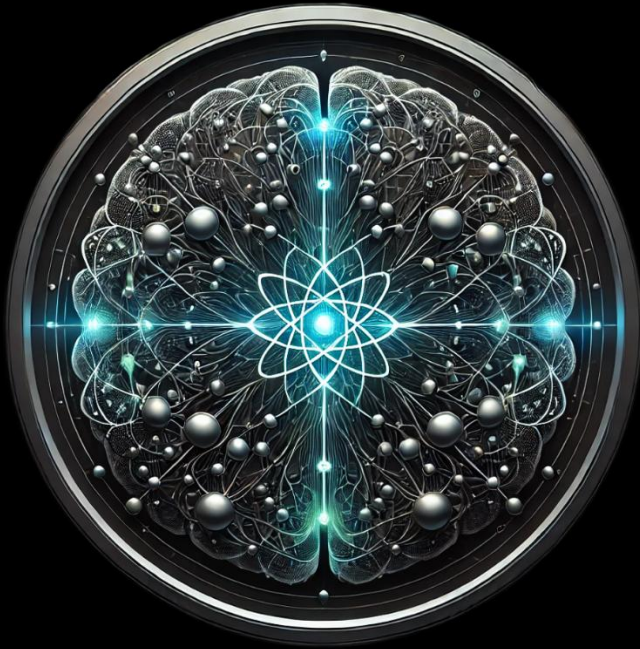


# 159 IQ?



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*Rethinking Intelligence  
through Neurophysiology  
and Cognitive Contradictions*

**PRACTITIONER EDITION  
(No Standard Edition)**

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A Series by iIDENTITY iINTELLIGENCE®



159 IQ?



159 IQ?

*Rethinking Intelligence through Neurophysiology  
and Cognitive Contradictions*

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**iii** Understanding Our Identity: **i**lluminate. **i**nterrupt. **i**ntegrate.

These three words may awaken something you've begun to sense — a quiet momentum beneath the surface of who you are.

## **i**DENTITY

*Illuminate what's already true.*

This isn't a model for change — it's a path to clarity. Before anything else, your soul, brain, and body's unique design is revealed — so you can finally see what's been guiding you all along.

## **i**NTELLIGENCE

*Interrupt the story that never fit.*

This is self-intelligence — the turning point. When you finally see your wiring for what it is — not how it's been misunderstood, mislabeled, and masked — the old explanations fall away. What remains is clarity, relief, and a quiet recognition: this was always me.

## **i**NVENTORY

*Integrate what's always been true.*

Illumination and interruption converge as revealed inventory — beyond insight, into embodied knowing. When the truth of your wiring is finally embraced, the old scaffolding gives way. What remains is steady, unmistakable, and already yours.



**Get to Know Your Brain!**

**Hard-Sciences for better Soft-Skills.**

Unleash Your Potential: alleviate anxiety, enhance relationships, increase performance.  
We use groundbreaking science in Neurobiology and Neurophysiology to help you excel.

**i**identity **i**ntelligence® **i**inventory



## Dedication

---

This book is dedicated to a client we'll call "Chris."

From the very first consultative discovery call, we knew Chris was remarkable. Though he initially sought our guidance for business process development, our conversation quickly revealed a profound and rare profile:

- A neurophysiological profile approaching that of Special Forces
- Clearly a *multi-potential client*
- Fabulously Whole-Brained
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Likely a genius-level IQ

Interestingly, none of these were the reasons he sought us out -- yet they became central to our work together. What began as a business consultation evolved into an exploration of his extraordinary cognitive infrastructure.

Chris and his wonderful wife have embarked on this journey together, engaging deeply in the NEURO-TEST™ neurophysiological assessment and debriefing process. Their partnership, curiosity, and commitment have made this work an exhilarating joy.

At the time of this writing, though we've only met a few times, the depth of insight, discovery, and anticipation for what's ahead – inspired me to write this book for practitioners – tailored to the unique infrastructural neural assets that clients like Chris embody.

To Chris and his wife: thank you for your trust, engagement, and willingness to explore the extraordinary. To practitioners: may this book help you recognize, appreciate, and support clients like Chris -- in unlocking the full potential of their amazing minds.



## A Note on Endorsements, Forewords, and Acknowledgments

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Given the scale and speed of the **iDENTITY iNTELLIGENCE®** series – launching with ~10+ books and expanding to over 50 – we've taken a **streamlined approach** to forewords, testimonials, and acknowledgments. Rather than including unique versions in every book, we've integrated them into some of the free downloadable resources linked in the Preface.

These additional materials provide a richer context, up-to-date testimonials, and extended content tailored for practitioners. This approach allows us to focus on delivering high-value, practitioner-driven content while keeping the reading experience clear and efficient.



## PREFACE

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### Accessing This Resource

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This book is part of the iDENTITY iNTELLIGENCE® series; however, unlike other books in the series, it is not a general-audience resource. Instead, it serves as a specialized deep dive into neurophysiology, intelligence, and Whole-Brained cognition -- providing insights to enhance professional application. Designed exclusively for practitioners in coaching, counseling, and related fields, this book offers advanced perspectives tailored to those working with high-IQ individuals, Whole-Brained thinkers, and neurodivergent populations.

It serves as both a reference and a conceptual guide -- offering foundational principles and advanced discussions on IQ, cognitive diversity, and neurophysiological dynamics. This book is a key resource for practitioners looking to expand their expertise in cognitive intelligence, the roots of Whole-Brained clientele, Autism, and neurophysiological application.



**(Standardized Preface for All Books)****iDENTITY iNTELLIGENCE® Series - Editions**

Some content in the series is coming from our book: *iDENTITY iNTELLIGENCE®: The Organizational Psychologist's Quintessential Toolbox*. It was a behemoth hard-cover, full-color, 8.5x11, 550 page book (equivalent to ~880 pages in a 6x9 book).

