



Narrating experience: the advantage of  
using mixed expressive media to bring  
autistic voices to the fore in discourse  
around their support requirements

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# PhD Journey/Data Collection

- Evaluation of a support service used methods informed by autistics:
  - Questionnaires
  - Narrative diaries
  - Photomontage/collage
- Doctoral study explored underused data:
  - Narrative diaries
  - Photomontage/collage

# Research Questions

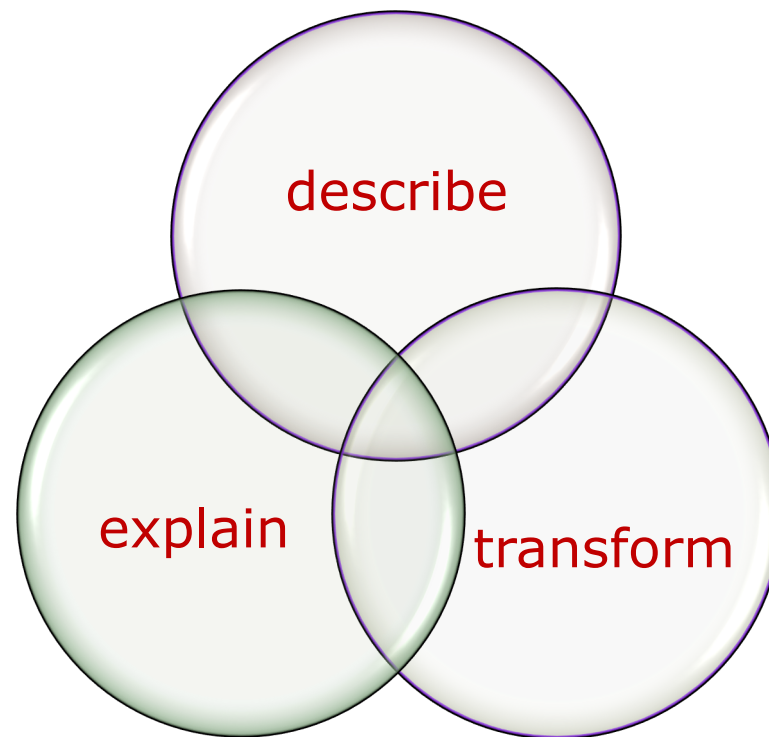
## Meta Research Question

How can data informing an evaluation of a support service be explored in greater depth in a research study to understand how some autistic individuals conceptualise their experiences?

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1. How do mixed expressive media enable autistic adults to voice their feelings and thoughts about themselves and their future?
2. How do the narratives of autistic adults inform us about their identity and wellbeing?
3. In what context(s) are these narratives taking place, and how is power situated within this?

*'For me, all social theory must be judged on three interrelated elements: its adequacy in **describing experience**; its ability to **explain experience**; and finally, its potential to **transform experience**.'* Oliver (1990)



# Interpretative Phenomenology

- Places autistics as the expert in their experiences
- Explores how people make sense of their personal and social world
- Introduce the double hermeneutic
- Introduced an element of power

# Narrative Enquiry

- Small stories embraced and context emphasised
- Attention shift from 'what happened' to 'how people make sense of what happened'
- Different lenses: purpose, narrator, audience, environment, retrospective meaning-making
- Different typologies:
  - visual and dialogic/performative

