A conference presented by

en troubles graves du comportement

SQETGC Service québécois d'expertise RÉSEAU NATIONAL D'EXPERTISE I TR I UBLE I SPECTRE II L'AUTISME



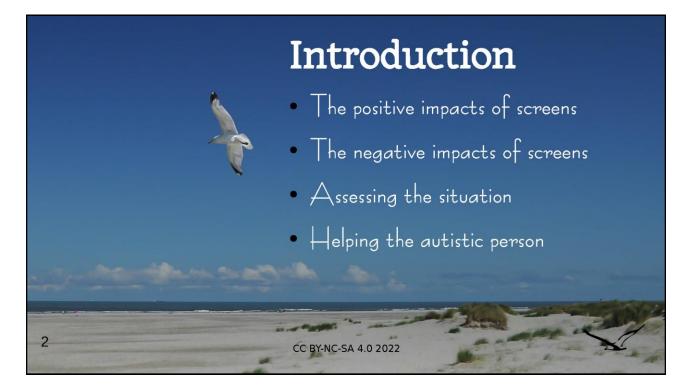
"Autism and screens: a complex relationship" January 18th, 2023 – 9 AM to 4 PM



Real and virtual worlds, an autistic perspective

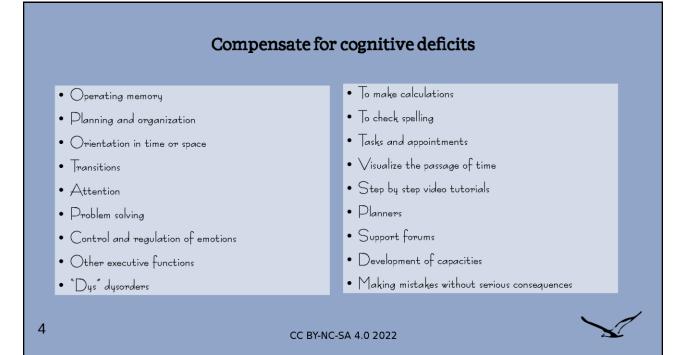
Isabelle Faguy, autistic and author

Real and virtual worlds, an autistic perspective

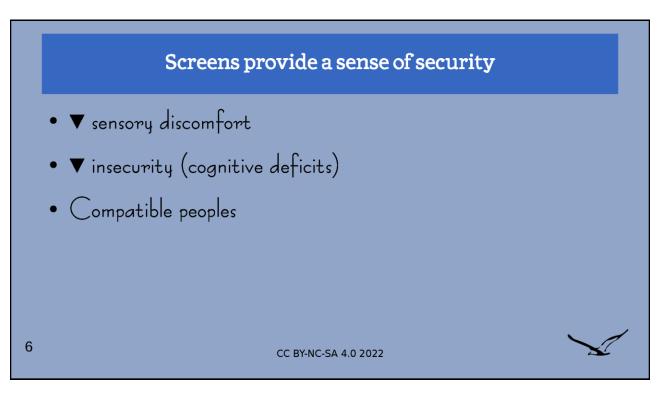


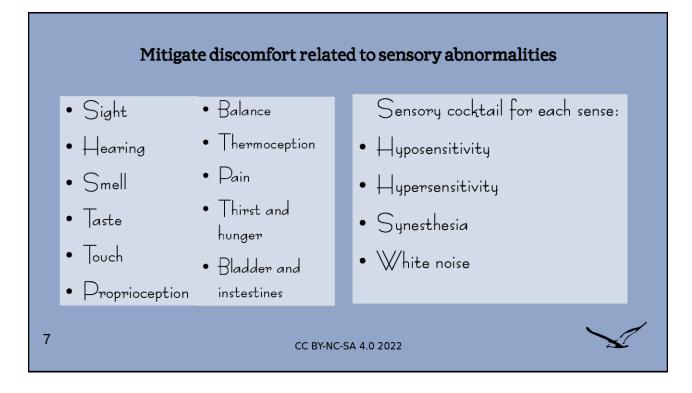
The positive impacts of screens

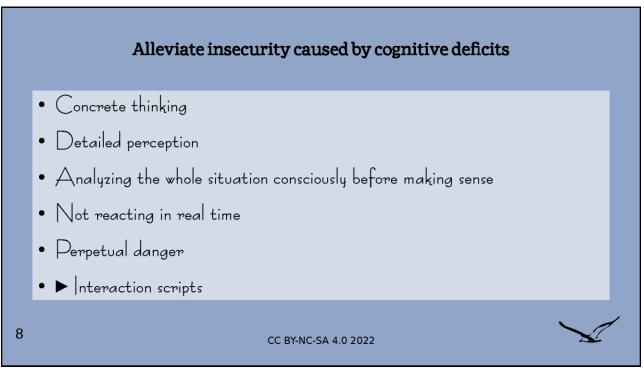
- Compensate for deficits
- Security feeling
- Learn to socialize
- Knowledge and skills
- Pleasure and relaxation

