

Can't not Won't

Could yesterday – but not today

The word WON'T assumes a deliberate choice not to comply or do.

When we understand that often there isn't a choice but a difficulty or difference we can swap the word "WON'T" for "CAN'T".

This changes our thinking about what is happening and helps us to think about how to support and accept

Look for the why

Safety / Trust
Autonomy
Environment
Energy / fatigue
Processing
Regulation
Sensory
Communication

Explore

You will find lived experience links on our website [Explore pages](#) videos, podcasts and websites

[Energy accounting](#) - an introduction by Spectrum gaming

[Executive functioning differences](#) - Autism understood

The PDA society has a wealth of information - [start learning here](#)

[Autism Central - Stress and Anxiety](#)

Books that might be useful to read -

What works for Autistic Adults and other books
by Dr Luke Beardon

Can't not Won't by Eliza Fricker - About a child who couldn't go to school

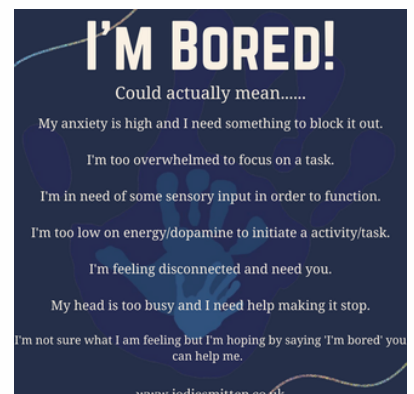
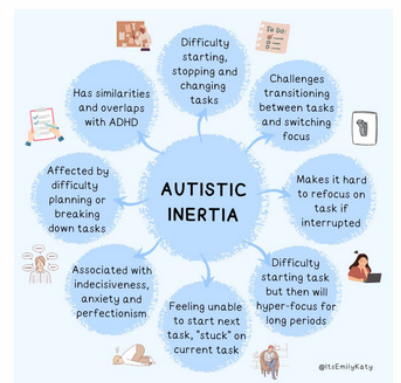
Videos to explore

[Demystifying Autism and overstimulation](#) - BBC Chris Packham and Luke Beardon

[Autism Central a variety of subjects](#)



Why it's hard to switch tasks (Let's call it Tendril Theory)



Credits for info tiles

Demand avoidance - @livedexperienceeducator

Autistic inertia - @ItsEmilyKaty

I'm Bored - Jodie Smitten

Switching tasks - Tendril Theory - EJM - I draw humans



Executive functioning

A Poem by Dean Beadle - who has kindly given permission for us to share this.

Autistic executive functioning

Executive functioning issues
body's paused while mind's on play
what is perfectly doable tomorrow
may be nigh on impossible today
The brain breaks down every task
a linked chain of bite sized pieces
then it replays every step ad nauseum
until the overwhelm rapidly increases

Process, process
run taps, have a wash
Process, process
it all comes at too great a cost
Repeating, repeating
going through the motions ahead
Exhausting, exhausting
perhaps I'll just lay here instead

Executive functioning issues
the haze between thought and action
the weight of the thinking stops the doing
a kind of perpetual suspended animation
And the rest of the world may wonder
why it takes us an hour to get dressed
because they can do functional activities
without thinking, under a minimum of stress

Process, process
Take down plates, charge up phone
Process, process
climbing mountains with a sack full of stones
Repeating, repeating
rehearsing each step with precision
Exhausting, exhausting
I just can't action every decision

And then come those halcyon active days
when you've the strength to combat trivial tasks
Gallop through your mounting to do list
and nothing seems too much to ask
You see it's executive functioning issues
deciding the ebb and flow of all I did
Today I had the energy to get it all done
yesterday I just couldn't, so I didn't and I hid

Process, process
take it slow and steady
Process, process
you'll get it all done when you're ready
Repeating, repeating
it's just how some brains chime
Exhausting, exhausting
be kind to yourself, do it in your own time

But don't you be forgetting about passion and joy
that help us to leave this stuff in the shade
Autistic interests, drive and commitment
got some of the best inventions made
Yes executive functioning issues are a *****
but our passionate joys can pull us through
There are some days when it seems we just can't
but try and stop us on days when we do!