



What psychological interventions / reasonable adjustments are most effective for autistic people with co-occurring mental health difficulties?

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Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition. It affects communication, interaction, behaviour and sensory experiences. ASD is a spectrum meaning each person experiences autism differently, with individual strengths and challenges.

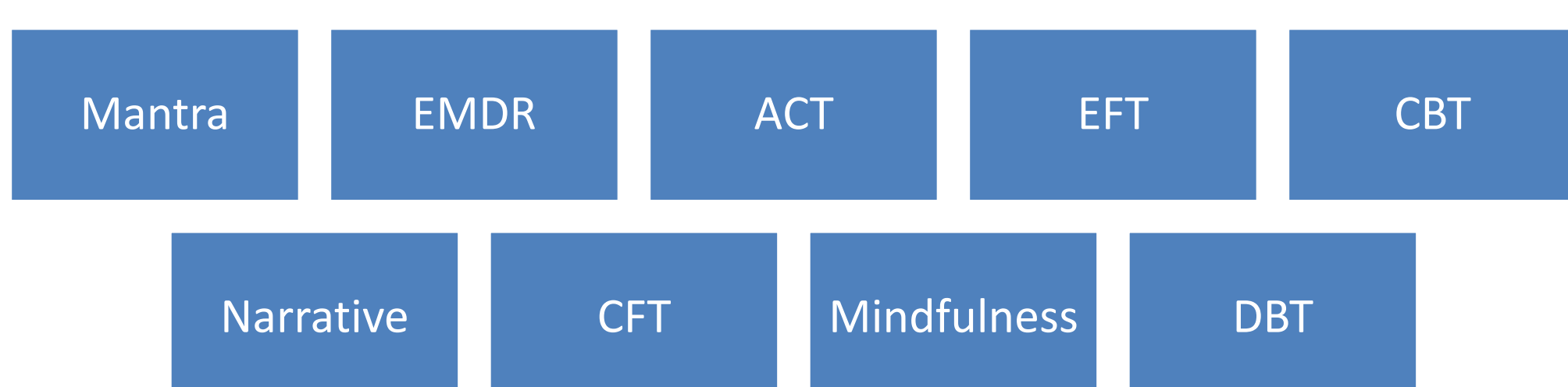
Rationale



Process

Literature review of research articles, focusing on most effective psychological interventions / reasonable adjustments for autistic adults experiencing co-occurring mental health difficulties.

Therapies included in the review:



Results

- **Limited research** was available for the individual therapies, with the **exclusion of CBT**.
 - Evidence-based therapies should be offered with **reasonable adjustments**.
 - Therapeutic outcomes are improved when **autism is understood and held in mind** alongside co-occurring mental health difficulties.
 - **Promising research** for CFT, EFT, ACT, Narrative, DBT, EMDR and Mindfulness when adapted.
- Further research is needed.**

“When I was in hospital, I kept getting told off for walking on tip toes and for fidgeting a lot...they thought I was doing these things to burn more calories, except I’d been doing them for as long as I could remember.” (Babb et al., 2021)

“I just fall through the gaps between departments [mental health/learning disabilities], whether it’s in the health service or social services.” (Griffith et al., 2012)

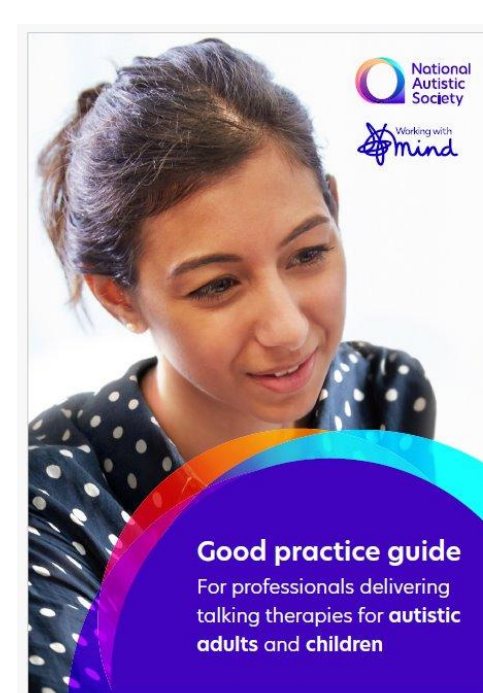
I know he [clinician] doesn’t want the literal answer...‘What brings you here today?’, I know he doesn’t want to hear ‘the bus.’” (Mason et al., 2021)

“...now I’ve got the information, I’m not anxious about it anymore...and it’s a tiny little adjustment from their end, but it lowers my anxiety on a day-to-day basis.” (Parmar et al., 2022)

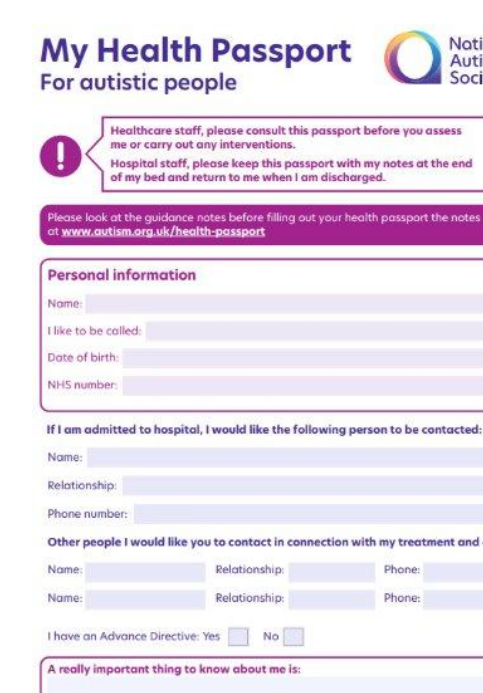
The above quotes were cited in Radev, Freeth & Thompson (2024).

Future Considerations

- **Embedding reasonable adjustments** from a patient, service and therapist perspective.
- **Training and knowledge** of autism and MH.
- An **acceptable and accessible environment**
- **Clear pathways** and clear commissioning pathway.
- **Coproduction** to develop services and research.



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