



Neurodiversity and the Church

Mark Arnold – Urban Saints

Naomi Fox – Growing Hope



Neurodiversity and the Church

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SAINTS

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(Izzy Park at Unsplash)



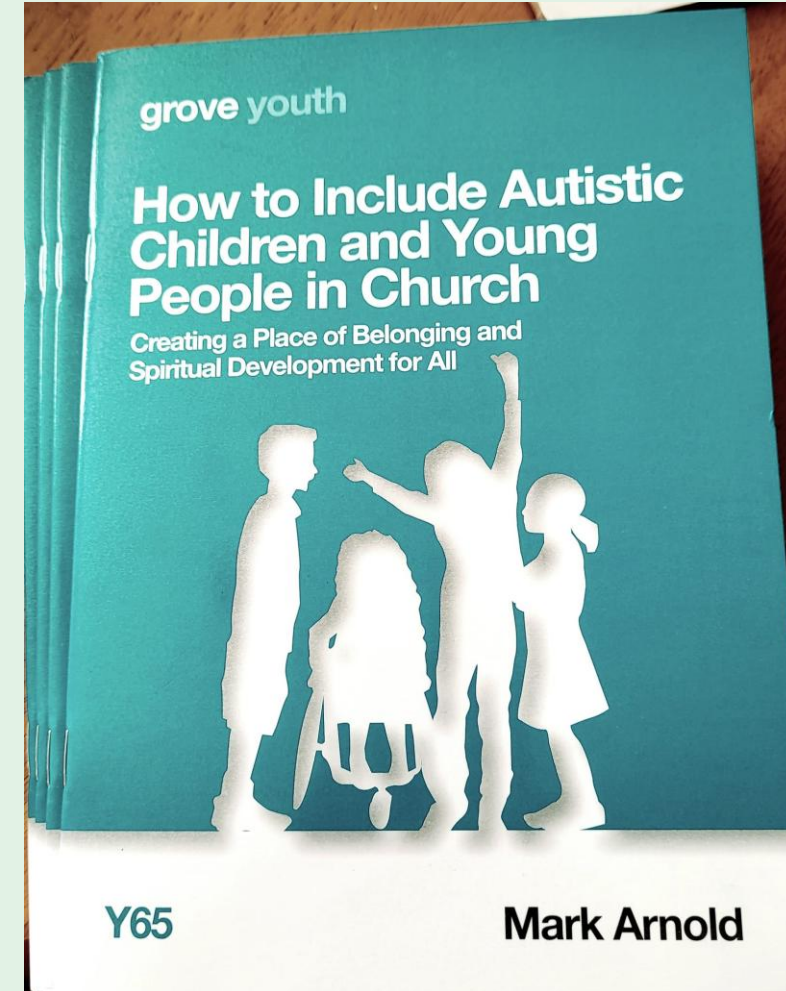
Welcome

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What is neurodivergence (and what it isn't!)

- How common is neurodivergence?
- It's not bad behaviour
- Identity first or person first
- Medical model vs. social model
- Brain overloads, meltdowns, shutdowns
- Autism myths