# Critical Realism

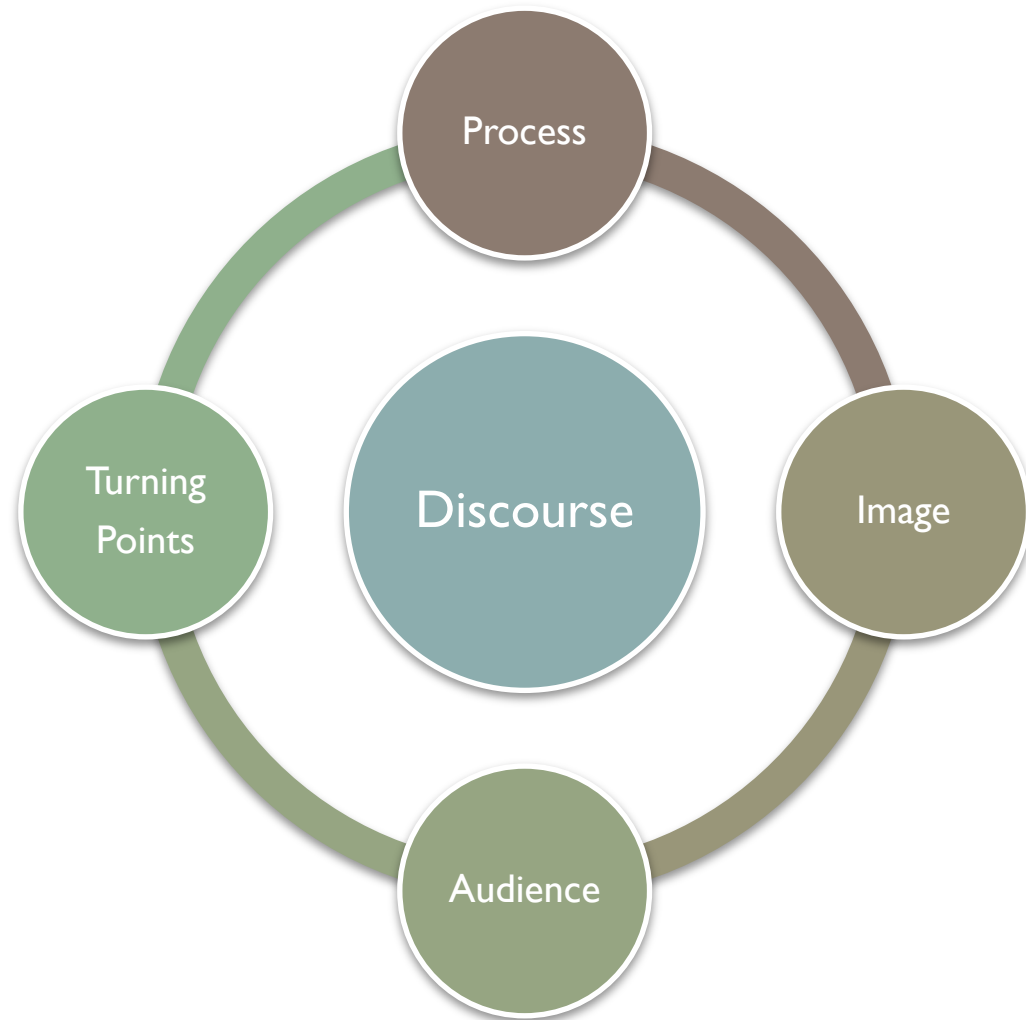
- Language, context and power (dominant groups)
- Diverse layers of discourse
- Discourse in a range of forms: text, visual, performative

# Development of Analytical Framework

Theory	Contribution
Phenomenology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Considers individual subjective experiences in temporal context</li><li>-Places individual as the expert</li></ul>
Narrative Enquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Events sequenced for later action</li><li>- Allows combination of formats</li></ul>
Critical Realism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Addresses issues of agency, structure and power</li><li>- Cross-disciplinary</li></ul>



# Sites of Meaning Making



# Meaning Making

- Micro Analysis
  - use of themes from research questions
- Macro Analysis
  - use of themes from research questions