Most books in the series are available in four editions. The Standard Edition is an affordable black-and-white paperback. The Practitioner Editions are premium, full-color:

- ii **Standard Edition:** (for General Audience, Clients, and Laypersons): These books are written for anyone seeking to invest in themselves. The Standard Edition is printed as a black-and-white paperback for accessibility and affordability.
- ii **Practitioner Edition:** (for Therapists and Coaches): This edition includes the same foundational content as the Standard Edition, but is specifically designed for coaches, therapists, and other practitioners. It offers expanded insights, footnotes, and resources to deepen professional application. One primary distinction is greater in-depth usage of neurobiology, neuropsychology, and especially, neurophysiology.
- ii **Practitioner Edition - Annotated:** This Flagship edition contains all the features of the Practitioner Edition, with one key addition: brief, in-text glossary annotations of key therapeutic terms. These embedded definitions provide real-time clarity without disrupting the book's structure or pagination. Designed to strengthen both fluency and interpretive precision, this structure supports clarity in service of application -- while maintaining exact alignment with the Standard Edition. This ensures seamless reference across client, cohort, and classroom settings.
- ii **Supervisor Edition (for Clinical Supervisors, Professors, and Training Directors):** This edition is designed to support those




mentoring, supervising, or teaching others who are using the Practitioner Editions. It offers chapter-aligned teaching prompts, supervision strategies, discussion guides, and tiered competency rubrics. While the content of the client and practitioner editions remains unchanged, the Supervisor Edition helps frame that content into usable curriculum, cohort discussion, or performance tracking tools.

## **iDENTITY iNTELLIGENCE® Series - Purpose**

---

The books are designed to facilitate transformation and empowerment. They help bridge the divide between personal and professional growth (counseling / coaching); they are for practitioners' clients, as well as a general audience. These works serve as a rich resource for self-discovery, emotional growth, and behavioral change. They emerge not from theory alone, but from lived patterns across service of over 10,000 clients and over 60,000 hours helping individuals grow -- personally, professionally, and relationally.

At its core, iDENTITY iNTELLIGENCE® strives to:

-  Cultivate a deeper understanding of identity.
-  Foster empathetic and meaningful relationships.
-  Provide practical tools to navigate personal and professional challenges with resilience and intention.

By promoting healing, accountability, and the courage to embrace change, the series aims to guide readers toward greater harmony, success, and fulfillment -- reinforcing that transformation is a shared human journey.

- iii **Standard Edition:** These books offer a structured pathway to identify and overcome internal burdens, and external barriers to growth. They are designed to build resilience, strategy, and clarity, empowering readers to achieve their full potential. There are actionable insights and reflective exercises. Whether exploring these tools independently, or as part of a broader journey -- the series provides practical guidance for meaningful change.
- iii **Practitioner Editions (including the Annotated Edition):** These books function as a dynamic toolbox for leaders, coaches, therapists, and organizational psychologists. Equipped with proven strategies and actionable frameworks, these books enable professionals to drive transformative change effectively -- and with lasting impact (in clients and organizations). Practitioners may find significant value in delegating the Standard Edition to clients, as it serves as a complement to their sessions. This delegation can enhance the client's self-work, and streamline the practitioner's guidance, ultimately extending the scope and impact of the professional relationship.

## Start Your Journey with Free Tools

---

### *1. Free Neuro-Test Mini Introduction to Neurophysiology*

#### **Foundational Insights**

Drawing from over three decades of research and practice in neurophysiology, iDENTITY iNTELLIGENCE® equips individuals and practitioners with science-backed insights to navigate challenges and foster resilience. The proprietary iDENTITY iNTELLIGENCE iNVENTORY™ – a 20-minute online assessment – delivers a personalized understanding of core neurophysiological wiring. The instrument focuses on identifying aspects unaffected by external influences (e.g. family of origin, values, beliefs, personality, traits, trauma, etc.). This unique approach offers a clearer lens into how your brain's systems influence relationships, thought, emotion, and action.

The assessment measures five core systems; these systems connect to the series' core themes:

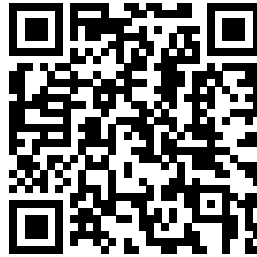
- iii **Risk Avoidance System:** Are you energized by high-risk stress, or do you excel in predictable environments?
- iii **Connection System:** Do tranquil surroundings recharge you, or do you thrive in high stimulus and / or social contexts?
- iii **Variability System:** Are you drawn to stability and predictability, or do you prefer dynamic, ever-changing environments?
- iii **Harmony System:** Do challenges invigorate you, or do you perform best in peaceful conditions?
- iii **Goals System:** Are you most effective when laser-focused, or do you excel at juggling multiple tasks?"

Neuro-Test is the testing instrument (assessment) behind iDENTITY iNTELLIGENCE iNVENTORY™. Understanding these systems can help build actionable insights to navigate challenges, build resilience, and

enhance favorable outcomes. To explore these concepts further, download our free mini tool, which:

- ii Offers a personalized overview of your unique neurophysiological wiring.
- ii Serves as a companion guide to maximize your experience with the iDENTITY iNTELLIGENCE® series of books.

<https://identity-intelligence.org/neurotest>



## ***2. Free Mini-Book: Why Neurophysiology?***

We encourage you to read this short, free mini-book, which gives the story behind, "Why Neurophysiology?" While it was originally written for practitioners (includes technical terms and frameworks), it's readable without foundations in neuropsychology or neurophysiology. The insights provide meaningful context for our approach:

<https://identity-intelligence.org/why-neurophysiology-p>



## A Note on Trademarks, Acrostics, Models, and Memorability

---

If you read a few of our books, you'll quickly notice how much we love acrostics, acronyms, and distinctive model names. Why? Because every brain is wired differently. Some of us learn best by hearing (auditory), some by seeing (visual), and others by doing (kinesthetic). Our goal is simple: to make the hard-science complexity of neurophysiology clear, practical, and usable -- especially in the soft-science realms of psychology, leadership, and personal growth.

Some readers find acrostics helpful. Others just remember, "STOP... oh yeah, that's the four-step model to stop bad thoughts." Either way works. The science stays the same. The goal is clarity and impact. The acrostics always come second.

Every model in this series is grounded first in experiential work -- meaning the name comes from the model, not the model from the name. Our models tend to be discovered – not built – through decades of pattern recognition, drawn from work with over 10,000 individuals in leadership, coaching, therapy, and organizational psychology contexts.

If a model happens to form a memorable acronym, we use it. If not, we don't. You never need to memorize anything. You never need to use the acronyms:

- iii Each model stands on its own -- acrostic or not. Parallel frameworks and models are always optional.
- iii Each book stands on its own -- companion resources are available if needed, and always free.

This is not a one-size-fits-all system. It's a library of doorways -- each leading to the same destination: transformation. Every model is independently powerful and fully optional. Use all. Use some. Use none.