TAKE
ACTION



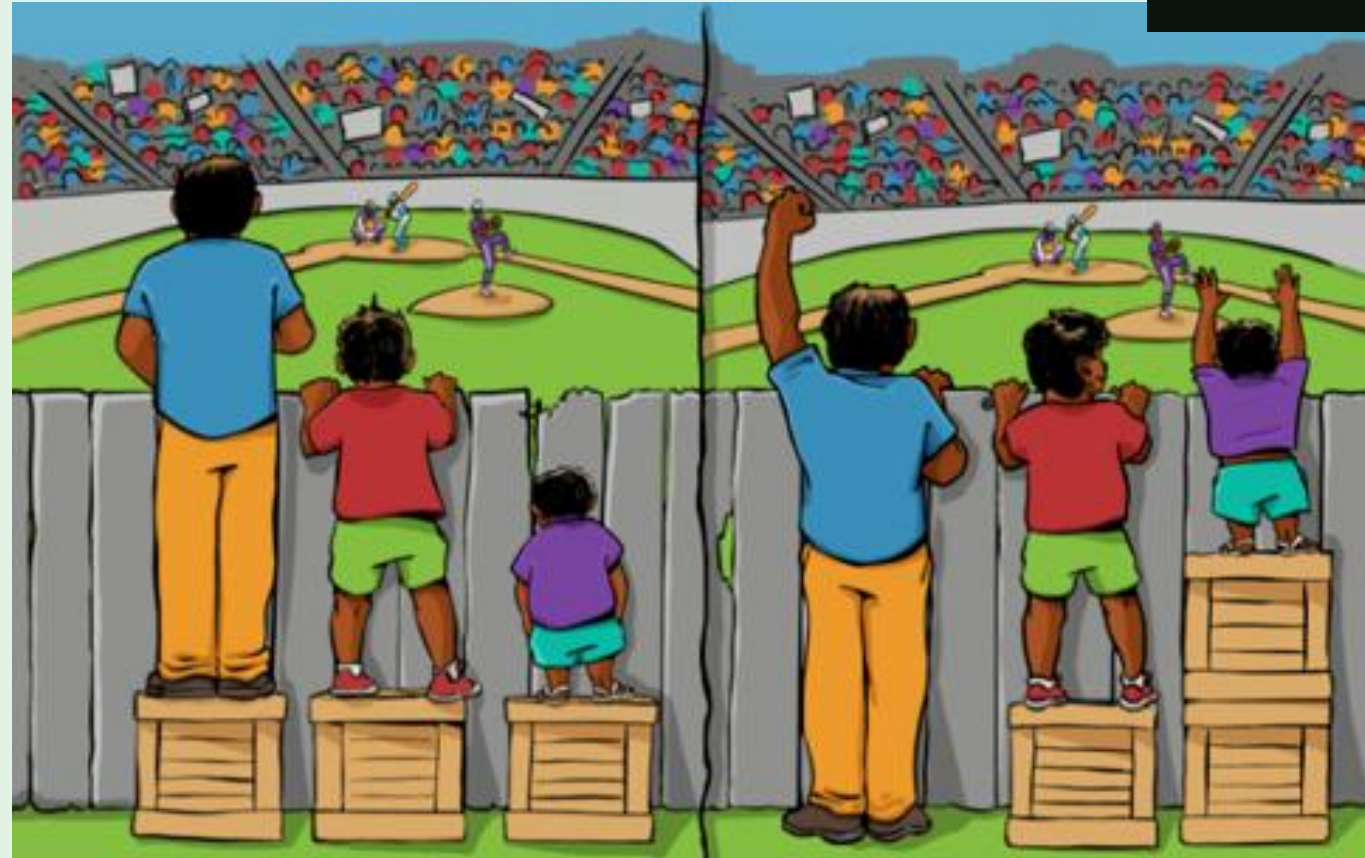
listen

Neurodiversity and the Church

Barriers

What barriers can Autistic children and young people experience in church?

- Physical
- Programme
- People



*Image Credit: Interaction Institute for Social Change /
Artist: Angus Maguire*





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Image Credit: Kalea Jerielle at Unsplash

STORY

Martin's story...



Story






Champion accessibility and provide free therapy for children and young people with additional needs in partnership with churches across the UK

growinghope.org.uk

Growing
HOPE



Growing Hope What we do...

-  We bring **hope to children** through providing free therapy.
-  We grow **hope for families** where hope has been lost due to isolation or rejection.
-  We share **hope in Jesus** because he brings hope even in the most difficult situations.



What is sensory processing?

What do you do in your morning routine?