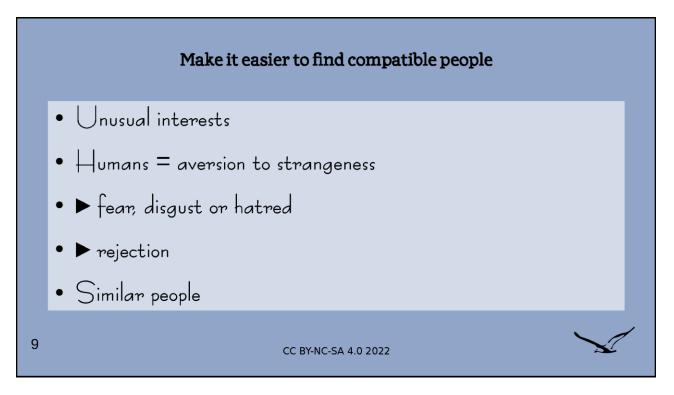


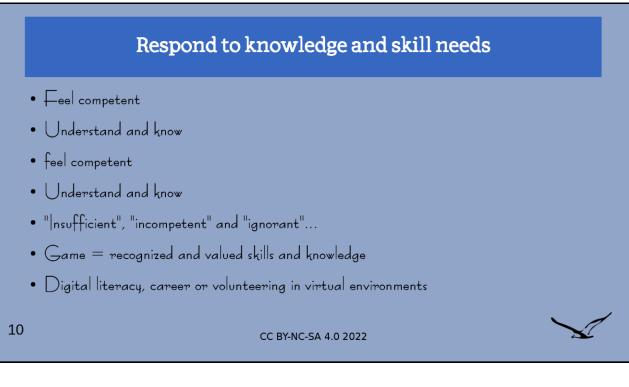












Procurent plaisir et détente

- Happy or relaxing
- + tensions ▶ need for + relaxing moments moments
- Physical, psychological and emotional tensions
- Frequency, duration et intensity of autistic meltdowns and shutdows

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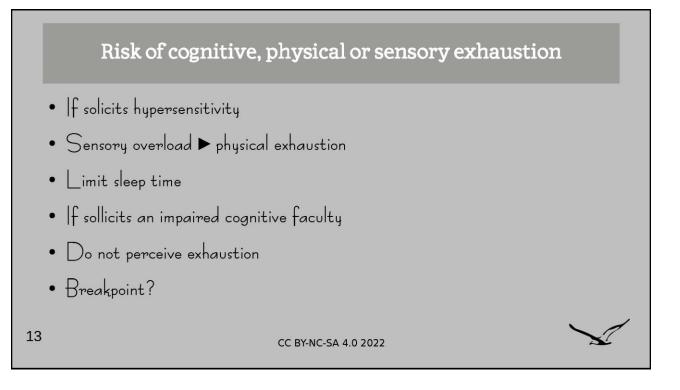
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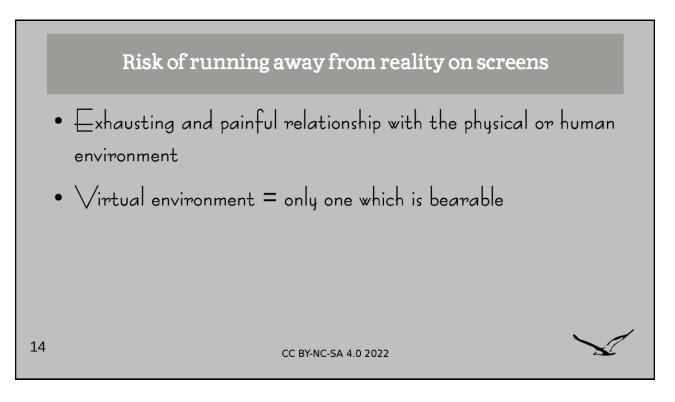
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The negative impacts of screens

- Physical or sensory fatigue
- Running away from reality on the screens
- Developing an addiction







