User Analysis

# Challenges autism presents to the users

Autistic people struggle to understand expressions of speech; for example, “curiosity killed the cat”. Sayings such as this can cause confusion in autistic children. This also applies to jokes and sarcasm, with a very literal meaning taken to things that other people may understand as ironic or sarcastic. To an extent paralinguistic features like intonation can prove difficult for an autistic person to understand. Processing language is a major setback for autistic people, with autistic children often having problems in speech development in earlier life. For this reason, things such as voice recognition may not always be suitable.

Similarly, autistic people struggle to visualise pretend things. For this reason, activities requiring an extensive use of imagination to add depth, fun or understanding can be potentially off-limits for a sufferer of autism. Focus too can be a problem, and losing focus after a short period of time can make social interaction difficult. Activities often need to be fun, engaging and something that the sufferer can understand.

Understanding emotion and tone of voice is a big problem to sufferers of autism. Social cues like gestures, facial expression, intonation and other related indicators are often lost, with an autistic person often comprehending or understanding the reality differently. This is a two-way problem, with the facial expressions and gestures of an autistic person frequently misinterpreted by a non-sufferer.

# Challenges autism presents during play

People with autism prefer to play alone. For example, individual games such as golf are much more appealing than team sports such as football. Skills such as communication and teamwork, which are essential for many popular games and activities, can be compromised. Fitting into a team, or even predicting what another team member is going to do, may be a big challenge. Problems can occur during play between autistic and non-autistic people, as autism can cause problems in communication.

During play, autistic people can struggle to visualise imaginary or pretend things. This can make games that require an element of imagination particularly problematic. The flow of the game can suffer due to lapses in focus and concentration, or the inability to comprehend the imagination-intensive parts of the game. A lack of empathy for other people can affect decisions during play, having an impact on play sessions with non-autistic colleagues. A poor awareness of things such as danger can leave games which require strategy or thought to be unenjoyable for autistic children.

Sensory challenges are a symptom of many autistic spectrum disorders; activities which are played in environments that are very hot or cold for example can cause the child to become very unhappy. Similarly, if something is too bright or loud, the child is likely to become distressed. This can rule out activities in which a lot of loud communication is required, or the environment is too bright. Many autistic children also feel uncomfortable being observed; group/team activities in which many eyes are on them will likely cause distress to the child.