Growing
HOPE



Sight (Visual)- Information received via our eyes



Smell (Olfactory)- Information received via our nose



Taste (Gustatory)- Information received via our taste buds



Hearing (Auditory)- Information received via our ears



Touch (Tactile)- Information received via our skin



Balance (Vestibular)- Information received via our inner ear to tell us about movement and balance



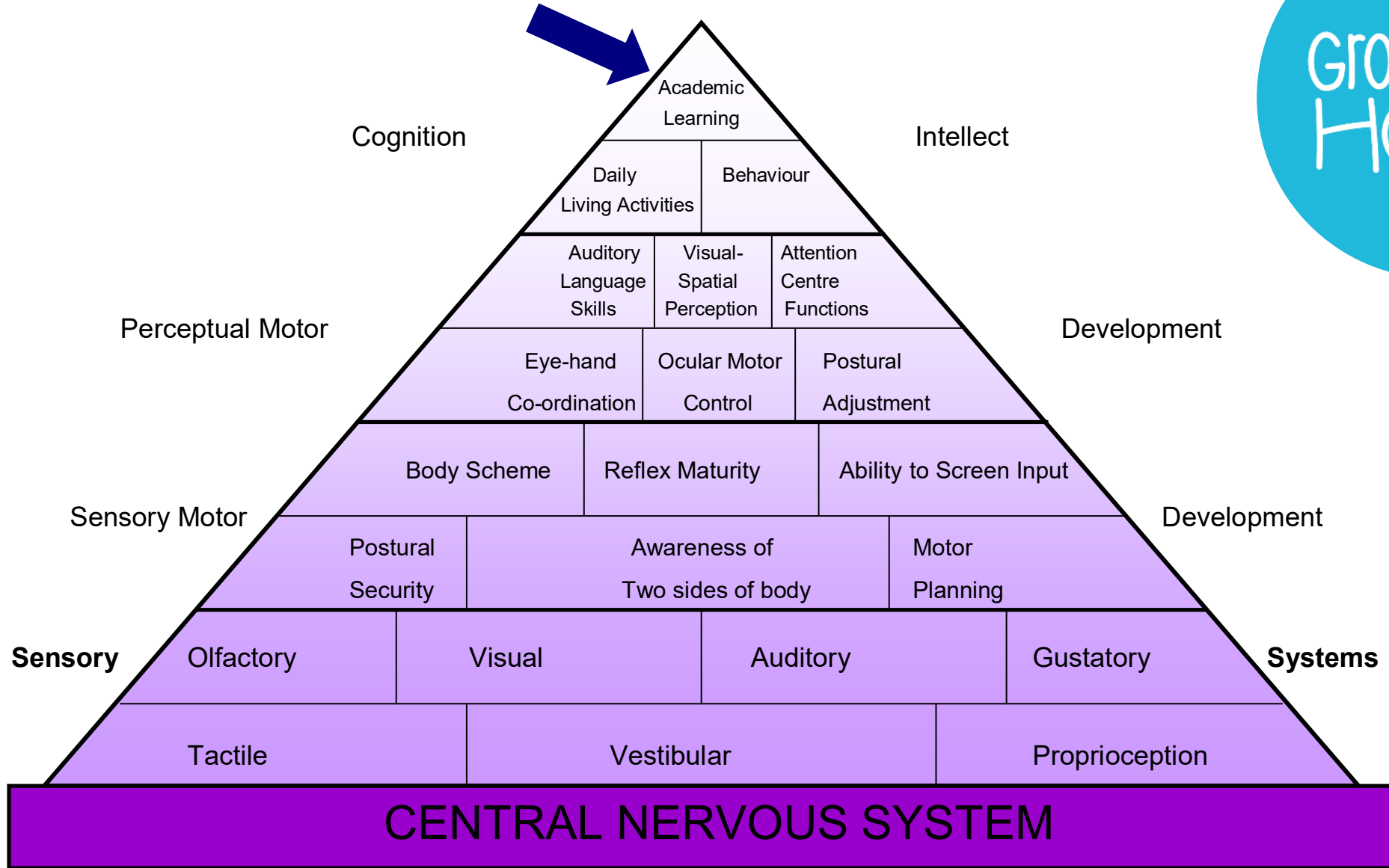
Body Awareness (Proprioception)- information received via our muscles and joints to tell us where our body is in space

Internal Sense (Interoception) – information received via our internal organs about whether we're hungry/ in pain/ need the toilet.



