

## Fun and Facts

There is this famous equation in math:

$$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + \dots = -\frac{1}{12}$$

That is, the sum of all natural numbers is... negative one twelfth. The result is not infinite, not positive, and not even an integer. Worst of all, it's not even a joke. Google for "1+2+3+4+... infinite sum" and you shall see.

This equation defies all we have learned in elementary school. And you thought you knew how to add numbers?

All parents think that raising children is easy... that they themselves are the best parents in the world for their children... that love solves everything. That is, until they have children on the spectrum. They then quickly realize that their intuition just doesn't work.

Autism is not a new thing. It was formally discovered in 1943, some 74 years ago. Ask yourself: how many parents/researchers have failed? Have you done anything differently from those parents/researchers? Do you think you are the only person that has put in enormous effort into raising your children? Do you think that if only you tried harder than other parents, you will succeed? Do you even want to know how many parents have thought and tried exactly the same way you have tried? Have they succeeded?

It's been three quarters of a century. Trust me, if diet, supplements, speech / behavioral therapy, socialization activities could have worked, they would have worked. If there were a solution to autism along our traditional approaches, it would have been found a long time ago.

To my awareness, none of the parents today has done anything that has not been tried before. All I see is new parents walking over the same failed paths that other

parents have already tried before. Repeating the very same mistakes. And their children just don't develop properly.

If we just keep applying techniques of raising neurotypical children to raise autistic children, we will never get anywhere. Raising autistic children requires a different approach. A fundamentally different approach.

You may not believe that I do raise my children differently from what other parents do. So, let us try a case study here.

A boy was playing computer games. It was bath time. The mother told the boy to take a bath. The boy protested, got mad and sad, and threw himself on the floor, sobbing.

Question: what would you do in this case?

Give it your best shot. Take a few minutes and think about all approaches that you can think of.

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This is not fiction. This is what happened some evenings ago with my son. I approached my son. Within one minute, he stopped crying. Within two minutes, he was giggling and then went into the bathtub for me to give him a shower. It was a true story. After taking the bath, I told my son to go to his mom and tell her about the new equation he has invented. It's not the equation above, but something funnier. He told his mom:

“Jason, plus dental floss sticking up his nose, equals... wah wah wah wah!”

And then he giggled non-stop. For the subsequent days, each time my wife or I told our son to take a bath (in the midst of his playing game), he complied with a smile.

This much I can say: had I left my son with any other parent in the world, he would have grown up suffering, just like virtually all other children on the spectrum. Yet, my son is happy and smiling every day. Anybody that has met my son can tell you that.

We will come back to what I did. But let me digress a bit.

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For simplicity of discussion, let me use this other example:

$$1 + 2 + 4 + 8 + \dots = -1$$

That is, the sum of all the natural powers of 2 is negative one. This one is actually easier to see in an alternative number universe known as the “dyadic numbers.” See, think of all numbers as grains of sand. What we usually do is to line up the numbers on a straight line. But a straight line is not the only permissible topology. In the dyadic universe, the same grains of sand are scattered over an infinite-dimensional space of concentric spheres. In this alternative universe, the partial sums on the left are indeed getting closer and closer to -1:

distance between -1 and 1 (=1) is 0.5  
distance between -1 and 3 (=1+2) is 0.25  
distance between -1 and 7 (=1+2+4) is 0.125  
distance between -1 and 15 (=1+2+4+8) is 0.0625

