



Our teachers are familiar with dealing with separation anxiety and focus on being especially calm, softly spoken and reassuring around a new learner.



Before long, Mindstretch children look forward to school. As one parent noted: "After school, my son said 'the new school is fun.' I've never heard him use the word 'fun' before and he is speaking more. It's amazing on the first day!"

Join Us! Mindstretch is now enrolling for 2016

Preparation for School

It is natural for a young child to be anxious when starting school or moving to a new school. Some key steps can help minimize such separation anxiety.

Alert the Child: Tell your child about the school and explain what is going to happen. At least 1 week before school starts, begin talking about the school with optimism. If possible, show the child photos of the school and teacher before their first day.

Build Familiarity: We require that our learners have satchel/bag and a sunhat. Buy these in advance and let your child try them out, including wearing the hat. Have the items visible in the child's room to build familiarity.

Visit in Advance: Try to make a brief visit to the teacher and school before the first day, thus giving your child a chance to orientate themselves.

Be Early: Be early on the first few days of school to give your child time to centre themselves before others arrive.

Manage Goodbyes: Allow some flexibility on the first day as some children benefit from quick goodbyes, while others need a parent to stay a while.

Be Positive: Do not reinforce negatives related to the separation anxiety. Talk positively about the school.

Allow Aids: Determine what calms your child. For example, they may like to bring a favourite soft toy to school on the first few days.

Be reassured that children typically settle down within a week or two.

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- ◆ **Preschool**
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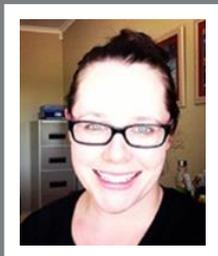
As we wrap-up 2015 and turn towards a new school year, we bring you the article above on preparing for school. I also thank Stephanie for her contribution 'Hearing and Listening' on page 2.

Thank you to the Mindstretch team, and to our clients and collaborators for a great year.

With appreciation, Jennifer
Mindstretch Founder and Preschool Principal

Hearing and Listening

By Stephanie Wainwright,
Speech Therapist,
pst! Peninsula Speech Therapists



Auditory processing is the ability to interpret sounds heard in the environment, including speech. Parents may think that their child has hearing difficulty because they do not pay attention to speech or other sounds. They may then be confused (though relieved) when a hearing test gives normal results. A hearing test is just a measure of the physical act of detecting sounds at various frequencies. The process of interpreting the sounds is more complicated and takes place in the brain's temporal lobe. This area focuses on the following functions:

- Sound processing: being able to locate a relevant sound and block out 'noise'.
- Speech processing.
- Comprehension.
- Auditory memory.

The ability to identify which sounds are important to listen to and which sounds are background noise is essential for concentration. If we cannot do this, we risk overloading our sensory systems. Often this is the case with those with autism spectrum disorders. They also often struggle to focus on speech sounds and language. This affects language development and their articulation of speech sounds and phonological awareness skills, both of which are key in learning to read and spell.

At Mindstretch, Consultant Speech Therapists assess the speech of every child at the time of enrolment. Feedback is shared with the parents and incorporated into the learner's IEP. This forms the basis of the speech promotion that Mindstretch Teachers routinely provide. Further, extramural speech therapy is available on a needs-led basis.



Here, a Consultant Speech Therapist gets results by engaging a young Mindstretch learner in an activity that's therapeutic *and* fun.

The auditory system is also connected to the vestibular system, which is responsible for detecting movement and position in space. By adding movement to therapy for auditory processing disorders, we make treatment more fun and meaningful for young children.

Auditory memory is another important skill that therapists focus on. It is essential for being able to retain short-term information to then act upon. The ability to process short-term memory leads to the information being established in long-term memory, a necessary step in learning.

Games to Improve Listening

Tailor these fun activities to your child's stage (*not* age) and improve auditory processing.

Early Days: Have your child note sounds in their environment by pointing out the noises that they hear. If they hear a kettle boiling, ask them "do you hear that noise?" Then show them what's making the sound. Everyday sounds include vacuum cleaners, phones, dogs barking, cars driving, doors banging, chairs scraping, toilets flushing and more.

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Inbetweeners: Encourage imitation of sounds. Have your child copy you making animal noises, car noises, etc. You can also use this activity to encourage auditory memory skills.

Try the following game, adapting it, as needed.