Assessing the situation

- The distinctive attachment style of some autistic people
- Addiction or adaptive strategy?
- The needs and expectations of the autistic person
- The needs and expectations of the loved ones

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1. The distinctive attachment style of some autistic people

- If parents are neurotypical
- If needs aren't perceived and understood ▶ not reponded to quickly and adequately
- Inadequate response perceived as aggression
- No response ► perceived as abandonment
- Problematic or non-existent attachment "people assigned to my care"
- Relationships with humans = no benefit and potential danger

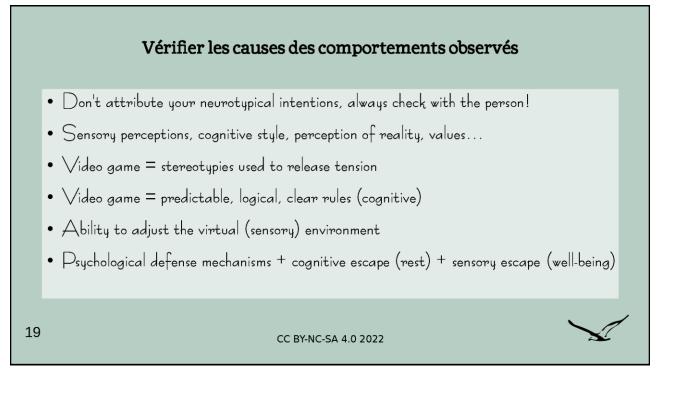


- Do you really know addiction?
- Are you trained to differentiate it from the coping strategies of autistic people?

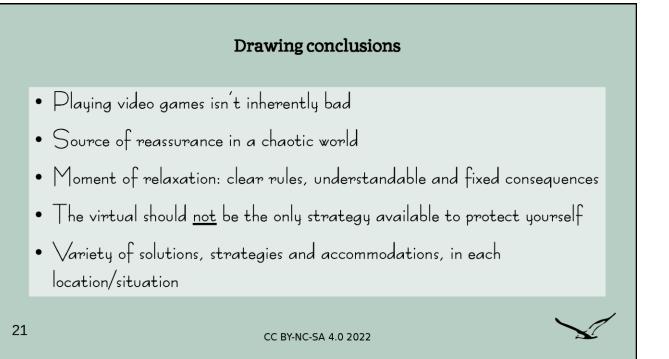
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Addiction or adaptive strategy?

- Addiction: A condition characterized by the use of a substance or behavior in order to obtain something highly desirable, despite the harmful consequences of continuing. Addiction to feelings of pleasure, power, controlled risk, etc.
- Adaptive strategy: Means to compensate for one's deficits, limit one's autistic breakdowns, finally feel competent, socialize with compatible people, learn and develop skills, feel a moment of security, etc.





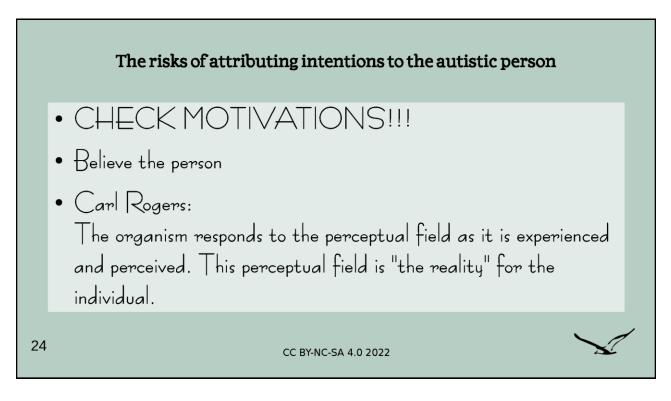


3. The needs and expectations of the autistic person

- Need of the autistic person or need of parent/caregiver?
- Know the person: ambitions, dreams, desires, plans, interests, values, MEANING to their life
- Autistic-chameleons: fragmented in characters, disconnected from Self
- Real need or defense mechanism in the face of years of suffering?
- Belief that any relationship will be negative or dangerous? (you would think that too if you had suffered the same violence, social exclusion and other abuses all your life)

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4. The needs and expectations of the loved ones

- Parents in 1+1=1 relationship with their autistic child
- Projects their needs onto son or daughter
- Needs of the loved one \neq needs of the autistic person

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Helping the autistic person

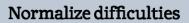
- Inform, explain and standardize
- Make the real world tolerable if not pleasant
- Make the real world safe and secure