# Case Study 1

SOPHIE

- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Planning Future
- ✓ Family

Managing  
Communicating clearly

Managing Time  
Shopping  
Childcare  
Unhappy

- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Money

Situations

- ✓ Understanding
- College Work

Uncertain  
Benefits  
Anxiety  
Jobs / Careers

Solving Problems

- ✓ Travelling
- ✓ Confidence
- ✓ Future Advise / Support

- Feeling
- ✓ Comfortable

FRIENDS  
Managing money

- ~~Conversations~~
- ✓ Counselling / Doctor

# Sophie - draft collage



# Sophie - collage

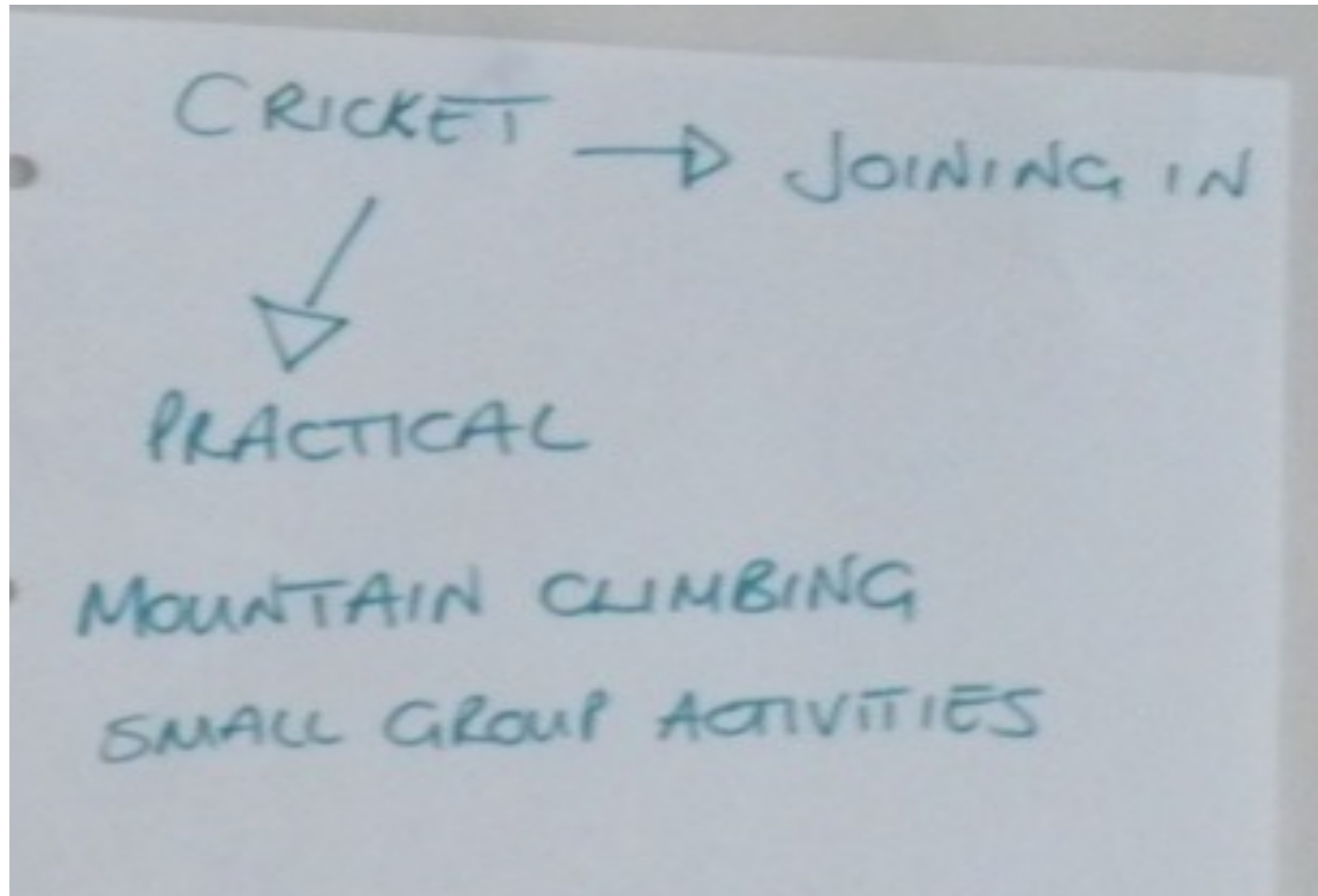


# Case Study 2

**PETER**



# Peter - mind map (1)





# Peter - mind map (2)

Communication.

One thing at a time

No questions.

Small groups.

