



# THE CYCLE OF MELTDOWNS


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[www.ocali.org](http://www.ocali.org)

[www.texasautism.org](http://www.texasautism.org)

NOT ALL SLIDES ARE IN YOUR SLIDES



EXCERPTS FROM *22 PEOPLE WITH  
AUTISM ANSWER THE QUESTION,  
“WHAT’S IT LIKE?”*

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The Mighty

Rachel Kassenbrock

August 22, 2015

[http://themighty.com/2015/08/22-people-with-autism-answer-the-  
...utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://themighty.com/2015/08/22-people-with-autism-answer-the-...utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer)




**SOMETIMES [IT'S] AWESOME,  
OTHER TIMES IT'S NOT.**

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**IT'S NORMAL EXCEPT FOR THE  
LACK OF FRIENDS.**

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**YOU'RE ALWAYS AWARE OF  
WHAT ALL YOUR SENSES ARE  
DETECTING.**

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**THE ANXIETY CAN BE INSANE  
AND OVERPOWERING.**

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IMAGINE BEING IN THE TV  
SECTION OF [SOGO HONG  
KONG] AND THERE ARE  
AROUND 20 TVS ON THE WALL.


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IT CAN BE OVERWHELMING  
SOMETIMES, BUT IT'S NOT  
UNBEARABLE ONCE YOU FIND  
A SUPPORT SYSTEM ...


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**I'M A HUGE FAN OF ROUTINE. I  
LIKE BEING ABLE TO STICK TO A  
SCHEDULE ...**


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AUTISTS ARE THE ULTIMATE  
SQUARE PEGS, AND THE  
PROBLEMS WITH POUNDING A  
SQUARE PEG INTO A ROUND HOLE  
IS NOT THAT THE HAMMERING IS  
HARD WORK. IT'S THAT YOU ARE  
DESTROYING THE PEG.

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PAUL COLLINS



CONTINUOUS EFFORT – NOT  
STRENGTH OF INTELLIGENCE – IS  
THE KEY TO UNLOCKING OUR  
POTENTIAL.

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Winston Churchill



**85% OF YOUR SOCIAL AND  
FINANCIAL SUCCESS IN LIFE IS  
DETERMINED BY YOUR SOCIAL  
AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS.**

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The Dale Carnegie Foundation



I KNOW OF NO ONE WHO IS  
PURELY AUTISTIC OR  
NEUROTYPICAL. EVEN GOD HAS  
SOME AUTISTIC MOMENTS, WHICH  
IS WHY THE PLANETS SPIN.

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Jerry Newport



AND IS SELF-REGULATION  
IMPORTANT?

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# The Secret of School Success

- “... one of several findings in the growing body of research on “self-regulation” -- people’s ability to stop, think, make a plan and control their impulses. ... it turns out that “these are really the same skills you need to do well in school” and potentially in life.”

Professor Megan McClelland  
Oregon State University

“If my child graduates from high school and he cannot read, it would be against the law to discriminate against him.

However, if he graduates and is not able to live or work next to other people without hurting or scaring them, society will not tolerate him.

As a result, he will most likely lose his freedom to move about his community independently, impacting his long-term quality of life.”

- Quote from “a very wise parent” in Using the 5-Point Scale and Anxiety Curve Poster by K. Dunn Buron and M. Curtis (2008) AAPC



# It Might Be a Self-Regulation Problem If ...

- You think that she is just being stubborn.
- You think for a nanosecond, “Just calm down already.”
- You feel like you need to watch your every word.
- You think, “Here we go again.”
- You have to stop yourself from wanting to raise your voice.
- You have to stop yourself from being in a bad mood around the person.



# SOME GUIDELINES

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From the work of Chris Filler and other OCALI employees

# “Give Me Space”

- Sensory sensitivities can cause stress and anxiety
- Use home base
- Attempt to stay back. Move slowly into the person’s space
- Ask for permission to touch; do not assume it is OK to even touch lightly
- Let the individual choose where to sit stand or pace

# “Turn Down the Noise and Lights”

- Try to eliminate multiple sounds in the environment
- Allow headphones or ear buds
- Change or reduce lighting

# “Listen or Look for the Message Behind the Behavior”

- Consider the hidden message – it could be fear, anxiety, pain, confusion, anger, hunger, and so forth
- Respond with a comforting joke, a choice with options or change what you are doing

# “Like Me”

- Individuals with ASD know if you like them
- They may respond accordingly

# “Say What You Mean: Communicate Your Message Clearly”

- Say what you mean and mean what you say
- Be concrete and to the point
- Use words that the individual knows, likes, or relates to

# “When in Doubt, Write it Out or Use Pictures”

- A picture is worth a 1000 words
- Use checklists, provide directions, post schedules, post rules in writing
- Use a “change card”
- Draw – even if you are not an artist



# “Let Me Know That Mistakes Are Okay”

- Individuals only see the end product
- They often don't understand that mistakes are a part of learning

# “Change Your Approach”

- Look inwardly. How can you change what you do?
- Perhaps
  - Whisper, slow your words, sing
  - Stop talking for a bit
  - Stop moving and keep your hands still
  - Demonstrate calmness

# “Give Me Choices”

- Having choices provides control
  - What they can do
  - The order in which to do something
  - When to take a break
  - What to wear
  - What to eat

# “Be Patient”

- Patience communicates respect and caring
- Make a statement or ask a question and wait
- Honor any attempt – an attempt is not a refusal It is success
- Refusal may mean the individual is not ready or does not have the skills
- Avoid rushing an gie time

# “Don’t Ask Me Why”

- Some individuals cannot communicate the why
- Provide information about the situation instead of asking for information (use writing or drawing)
- Ask questions that offer a choice instead of being open ended

# “Honor Special Interests”

- Individuals define themselves by their special interests
- Build lessons around special interests
- Use special interests to help through challenging moments



**THE POTENTIAL OF  
INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM IS  
LIMITLESS!**

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