Counselling Clients with Autism

Wendy Arscott, RSSW, BEd, MEd
A New Leaf Counselling Services
www.anewleafcounselling.com

Atmosphere

- What do we know about sensory issues?
- How will this impact our counselling session?
- What could you do in advance?

Presentation

- Blunt
- Isolation
- Lack social skills
- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Hesitancy to seek help
What could possibly go wrong?

- Characteristics of autism impacting communication and social skills
- Memory & issues
- Social differences & perceptions
- Has there been a formal diagnosis?

What could possibly go wrong?

- Emotional regulation
- Social understanding
- Transitions
- Non-verbal cues
- Empathy

What could possibly go wrong?

- Other aspects (OCD, ADHD, etc.)
- Anxiety, anxiety, anxiety
- Stress on caregivers
- Processing
Language

- Keep it simple
- Be aware of idioms, slang, colloquialisms
- Ask for understanding
- Literal interpretation

Support Persons

- When can you get others involved?
- Confidentiality

Plan of Action

- I always give the client a hard copy of the plan
- Follow-up, follow-up
Follow-up

- Clients may ‘forget’ appointments
- May not do the work they agreed to
- Think about how anxiety fits into the picture

Strategies

- CBT
- Interactive Behaviour Therapy
- Oxytocin studies

Remember...

- Ability to generalize impaired
- Sticky thinking
- Unique presentation of each client
- Lack of central coherence, seeing the whole picture ***
References

- Aston, M., Asperger syndrome in the counselling room