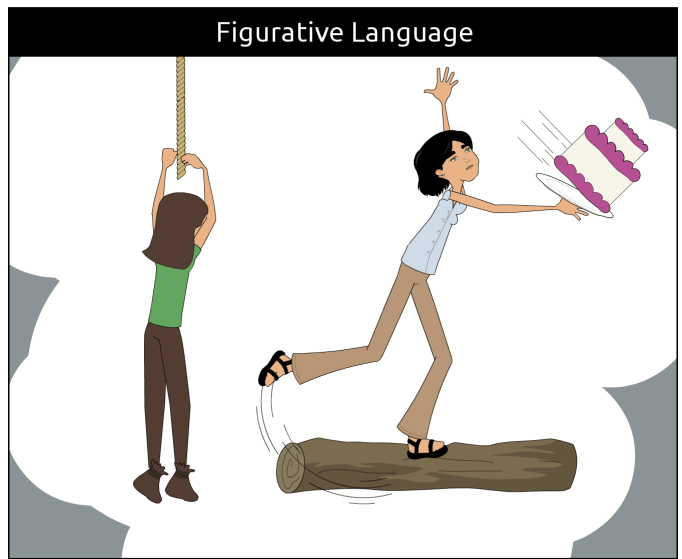
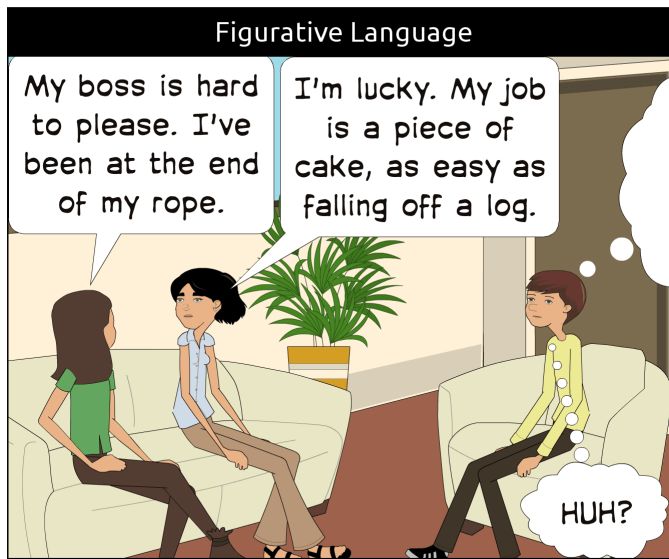
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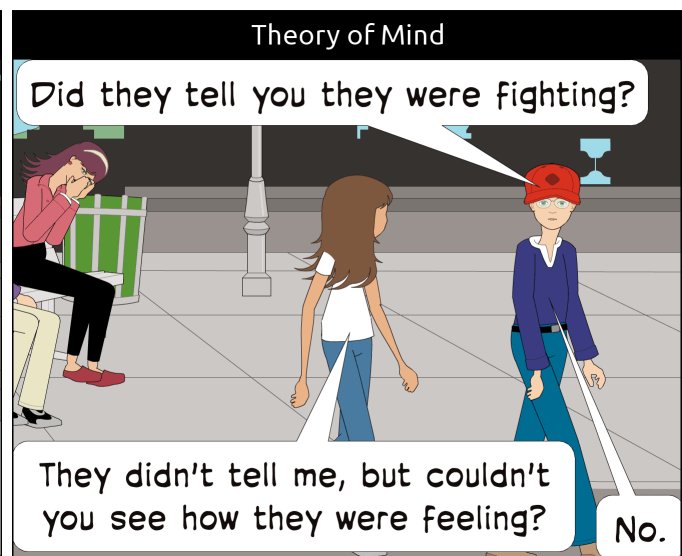
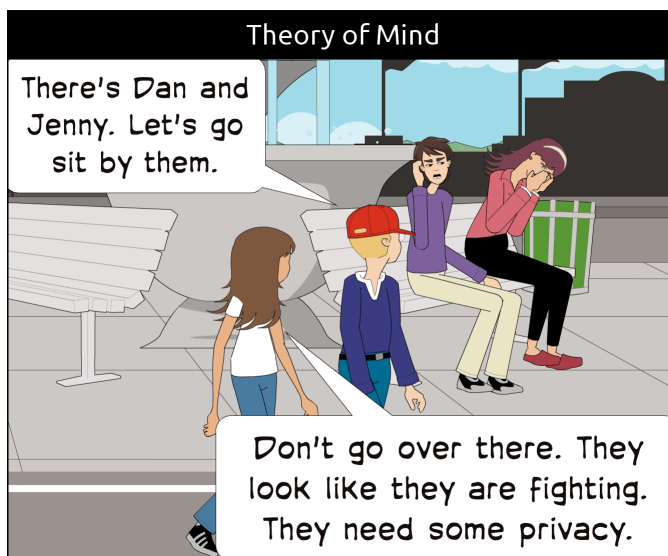
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People with autism often rely heavily on routine. When a procedure or event is done in a certain order or the same way every time, a precedent is set. When a person has autism a routine may even be established if something is done the same way just a few times. There may be little flexibility allowed by the person with autism once precedence is set.

