

Artistic Birth

from the inside out

EMMA DURMAN MSC

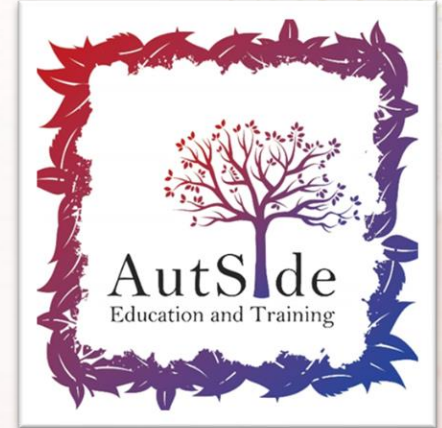


Hi! I'm Emma

Please allow me to introduce myself...

A little bit of context

- I'm a late diagnosed autistic woman who is mum to an autistic young adult – we also both have ADHD and I have several cooccurring conditions
- I graduated with a MSc in Autism and Related Conditions from Swansea University medical school
- I'm co-director of a company called Outside – we provide training, consultancy and support to families and a wide range of professionals and organisations around Autism, neurodivergence and related conditions
- My Masters dissertation focussed on the experience of birth as an Autistic person, and I've spoken about this at conferences - PARC London Southbank University, and Let's Talk Birth Bath University, Let's Talk Birth 2020, as well as writing an article for BirthRights, a charity that focuses on human rights in childbirth

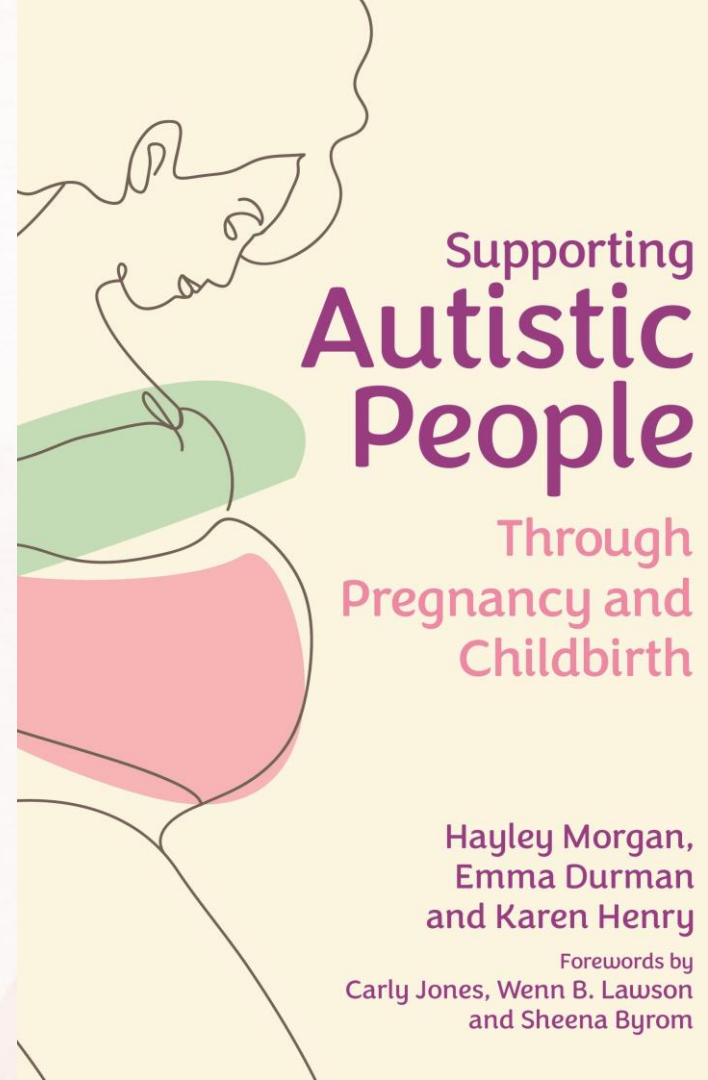


I'm also co-author of this book:

Published by Jessica Kingsley in January this year

Covers a range of topics focused on the neurodivergent experience of pregnancy, birth and parenthood including:-

- C1 – Background and History
- C2 – Intersectionality and Feminism
- C3 – Coexisting conditions
- C4 – Pain and sensory differences
- C5 – Autistic Communication
- C6 - Advice for professionals
- C7 – Practical Strategies and Information
- C8 – Summary and Closing Wishes