- ◆ **What's needed:** farmyard animals (e.g. toys or real or drawn pictures).
- ◆ **How to play:** Make a noise and ask your child to identify the animal. Then make two noises and ask them to point to both animals. Increase the number of noises until your child is starting to have difficulty remembering the sounds: this is your threshold. For example, they may easily identify two animal sounds but may struggle remembering three in a row. You will play and practice at the threshold. Vary the order in which you make the sounds and have them make sounds for you to identify. Get a few of your turns wrong – it makes the game much funnier for the child!

Almost Readers: At this stage, awareness of sounds and the ability to manipulate sounds is important. You can start playing rhyming games and read lots of rhyming books like Dr. Seuss or books by Julia Donaldson. Car rides are an opportunity to stimulate your child's auditory skills. Play 'I-Spy' (use the sound of the letter rather than the name of the letter when you play this) and play "I went to the shops and bought a..." encouraging the child to remember as many groceries on the list as possible. 'Simon Says', 'Broken Telephone' and 'Musical Chairs' are all great for this.

Whatever games you play and whatever books you read, nothing replaces the value of talking to your child. Keep the dialogue going!

- ✚ Visit www.pst-speechtherapy.co.za to learn more about Stephanie's work.

Mindstretch News



OCT 20: Our youngest learners enjoyed a music percussion session by Pam Levesque.



OCT 23: The Fire Brigade visits Mindstretch and teaches lessons in safety.



NOV: Lauren Pech of Lionhearted Kids begins weekly yoga lessons at Mindstretch.



2016 TRAINING: Register for Jennifer's HANDLE Introductory course in Johannesburg (Feb) or Cape Town (Sep); learn more at www.mindstretch.co.za.

New Intermediate Grade RR Class for Mindstretch

We are delighted to report that our five Grade R learners applying to schools offering mainstream Grade 1 curricula have been accepted. Our Kindergarten children have similarly improved.

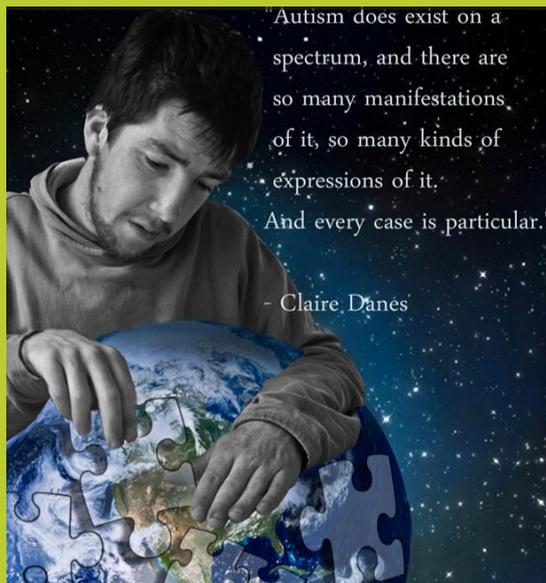
In our ongoing efforts to help children achieve their full potential at Mindstretch Preschool, we will launch an Intermediate Grade RR class in 2016. The aim is to ready learners for Grade R tuition. This will include a focus on pre-numeracy and pre-literacy skills, while also improving motor coordination, spatial awareness and verbal expressive language.

We welcome Michelle Finegan (pictured right) as the Intermediate class teacher. Like all of the Mindstretch teachers, Michelle comes highly qualified, having studied Foundational Phase teaching for 4 years at the Cape Town College of Education, earning an HDE, FP. A fifth year at Stellenbosch University earned her a further certification *cum laude* in Special Needs Education.

Michelle has worked in education for 14 years, including at a special needs school in London, as Grade 3 teacher at Parklands College, and as a Grade 2 teacher at Oakley House Remedial School.



Avoid Label-Locked Thinking



Psychologist Baron-Cohen's Autism-Spectrum Quotient (or AQ) test demonstrates how **autism is a spectrum**. The 50 questions measure autistic traits in adults, although it is not diagnostic. Indeed, those scoring high (perhaps even meeting the criteria for 'mild autism') may have no difficulties in daily functioning.

This shows the danger of label-locked thinking, which is why **Mindstretch works to enable, not label**.

- Find the test at: <http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/9.12/aqtest.html>
- Also, '**Young Adults With Autism**' is a helpful Cape Town-based group: <https://www.facebook.com/youngadults.withautism.1>



We Welcome Feedback and Subscriptions

- Email jen@mindstretch.co.za with comments or suggestions for the newsletter, and please follow us on Facebook to receive regular news updates (our page is titled 'Mindstretch Preschool, Training and Therapy').
- To receive the newsletter, please subscribe online at www.mindstretch.co.za/newsletter.