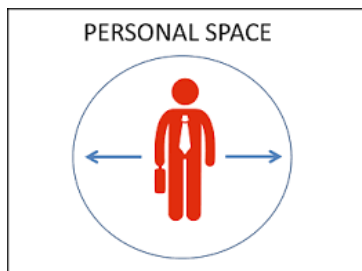


Social distancing and Proxemics

I have been running a social skills group at one of my secondary schools with pupils who have social difficulties/pupils on the Autistic Spectrum. Just before schools shut down due to Coronavirus, I delivered a session that included teaching the pupils about Proxemics- which divides the space between us and others into the following zones.

Intimate Distance Zone - Ranges from direct contact to 60 cm. This is the space reserved for very close friends, close family members and people we love

Personal Distance Zone - Ranges from 60cm to 1.5 meters



This space is reserved for friends and family – (i.e. people you know and trust). A space for talking, shaking hands, gesturing etc. For non-friends and family getting too close can be interpreted as invading personal space.

Social Distance Zone - This space is between 1.5 – 3 meters. It's the distance you keep from strangers that you may have some interaction with such as a shopkeeper or at the post office etc, although there are certain instances where it's hard to keep a certain kind of distance from other people for example on public transportation or in a lift.

Social Distancing

The UK government is currently advocating a social distancing rule of 2 meters. This made me think about how this would be affecting pupils with ASD. On the plus side 2m fits well within the social distance zone proposed by Proxemics, though there are scientists suggesting that 2m isn't enough space for social distancing in order to prevent the spread of the virus, as the the 3-6 foot rule is based on a few studies from the 1930s and 1940s, which have since been shown to be wrong as droplets can travel further than 6 feet (1.8m).

This prompted me to do an online search to see if there were any social stories/autism friendly videos that help to clearly explain to pupils with ASD (particularly younger children) what 2m looks like so that they can help understand and follow the current social distancing rule. Whilst I found lots of resources

explaining what Coronavirus is and the importance of washing hands etc , I couldn't find anything specific re: the 2m rule so I've come up with a simple version myself- see below.

A Social Script for Social distancing

When lots of people are sick, keeping your distance from others helps to keep you healthy.

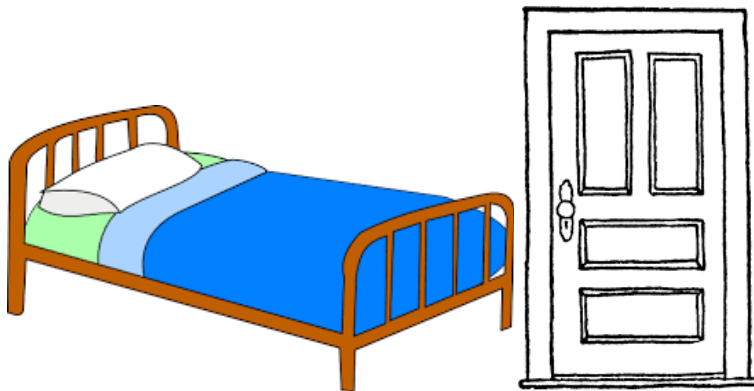


But keeping close to your mum or dad and the people you live with is ok



When outside try to stay 2 meters away from other people

2 meters is the height of a door or length of a bed



By keeping 2 meters distance from others this helps us all to keep safe

Lance Hardy, Educational Psychologist