"I have learned so much from this exceptional text. Even as an experienced midwife of many decades each chapter made me sit up and re-read sentences"

- Sheena Byrom OBE

"I learned a lot from my readings including invaluable practical tips and further resources to maintain and expand my learning"

- Dr Sam Chenery-Morris, Dean of School of Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health, University of Suffolk

"A ground-breaking resource that not only fills a significant gap in literature but also serves as a practical framework for healthcare workers supporting autistic populations"

- NetGalley Review

"...this is the book the NHS, wider international healthcare and autistic people themselves have been waiting for with baited breath for years, indeed, decades"

- Carly Jones MBE

Chapter Overviews

Chapter 1: Background and History

This chapter will include the history of modern birth practices and how we developed to current standards, the history of autism as a diagnosis and an overview of key theories, and a 'snapshot' of present-day working knowledge.

Chapter 2: Intersectionality and Feminism

This chapter will include research and statistics on the various intersections including other co-occurring conditions and disabilities, LGBTQIA+, and other issues more common in the autistic community (e.g. domestic abuse, bullying, sexual harassment). We will also include information from ethnic minorities, including the impact of cultural differences, under-diagnosis, stigma and stereotypes, as well as the findings of reports such as the MBRRACE report. Feminism will form a foundation here, with a retrospective investigation into the roots of gender disparity in healthcare.

Chapter 3: Coexisting Conditions

This chapter will include information on commonly occurring coexisting conditions such as mental health, autoimmune, sleep and eating disorders/ disordered eating and more, and their impact on pregnancy, birth and new parenthood will be discussed.

Chapter 4: Pain and Sensory Differences

The interaction between sensory systems and pain in the autistic brain will be comprehensively discussed, as well as co-occurring conditions that may make this a significant disadvantage for the autistic birth experience. This may include alexithymia, chronic pain, Ehlers–Danlos syndrome and epilepsy. Recommendations will include newly devised pain scale approaches and descriptions of behaviours that may signal interoceptive pain or sensory overwhelm.

Chapter 5: Autistic Communication

Hayley's background is linguistics and she's very interested in the practical application of Milton's 'double empathy problem' in this real-world setting. Practically speaking, this will take the form of a research-based foundation about autistic communication. This will then be built upon through the lens of double empathy, including approaches and tips to help bridge this gap between communication styles.

Chapter 6: Advice for Professionals

In this chapter, we will bring together all the topics discussed in earlier chapters and consider the impact this can have on professional practice, including standards of care such as the Nursery and Midwifery Council (NMC) code. Hayley will also present findings from her original research and Emma will present her proposed training plan for healthcare professionals.

Chapter 7: Practical Strategies and Information

In this chapter, we discuss specific impacts on pregnancy, birth and parenthood for autistic people and their loved ones, and share practical advice, information and suggested strategies to improve the autistic birth experience for everyone involved.

Chapter 8: Summary and Closing Wishes

Sheena Byrom OBE Univ., Ed D honoris causa, RM, MA

In their busy and often challenging day-to-day lives, midwives and other professionals working in maternity care are tasked with providing personalised maternity care, which means approaching and caring for each childbearing woman and person as an individual. This can only happen when staff have a broad and in-depth understanding of different social and cultural backgrounds and of diversity in its entirety, all of which inform the needs and preferences of the people they serve. Pregnancy and childbirth is a time of life-change and affects us all; we are all born. Those with extra needs often face a double vulnerability when inequalities exist due to lack of awareness or judgment. How women, birthing people and families are treated during their childbearing journey influences outcomes both physical and psychological. What we do, and how we do it, what we say, and how we say it, matters. And this is critical for those we work with too.

We live in a world that continually unfolds with diverse human experiences, where we can learn about, embrace and celebrate neurodiversity. This book on supporting autistic people through pregnancy and childbirth offers enlightenment by inviting readers on a journey of understanding, compassion, and appreciation to enhance health and wellbeing for birthing parents and their baby.

As health-care professionals it is imperative that we are continually self-reflective, aware of our inbuilt and learned biases and that we continuously expand our knowledge to enhance our understanding and appreciation. I have learned so much from this exceptional text. Even as an experienced midwife of many decades each chapter made me sit up and re-read sentences – especially around the reality of the stigma autistic people face and the disrespectful attitudes due to lack of awareness.

