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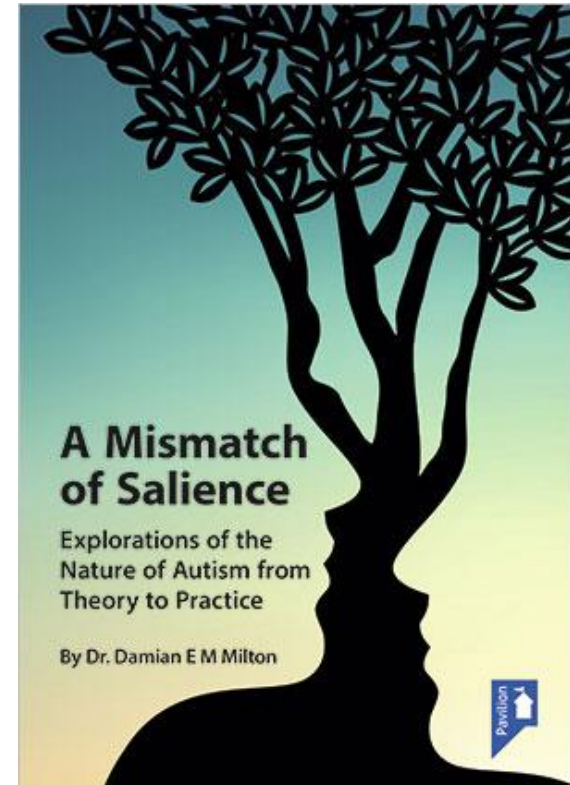
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Miscommunication support...and maybe what to do about it!

Dr. Damian E M Milton



A bit about me

- I'm autistic (diagnosed 2009) – as is my son (diagnosed 2005).
- A background in Social Science (initially Sociology).
- Lecturer in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Tizard Centre, University of Kent.
- Autism Knowledge and Expertise Consultant, National Autistic Society.
- Visiting Lecturer, London South Bank University.
- Director at the National Autistic Taskforce.
- Chair of the Participatory Autism Research Collective (PARC).



Introduction

- This presentation will give a quick overview of the *Ten rules for ensuring miscommunication when working with autistic people and people with learning disabilities...and maybe what to do about it!* as recently published in a booklet by the presenter in collaboration with Dr. Jill Bradshaw.
- Evidence from a project led by Jill Bradshaw at the Tizard Centre, University of Kent will unfortunately cannot be shown today but will be coming soon.
- As the title of the booklet suggests however, the presentation will finish on ideas on what to do about this situation to make a positive change, including a project idea being led by Dr. Dinah Murray.

Aim of the ten rules series

- *The 'ten rules' concept sets out to be gently provocative. Sadly, the 'rules' in this presentation are reflective of many of the practices we have come across that cause so many problems...We hope it will be a useful starting point for discussion and a catalyst for action.*

Rule 1: Assume you know best

- After all, you have a lot of experience of communicating, you do it all the time. You are bound to know what is going to work best for me.
- Make sure you don't talk to my family or other people who know me well. After all, what would we/they know!

Rule 2: Just use verbal communication with me at all the times

- After all, that's what most people use to communicate and it works just fine.
- If verbal communication doesn't seem to work the first time, say it again, louder, use more words, move closer to me (and just keep going).

Rule 3: Use as many words as you can when you communicate with me

- It is always better to provide lots of details all the time and just keep speaking.
- If I look confused, then just keep going using more words as your message will get through to me in the end.
- Keep speaking and keep rephrasing things in as many different ways as possible.

Rule 4: Always insist on eye contact

- After all if I am not looking at you, then I can't possibly be listening to you can I!

Rule 5: Try to get a mismatch between your verbal and non-verbal communication

- Make sure I can't decide whether I need to pay attention to what you say or what you are communicating with your non-verbal communication.

Rule 6: Always be vague and obscure

- Never mean what you say or do as you say – be as confusing as possible.
- Even better, do this at the same time as strategies 3, 4, 5 and 7.

Rule 7: Insist on interacting with me whenever you want to and pay no attention to my actions or wishes

- We all like to chat don't we and it is 'good for me' to socialise.

Rule 8: Ignore me

- If you find me hard to interact with me, you could try ignoring me, especially if you think the way I am communicating is 'inappropriate'.
- After all, autistic people don't like to chat do they, so best to leave me on my own.

Rule 9: Demean me

- Be derogatory to me, especially in your ways of communicating/acting socially. Make fun of the things that are important to me and laugh at any errors I make.

Rule 10: Don't make any adaptations – just treat me the same as you treat everyone else

- After all, I need to learn to fit in and be just the same as everyone else.

Maybe what to do about it?

- The ten rules booklet gives some guidance on such matters, however...

A positive proposal

- Communication project idea being led by Dr. Dinah Murray
- A Communication Support Worker?
- AutNav

- And related projects: sensory needs

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