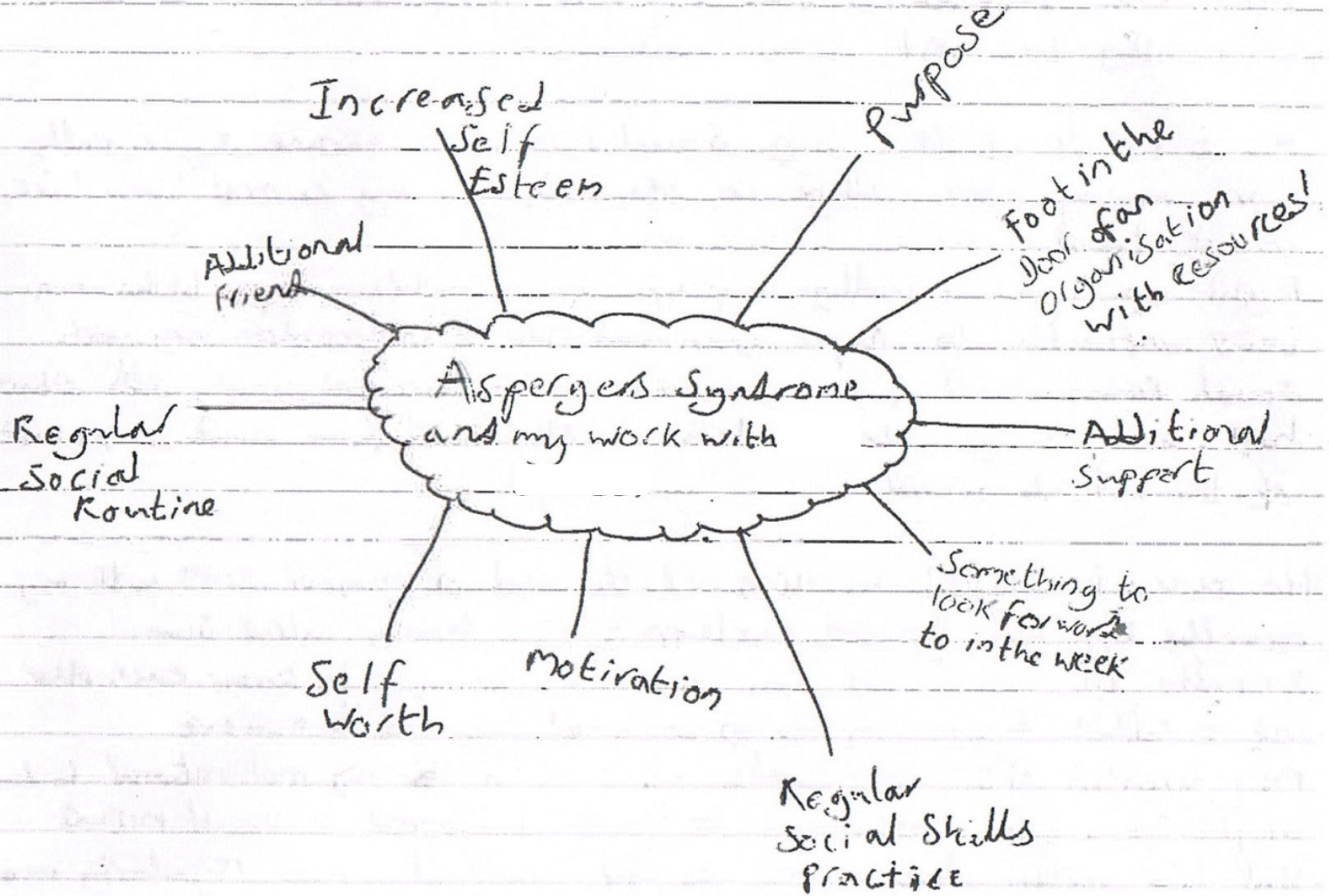
Learning Italian.

Rules and strategies. Make things work.

# Case Study 3

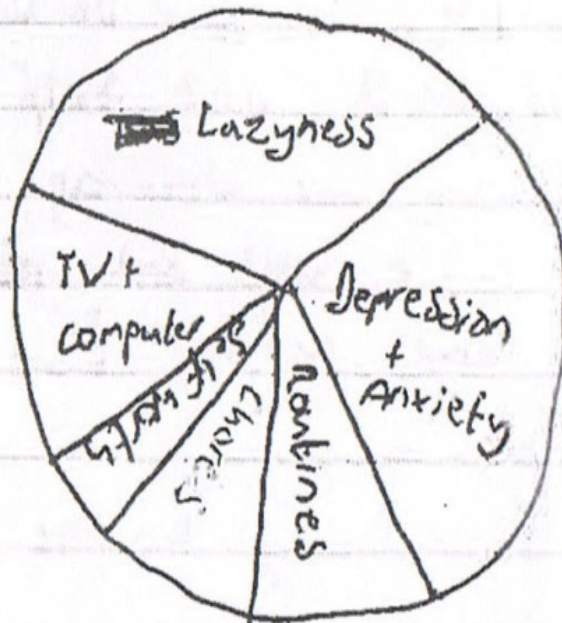
**MICHAEL**

# Michael - Narrative Diary (1)



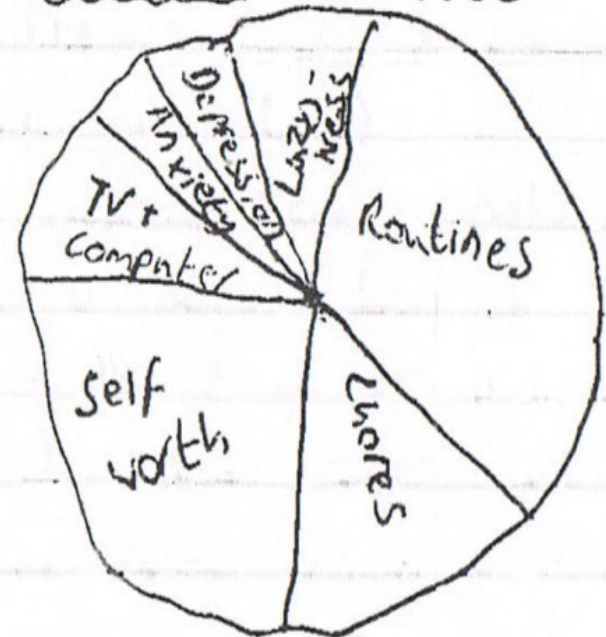
# Michael - Narrative Diary (2)