I have a specific interest in the promotion of compassionate maternity care and compassionate leadership, so the content has provided me with another layer of knowledge to inform my work. Promoting safety in maternity services is crucial but often limited to risk management strategies and excessive monitoring of clinical situations and processes. However evidence tells us that safe services are those where managers and leaders foster supportive, inclusive work environments and psychosocial safety is a priority. This is especially important when considering the needs of autistic people in their working and birthing environments, extra considerations for self-care (staff), how we communicate, and the impact of empathy. The book is a heartfelt and illuminating exploration of a subject that has long been shrouded in mystery and misunderstanding. From beginning to end the content is rich with information derived from a combination of lived experience, evidence-based and practice-based knowledge which the authors hope will open minds and hearts to the specific needs of autistic people - of both those working in and using maternity services.

Through these pages, you will gain insight into the everyday struggles and triumphs of autistic people who are on the journey of creating a family. This book is not just an opportunity to learn; it is an invitation to empathise, to embrace differences, and to champion inclusivity. It is a call to action for a world that is more compassionate, more understanding, and more accessible for all.

I am honoured to introduce you to this book, and I am confident that it will not only inform but also inspire you to join the journey towards a world where autism is not something to be feared or fixed but celebrated and supported.

So, open these pages and read on, within them lies a bank of evidence-based knowledge as well as a tapestry of stories, and hope that has the power to transform lives and perceptions.

Dr Carly Jones MBE h(DS)c]

When Jessica Kingsley Publishers emailed me to ask if I'd add a foreword to *Supporting Autistic People Through Pregnancy and Childbirth* it felt like a pinch-me moment.

This was not only because the authors, such esteemed professionals, would consider me worthy of that privilege, but also because this is the book the NHS, wider international healthcare and autistic people themselves have been waiting for with baited breath for years, indeed, decades.

As co-production lead for the NHS in the Learning Disabilities and Autism programme in London I immediately invited one of the authors (who I feel should now at all times be referred to as the Charlie's Angels of autistic people and pregnancy) to speak to our NHS autism community of practice on this subject matter – subject which despite being mostly over-looked historically is now thankfully being given the systematic awareness it so richly deserves and requires.

Their talk had an impact beyond our imagination. With national films about autistic pregnancy now well under way, it feels like we are carefully yet confidently tiptoeing into a new era of support, understanding and non-infantilised equality for autistic people at a most pivotal time, that of becoming a parent.

Some weeks later I received hot off the press the final draft, which you as a reader have the honour of holding in your hands right now.

Carving out a full day in one of the admittedly rare sunshine-filled days here in the UK, I took to my garden and inhaled their collective words like a continuous breath of fresh air and deep exhalation of 'at last', nodding with agreement at every page I read.

Issues that are all too often overlooked that affect autistic pregnant people are explained, such as pain and interoception (hurrah at blinking last!), and the myth of autism and high intelligence meaning we have no care needs burst wide open with my favourite quote of the book, 'How can you be so intelligent but have no common sense?', which I'll add is a quote I heard often pre-diagnosis...and admittedly a few times after! **What a contrast to the past, not so distant at all.**

In 2014 I was fortunate enough to be an advisor for a Cambridge University study on autistic motherhood. The conclusion then was that autistic pregnant people were often so misunderstood by professionals that one in five were subject to social services interventions. In 2016 when acting as a research participant for an American university study on autistic people in childbirth I discovered that, anecdotally, our access to equitable pain relief and understanding of our emotional state post birth were also indirectly compromised.

Supporting Autistic People Through Pregnancy and Childbirth offers a candid, well thought out, factual and objective read that's written in such a manner that you can binge-read it in one sitting (as I did) or use as an on-hand reference guide with easy-to-locate sections as a go-to resource in practice.

Supporting Autistic People Through Pregnancy and Childbirth is more than another autism book; it's an invaluable record of the many vast experiences pregnant autistic people have faced and have tried to explain, to those who ask, for decades.

When asked 'What hurdles do autistic people have in pregnancy?', before now I'd sigh, 'Oh my gosh, how long do you have and where do I start?' Now, I'll simply smile, and hand them a copy of this powerful book.

You'll leave this book feeling educated, with many 'aha!' moments and with a new-found hope that the next generation of autistic pregnant people will be less misunderstood and more hopeful.

Thank you, Hayley, Emma and Karen for all you do and for assisting the many people this will continue to help.