---

*Take what works. Leave the rest.  
No guilt. No guile. Just guidance.*

---

These aren't high-concept, low-application theories. These are well-worn tools -- field-tested, refined, and handed to you not as requirements... but as resources.

By the way, we resisted the urge to call this section:

**T.A.M.M. — Trademarks, Acrostics, Models, and Memorability**

... but let's just say, it wasn't effortless.

## **A Note on Page Layout and White Space**

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This book was designed to share the same structure and pagination as its Practitioner Edition counterpart (expanded content, additional techniques, and neurophysiological insights in footnote form). In this edition, that content is intentionally omitted, resulting in occasional white space.

Rather than filling the page, we've chosen to preserve that space for your own use -- to annotate, reflect, or personalize your growth. You can use it to underline key ideas, jot insights, or highlight action steps.

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## ABSTRACT

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What is intelligence? How does it shape the way we think, perceive, and interact with the world? Far more than a number on an IQ test, intelligence is a multidimensional phenomenon -- rooted in cognitive structure, neurophysiology, and the interplay between pattern recognition and memory recall.

Moreover, individuals on the Autism Spectrum often display unique cognitive profiles that challenge conventional definitions of intelligence. Interestingly, many individuals recognized as geniuses exhibit traits commonly associated with neurodivergence... not necessarily autistic, but often more neurologically akin to autism, than to neurotypicality. This raises an intriguing question: Are geniuses a subset of neurodivergence? While not all highly intelligent individuals fit into existing neurodivergent categories, their cognitive tendencies frequently diverge from societal norms -- in ways that mirror atypical processing styles. This perspective invites us to broaden our understanding of intelligence, moving beyond standardized measures -- to appreciate diverse neurocognitive expressions.

*159 IQ?: Rethinking Intelligence through Neurophysiology and Cognitive Contradictions* explores the complexities of high intelligence, challenging common misconceptions along the way. The book begins with an examination of historical estimations of Einstein's cognitive abilities -- and concludes by considering how neurophysiology interplays with autism.

Along the way, it delves into the fascinating phenomenon of whole-brained cognition – where neurophysiology doesn't just support thinking, reality, and experience – but radically spins it. Like gravitational forces bending light, neurophysiological circuits create the illusion of seamless integration -- while simultaneously introducing deep paradoxes, limitations, and cognitive derailers:

1. Unmatched objectivity with striking optimism (**Caution: prone to inaccuracy**)
2. Profound stimulus action with deep introversion (**Caution: distractible / inflexible**)
3. Rigorous logical precision with boundless creative abstraction (**Caution: lacking expertise**)
4. Genuine humility in serving others while relentlessly pursuing personal agendas (**Caution: inauthentic**)
5. Genuine care for others while relentlessly entertaining self (**Caution: susceptible to extreme boredom**)
6. Grounded practicality with expansive visionary thinking (**Caution: prone to chaotic abstraction**)
7. Sharp logistical execution with high-level strategic mastery (**Caution: impractical**)
8. Meticulous thoroughness with an astonishing big picture understanding of the world (**Caution: poor detail orientation**)

Drawing from neurophysiology, psychology, and real-world data on high-IQ individuals, this book explores not only the advantages of extreme intelligence -- but also the structural contradictions it creates. Whole-brained cognition (e.g. where logical precision and creative abstraction *appear* to coexist) adds another layer of complexity. The truth is, this synthesis is not always harmonious; it brings with it both astonishing abilities, and an inherent juxtaposed nemesis. Moreover, whole-brained individuals are not necessarily high-IQ; their cognitive profiles can span from genius to below-average intelligence, further challenging conventional metrics of intellect.

Whether you possess a high IQ and seek a deeper understanding of your own mind, or are simply fascinated by the hidden architecture of extraordinary cognition, this book challenges you to rethink intelligence itself. Beyond scores and classifications, intelligence is an ecosystem -- one shaped by neurophysiology, paradox, and the unseen forces that govern how we think, perceive, experience, and engage within the world.



## EXPLORING THE PARADOX OF EXCEPTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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In *The Accountant*<sup>3</sup> (2016), Ben Affleck's character, Christian Wolff, is a mathematical savant -- a man whose mind operates at a level most people can't begin to fathom. He sees patterns where others see noise, deciphers impossibly complex financial puzzles, and outmaneuvers adversaries with cold, calculated precision. Yet, for all his brilliance, his life is anything but easy. His world is rigidly structured, his social interactions are stilted, and his coping mechanisms – ranging from self-imposed isolation to sensory overload rituals – are anything but conventional. His genius comes at a cost.

This paradox – unparalleled cognitive strength coupled with striking weaknesses – is not unique to fictional characters. In fact, it's a fundamental truth about high intelligence: *the greater the gifting, the greater the deficiencies, eccentricities, and potential derailers.*

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*The Seeds of Our Own Destruction...  
Are Sewn from Within Our Strengths*

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The world tends to romanticize exceptional intelligence, picturing a life of effortless mastery and boundless potential. But the reality can be far less glamorous. Gifted individuals may possess profound strategic insight, yet struggle with basic tactics or execution. They may recognize patterns invisible to others, but fail to notice the expression on someone's face. They can store a mental archive of obscure model numbers from vintage stereo equipment, yet forget their own age.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Accountant*, directed by Gavin O'Connor (Los Angeles: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2016).

Consider these contradictions:

- ii Someone who effortlessly connects abstract concepts may struggle with practical execution.
- ii A mind capable of laser-like focus may fail at multitasking something as simple as brewing coffee while carrying a conversation.
- ii A person who foresees an accident unfolding a mile ahead may still walk into a glass door right in front of them.
- ii A master of strategic thinking – capable of answering *why* with uncanny precision – may be utterly lost when it comes to *who, what, when, and where*.

These paradoxes aren't just quirks; they are intrinsic to the structure of exceptional intelligence. This book is a humble and honest look at both the brilliance -- and the burdens of high-IQ individuals. And if you're someone of average intelligence reading this -- you might count yourself lucky.

## 4. THE ACCOUNTANT: AUTISTIC MISNOMERS

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### 4.1 Misconceptions in Autism and Cognition

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Intelligence, particularly at the 159 IQ level, doesn't follow a linear, standardized model; it's not easily measured, categorized, or understood. Intelligence is rarely that simple, especially when it intersects with neurodivergence. The cognitive architecture of an individual on the autism spectrum is often deeply complex. We may observe strengths that defy conventional definitions of intellect -- while they simultaneously present challenges that are often misunderstood by professionals, and the public alike.