Pre my work with



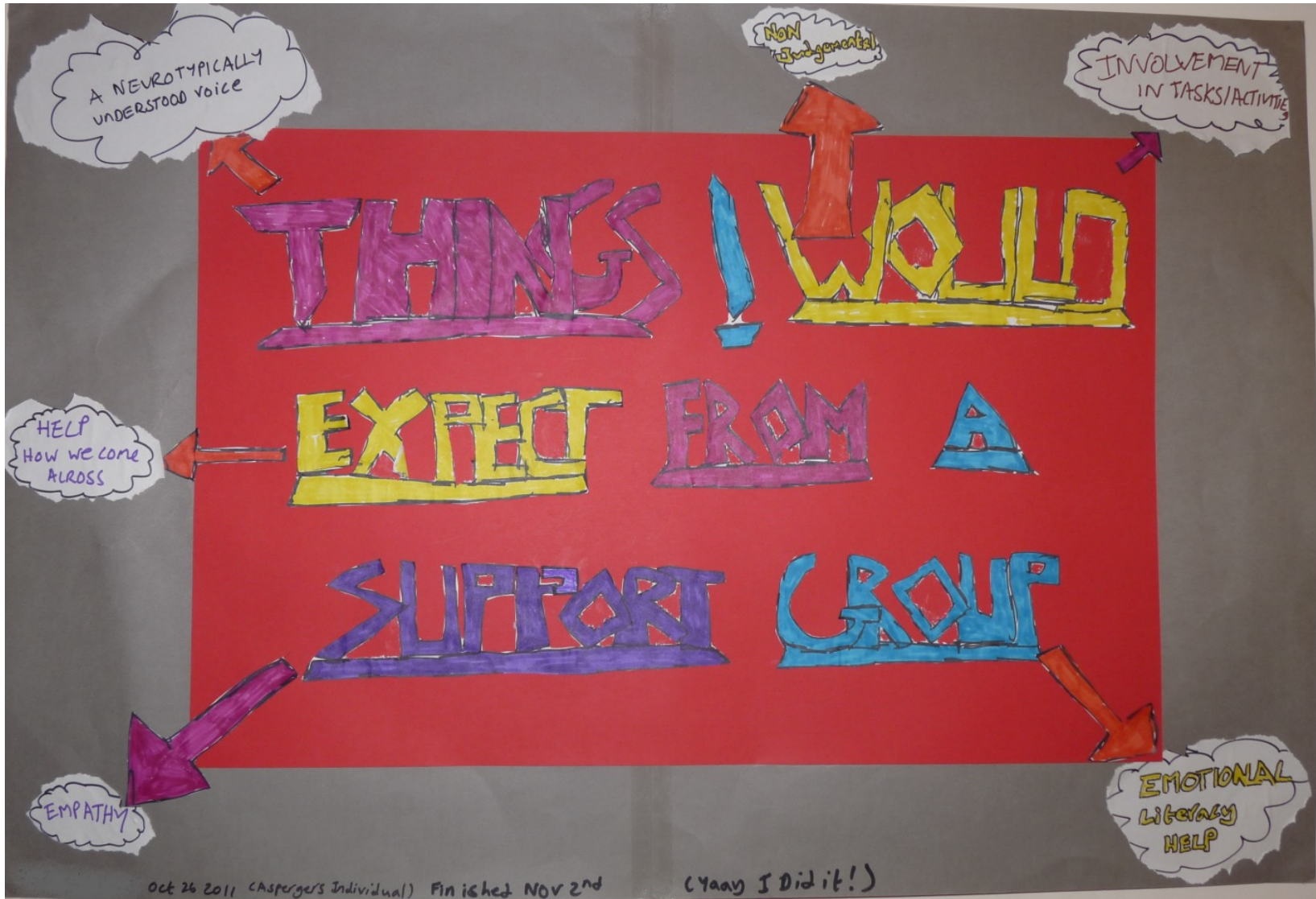
July 2009

After 4 months work



December 2009

# Michael Collage





Thank you