Inform, explain and standardize

- Normalize difficulties
- Identify irritants and find solutions
- Explain that their parent isn't mean, just ignorant

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- Normalize difficulties, but not deny them
- "We all have difficulties in life"
- The autistic person really has more difficulties to overcome
- Fear of failure in the real world (too chaotic and unpredictable):
 - Expose him to situations according to his abilities and skills
 - Failure \neq stupidity or worthlessness
 - \models ailure = step in the learning process3
 - Experience and skill more important than short term success or failure

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Identify irritants and find solutions

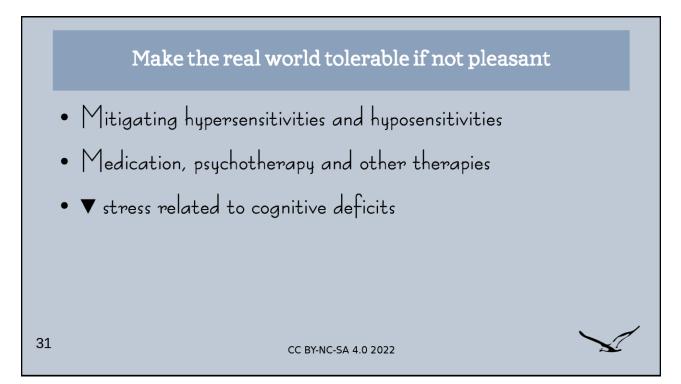
- List of irritants and disagreements with loved ones
- Compromise, but never if interferes with a deficit or with a sensory abnormality
- Never require the autistic person to endure pain (sensory, physical) or unbearable stress (eg cognitive overload) in order to relate. How could he then perceive relationships positively?
- Helping loved ones to do their share (inform, train, support)
- Assess if this is a "non-problem" (Is it really necessary?)
- Evaluate alternatives (eg bath instead of shower), be creative!

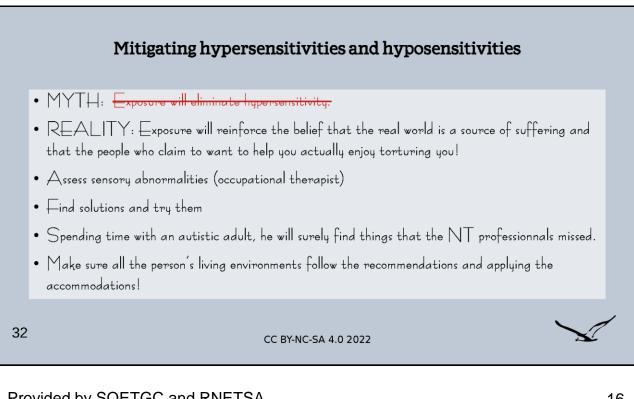
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Explain that his parent isn't mean, just ignorant

- mportant to explain:
 - The peculiarity of raising an autistic child for an NT parent.
 - The complex grieving of his dreams of all the things he was expecting doing with his son or daughter.
 - Difficulty in theory of mind and empathy towards one's child, due to different cognitive style, sensory abnormalities, etc. Google: "double empathy problem"
- Illustrate situations where the autistic person was also unable to put themselves in the shoes of an NT person. That doesn't make him a mean person, just someone who doesn't know what it is to be NT.
- Never demand more from the autistic person than from their parents, teachers or caregivers!
- Ability to understand according to actual stage of development (≠ chronological age)

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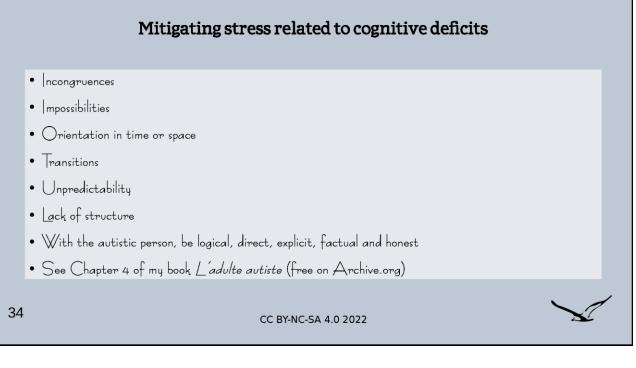