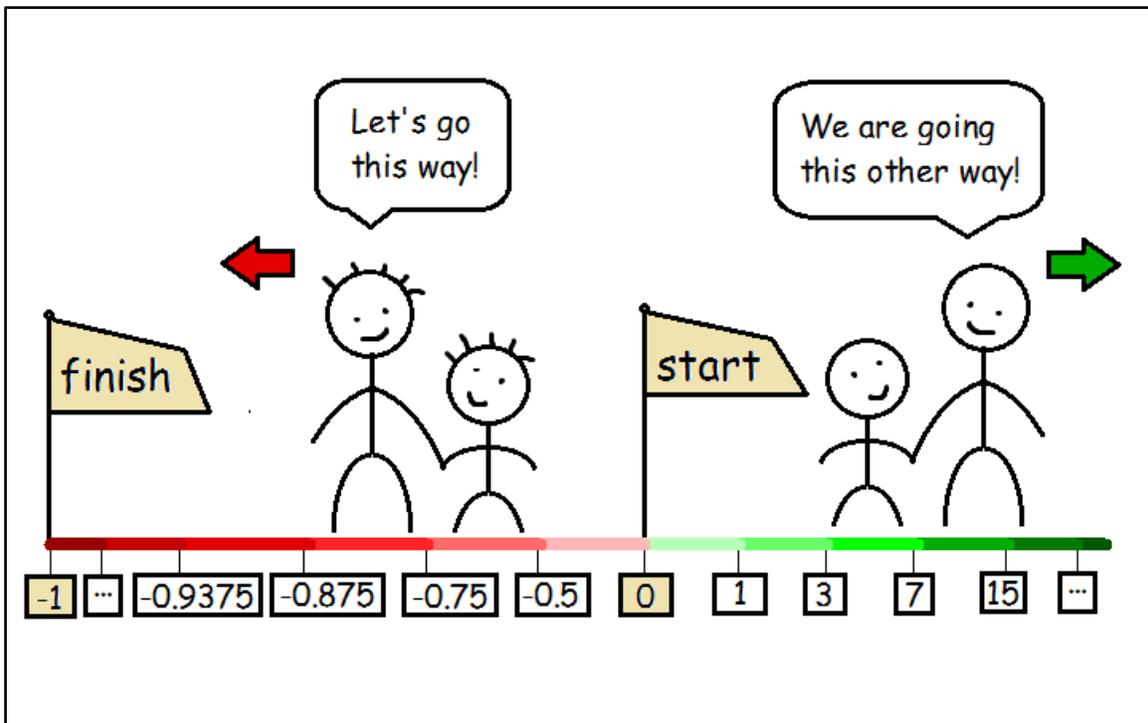
whereas

distance between -1 and 0 is 1  
distance between -1 and -0.5 is 2  
distance between -1 and -0.75 is 4  
distance between -1 and -0.875 is 8  
distance between -1 and -0.9375 is 16

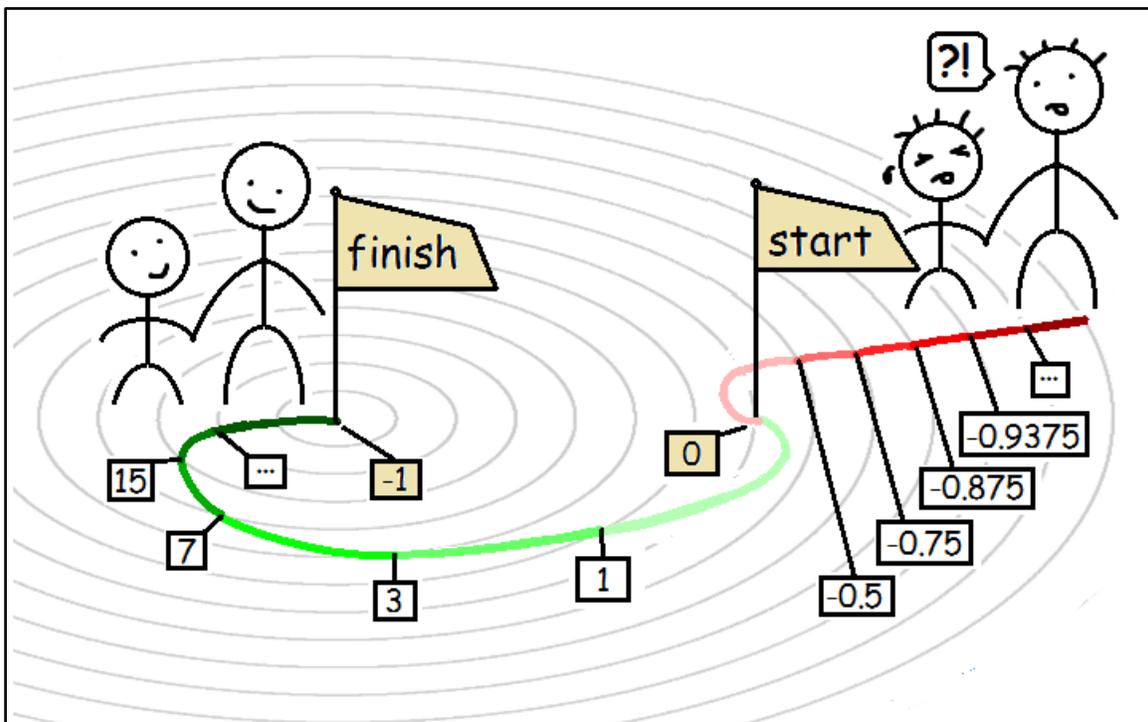
What's the point? The point is, the autistic brain is organized differently from the neurotypical brain.