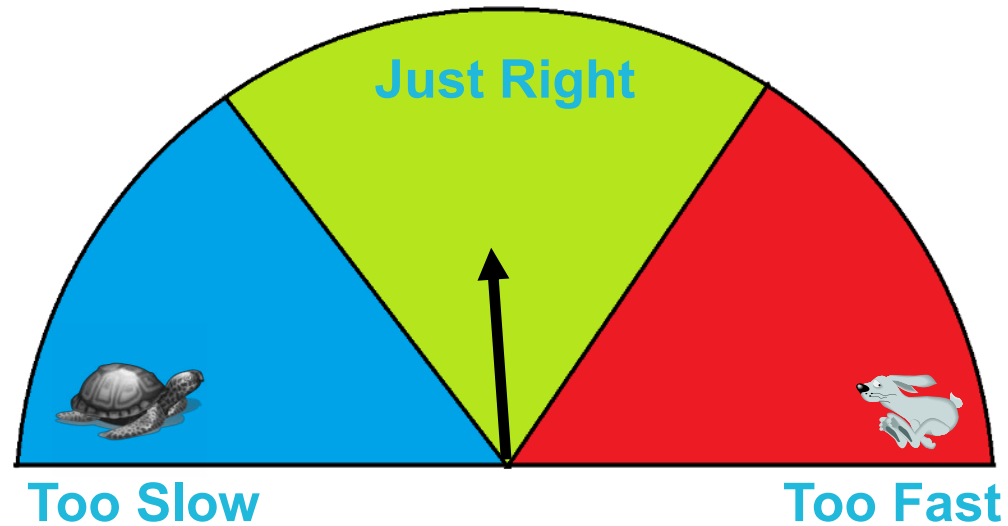
Strategies for attention and concentration

This diagram is courtesy of Taylor and Trott and is taken from 'How Does Your Engine Run?' A Leader's Guide to the Alert Program for Self-Regulation (Williams & Shellenberger, 1996).





Alert Programme



(Williams & Shellenberger 1996)



Sense	Calming	Alerting
Sight	Plain, geometric	Flashing, busy
Smell	Vanilla, lavender	Strong/ pungent
Taste	Vanilla, lavender, chocolate	Spicy/sour
Hearing	Rhythmic, steady	Changing in pitch/tempo
Touch	Deep pressure	Light/tickly
Balance	Linear movement	Rotational, stop/start
Body Awareness (proprioception)	HEAVY WORK – wall pushes, gym ball, animal walks, crunchy/chewy snack	