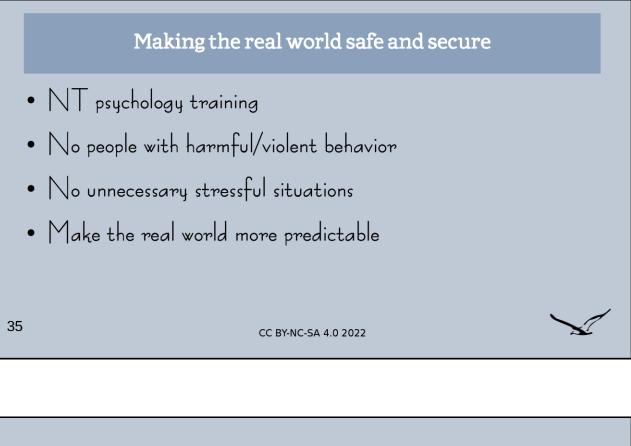


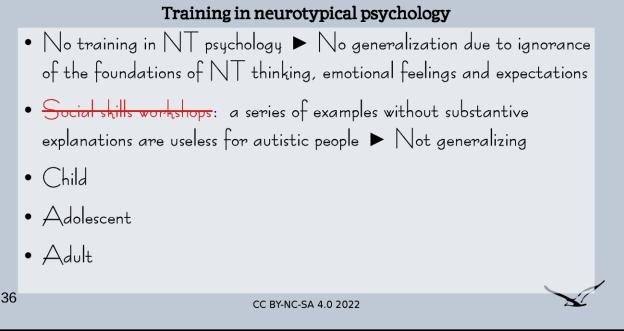
Medication, psychotherapy and other therapies

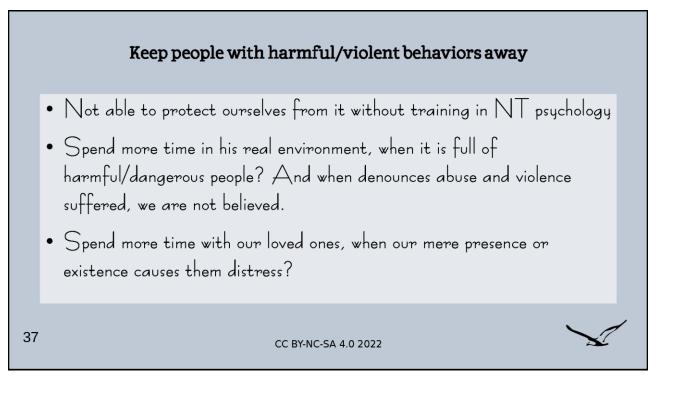
- No medicine for autism, not a disease. It is a <u>condition</u>.
- Situations where medication can help: debilitating anxiety, incessant and intrusive ruminations, intolerable sensory stimuli despite reduced exposure, depression, insufficient sleep, etc.
- Autistic people are able to develop introspection and self-criticism. Some autistic people have not reached this developmental stage. Help them achieve it!

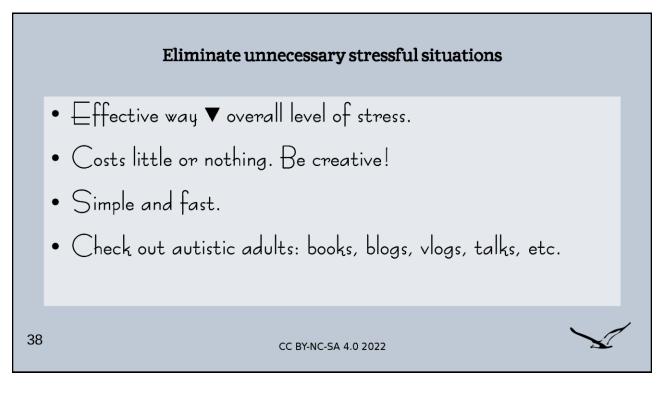
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Make the real world more predictable

- Effective way ▼ overall level of stress.
- Check out autistic adults, local and international groups (Ask Autistic Adults Resource for Parents of Autistics / 35,000 members).
- Spheres: sensory, social and cognitive.
- **V** sources of sensory overload
- Do not require spontaneity in interactions and conversations, replace with scripts.
- \bigcup se schedules, sequences and routines.
- Concrete and logical explanations, diagrams and visuals, alternative and augmentative forms of communication (AAC).
- Clearly state your needs, expectations and intentions.

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Helping loved ones

- Information, training and support
- Find another source of affection and companionship
- Consult in psychotherapy if necessary



Conclusion Accept other people's differences Integrate the person in all spheres Mentoring, accommodations, accompaniment, sensory aids, alternative communication, adapted transportation, monetary support, etc. Train the person in psychology and neurotypical communication

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