I am the one parent that does not pay attention to his children's verbal or social skills. Yet, my children are more verbal and social than most children on the spectrum. How is this possible? You ask.

When your children are non-verbal and non-social, your instinct is to overwhelm them with speech therapy and socialization activities. You then fail. You don't achieve what you want.



**Linear Space:** the neurotypical perspective gives the illusion that the shortest path between start (0) and finish (-1) is the straight line segment in red.



**Dyadic Space:** the autistic reality shows that the shortest path is totally opposite to the neurotypical intuition. The right path is the green path.

While other parents were busy with providing speech therapy and socialization activities to their children, I was busy drawing pictures and teaching my children to read. And in the specific case of my son, I was taking him to ride elevators and also letting him watch elevator video clips on YouTube. To you, I was taking my children farther and farther away from what they really ought to be doing. Strangely, at the end of the day, my children came out ahead of your children: verbally and socially. And you then scratch your head.

Your mistake is that you think the autistic brain works like the neurotypical brain.

Nope. They are different. They are like the Dyadic space vs. the Linear space. You think walking straight from zero to -1 will get you closest to your target. You see me walking in the opposite direction and you think I must be crazy. But I am not. What you don't know is that the autistic brain is simply not what you think it is.

In my opinion autistic children need no speech therapy nor extra socialization activities. They are not sick. They need no therapy. The only thing they need is development. Development in the autistic way. You just need to remember that  $1+2+4+8+\dots$  actually gets you closer to -1. That's all. There is absolutely no danger that the autistic way of developing your children will make them less verbal or less social. On the other hand, by pushing them into speech therapy and socialization activities, you are causing harm to them. In the name of love, you have achieved to ruin your children's lives. Worst of all, you don't even realize it.

I am not against socialization activities. I am against them only when the children are not yet ready for these activities. Dumping socialization activities on these children, when they are still not ready, is not teaching. It's child abuse. It's a bit like me talking to you about renormalization of quantum field theories or Riemann Zeta function. It's pointless, it's all noise to you. You surely don't want me to talk to you all day long on subjects that you are not able to comprehend. So why do we as parents keep dumping noise onto our autistic children, day after day, week after week, and year after year?



### *I See Myself*

*I see myself with dark brown hair as dark as the night sky. When I go outside at night, my hair blends in. I'm as responsible as a garbage worker. I can clean up the trash in a park in just 1 minute! I'm so good at drawing that my drawings always shine. Picasso even asks me for ideas! This is how I see myself.*

This is my daughter's drawing a few weeks ago. Here is what she wrote: "I see Myself. I see myself with dark brown hair as dark as the night sky. When I go outside at night, my hair blends in. I'm as responsible as a garbage worker. I can clean up the trash in a park in just 1 minute! I'm so good at drawing that my drawings always shine. Picasso even asks me for ideas! This is how I see myself." She is happy, has tons of friends in school... some of them are close friends. Some teachers have already told me that they will miss my daughter so bad because next year she is going to a new school. In all sense, my daughter is a very social person. You probably think I take her to playdates and things like that. Not really. I don't avoid playdates. But I certainly do not put a conscious effort into socialization activities for my daughter. My point is, neurotypical children