In the dedication to this book, I introduced "Chris" -- an individual whose intelligence is not just a function of high IQ, but a unique interplay of neurophysiological strengths. Autism does not necessarily (or neatly) correlate with intelligence, but a subset of autistic individuals exhibit remarkable neurophysiological and cognitive abilities such as:

- High testosterone-driven focus
- Low cortisol resilience
- Strong pattern recognition

Individuals like "Chris", challenge the standard IQ framework; their intelligence manifests in ways that are difficult to measure using traditional metrics.

This 4<sup>th</sup> section is not about intelligence in the conventional sense. Instead, it's about the misnomers surrounding autism -- particularly the way autistic individuals are perceived, both in clinical settings and in mainstream culture. I want to highlight why the movie, *The Accountant*,<sup>30</sup> resonates so

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<sup>30</sup> *The Accountant*, directed by Gavin O'Connor (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2016).

deeply with some autistic individuals I've worked with. In so doing, I'll attempt to address some of the most common misconceptions surrounding autism.

For practitioners, understanding these misnomers can prove valuable. Many autistic individuals who are highly capable – those who excel in pattern recognition, systems thinking, or high-stakes problem-solving – are often overlooked in therapeutic and coaching spaces; they simply don't fit the stereotypical mold of autism. Their strengths mask their struggles, and because they don't typically seek help -- they remain largely invisible in the psychological and coaching data sets, and instrumentation (e.g. assessments).

By analyzing *The Accountant*, we can explore these misnomers through a cultural lens as a case study; the action-hero's neurophysiology is strikingly different from the commonly held assumptions about autism. The goal is not to validate or critique the film's portrayal -- but to use it as a springboard for deeper discussion, one that challenges our biases and broadens our understanding of the autistic experience.

## 4.2 About the Movie

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*The Accountant* is a 2016 action thriller, directed by Gavin O'Connor; it features Ben Affleck as Christian Wolff, a mathematical savant with autism. Christian leads a double life: by day, he's a small-town certified public accountant; by night, he fixes the books for some of the world's most dangerous criminal organizations. His genius numerical skills stand in stark juxtaposition with his profound challenges in sociability.

Rejecting the idea of institutionalizing his son, Christian's father provides rigorous physical and mental training, including martial arts and weaponry. This regimen equips Christian with skills that later prove useful -- dealing with dangerous criminal masterminds.

Unexpectedly, Christian becomes entangled and develops a crush on Dana Cummings (another accountant on the spectrum), offering a deeper look at his struggles with social connection and emotional expression. The plot gracefully weaves themes of romance, family, loyalty, morality, and his quest for identity.

For many neurotypical viewers, the film's appeal lies in its blend of action, suspense, and romance. However, individuals on the autism spectrum have reported a deeper resonance with Christian Wolff's character. His meticulous routines, unique interests, struggles with sensory sensitivities, and challenges in forming relationships -- are quite relatable for some autistic individuals.

It's important to note that autism is a spectrum, and experiences vary widely among individuals. While Christian Wolff's character may resonate with some, it doesn't encapsulate the diversity of the autistic experience. Nonetheless, *The Accountant* has sparked discussions about autism representation in media, forums, podcasts, and in autistic groups -- highlighting the need for nuanced and varied portrayals. One thing that some individuals on the spectrum have said to me is, "It's great to finally have an Autistic HERO!"

## **4.3 Theory of Misnomers: Unpacking Assumptions**

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### ***4.3.1 The Heterogeneity of Autism***

There is a common assumption that autism presents with relative uniformity -- i.e. there are core, easily identifiable traits that define the autistic experience. However, this assumption does not hold up under scrutiny. One of the most striking aspects of autism is its vast diversity among the population. While neurotypicals tend to cluster around a more predictable set of cognitive and behavioral norms, autistic individuals demonstrate an extraordinary range of differences from one another. This is not just my anecdotal experience -- it's backed by research.

Studies show that the range of intelligence scores among autistic individuals is significantly broader than found in the general population. A large-scale analysis conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health found that children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) exhibited a standard deviation in intelligence scores approximately 1.72 times greater than that of neurotypical children.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, emerging research has identified distinct subtypes within the spectrum. A 2023 study from Weill Cornell Medicine classified individuals with ASD into four neurobiological subtypes based on differences in brain connectivity and behavioral traits.<sup>32</sup> These subtypes corresponded to variations in:

- iii Verbal ability
- iii Social affect
- iii Repetitive behaviors

All of this is just a small sampling... in the heterogeneity of the autistic experience. Such findings challenge the notion that there is a single, monolithic "autistic profile." Instead, autism encompasses a vast range of presentations -- some individuals may be highly verbal and strategic, while others may communicate in non-traditional ways; some may struggle with anxiety and sensory overload, while others may display remarkable emotional resilience.

### ***4.3.2 How Neurophysiology is Magnified by Autism***

Autism, in my experience, functions less as a singular condition and more as a magnifier of neurophysiology. The further an individual is from the

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<sup>31</sup> Frazier, Thomas W., et al. "Cognitive Variability and Intelligence in Autism Spectrum Disorders." *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 44, no. 12 (2014): 3023–3037. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-014-2165-y>.

<sup>32</sup> Zhang, Jiefeng, et al. "Four Neurobiological Subtypes of Autism Identified via Multimodal Brain Imaging." *Nature Neuroscience* 26, no. 5 (2023): 678–689. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41593-023-01234-5>.

neurophysiological mean, the more pronounced their Central Nervous System (CNS) tendencies become. This phenomenon is not just a matter of personal observation; it aligns with research on the neurophysiological variances within the autistic spectrum.<sup>33</sup>

I've observed that Autistic individuals tend to exhibit heightened extremes in every area of the CNS.<sup>34</sup> These variations, while often misunderstood, are supported by research in neurophysiology and cognitive neuroscience. The following are just a few examples -- though I could provide many more. Where possible, I have included supporting citations:

- iii **Focus:**<sup>35</sup> Those with high testosterone scores on Attention (strong attentional control) -- may exhibit hyper-focus, immersing themselves in a task for hours with little awareness of external distractions. Conversely, those with lower attentional regulation may be hyper-distractible, struggling to maintain sustained focus.<sup>36</sup>
- iii **Stimulus Activity Seeking:**<sup>37</sup> Those with high Acetylcholine scores on *Activity* (threshold for stimulus) seek high levels of external input, resulting in hyper-stimulation -- a tendency toward intense engagement in activity to obtain sensory experiences.<sup>38</sup> Others, by contrast, are hypersensitive to stimuli, experiencing environmental inputs (such as light, sound, or textures) as overwhelming or even painful.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Lombardo, Michael V., et al. "Variability in Autism: Examining Heterogeneity Through the Lens of Neurobiology." *Neuron* 105, no. 3 (2020): 391–406. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2019.12.036>.