Dr Carly Jones MBE h(DS)c]

Wenn Lawson



Reviews

Authoring this book for several audiences: women, professionals, students, and family members is a massive undertaking but one that comes together well. As an academic I especially enjoyed the more theoretical and scientific chapters, but other readers will no doubt prefer different chapters. The uniqueness of women with autism is central to this book, readers too will be different. Whatever your unique motivations are, you will not be disappointed there really is something in this for the academic, the family or friend of a person with autism - and especially those encountering pregnancy, birth, and parenthood. I learned a lot from my readings including invaluable practical tips and further resources to maintain and expand my learning. –
Dr Sam Chenery-Morris, Dean of School of Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health, University of Suffolk

A ground-breaking resource that not only fills a significant gap in literature but also serves as a practical framework for healthcare workers supporting autistic populations. As a therapist specializing in bibliotherapy, particularly with neurodivergent clients, I am immensely impressed with the authors' dedication to promoting equality of access to healthcare for autistic parents.

One of the strengths of this resource is its accessibility. The authors do an excellent job of introducing readers to the diverse characteristics, needs, and struggles of individuals on the autism spectrum. Even for those without prior knowledge, the book provides a thorough understanding through case examples, making it an invaluable tool for healthcare workers, therapists, and anyone involved in supporting autistic individuals on their parenting journey.

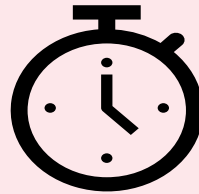
The authors skillfully navigate the spectrum of sensitivities, acknowledging both hypersensitivity and hyposensitivity in different areas, fostering a deep understanding among readers.

-- NetGalley review

Agenda

Here are some of the topics I will cover in today's talk:

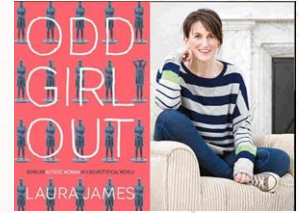
- **Something missing?**
- **Family Planning, Sexual Health, Relationships**
- **Healthcare**
- **Pregnancy**
- **Birth**
- **Trauma**
- **Mental Health**
- **Adjusting to parenting**
- **Different strengths, needs and challenges?**
- **Mixed neurotype parenting**
- **The right support**



**THERE'S A LOT TO SAY ON THIS TOPIC:
I'LL BE TOUCHING KEY POINTS DUE TO TIME
PLEASE VIEW THIS AS THE START OF A MUCH WIDER
CONVERSATION!**

Something's Missing.....

- For a long time there has been little to no research, guidance and support for Autistic people who are, or are becoming parents
- We often infantilise those with disabilities, which has an effect on sexual education and planning, relationship advice, and identifying the needs around pregnancy and parenting
- Lots of Autistic people have gone undiagnosed or misdiagnosed, with many only coming forward for assessment after having their own Autistic children
- This has meant a 'hidden' cohort of Autistic people who are becoming or have become parents without specialised support
- Autistic co parents are without support too, and non-autistic partners may not have support in their role either





**Trigger Warning:
ableism, eugenics**

What does research say?

- Most of the research focuses on causes of Autism during pregnancy rather than supporting Autistic childbearers
- The causes suggested vary wildly
- Cambridge University are now doing some research
- Some research even suggests maternal sexual trauma causation – critically correlation doesn't equal causation
- Autistica are carrying out a project on this topic, and it was on the NAS agenda for their women conference last year
- On the whole research has overlooked this topic – and there are a lot of difficult to read articles if you search Autism and pregnancy – the emotional labour for Autistic women wading through it is huge

Third, autistic women provide the uterine environment for their baby, and this may contain a number of important uterine environmental factors that interact with an increased genetic likelihood of developing autism. These include the metabolic pathways associated with gestational diabetes, including insulin and testosterone exposure to the fetus.

The results of this research will help inform ways to support babies and young children who have an increased likelihood of developing autism - in terms of both their strengths and challenges - from the earliest possible age.

We are not doing this research with the aim of prenatal screening or with a view to terminatic since this does not align with our ethical value respecting autistic people. The overall aim of t which babies will develop autism from their ea the future, we hope that this information will h support for babies and young children from an



Preventing Autism in Pregnancy: Is it Possible? | Parents
<https://www.parents.com/.../pregnancy-and-autism-what-you-need-to-know>

Causes Prevention Epidemiology Research Diet Me >
Experts are still trying to piece together what factors contribute to the development of autism. Recent research suggests that changes that occur during conception, pregnancy, and possibly even delivery may increase the risk of autism in children who are genetically predisposed to the disorder. One study in the New England Journal of Medicine found differences in the brains of children with autism as early as the second trimester of pregnancy. While researchers haven't been able to pinpoint a definite cause, A. See more on parents.com

Women who wear jeans give birth to transgenders and autistic children, says Kerala professor

Meet Rajith Kumar, the Kerala teacher who thinks women who wear jeans give birth to 'hijra' and autistic children.