don't need special activities to socialize with each other. So I don't see why autistic children need all those extra activities, either. Socialization will come naturally to all children, whether autistic or neurotypical, as long as they are properly developed. When you say that autistic children must do extra activities so that they can learn to socialize, you are already starting with the wrong foot: you are already NOT viewing your children as equal-rights human beings. You are already thinking your children are defective. Let me tell you: they are not defective. It's our society the one that is defective, because we insist on approaching our autistic children with methods of raising neurotypical children. We are wrong. We fail to see that the shortest route to walk from 0 to -1 is not by taking the straight-line route. We fail to see that the autistic brain is actually organized differently from the neurotypical brain. It's time for us to understand that  $1+2+4+8+\dots$  is actually the right route of getting to -1.

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Coming back to the case of my son not wanting to take a bath. What did I do?

This was not the first time the incident has happened. The following is what I did after my wife first told me about Ivan not wanting to take a bath.

That weekend, I took my son to elevator ride to a mall as usual. My daughter actually joined, too. We stopped by a bakery and I got a blue sugar cookie for my son (my daughter got a chocolate chip cookie). While my son was enjoying his cookie, I asked him: "Is life fun, now?" And he would say "yes." And then I reminded him about "Sometimes life is tough, like when you didn't like it when you had to take a bath, but, sometimes life is fun, like now, right?" And he'd say "yes."

In the interim, I've also made a silly video for another boy on the spectrum. It's about my son's wanting to put a banana peel on my head, and also sticking a strand of dental floss up my nose. I put a sound effect (known as the "sad trombone wah wah wah fail sound effect") into the video.



So, when my son was on the floor, sobbing about not wanting to take shower, I simply told him: "Yes, sometimes life is tough, like taking a bath, now. But sometimes life is fun. Remember when you saw the car in the garage of your friend's house?" And he would start to smile. I'd ask him: "What was the brand of the car?" And he would say: "It was a Tesla." And I'd ask him: "Does Tesla make good cars?" And he would say: "I think so." Etc. I also reminded him about the elevator ride and the blue sugar cookie. He then started to giggle, picked up the dental floss, and wanted to stick it up my nose.

He got into the bathtub without problems. Not only that, for all the subsequent days (it's been about 3 weeks as of my writing, now), the problem never re-surfaced.

All I did was to show my son facts. I did not tell him "you should do this" or "you shouldn't do that," or come up with rules. I simply told him "Sometimes life is tough. But sometimes life is fun." That was all. I simply told him facts.

Do you realize how I treat my children as equal-rights human beings? Not only do I consider them as equals, I furthermore take them as my teachers, and I am perfectly prepared for the day when they are all grown-up and much more knowledgeable than I am. Everything I write, is for my children to read. I don't do manipulation, simply because I don't like people to do that to me, either.

As you can see, there is a different way of approaching these children. If you see them as defective, you make their life miserable and your own life miserable. If you see them as the brightest minds in the world and pay deference to them, they are happy and so are you.

I have one and only one tool to deal with all the issues of autism. That tool is called "modulation." Autism, to me, is one single issue, solvable by using one single tool. Elementary, my dear. You'd see me doing one thousand different things (e.g. drawing pictures, making animation video clips) and you'd get confused. But to me, everything I do is nothing but modulation. All those one thousand things I do, are nothing but different manifestations of modulation. Autism is trivial, and beautiful. I just wish more people learn to understand it.

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How come I can arrive at (a) Tesla car, (b) elevator ride, (c) blue sugar cookie, (d) banana peel and dental floss, to help my son take a bath? What was the solution you have come up with to handle this incident? How come I can solve a problem in a matter of seconds, whereas most parents would ruin their relationship with their children?

Perhaps it's because I can see

$$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + \dots = -\frac{1}{12}$$

and

$$1 + 2 + 4 + 8 + \dots = -1$$

whereas other people cannot?

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“Punishment and reward” system is for raising neurotypical children.

It should be clear why punishment doesn't work for autistic children. It does not work because punishment is a reinforcer on the negativity of these children. Autism is all about the brain being focused on one particular subject. By introducing punishment, we are not helping our children to balance their negative experience with their positive experience.

