



Shiatsu for autistic adults with complex needs

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Summary

1. Autism Diagnosis and the challenges of treating autistic people with complex needs.
2. Three cases-studies.
3. Conclusion and Q&A.
4. Guidelines for working with autistic patients with complex needs.
5. The benefits of Shiatsu to autistic patients with complex needs.



Autism Diagnosis

Difficulties with social
communication and social
interaction

AND

Restricted and repetitive
patterns of behaviour, activities
or interests

- Limit and impair everyday functioning.
- Early-Childhood
- Diagnosis is covering a wide spectrum of conditions.

Autistic adults with complex needs -

- Also referred to as “severe Autism” or “low functioning autism”.
- Assisted living and dependant on support-workers for daily tasks, nourishment and self-hygiene.
- High prevalence of self-harming behaviour.
- Verbal communication is disrupted or non-existent.
- Accompanying psychiatric and neurologic diagnosis.
- Anxiety
- Sensory dysregulation

Anxiety

- High prevalence in autistic people - forty percent of autistic adults who are “high-functioning”.
- Likely to be higher in autistic adults with complex needs.
- Restlessness
- Urgent need to feel in control.
- A contributing factor to health conditions.



Sensory dysregulation

- The nervous system is not regulating sensory input in an ideal way.
- Overload of stimulation, not enough stimulation, or a combination of the two.
- Can affect all senses, including proprioception and balance, and brain activities like grasping of space and directions, initiation of action.
- Behavioural impact - avoidance or over stimulation.
- Likely to contribute to anxiety.

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Three case-studies



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Case study 1 : B.P.

Male

Age: twenties

Diagnosis: Pathological Demand Avoidance, Scoliosis.

Body: very thin, high muscular tension, upper back surgery - stiff back

Case study 1 : B.P.

When I first started:

- Sends me out of the room.
- Taking a role that B.P can accept.
- Can not interact directly.
- Support-workers lead the situation.

Case study 1 : B.P.

The process:

- Relationship established.
- Breakthrough - orange shirt.
- Shiatsu routine established.
- Breakthrough - Non-verbal communication.
- Back to starting point

Case study 1 : B.P.

The process:

- Taking a new role which makes sense to B.P.
- Breakthrough - “Just one minute”.
- Waiting for a sign of interest/interaction.

Case study 1 : B.P.

Current state:

- Up to thirty minutes of uninterrupted Shiatsu in chair.
- When receiving Shiatsu, B.P becomes relaxed and happy. Often gives hugs.
- B.P can still refuse my presence or participation.

Case study 2 : J.P.

Male

Age: Thirties

Characteristics: Sleep-deprived, restlessness, screaming and self-harming, Echolalia.

Body: Overweight, chronic cyst on chest, knees arthritis, digestive dysfunction.

Case study 2 : J.P.

When I first started:

- Restlessness - sitting for maximum twenty seconds.
- Hard to know his preferences.
- Screams

Case study 2 : J.P.

The process:

- Cards - giving J.P control, communication of needs.
- Counting together.
- Refocusing
- Acute hearing

Case study 2 : J.P.

The process:

- Rest in bed - prompting to help with transition.
- “Toilet” - “you’ve been” - specific replies that makes sense to J.P.

Case study 2 : J.P.

Current state:

- Up to eighteen minutes of uninterrupted Shiatsu, followed with short rest in bed.
- J.P is more relaxed after sessions, sometimes long rest in bed.

Case study 3 : S.G.

Name: S.G

Female

Age: Fourties

Characteristics: Restlessness, non-verbal, “tidying up” (OCD?).

Body: high muscular tonus, overweight, tics (Tourette?)

Case study 3 : S.G.

When I first started:

- Functional touch only.
- Foot massage with body lotion.
- S.G is in control of situation - therapist is “a tool”.

Case study 3 : S.G.

The process:

- Hair locks
- Back to starting point.
- Learning from “accidents”.
- Various qualities of touch.

Case study 3 : S.G.

Current state:

- Receiving thirty minutes of Shiatsu in chair.
- Non-functional touch - no need to conceal intention.
- Relaxed, laughing, less “tics” during and after sessions.

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CONCLUSION



Shiatsu is relevant and achievable even to the most unlikely patients.