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Diagnosing Autism during Pregnancy - indiaparenting.com
https://www.indiaparenting.com/.../469_4393/diagnosing-autism-during-pregnancy.html
Are prenatal tests for autism a boon or a bane? Prenatal tests to detect autism help in deciding autism before the child is born. This raises many ethical issues. Avoiding the prenatal factors that may lead to autism is the best option. Which factors during pregnancy term, contribute to autism? Read on.

Paracetamol in pregnancy 'link to autism and ADHD' not ...
<https://www.nhs.uk/news/pregnancy-and-child/paracetamol-in-pregnancy-link-to-autism>
Where Did The Story Come Fr... What Kind of Research Was L... What Did >

The study was carried out by researchers from various institutions in Spain, including Hospital del Mar Medical Research Institute and Universitat Pompeu Fabra. It received funding from multiple sources, including the Instituto de Salud Carlos III and the Spanish Ministry of Health. The authors declared that they had no conflicts of interest. The study was published in the peer-reviewed International Journal of Epidemiology. It is available on an open access basis and is free to read online. Th.

See more on nhs.uk
Published: 04/07/2016

Mom's Health While Pregnant Linked to Autism Risk
<https://www.webmd.com/.../moms-health-while-pregnant-linked-autism-risk>
09/04/2012 - April 9, 2012 - Women who are obese and/or have diabetes or high blood pressure during pregnancy may be about 60% more likely to have babies with autism. >

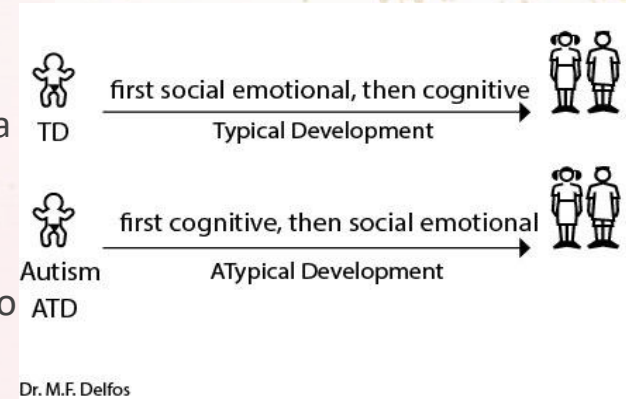
Autism: Causes, Risks and Treatment - americanpregnancy.org
<https://americanpregnancy.org/birth-defects/autism>
Autism: Causes, Risks, and Treatment. Autism is a developmental disability that usually appears during the first three years of life. It is a neurological disorder that impacts the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction and communication skills.

Does drinking during pregnancy have a link to autism ...
blog.ukdataservice.ac.uk/ukdataservice/pregnancy-autism
October 11, 2018 - Neil Dymond-Green - Leave a comment, Rossan Ryan explores data from the Millennium Cohort Study to understand if there is evidence of a link between drinking during pregnancy and autism in their child.

What causes autism? - webmd.com
<https://www.webmd.com/brain/autism/qa/what-causes-autism>
14/02/2019 - Because autism runs in families, most researchers think that certain combinations of genes may predispose a child to autism. However, there are risk factors that increase the chance of ...

Family Planning, Sexual Health, Relationships

- We often infantilise those with disabilities, particularly cognitive/developmental conditions
- This can mean we fail to recognise that maturity can be mismatched – a multiple spectrum of ages (S1MASP)
- Autistic women were often diagnosed more readily where their Autism was considered ‘severe’ i.e. high support needs, being non-verbal and/o an accompanying intellectual disability
- This meant we overlooked the need for specialist knowledge, relationship advice and sexual health and family planning
- Often parents take on the biggest role in supporting and educating Autistic children/teens, adult offspring, which can mean they find it difficult to broach these topics openly, honestly and in the kind of sufficient depth and explicit detail Autistic people may need to develop robust understanding





**Trigger Warning:
health disparities,
mortality**

Healthcare

- Autistic people are known to be at a disparity in healthcare
- We die younger on average than non-autistic people
- We are likely to have co-occurring conditions
- Many Autistic people report that healthcare is difficult to access
- Intersectionality can compound these barriers, i.e. being part of the LGBTQIA+ or BAME communities, as well as the gender disparity in healthcare for women