It may come as a surprise that reward also does not work for autistic people. Bob Dylan had to be dragged into accepting his Nobel Prize. (He finally delivered his Nobel Prize lecture, via recording, a few days ago... 6 days before the official deadline.) Grigori Perelman refused Fields Medal and declined the 1-million-US-dollar Millennium Prize (and preferred to be poor and live in a small apartment with his mom). By now people should know that autistic children don't like to be manipulated.

The most important thing to keep in mind is, autistic children crave to be treated as equals. You need to treat them as equal-rights human beings. The moment you think they are defective or sick, you are already not treating them as equals. The moment that you say things behind their back, seeking “treatments” or “cures” for them, you are already not treating them as equals.

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Here is the drawing I made to address Mindy's cringing in school when she was younger. I explained to her about it when we were having ice cream. It's always good to have a smartphone to draw pictures. (If not, pen and paper napkin are also fine). I redrew and edited the image at home afterwards, and showed it to her also at bedtime.

The background story is that Mindy had a winter party in school, where children got to play various games hosted by parents. At the Bingo table, at one point, everyone has gotten at least one Bingo, except Mindy. Mindy then got frustrated and cringed. Her reaction surprised her friends at the table. The “bucket dipper” and “bucket filler” are euphemisms already used in school to teach children about appropriate social behaviors, like being friendly and helpful to others.

**Sometimes life is frustrating...**

Frustration at WINTER PARTY

I have not gotten any BINGO!



**bucket dipper**



**Sometimes life is good...**



**bucket filler**



I laminated and taped a small image of Mindy having ice cream, on a corner of her table in school. So the teacher could simply point to the image if there were any negative moments. See, it was perfectly fine for other students to look at this picture. It was a happy picture.

Did I need to tell Mindy what to do and what not to do? Did I tell Mindy to control her temper? Did I need to teach Mindy coping techniques, behavior replacement? Did I need to use any of the ABA approaches?

I did none of that. I only told Mindy facts. Among the facts, I told her: "Sometimes life is frustrating. Sometimes life is good."

Facts. Not manipulation. Respect your children. Let go the punishment-and-reward system: that's for neurotypical kids. For autistic children, use the "fun-and-facts" system instead. Treat them exactly the same way you'd like to be treated.



It's Yin and Yang. The Chinese knew about this thousands of years ago. So did the Indian. In the Triviṣa (Three Poisons) theory of Buddhism, Yin and Yang correspond to Dveṣa (Aversion) and Rāga (Attachment). In modern jargon, what you need to do is to establish a space-time wormhole tunnel between Yin and Yang, and your children will be able to develop properly.

So, let me ask you this question: when your children are happy, how many of you talk to them about their sad/bad moments? When your children are on vacation and/or having fun, did it even occur to you to address their bad moments? Or did you just let all those opportunities slip away? As depicted in the Yin-Yang diagram above (known as the Tai Chi diagram or Taijitu 太極圖), there is a dot of Yin in Yang, and a dot of Yang in Yin. Meaning that when the children are happy, you should remind them of their sad moments. And the when children are sad, you should remind them of their happy moments. That is the way to achieve the Yin-Yang Harmony 陰陽調和.

I talked to my children about these things, even when they were still non-verbal. When they had a bad time during the day, I always reviewed the particular incident with them at bedtime, by doing picture-aided talking, with a magnetic drawing board. That brings us back to picture drawing. I just don't understand how other parents can possibly address their children's tantrums, when those parents never draw pictures. Sometimes I just think the best way of making adults understand how to communicate with autistic children, is by placing a piece of packaging tape over the mouths of these adults. Ha ha. I guess there is no need for packaging tape... but adults should remember this: use your hands, not your mouth. Drawing pictures is important for your children's development. Your elbow motion during picture drawing is priceless: it builds bonding and also teaches the children to draw pictures later. And with that, they'll be on the right track to develop deep-thinking skills. Do not underestimate the importance of drawing pictures for your children.

Jason Lu, 2017-06 (latest update 2017-11)