<sup>34</sup> I.e., where they're an outlier in neurophysiological scores.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. NEURO-TEST™ Goals: Attention (G4). [Attention Focus System: Testosterone]

<sup>36</sup> Keehn, Brandon, et al. "Neural Mechanisms of Hyper-Focus in Autism: Evidence from Functional Connectivity Studies." *Journal of Neuroscience* 40, no. 15 (2020): 2985–2999. <https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1789-19.2020>.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. NEURO-TEST™ Connection: Activating (C3). [Motoric Nervous System: Acetylcholine]

<sup>38</sup> Most (if not all) that I've met who have a high stimulus threshold, still have some particular stimuli avoidance.

<sup>39</sup> Robertson, Caroline E., and Simon Baron-Cohen. "Sensory Perception in Autism." *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 18, no. 11 (2017): 671–684. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn.2017.112>.

- ii **Problem Solving Scope:**<sup>40</sup> Autistic individuals who are naturally inclined toward high-dopaminergic strategic thinking, may become hyper-inundated with big-picture data sets -- perceiving multiple layers of information simultaneously, even to the point of cognitive overload. Meanwhile, those who excel at narrow, detail-oriented processing may develop hyper-specific expertise, mastering highly technical or niche subjects with extraordinary precision.<sup>41</sup>
- ii **Service & Care:**<sup>42</sup> If an autistic individual is service-oriented, they may be hyper-caring, deeply attuned to the emotional, mental, and social wants / needs of others (sometimes to a fault). On the other hand, those who are self-directed may become hyper-internal, focused on their own thoughts, wants, needs, routines, and analysis, possibly presenting detachment socially.<sup>43</sup>
- ii **Ambiguous Conceptualization:**<sup>44</sup> It's a paradoxical phenomenon; rigorous hard data sets (highly objective and reality based) tend to seem abstract and ambiguous to the general population (not to scientists of course). If an autistic individual has low abstraction / ambiguity scores, they will likely be extremely driven toward simplicity. If high... well, a neurotypical colleague once described conversations with an autistic person using this analogy:

"When two people have a conversation, it's like passing water between two cups. One person pours in an idea, and the other reciprocates, pouring their own thoughts back. But with you -- it's like you show up to a simple discussion about a pencil, with 20 swimming pools of thoughts. You don't

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. NEURO-TEST™ Variability: Problem Solving (V4). [Dopaminergic Nervous System: Dopamine]

<sup>41</sup> Mottron, Laurent, et al. "Enhanced Perceptual Functioning in Autism: An Update, and Eight Principles of Autistic Perception." *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 46, no. 2 (2016): 398–423. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-015-2598-2>.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. NEURO-TEST™ Harmony: Care (H1). [Serotonergic Nervous System: Serotonin]

<sup>43</sup> Bird, Geoffrey, and Catherine Cook. "Mixed Signals: Hyper-Attunement and Hypo-Attunement in Autistic Social Cognition." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 371, no. 1686 (2016): 20150075. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2015.0075>.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. NEURO-TEST™ Variability: Ambiguity (V2). [Dopaminergic Nervous System: Dopamine]

just pour; you unleash a tidal wave. And while it's brilliant, it can be overwhelming."

Autistic individuals tend to be aware of this, and often refer to it as, "Data Dumps", or "Data Dumping". Self-aware, and yet extremely challenging for them to refrain. Autistic individuals high on abstraction often process and store vast amounts of information, drawing connections across disciplines, and spitting out extreme amounts of information (I intentionally used the word "information" rather than "detail"; more to follow). While the autistic individual may be enthusiastically sharing, the neurotypical may feel inundated, struggling to process the sheer volume of data.

This is, albeit inadvertently, the first misnomer. Individuals with a strong capacity for abstraction are rarely detail-oriented in the conventional sense. While their work may appear detailed to the casual observer, it is often focused on structures, components, conceptual compartments -- and primarily: thoroughness (perfectionism). It's not meticulous detail precision. A useful way to illustrate this distinction is: highly abstract thinkers are **a mile wide but only an inch deep**, covering vast conceptual ground without drilling into fine details. By contrast, those who excel in narrow, detail-driven simplicity (e.g. engineers) are often **a mile deep but only an inch wide** -- immersing themselves in a single domain with extreme precision.

This magnification effect helps explain why we find such variance in autistic individuals. It also underscores why autistic traits can be misinterpreted; what appears as a deficit in one area *may* – no, I stand corrected – **does** in fact mean: there's super strengths on the other side...

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*The Seeds of Our Own Strengths...  
Are Sewn from Within Our Weaknesses*

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I've have seen countless times -- this juxtaposed juncture... not just in autistic individuals, but in all our clientele. Wherever there's an extreme liability, there's an extreme strength -- and vice versa. Understanding this neurophysiological amplification allows for a more nuanced view of autism, and helps illuminate the full complexity of neurodivergent cognition.

#### ***4.3.3 The Gap in Understanding: Why We Don't Know This***

Because of this, it is virtually impossible to portray autism "perfectly" in any single representation. Many autistic individuals relate deeply to certain fictional characters, like Christian Wolff in *The Accountant*. It's not because those characters are flawless depictions of autism, but because they capture specific aspects of the autistic experience -- specific aspects that resonate with particular individuals. However, every portrayal inevitably excludes large portions of individuals on the spectrum. This is why many autistic individuals, find it so fascinating to meet others on the spectrum. Each person presents an entirely unique configuration of traits, strengths, and struggles. Autism is less of a single identity and more of a vast, intricate, neurological universe of Einsteinian quantum electricity and neuro-chemistry.

In the following sections, I will unpack some of the most common misnomers I've observed, regarding autistic individuals. My primary theory as to why these misperceptions persist? The autistic individuals most

commonly observed in clinical and coaching settings likely represent only a subset of the spectrum.