Co-existing Conditions

- Eating Disorders
- Sleep difficulties
- Chronic pain
- Autoimmune
- Hypermobility
- Mental Health
- Epilepsy
- Other NDD conditions
- LD/ID
- Diabetes
- High Blood Pressure
- Dysautonomia

“Comorbidity is to be expected in autism spectrum disorders – directly or indirectly. Comorbid conditions may be markers for underlying pathophysiology and request a more varied treatment approach.”
(Isaksen et al 2012)

Pregnancy

- Pregnancy can be a tumultuous time for any woman
- The huge amount of change can be difficult
- Sensory changes can have a more pronounced impact – Autistic people often have differences in interoception
- Some Autistic women report 'tokophobia' – fear of being pregnant, even when they want biological children
- The amount of clinical intervention needed is stressful – both socially, and the sensory difficulties of the clinical environment
- Continuity of care is hard to find – and information is not always presented in the most accessible way for Autistic women




Birth

Birth can be a difficult process for many women.

The anxiety regarding birth, the clinical environment, the looming responsibility, the uncertainty and huge transitions can mean this is hugely difficult for Autistic women.

We may need enhanced information, ask lots of questions, and need more time to process - all of which is difficult to achieve when maternity/healthcare services are under pressure.






Trigger Warning:
pain

Pain

- Autistic people often experience/process pain differently
- In addition to this, we often 'perform pain' differently – blunt/flat affect
- Traditional pain scales can mean we get our pain management needs overlooked or dismissed
- There is little evidence, but it seems we may react differently to medications/analgesia in some cases

Wong-Baker FACES™ Pain Rating Scale





**Trigger Warning:
violation, trauma**

A Healthy Baby is all that matters?



Trauma

- Birth Trauma, and indeed PTSD after childbirth is not uncommon
- It is the perception of danger that is important in developing trauma
- Autistic women are likely to meet some of the identified risk factors for PTSD following childbirth – i.e. history of sexual trauma, lack of perceived social support, higher anxiety sensitivity, a more negative childbirth experience than expected
- PTSD can mean an increased chance of PND, and this impacts the entire family unit



BIRTH TRAUMA
POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Fertility and infant loss

We need to be aware that autistic people may respond, process, express feelings of grief and loss differently

We may need help to process what has happened in a more tangible way

We may experience delayed grief or work through the stages differently – and though we might not appear upset in the expected way or say the expected things, but that does not mean we are not hurt or grieving

Autistic women report their sensory sensitivity means they recognise signs of pregnancy earlier and more intensely:

“Many autistic mothers have shared that they became very aware of their internal body state and knew things about their pregnancy before the textbooks said they should”

“Autistic processing can be very different to the average person's, and some may not process what has happened immediately or even within the weeks and months that follow the loss”

Tommys


#MeToo in Birth

- Globally, there is focus on women's reproductive rights, and in some cases they feel increasingly under threat
- Women are conditioned to believe that birth trauma is just another part of the 'raw deal of motherhood', and that a healthy baby is all that matters
- The way we talk about consent, choices, autonomy in maternity care needs to evolve systemically, and societally
- Many women suffer birth trauma, or feel their choices and dignity were not respected during birth/maternity
- For women who are additionally vulnerable – such as Autistic women, this can be amplified

**“Birth is a
feminist issue.**

**And it's the
feminist issue
nobody's
talking about”**

**Milli Hill
Give Birth Like a Feminist**



**Trigger Warning:
abuse, rape**

Prior Sexual Abuse

- Research shows that Autistic women are extremely vulnerable to sexual abuse
- High rates of sexual abuse are also associated with the common coexisting condition ADHD
- During childbirth examinations can prove retraumatizing for women who have experienced prior abuse
- They may feel they lack agency
- Subconscious effects of going through the painful process of childbirth involving the same body parts affected by abuse could be profound and cause a resurgence of shame, fear, guilt

There are reports of an **increased incidence of sexual abuse** in Autistic women, with **78% in one study** stating they had been raped, coerced into sex or otherwise sexually abused*

A Case for Specialist Midwives?

