RAMBLE:

AI that helps autistic children develop social skills is already under development, but I am concerned that it is being developed by neurotypical people which could lead to this kind of social helper AI teaching autistic children to mask (which is bad). I am especially suspicious of when articles talk about these AI helping treat children with autism. I am not a fan of the term treatment in this scenario simply because it’s not a disease or something that can be helped with medication and really it’s a super complex thing. Autism is on a scale and I am on the high functioning end, but there is a lot of problems with how autism can be treated in the way people act towards autism and people with autism, not cure. The point is, the AI in the articles I’ve read thus far have just been teaching the children how to socialize for the most part. Which is good, but that also is just teaching a kid how to socialize, and has a really high chance (in my opinion) in teaching said child masking.

Masking is just when you try to hide the traits you have that are associated with your mental disorder and it is not great.

So what I want to do is develop a theory on an AI that would not just teach the child to act normal, but how to deal with their autism and work with it.

AI would have to help the child develop social skills, including how to deal with some things that can come with being autistic in social situations like sensory overload.

It could have varying levels of teaching things. Like the eye contact thing. Kids can learn how to look like they are making eye contact when they aren’t, which is an essential skill and is like a step below actual eye contact. It is so hard to actually make eye contact, and when you have autism there are going to be bad days.

The AI can formulate reports based on the interactions, which will not only suggest things for the child but for the adults in the child’s life. It could identify what the kid is really uncomfortable with and recommend the adults not do the thing.

Back to the sensory overload, it could help autistic children identify when it is happening and how to deal with it. Teach them coping strategies for the bad days.

I really would like the AI that is teaching the kids to be able to help make them confident in their autism and be okay with being a bit different. Because the world will straight up say otherwise A LOT. Other children can especially be nightmares. It’d be good to set a strong foundation of confidence.

But the real question is: how do I implement this?

Well I should go over what is already out there with it, and see what I can theoretically tweek.

Ideally this will be a robot or some sort of program with voice and text options. The AI can speak and text will appear and the kid can respond via buttons or maybe text or verbally. Verbally is preferred but that might take time for some.

One part could be the balance of sharing your special interest and talking about other things, aka if your friends have other interests talking to them about that.

Hmmm maybe if the AI had a similar knowledge base as Akinator I could have it be conscious of the child’s special interest. No idea how to use that, but perhaps it’d be useful. I could do something similar to NoRedInk where it could use character names.

Oh oh I could have the child tell the AI about their special interest, the AI could record that information….oh no I think this AI will have to understand English to do this.

Okay sensory overload, that’s a common one and can lead to lashing out or panicking. Hmmmm.

So maybe the AI could ask the child about their experiences and there is this sort of tree set up where the AI learns about the child’s current sensory processing abilities and from that will come up with the techniques to teach the child to deal with it.

So that’s for each of the senses.

If I wanted to narrow down the scope I could just do an AI that comes up with sensory overload techniques to help people who deal with that.

Sight

Smell

Sound

Touch

Taste

And it can use this info as well to generate the report for the adults. You can’t teach a kid to hate the feel of cotton or get overwhelmed by certain smells, but you can work with that by not buying things for your kid made of cotton. OH IT CAN ALSO REC ALTERNATIVES. Yes it can recommend things that might be helpful.

So the AI would need a large database for this, knowing what can be replaced with what and there are a lot of items in the world.

Also a record of the child. Foods they like, foods they hate, textures they like, textures they hate. That way the recommendations can also become personalized!

Plus people with autism can have this weird selective eating times where it is so hard to eat pretty much anything. And the best way to deal with that is to go with it mostly, ride it out until it is done unless it is dangerous to do so. Try to get them to eat other foods they really like, but don’t force them to.

So it can have a pretty simple report output that will be a mixture of the big database and the child record.

I just realized the food information section is going to have to include smell, taste, texture, color, basically a full set of classifications per item.

And how to decide what foods to include? Like obviously there is going to be a lot of basics, but should weird stuff be included?

Okay, yeah I am now really considering narrowing the scope to an AI that helps with sensory processing because this is already a hefty boi but we shall see.

At least I have some idea on how to implement parts.

There would be food, clothes, sounds, textures….