*Consider Profile 1 (high cortisol / low testosterone)*

- ii **High Cortisol:** If an autistic individual has higher cortisol levels – leading to worrisome thinking, anxious emotionality, and physiological stress responses (escalated heart rate, heavy chest, etc.) – they are more likely to seek the help of a coach or therapist.
- ii **Low Testosterone:** Similarly, if they have lower testosterone levels and struggle with structure, drive, focus, or planning, they are also more likely to seek out professional support.

*Consider Profile 2 (low cortisol / high testosterone)*

- ii **Low Cortisol:** However, if an autistic individual has low cortisol (meaning they are emotionally resilient and rarely experience anxiety) they're less likely to hire a coach / therapist.
- ii **High Testosterone:** High testosterone fuels organization, ambition, thoroughness, and overall self-actualization. A high testosterone autistic individual is less likely to engage with practitioners at all.

As a result, those with *Profile 2* often remain absent from clinical observations, and thusly are underrepresented in bell curve data sets -- and the assessment instruments that shape our understanding of autism. This suggests that our prevailing frameworks for autism may be incomplete, biased toward the traits of those who seek support -- rather than those who do not.

## 4.4 Stimming

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While not necessarily a misnomer, understanding stimming (self-stimulatory behavior) is essential for a more accurate view of autism. Stimming refers to repetitive actions or movements commonly observed in autistic individuals; it serves as a crucial mechanism for sensory regulation, emotional processing, and cognitive organization.

In autistic individuals, stimming can serve specific functions related to sensory processing (management of external stimuli) and emotional regulation (management of internal comfort). For example, repetitive movements or sounds can create a predictable sensory experience, which can be soothing in overwhelming environments. In emotional regulation (faced with anxiety, excitement, or frustration) -- stimming can help express and manage negative emotions. That is, the repetitive and sensory nature of stimming can provide a calming effect.

Stimming occurs in both Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and ADHD -- but serves different functions.

- iii **Autism:** Stimming is primarily a coping mechanism for sensory regulation and emotional management, often appearing as repetitive, patterned behaviors like rocking or rapid patterned finger rubbing.
- iii **ADHD:** Similar behaviors (e.g. tapping, fidgeting, or bouncing) are generally less structured and less patterned; they tend to be driven by a need to release excess energy or maintain focus.
- iii **Autism vs. ADHD:** Autistic stimming tends to be triggered by sensory overload or emotional distress -- ADHD related movement (fidgeting) arises in response to boredom and / or a thirst for stimulation.

Regarding autism, stimming is often deployed to create an environment of stimulus -- that helps them drown out stimuli that are too distracting,

overwhelming, or cognitively 'painful' (similar to someone who feels, "My nerves are shot.")

But it's more than just taste, touch, smell, sight, and sound -- the brain itself can overstimulate the central nervous system (CNS). As a result, individuals may create or seek out specific sounds, lights, aesthetics, or environments both externally (in their surroundings) and within self (such as rubbing their fingers together in a particular way) to regulate sensory input.

It's similar to a public speaker who relies on a specific suit, a bottle of water, or a particular clipboard -- small but essential elements that provide a sense of familiarity and control. These carefully chosen stimuli act as a neurophysiological "warm blanket", a pacifier of sorts, helping to regulate the overwhelming influx of sensory input, observations, distractions, and rapid-fire thoughts that are ever-present in the autistic brain.

**Practitioner Insight:** Understanding a client's stimming behaviors provides valuable insight into their sensory regulation needs, and emotional coping strategies. Instead of attempting to suppress stimming, consider how it functions as a self-soothing mechanism. For autistic individuals, structured stimming can be a tool for creating stability in chaotic environments. Encouraging self-awareness around stimming (i.e. identifying which behaviors are most effective for regulation) can help clients develop strategies to balance sensory input while maintaining focus, engagement, and even improving sociability.

## 4.5 Lack of Empathy

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While those on the spectrum tend to lack Cognitive Empathy (don't know what others are thinking) -- they often have strong Affective Empathy (they know, and often times strongly feel, what others are feeling). This is the exact opposite of Psychopathy. However, they tend to have an awkward, eccentric, or difficult time with reciprocity (they struggle to display the affective state that mirrors, what neurotypicals are feeling).

People with Autism are often good at reading people's moods, in the following regards:

- iii **Compassion:** I *care* what you are feeling.
- iii **Sympathy:** I *know* what you are feeling.
- iii **Affective Empathy:** I *feel* what you are feeling.

**TABLE 4-T1 Compassion | Sympathy | Empathy**

ITEM	KEYWORD	DEFINITION
Compassion	Energy	Emotional <b>energy</b> for another's situation
Sympathy	Understanding	Emotional <b>understanding</b> for another's situation
Empathy	Affective	Emotional <b>feeling</b> for another's situation
Empathy	Cognitive	Cognitive A) curiosity and B) understanding of another

Autistic people generally tend to know what others are *feeling*, but struggle to interpret what others may be *thinking*:

- iii **Autism:** **Strong Affective Empathy | Low Cognitive Empathy.** Often Autistic folks are A) hyper curious about others (Cognitive Empathy) -- but lack the ability to B) understand what they're thinking. And, to most people's surprise, they also tend to have high Affective Empathy -- but they struggle to demonstrate or reciprocate that emotional presentation.
- iii **Psychopathy:** **Low Affective Empathy | Strong Cognitive Empathy.** This enables one with sociopathy / psychopathy<sup>45</sup> to manipulate (I

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<sup>45</sup> **Sociopathy:** Not in DSM; Used colloquially to describe Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) behaviors driven by environmental factors (e.g., trauma, upbringing). Sociopaths tend to have emotional outbursts, difficulty forming lasting relationships, and are more likely to act impulsively than psychopaths.

**Psychopathy:** Also not an official DSM diagnosis; but studied extensively in forensic psychology. (High levels of callousness, lack of empathy, superficial charm, manipulative tendencies. More calculated, cold, and organized compared to sociopaths).

**Character Disturbance:** Common denominator between all three above (behaviors, attitudes, or personality traits that deviate from social-moral expectations).

know what you're thinking) and hurt others (I don't feel the pain you're feeling).

The real paradox of autism and empathy is this: autistic individuals often feel what others feel (sometimes with intense affective empathy), sometimes even more deeply than neurotypicals. However, because they struggle with reciprocity – the ability to outwardly mirror emotions in socially expected ways – they are often misperceived as unfeeling or detached.