- There is precedent for Specialist Midwives for a range of issues, including substance abuse, BAME, domestic violence, mental health
- Given the specific challenges/issues Autistic women may face during birth, throughout maternity care, and the benefit specialist knowledge of the condition could bring, specialist midwives seem like a good idea
- Funding, training, staff rotas and retention all make this difficult in practice
- What is clear is that we need robust training for all healthcare professionals, and development of specialist resources and guidance both for professionals and Autistic women and their loved ones/carers



Environmental Adaptations



- Fluorescent lighting, beeping, chatter, shiny reflective surfaces, strange smells, crowds.....
- All of this can quickly lead to overload in an Autistic person who is sensory sensitive
- Think about what small adaptations you might be able to make – dimming the lights etc

Work Together: Empower the person & their loved ones/carers

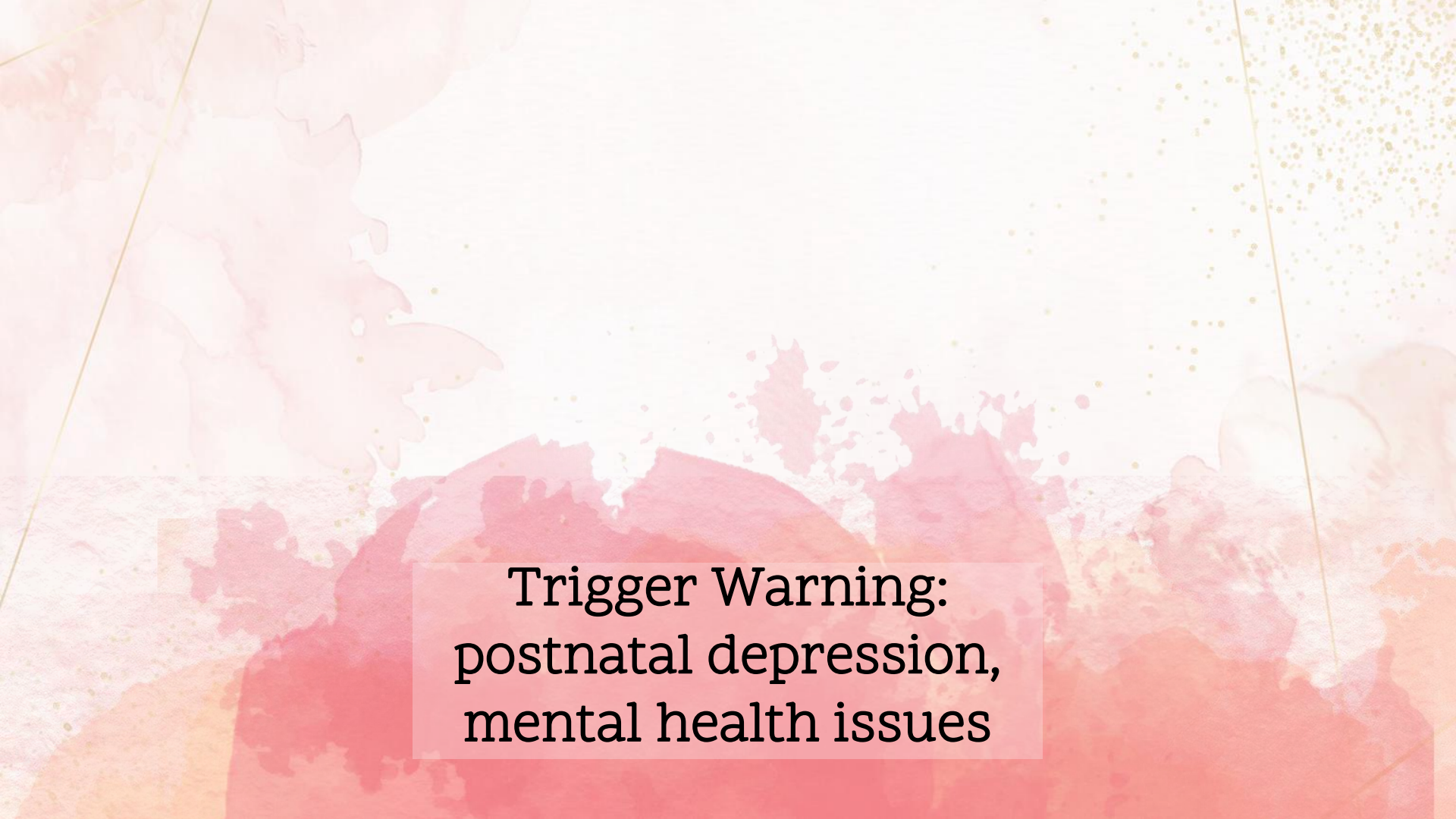
- Giving a person autonomy and dignity is paramount
- Often carers have been advocating for the person for a long time
- They will often know them best and can help with techniques that may work or be inappropriate
- Partners often feel helpless, ignored and overlooked during the birth process – and this can lead to trauma
- For strategies to work you need everyone 'on board'
- Consistency across environments can be key to success!