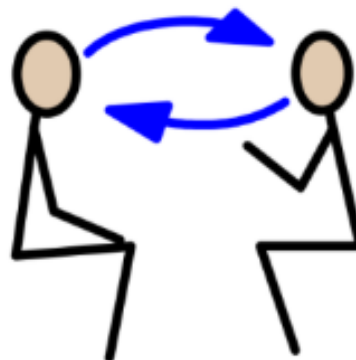
Welcome



Singing



Story



Discussion



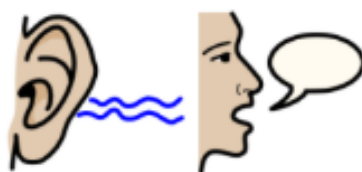
Memory
verse



Prayer



Craft



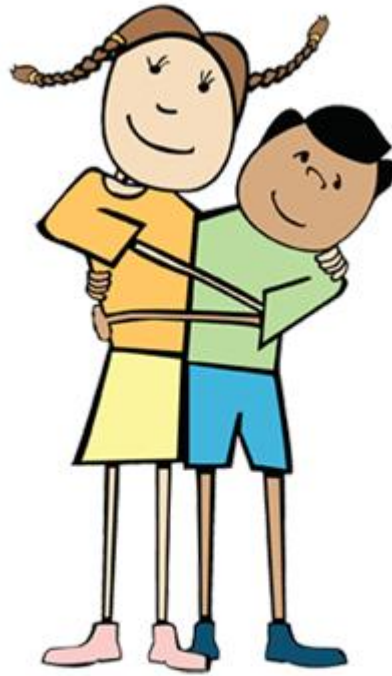
Listening
to God



Game



Singing



Squash



Posture preparation



Push Palms-
Push your palms together and count to 10.



Pull up on chair-
Pull your body up on your chair and count to 10.



Pull hands-
Try and pull your cupped hands apart and count to 10.



Stack your blocks-
Put your shoulders, hips, knees and feet in a line and sit up tall.



Tight Hug-
Hug yourself tightly and count to 10.



Stretch-
Stretch your body out as much as you can.

What can this look like?

- Time of day?
- Better sometimes?
- Worse sometimes?
- What's most distracting?
- What's most motivating?
- Coke bottle
- Individuals
- Detective
- Proprioception





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STORY

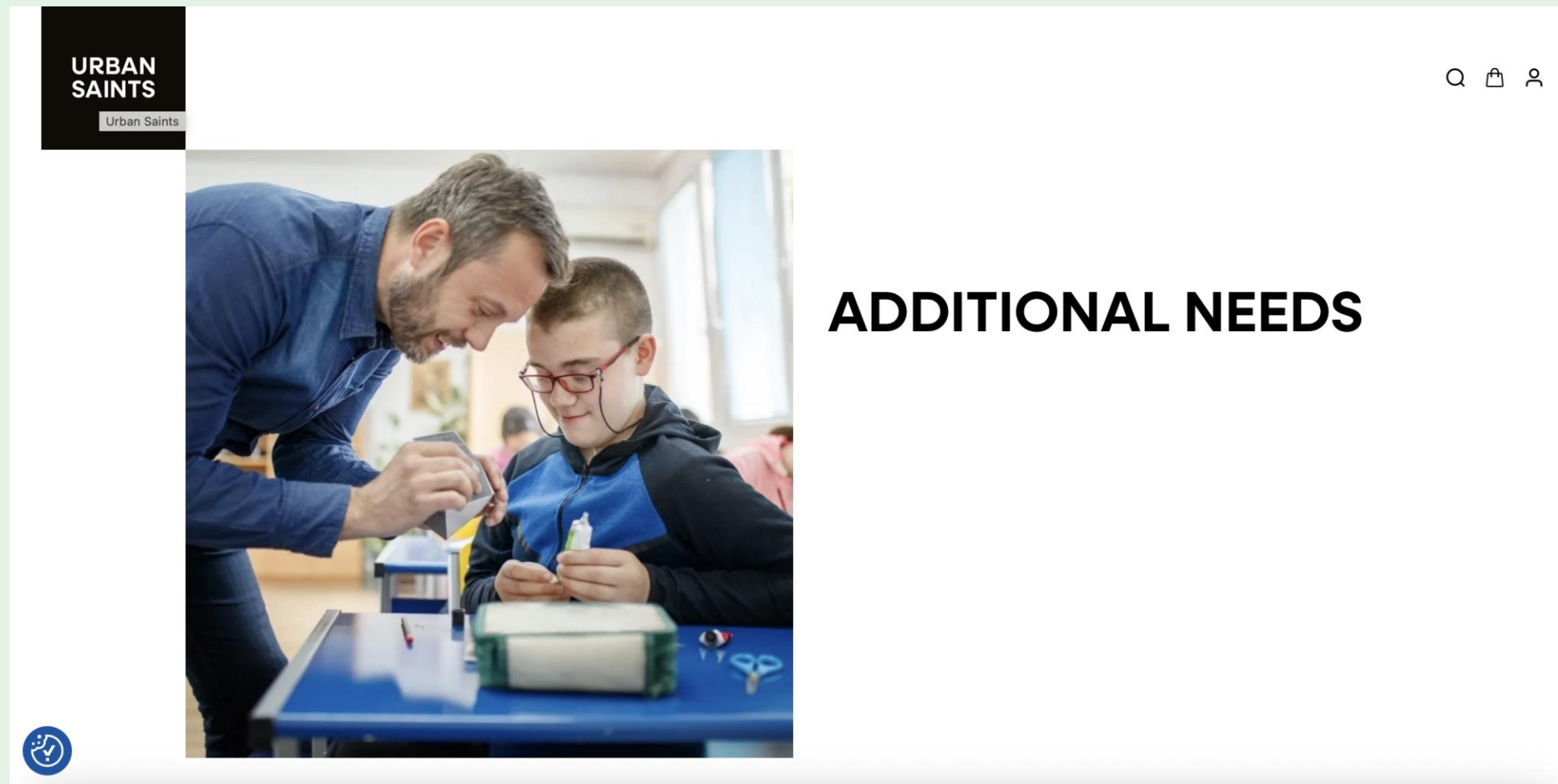
Timmy's story...