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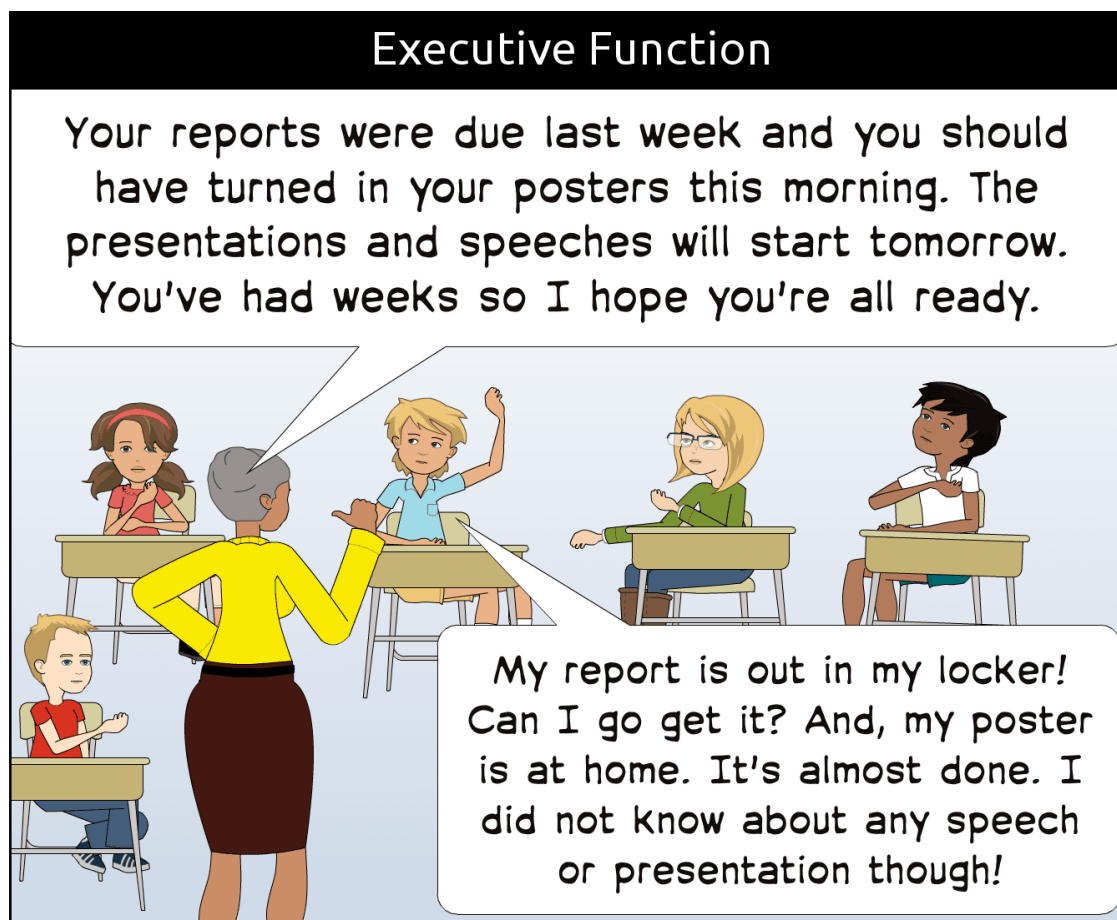


Using figurative language is not always easy for a person who has autism. Concrete language may be easier. Concrete = things that are tangible. Metaphors and idioms are examples of figurative language.



Theory of mind is being able to understand the thoughts, motives and actions of others. Without theory of mind, a person can easily fall victim to those with ill intentions. Imagine going through life without being able to make sense of why others behave the way they do. Many people on the autism spectrum often misunderstand others' actions.

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Executive function is the reasoning we use to sequence events, solve problems, plan a project or execute a plan. Executive function is needed to see all the little things involved in a big picture and how everything fits together. Organizational skills are involved in executive function. Those on the autism spectrum may struggle with executive function.