Adjusting to new parenthood

- Routine
- Sleep disruption
- Lack of 'downtime'
- Sensory overload
- Uncertainty, confusion, emotional regulation
- Executive Functioning
- Impact on relationships
- Social support
- Stigma, judgement, intervention
- Overwhelming visitors, house calls
- Recovering from birth





Trigger Warning:
postnatal depression,
mental health issues

“I just desperately wanted to go home,
rest, recover....

But my home didn't exist anymore, my
whole universe had imploded,
irrevocably changed – and I couldn't
catch my breath...”

Post Natal Depression

Birth Trauma and prior existing mental health conditions are indicators for developing PND

The support Autistic women require in the post-natal period may differ, and traditional interventions for PND may need to be tailored/adjusted

We need to be mindful of how we assess for PND too – for example midwifery notes on ‘lots of visitors today 😊’ as indicators for mental wellbeing may not be a good measurement



Parenting

“I **think** a lot more about parenting than a lot of the other people I know,”
Kirsten Hurley

- We provide support for neurotypical parents of Autistic children, but there is no support for Autistic parents of neurotypical children who are also facing the challenges of mixed neurotype parenting
- Autistic parents will face specific challenges and bring specific strengths in raising children, but often we 'do things differently'
- We may be judged for our parenting methods as they might fall outside of 'the norm', and we may bond and show affection differently



Undiagnosed Parents

- Undiagnosed parents may come to realise they are Autistic when they have Autistic children
- They may need support in dealing with the rollercoaster of emotions such a revelation may bring – often whilst dealing with the turbulence of the child's diagnostic/support journey
- They may wish to pursue assessment and diagnosis, or be happy with their own knowledge and research about the neurotype



The Right Support

- When to intervene and how
- Striking the balance between invasive and essential support
- Ensuring parents feel safe to disclose their diagnosis/identity
- Tailored training, interventions and support groups
- Safe spaces are vital
- Information is scarce and there's a lot of difficult, outdated, even harmful information to wade through



Key Takeaways

- Autistic people need specialist relationship advice, guidance around consent, sexual health and family planning
- We need specialist knowledge and resources in maternity care
- Trauma is a real concern during the birth process for Autistic women and their loved ones
- Adjusting to parenting can take a different route, and we need to alter how we assess someone's capability and be balanced and targeted in the support we provide
- Autistic parents will often benefit from access to specialist advice, support groups and training – ensuring these are 'safe spaces'
- We need participatory research, and true co-production in service development and delivery to ensure it meets needs



**“Co-
production is
NOT optional”**

Sarah Cassidy
Autistica Discover Conference 2019

Many Autistic people are fantastic parents, some with support, some independently.

It's important we remember everyone has the right to a family life, and to make sure we look holistically both at the person, and the family unit.

Specialised support and resources from family planning, the perinatal and postnatal period, and throughout parenting could be hugely beneficial for Autistic people.

Better experiences, understanding, empathy and knowledge means better outcomes – for everyone!



Thank You!

Please do follow Outside on:

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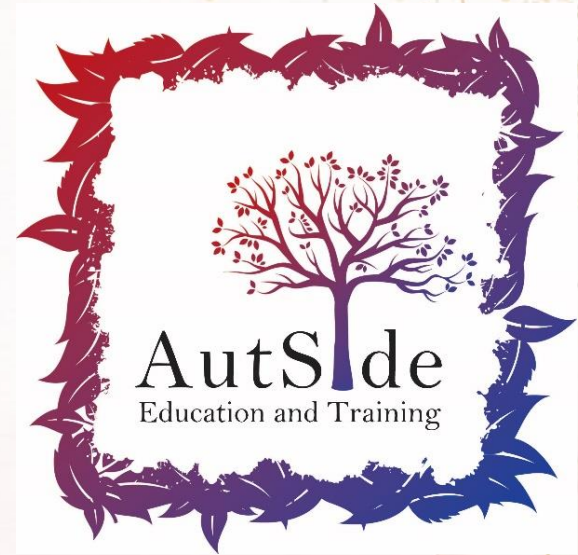
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