Story

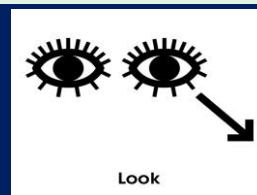
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The screenshot shows the Urban Saints website interface. In the top left corner, there is a black box with the text "URBAN SAINTS" and a smaller box below it with "Urban Saints". In the top right corner, there are icons for search, a shopping bag, and a user profile. The main content area features a large photograph of a male teacher with a beard, wearing a blue shirt, leaning over a blue table to assist a young boy with glasses and a blue and black hoodie. They are working on a project together. The text "ADDITIONAL NEEDS" is displayed in large, bold, black capital letters to the right of the photograph. In the bottom left corner of the screenshot, there is a small blue circular icon with a white checkmark and a person silhouette.

 www.urbansaints.org/additionalneeds



Neurodiversity and the Church



Events

Upcoming (9) Past (215)



'All Inclusive?' - Supporting Children & Young People With...
Tue, Apr 21 • 7:30 PM GMT+1
From £20.00



'All Inclusive?' - Supporting Families
Tue, Apr 28 • 7:30 PM GMT+1
From £20.00



The Dads' Fire Circle - April Online 'Gathering'
Wed, Apr 29 • 8:00 PM GMT+1
Free



'All Inclusive?' - Making Sense Of Our Senses
Tue, May 5 • 7:30 PM GMT+1
From £20.00



'All Inclusive?' Understanding Behaviour: Children/YP with...
Tue, May 12 • 7:30 PM GMT+1
From £20.00



'All Inclusive?' - Invited to Belong:2U
Tue, May 19 • 7:30 PM GMT+1
From £20.00



All Inclusive? How to Include Autistic Children and Young...
Tue, Jun 2 • 7:30 PM GMT+1
From £20.00



How to Include Children and Young People with ADHD in...
Tue, Jun 9 • 7:30 PM GMT+1
From £20.00



www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/mark-arnold-the-additional-needs-blogfather-30541746080



Look

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www.additionalneedsalliance.org.uk



www.facebook.com/groups/additionalneedsalliance



Resources...



joining

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www.thedadsfirecircle.com



Resources...



joining

WHEN DREAMS CHANGE

Enables parents and carers to reflect on their experience of having a child or young person with additional needs and to become more of the person they were created to be.

HOW?

- 4-week therapeutic course providing a space for parents to process their experiences
- Using the story of Joseph from the bible
- Looking at grief, identity, strategies to cope with stress and support networks

“I really enjoyed the feeling of being safe to share some of the challenges of raising my son.”