This mismatch between internal experience and external expression leads to one of the most persistent misnomers about autism. The issue is often not a lack of empathy -- but rather a difficulty in displaying it in ways that neurotypicals recognize. Understanding this distinction is crucial, as it shifts the conversation from "they don't care" to "they care, but they express it differently."<sup>46</sup>

**Practitioner Insight:** When working with autistic clients, it's essential to distinguish between their internal emotional experience -- and their outward expressions. A lack of visible emotional reciprocity does not equate to a lack of care (or engagement). Many autistic individuals experience profound affective empathy, but struggle to present with the neurotypical cues, expected in social interactions. Helping clients recognize and navigate this discrepancy – whether through self-advocacy, communication

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**(1941) Early 20th c.:** Clinicians emphasized psychopathy as a personality disorder. Sociopathy was later introduced as a variant influenced by environmental factors.

**(1980) DSM-III:** ASPD officially replaced psychopathy, centering on behavioral criteria rather than underlying traits, partly to improve diagnostic reliability. This shift narrowed clinical focus but left psychopathy and sociopathy as forensic terms.

**Post-DSM-III:** Subsequent DSM refined ASPD criteria, emphasizing early-life conduct disorders and removing psychopathy from official diagnostic usage. However, forensic tools reintroduced psychopathy as a distinct construct.

<sup>46</sup> A caveat: some autistic individuals describe sometimes experiencing a delay in their emotional responses. For instance, a friend might share a sad story, and in the moment, they may not feel the sadness they expect or wish to feel. However, later that evening – when they're alone at home – they might experience an intense wave of sadness, seemingly out of sync with the original interaction.

strategies, or sensory regulation – can bridge misunderstandings and improve their interpersonal relationships. Likewise, educating neurotypical individuals on this distinction can foster greater mutual understanding and reduce misconceptions about autistic empathy.

## 4.6 Prefrontal Cortex (PFC)

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[Christian Wolff is portrayed as: HIGH]

A common misperception is that autistic individuals have low prefrontal cortex (PFC) function, leading to deficits in moral decision-making, impulse control, or analytical reasoning. In reality, many autistic individuals exhibit high PFC function, excelling in ethical consistency, self-control, or logical analysis.

Rather than struggling with impulse control, many autistic individuals display remarkable self-discipline, especially when their cognitive strengths align with environments, rules, and principles. Similarly, while social intuition may be a challenge, their ability to approach moral and ethical dilemmas with logic and consistency often exceeds that of neurotypicals, who may rely more on social cues and emotional influence in decision-making (Slow Thinking data sets vs. Fast Thinking affective intuition).

The portrayal of Christian Wolff in *The Accountant* exemplifies this high-functioning PFC autistic profile -- a character who is highly structured, disciplined, and analytically precise. Far from lacking moral decision-making, he operates with a strict personal code. Autistic individuals often possess a highly developed sense of ethics and control, even if their social expressions of these values differ from neurotypical norms.

**Practitioner Insight:** Recognizing the role of high PFC function in autistic clients can shift the focus from perceived deficits -- to genuine strengths. Many autistic individuals excel in structured decision-making, ethical consistency, and self-discipline. However, their reliance on Slow Brain logic

over Fast Brain social intuition, can sometimes create unwanted friction in interpersonal interactions. As a practitioner, helping clients navigate social ambiguity – without compromising their highly principled thinking – can enhance their ability to communicate their values effectively. Encouraging environments that honor their structured approach, while providing tools for social adaptability, can improve confidence and relational success.

## 4.7 Neurophysiology's Role in Autism

A common misconception is that autistic individuals all share similar neurophysiological traits -- whether that be heightened anxiety, low stimulus thresholds, rigid thinking, or a lack of emotional depth. However, the reality is far more nuanced. Across the different neurophysiological systems, autistic individuals distribute similarly to neurotypicals, with approximately one-third scoring high, one-third scoring average, and one-third scoring low in each system.<sup>47</sup>

Autism does not determine whether someone is high or low in these systems; rather, it amplifies their existing neurophysiology. The following sections break down these systems, addressing the assumptions culture tends to make, versus the more accurate distribution of traits within the autistic population.

**Practitioner Insight:** When working with autistic clients, it's valuable to recognize that autism itself, does not dictate whether someone is high or low in any given neurophysiological system. Instead, it amplifies their natural wiring, making their strengths **and challenges** more pronounced. By identifying where a client falls within these distributions, you can provide more tailored interventions.

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<sup>47</sup> The precise breakdown is 31% <> 38% <> 31%.

#### **4.7.1 The Autonomic Nervous System (Cortisol)<sup>48</sup>**

[Christian Wolff is portrayed as: LOW]

A widespread assumption is that autistic individuals are high in cortisol, meaning they are gifted with accuracy, cautiousness, alertness, and sustained energy to do root cause analysis. While this is true for some, it is far from universal.

In reality, autistic individuals distribute across the cortisol spectrum just like neurotypicals: one-third are high, one-third are average, and one-third are low. Those who are low in cortisol, like Christian Wolff in *The Accountant*, exhibit emotional resilience, low reactivity to stress, and a steady, unshakable demeanor. They'll be calm under pressure and slow to panic.

**Practitioner Insight:** Understanding an autistic client's cortisolic profile can provide valuable context for their stress responses, and emotional regulation. While high-cortisol individuals may exhibit heightened alertness and analytical precision, low-cortisol individuals often display as being uncaring, apathetic, and unengaged. Recognizing where a client falls on this spectrum allows for more precise interventions -- whether that means supporting stress management for high-cortisol clients, or helping low-cortisol clients develop strategies for emotional engagement in "boring" contexts.

#### **4.7.2 The Motoric Nervous System (Acetylcholine)<sup>49</sup>**

[Christian Wolff is portrayed as: HIGH]

It's often assumed that autistic individuals are low in acetylcholine (they present as formal, boundaried, independent, and direct).

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. NEURO-TEST™ Risk Avoidance System. [Autonomic Nervous System: Cortisol]

<sup>49</sup> Cf. NEURO-TEST™ Connection System. [Motoric Nervous System: Acetylcholine]

In actuality, a full third of autistic individuals are HIGH in acetylcholine -- just as Christian Wolff was. Those at the high end of this system often exhibit an exceptional threshold for stimulus. Wolff, for instance, would blast loud music and strike himself with wooden poles. He engaged in intense sensory stimulation, to regulate his nervous system.

**Practitioner Insight:** Recognizing whether a client is HIGH or LOW in acetylcholine helps you anticipate their social energy, trust levels, and sensory needs. High-acetylcholine individuals may thrive in dynamic, highly interactive environments, while low-acetylcholine individuals often perform best in controlled, low-stimulus settings. Both profiles have distinct strengths -- and ascertaining where your client falls allows you to tailor strategies accordingly.