Attentiveness
Creativity
Patience
Persistence
Personnalisation



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Key guidelines for working with autistic clients with complex needs

Transitions

- Often stressful.
- Rigidity of mind.
- Lack of feeling of persistence.
- Impacts of anxiety and sensory dysregulation.
- Start and termination of sessions should be clear and communicated.
- Make transitions smooth and easy.

Sense of control

- Very common that patients will want to be in control of a situation.
- Therapist as a “tool”
- Routines
- Daily plans

Space and sensory stimuli

- Environment - temperature, background noises, lights, smells, other people, etc.
- The therapist - colours, jewelry, perfume, voice, etc.

Perception of time

- Difficulty to grasp time periods.
- Clocks
- Counting together
- Daily plans

Echolalia

- Repeating phrases, seems to be out of context.
- Hidden meaning.
- React to the message, enable the conversation.

Routine

- Autistic clients adhere to routines. Once a routine is established, they might be irritated if you make changes.
- The patients might come up with their own ideas on how the session should progress. Be open to follow their lead.



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How can Shiatsu benefit autistic patients with complex needs?



The therapy should be focused on the conditions accompanying Autism:

- Anxiety
- Self-harming behaviour
- Sleep deprivation
- Epilepsy
- Digestive dysfunction
- Muscles and skeleton conditions
- Psychiatric conditions

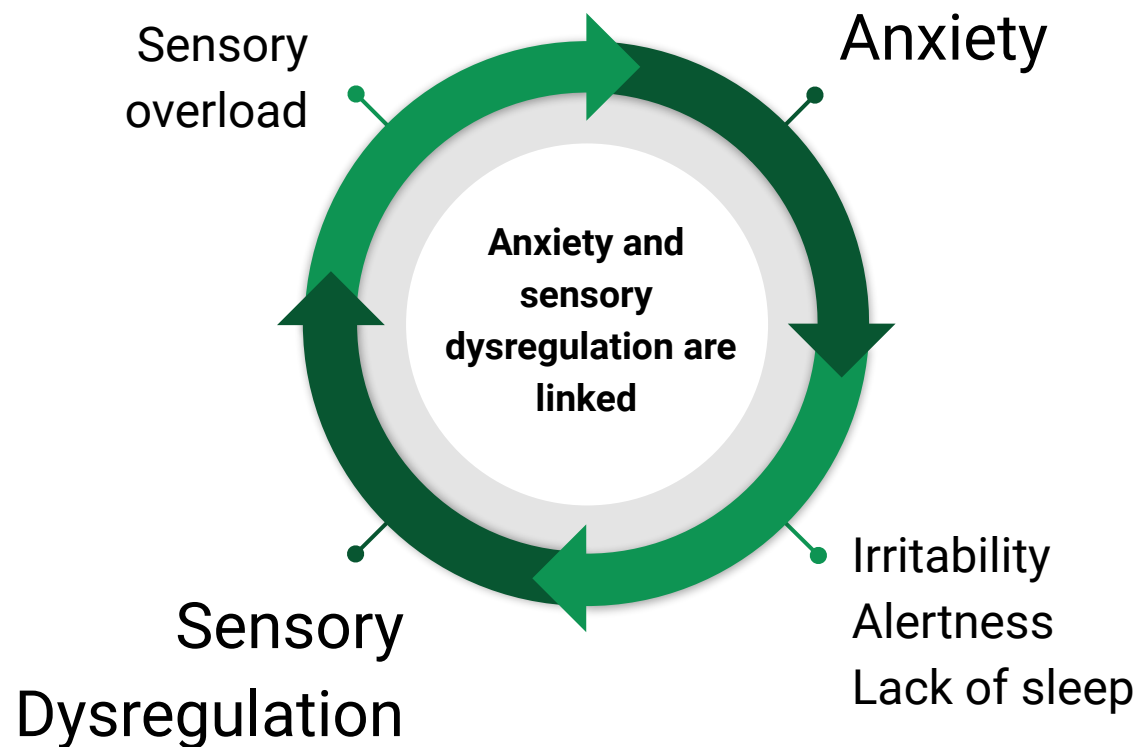


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Other benefits

- Shiatsu provides a chance for non-functional human touch, that some patients never receive.
- Shiatsu = communication.

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Thank you

Please get in touch for more information-
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I am very happy to help promote Shiatsu for autistic clients in London, Paris and elsewhere in Europe.

I hope you will take this on and I will gladly provide more guidance.