Anya¹

8 out of 10

Parent/carers of children with additional needs have poor mental wellbeing²

Parents of children with

autism

often experience strong feelings of grief and need support to process their emotions³

Watch this video to find out more!



Siblings Group aims to enable brothers and sisters of children with additional needs to share some of their experiences and feelings of being a sibling and to know their experience is not an isolated one.

HOW?

- 7-week therapeutic course for primary school aged children providing space to share emotions and experiences
- Secondary school aged course in development for 2024/25
- Using puppets, creative activities and movement-based games
- Teaches strategies for resilience – e.g. talking to an adult, hand massage, deep breathing, feelings box

"I liked that we could feel free to tell others what we thought."

Sophie¹

5 out of 10

siblings of children with additional needs are socially isolated²

Children who have had the opportunity to develop resilience have better health and well-being outcomes as they develop into adulthood³

Watch this [video](#) to find out more!



¹Pseudonyms | ²Lunt, Left Behind – Six Months On, 2022, Disabled Children's Partnership. Available at: <https://disabledchildrenspartnership.org.uk/left-behind-six-months-on/> | ³Bak PL, Midgley N, Zhu JL, Wistoft K and Obel C (2015) The Resilience Program: preliminary evaluation of a mentalization-based education program. Front. Psychol. 6:753. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00753 (Frontiers | The Resilience Program: preliminary evaluation of a mentalization-based education program (frontiersin.org

Accessibility Award

WHY?

We are called to be community, to come together to worship God and build kingdom. The Growing Hope Accessibility Award enables churches to become places where everyone can be seen, heard, able to belong and join in.

Families have often reported to us that when they have a child with additional needs, their world becomes smaller. They are unable to go to the shops or social occasions as their peers do. Adeola, one of our clinic parents, when invited along to church said "What? We can come to church?" Because the church had Growing Hope support, it was able to provide a safe environment for her child, as well as enable both Adeola and her other daughter to engage in church individually and as a family.

Cost £500
plus travel

"It was great for us as a family to come along to a church where our children were accepted without the need to explain, apologise, or justify ourselves. Having resources that our children could access helped them to settle easily. It gave me and my husband the freedom to worship in a place where our children felt loved and seen".

Aliysha* - Parent of a child at St James' Church,
High Wycombe.

HOW?





"A very useful session which I am sure will make us all more aware and inclusive both in and outside church."

Jennie at St Georges, Shirley.

Accessibility Training

Growing Hope provide accessibility training, which supports volunteers with practical strategies to support everyone.

WHY?

Ensuring that everybody is welcome goes beyond tools and strategies implemented by church leadership, it relies on the whole church family getting on board and having a good level of understanding around additional needs and possible support.

HOW?

The practical workshop involves:

- What are additional needs?
- How to celebrate and support everyone in their gifting?
- What is multisensory learning?
- What can we do in a church setting?

WHO?

The invitation can be far and wide, across all different areas of serving, and other local churches.

Training cost £300 +
travel
for 2.5hr session
(or £200 on booking
Accessibility award
at same time)

WHAT DO FAMILIES EXPERIENCE?

What do families experience?

BACK TO 'RUN FREE THERAPY CLINICS'



Ibrahim

[Watch Video](#)



Eloise

[View Feedback](#)



Kaiden

[Watch Video](#)



Nile

[View Feedback](#)



Elijah

[Watch Video](#)



“Growing Hope gave me the confidence to be the Mum I am today. When I was getting ready to wean Elouise there was no help but the Growing Hope Speech and Language Therapist helped me to have the confidence to try new things with Elouise. Now she is thriving, and you can’t stop her eating.”

Eloise’s mum

"I can see a big difference in my son already. There is a big change in him. He used to play by himself now he can play with his siblings and other children too! Thank you so much for the opportunity, and the hope you are giving to parents like me."

Nile's mum