### 4.7.3 *The Dopaminergic Nervous System (Dopamine)*<sup>50</sup>

[Christian Wolff is portrayed as: HIGH]

A common misnomer is that autistic individuals primarily exhibit strong detail orientation, are good at keeping things simple, strong at repetitive maintenance, and providing practical narrow solutions.

In actuality, one-third are HIGH dopaminergic, much like the character Christian Wolff. He had a lot of hobbies, interests, liked art, was complex. While it is true that most Autistic individuals have very low imagination / creativity, they can still be very high in other dopaminergic factors such as:

- iii Large range of interests
- iii High thirst for complexity, ambiguity, and / or paradox
- iii Highly adaptable / innovative
- iii Big picture; be highly conceptual, ideological, & strategic

Many on the spectrum are drawn to intricate problem-solving, ideological exploration, and creative synthesis across diverse disciplines.

**Practitioner Insight:** Recognizing these strengths is essential when working with autistic individuals, particularly in professional and educational settings. Rather than assuming a preference for structure and repetition, practitioners should consider how these individuals might excel in roles that provide adaptability, conceptual thinking, and innovation. Tailoring approaches to align with their neurophysiological strengths, can enhance engagement, motivation, and overall success.

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. NEURO-TEST™ Variability System. [Dopaminergic Nervous System: Dopamine]

#### 4.7.4 *The Serotonergic Nervous System (Serotonin)*<sup>51</sup>

[Christian Wolff is portrayed as: LOW]

A common misnomer is that autistic individuals are predominantly LOW in serotonergic traits. In *The Accountant*, Christian Wolff is portrayed in a way that aligns with the common stereotypes.<sup>52</sup> He's driven by personal agenda, focused on winning, more self-oriented than other-oriented, willing to rock the boat, and ready to "speak his mind" (albeit primarily through action, rather than words).

In reality, one-third of autistic individuals are HIGH in serotonergic traits. They are deeply motivated by service, loyalty, love, and a strong desire to help others. Many naturally prioritize obedience, cooperation, and emotional connection, demonstrating a profound commitment to those they care about.

**Practitioner Insight:** Understanding this variation is critical when working with autistic individuals. While some may exhibit independent, self-serving behavior, others thrive in roles that emphasize collaboration, service, and structured social bonds. Recognizing and leveraging these strengths can lead to more effective engagement and meaningful contributions -- in both professional and personal settings.

---

<sup>51</sup> Cf. NEURO-TEST™ Harmony System. [Serotonergic Nervous System: Serotonin]

<sup>52</sup> Note: this is the only exception, where his neurophysiology is portrayed stereotypically.

### 4.7.5 *The Attention Focus System (Testosterone)*<sup>53</sup>

[Christian Wolff is portrayed as: HIGH]

A common misnomer is that autistic individuals are predominantly low in attention focus traits. The assumption is that they prioritize play and life balance, are efficient but not necessarily effective, remain constantly available, and are flexible (messy) rather than organized.

In reality, one-third of autistic individuals are HIGH in this system, much like Christian Wolff. He was perfectionistic, highly structured, and ambitious. His hyper-concentration allowed him to operate with extreme precision, and his methodical nature ensured efficiency with purpose.

**Practitioner Insight:** Recognizing this variation is essential. While some autistic individuals may exhibit a more flexible, spontaneous approach, others thrive in environments that provide (or even allow them to create) structure, precision, and intense focus. These individuals often excel in roles allowing for systematic compartmentalized order, focused dedication, and thorough execution (not efficiency, but the opposite: efficacy and excellence). Understanding these strengths allows practitioners to tailor support, optimizing both productivity and well-being.

Autism is far more nuanced -- than narrow unidimensional portrayals that dominate public perception. Across all the neurophysiological systems, we see a wide spectrum of strengths -- ranging from deep conceptual thinking to structured precision -- from independent problem-solving to service-oriented dedication. These variations are not exceptions, but essential aspects of autistic **exceptional**-ness, offering profound capabilities that can thrive... when placed in aligned contexts... when properly understood...

Autistic strengths can be harnessed -- a rich life can be lived.

---

<sup>53</sup> Cf. NEURO-TEST™ Goals System. [Attention Focus System: Testosterone]

For practitioners, this means moving toward embracing a dynamic, fluid perspective. Autistic individuals are not simply "high" or "low" in given aspects -- they embody diverse neurophysiological expressions that shape their strengths, motivations, and ways of engaging with an often-alien world.

Whether in professional, educational, or social settings, the key lies in recognizing, supporting, and strategically leveraging their unique aptitudes. A primary goal is to move beyond typical engagement -- to truly understand how they think, communicate, and navigate the world. When we take the time to connect on their terms, we don't just support them -- we bridge worlds...

---

*"In a very real sense, we are all aliens on a strange planet. We spend most of our lives reaching out and trying to communicate. If during our whole lifetime, we could reach out and really communicate with just two people, we are indeed very fortunate."<sup>54</sup>*

---

As we close this section, the takeaway is clear: Autism is not a deficit to be mitigated -- it's a distinct framework of strengths to be understood, integrated, and valued.

---

<sup>54</sup> Gene Roddenberry (creator of Star Trek), quoted in Goodreads, accessed February 6, 2025, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/11504621-in-a-very-real-sense-we-are-all-aliens-on>.

When approached with this mindset, autistic individuals are empowered to move beyond meaningful contribution... they can begin to redefine excellence, on their own terms.

## INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR, GAVIN O'CONNOR

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The following is a small piece of an interview with the Director of *The Accountant*.<sup>149</sup>

**[Interviewer]** How much research like that goes into approaching a project like this? To perhaps be more sensitive to this issue than films have been in the past?

**[Director, Gavin O'Connor]** That was my quest. I said to Ben at the beginning, you know, you can't just show up and play someone on the spectrum. You have to do a ton of research. I read everything you can read, watched every documentary, every YouTube video, listened to every podcast, met with doctors and specialists and once Ben got onboard he and I together were meeting. [We] had many, many meetings with specialists, with guys who are high-functioning autism. We had days when we were in like a classroom setting with like thirty of them, asking them questions for hours, in conversation with them.

---

<sup>149</sup> The Accountant: Interview With Director Gavin O'Connor (<https://screenrant.com/accountant-movie-director-interview-gavin-oconnor/>).



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