

**What is Monotropism
in Autism?**

**How was the theory
developed?**

**How does it impact
individuals?**

**How do we work with
it?**
by Wenn B. Lawson and Fergus
Murray





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**Autism is a matter of attention.
We are biologically made with
brains that work differently to the
allistic population.**

**We are single focused individuals
but when interest is sparked, we
connect more widely.**

**Using our interests & strengths
helps us connect.**

History of Monotropism

- Developed by autistic people starting in the 90s
- Now very popular in autistic communities
- Some research has been done, more is needed!



Monotropism: a key contributor to flow and/or inertia, in autism.

Flow

- Flow implies easy, ongoing and happy to be engaged with (an action or activity).
- Flow may also imply an inability to stop, even when an action or activity has become tiring or is not appropriate any longer.

Inertia

- Inertia implies a state of being stuck, not able to start.
- It also implies a disconnection to ability to engage in an action or activity. This can be so even if there are deadlines to meet, appointments to attend and so on.

Flow & Inertia

Flow is a natural state of being monotropic.

But, if we are expected to change attention quickly, we may get 'stuck'

Or if our senses are overloaded (We tend to experience our senses one at a time) we may become 'inert' or hindered from activity.

Getting stuck is the opposite to a flow state.



In Autism though

Interests dictate

Driven to organise and plan: but will have difficulty, so insist on sameness & will resist change.

Thinking ahead only occurs in connection to interests

Can only attend to one thing at any one time (unless within attention tunnel).



What is Play?

"Wenn, Wenn" I hear the teacher say.

"Wenn, Wenn, look this way".

"Wenn, Wenn", I hear the children say.

"Wenn, Wenn, come and play".

I hear the words that come each day,

"What do they mean?" I hear me say.

Words without pictures simply go away. I turn my head and look instead

at all that glitters; blue, green and red.

Cognitive theories of autism

- **There are many different cognitive theories of autism but they have many gaps and most don't hold water!**
- **Lawson (2009)**
- **But, there is one theory, idea viewpoint that does hold up....**
Monotropism or Single Attention and Associated Cognition in Autism: SAACA

Properties resulting from SAACA

- Single Focused Interest
- Detail focus
- Interoception off-line
- **Strength Based Attention**



Inertia

- **Shifting attention uncomfortable**
- **Object permanence challenged**
- **Emotional regulation challenged**
- **Passionate Interests**

We are a colourful lot!

Mono/Single Interest

Passion



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No Interest





How can I relax at school if I don't know home still exists? I need a way into understand Object Permanence





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**This is my very question, from
present or the past.**

**Time for me is all the same,
I know not of its future.**

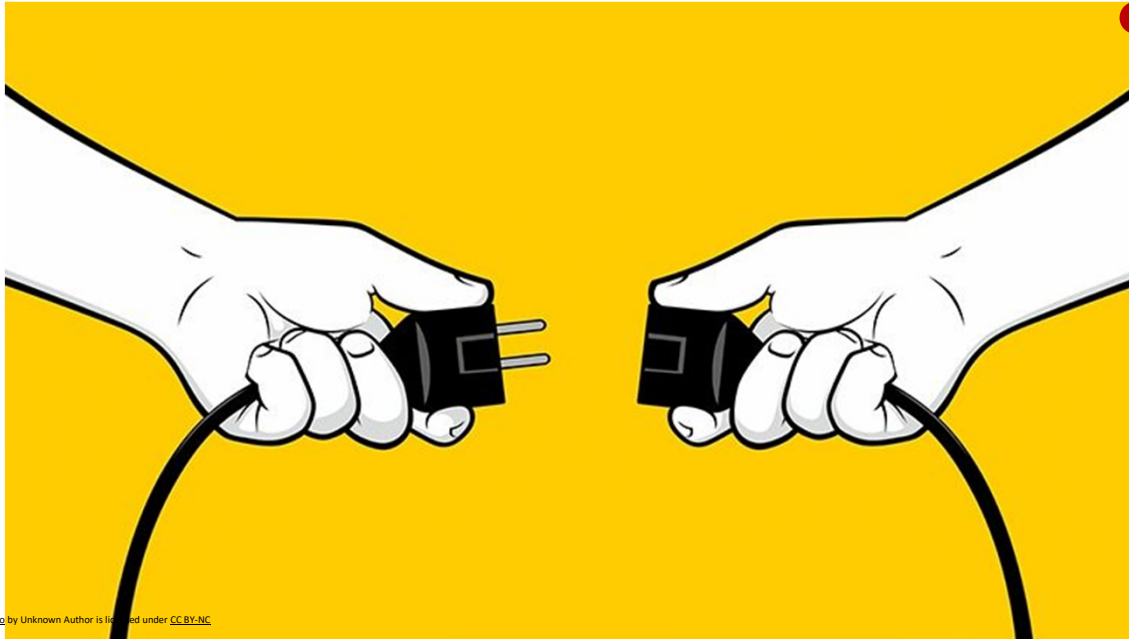
**I only know I trust in 'now'...
tomorrow can come, I just need to
know how.**



Happiness and good fortune may be used to refine our lives, but so may difficulty, grief, and pain. To make any emotion work in your favor, commit to this: That each is, most certainly, temporary. By this devotion, you honor your humanity. By this allegiance, you wholly live through the storm at the surface and be there at the deep.

Interoception: my inner senses connected let me feel pain, temperature, hunger, anxiety, desire, toileting needs, thirst etc.

Off-Line or not connected?



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- **Power or connection is available, just gotta link it up & turn it on!**

Hyperactiv

ion



Disorg

Distracted

Attention

**ADHD & Autism:
Monotropism =
single attention
but interrupted
and fragmented**

‘When an autistic person has stopped for the day, or taken a break, or taken a vacation, it can be difficult to restart. This may look like resistance to getting out of bed in the morning, not necessarily because the person is tired, but because **the steps to doing so are overwhelming**’.

Things that help

Limit your options

Make a short list,

My list brought me back and reminded me “this is what free time means” and then I had every activity in front of me to choose from.” –

Smart watch, timers, support from others!

Literal notion of Free Time?



“

Technology is
not just a tool.
It can give learners a
voice that they may
not have had before.

GEORGE COUROS

”





<http://monotropism.org>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOe1fliDs0I>

www.wennlawson.com

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD8L-Ht_jSQxBmWe6MzZvJA

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Resources

www.wennlawson.com

<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/ready-to-learn-interoception-kit.pdf>

<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/object-permanence-interoception-and-theory-of-mind-supporting-document.pdf>

<https://autisticandunapologetic.com/2020/07/26/monotropism-the-most-accurate-autism-theory-youve-probably-never-heard-of/>

<http://www.autisticscholar.com/monotropism/>