

Counselling Clients with Autism

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Atmosphere

- What do we know about sensory issues?
- How will this impact our counselling session?
- What could you do in advance?



Presentation

- Blunt
- Isolation
- Lack social skills
- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Hesitancy to seek help



What could possibly go wrong?



- Characteristics of autism impacting communication and social skills
- Memory & issues
- Social differences & perceptions
- Has there been a formal diagnosis?

What could possibly go wrong?



- Emotional regulation
- Social understanding
- Transitions
- Non-verbal cues
- Empathy

What could possibly go wrong?



- Other aspects (OCD, ADHD, etc.)
- Anxiety, anxiety, anxiety
- Stress on caregivers
- Processing

Language



- Keep it simple
- Be aware of idioms, slang, colloquialisms
- Ask for understanding
- Literal interpretation

Support Persons



- When can you get others involved?
- Confidentiality

Plan of Action



- I always give the client a hard copy of the plan
- Follow-up, follow-up

Follow-up



- Clients may 'forget' appointments
- May not do the work they agreed to
- Think about how anxiety fits into the picture

Strategies



- CBT
- Interactive Behaviour Therapy
- Oxytocin studies

Remember...



- Ability to generalize impaired
- Sticky thinking
- Unique presentation of each client
- Lack of central coherence, seeing the whole picture ***

References



- Paxton, K., Estay, I. A., (2007). *Counselling people on the autism spectrum: a practical manual*, Jessica Kingsly Publishers, Philadelphia, PA, USA.
- Aston, M., Asperger syndrome in the counselling room
