



 **Cork Autism**
Conference 2019
**AUTISM: NO LIMITS,
JUST POSSIBILITIES**
SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 22ND,
2019, 8:00 AM - 6:00PM
CLAYTON SILVERSPRINGS HOTEL, CORK

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Speaker Profiles



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Dr. Peter Vermeulen is a **Bestselling Author**, **Senior Lecturer**, **Trainer & Consultant in Autism**.

His presentation will be exploring:

*From Neurodiversity to Neuroharmony. Plea For
A Smaller But Stronger Autism.*

WATCH a video of Dr. Peter Vermeulen on Autism, Happiness and Wellbeing [HERE](#)

Dr. Vermeulen is a **Psychologist and Co-director of Autisme Centraal**, a training and education center specializing in Autism in Belgium.

Peter Vermeulen, PhD has more than **30 years of experience** in the field of autism.

He has a Masters in Psychology and Pedagogical Sciences at the University of Leuven, Belgium (1985) and **PhD in Psychology and Pedagogical Sciences** at the University of Leiden, The Netherlands (2002).

From 1987 till 1998, he worked for the **Flemish Autism Association**, first as home trainer for families with a child with autism, later as director of the home training centre and finally as trainer / lecturer.

Since 1998 he has worked as **Autism Consultant / Lecturer / Trainer** at Autisme Centraal.

He is **Chief Editor of “Autisme Centraal”**, a bi-monthly magazine of Autisme Centraal.

He also is **President of the editorial board** of the Belgian-Dutch Journal of Special Education, Child Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology.

Dr. Vermeulen has **published more than 15 books** and several articles on autism, such as:

- “This is the title: on autistic thinking” (2001)
- “I am Special: handbook for psycho-education” (2000, revised edition 2013), and
- “Autism as context blindness” (2012), a book which has won several awards in the USA

About his presentation:

With more than 10 scientific articles per day, autism (as synonym for autism spectrum disorder) is just about the most studied condition in the world. We need all this research to increase our understanding of a condition that suffers like no other from myths and misconceptions.

However, all the research and all the information about how different, specific and unique autism is, has made us forget that people with autism are not only different, but that they share more than we think with all the other people, especially when it comes to basic needs such as happiness.

Accepting neurodiversity is fine, but it emphasizes the differences between people. While it is a big step towards more acceptance of autism as one of the many ways a brain can operate, it is only the first step in our commitment to a better world and more well-being for people with autism.

We should also focus on what connects people with autism with the rest of the human species: the pursuit of happiness and the wish to be seen as a 'citizen' with rights and duties, and – above all – as someone who can contribute to society in order to have a purposeful and meaningful life.

It is time to say goodbye to the traditional models of disability (the medical model and the social model) and start working from a citizenship model when thinking about autism. In order to do so, we need to make autism smaller but stronger again.

It is a label given to people whose brain is a bit differently wired (but not completely!): nothing more but also nothing less than that. Acknowledging all the things that people with autism share with the rest of the people in the neurodiversity spectrum is the first step towards neuroharmony.

An example of good practice and source of good inspiration for visioning autism in the future could already be found in the eighties in Boston. More in particular, in a bar...

After this presentation you will be convinced that

- People with autism are more than their autism
- Every person with autism can contribute to society
- It's more useful to look for strengths and skills than for deficits and impairments
- People with and without autism have more in common than you would think
- A positive approach of well-being in autism is more than monitoring, preventing and treating mental health issues

www.petervermeulen.be



Anna Kennedy OBE is an Autism Advocate, Author, Mother, Founder UK Autism Charity Anna Kennedy Online.

Anna will be exploring:

Autism And The Performing Arts

WATCH a TedTalk of Anna Kennedy OBE sharing how **Autism is an Inspiration, Not An Illness** [HERE](#)

Anna's two sons, **Patrick, 27 and Angelo, 24**, were both diagnosed with autism as young children.

The severity of their conditions meant that they were turned away from local mainstream schools, as they couldn't cater for their individual needs. Both boys were finally offered just five hours of home tuition per week.

Anna decided something had to be done for her boys, and with the help of her husband, she took on the challenge of setting up a school . They relentlessly fundraised and re-mortgaged their home to raise funds, and in 1999 **Hillingdon Manor Manor School** finally opened its doors.

Starting out with 19 pupils the school now teaches 175, and is the largest school of its kind for children on the autism spectrum.

Anna has since set up **Baston House School** and respite home for adults as well as an autism awareness charity.

In recognition of her work Anna was awarded an **OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list 2012** for her services to special needs education and autism

Her charity, **Anna Kennedy Online**, provides support and advice about autism-related issues to thousands of parents and carers and promotes inclusion and equality for those with the condition. She provides various training and also runs numerous fundraising and awareness events throughout the year.

Anna is also a **UK Autism Ambassador**, **Finalist BBC Peoples Strictly 2015** and **Founder Autism's got Talent**

She is the **Author** of the book: ***“Not Stupid”***

About Anna’s presentation:

Anna Kennedy has been showcasing autistic children and adults across the UK in the well known Autism’s Got Talent.

You will leave this session inspired and see a ‘can do’ attitude

Many children and adults on the autism spectrum are bullied at school, in the community and more online.

Anna will talk about how performing arts has helped autistic children and adults improve self confidence and discover talents in music, poetry, drama and dance etc.

www.annakennedyonline.com



Jessie Hewitson is a Mother, Award-Winning Journalist and Bestselling Author.

Jessie's presentation is:

How to Raise a Happy Autistic Individual

Jessie is an **Award-Winning Journalist** with **The Times** and **The Sunday Times** from London.

She is **Author** of the Bestselling book: **Autism: How to Raise a Happy Autistic Child.**

Her book looks at autism as a difference rather than a disorder to be fixed and explores ways you can adapt the autistic individual's environment to help them. The focus of the book is on how support an autistic person to be happy.

The book combines her own experiences with tips from autistic adults, other parents - including **Author David Mitchell** - as well as advice from autism professionals and academics such as **Professor Simon Baron Cohen**.

About Jessie's presentation:

Jessie will look at the barriers: the pressure to mask; the lack of appropriate mental health support for autistic people; the problems within the education system and with employment and also the medical model of autism.

She will explore how best we can support autistic children and adults, based on her research and interviews with autistic adults.

She will look at how your own outlook on autism and your children's difference – as parents, professionals and carers – can affect a child's happiness and examine how, in subtle ways, we can be placing pressure on our children to be more like "us" (assuming the parent is non-autistic).



Geoff Evans, is an **International Trainer** and **Consultant in Autism**.

Geoff's presentation will look at:

A holistic Approach to Supporting Individuals with Autism with Behaviours that Challenge.

Geoff has worked with children with autism, adults and their families for thirty-five years. This has included twenty years working as **Head of Social Services** with the **National Autistic Society** and **Senior Lecturer in autism at Sheffield University**.

Geoff has qualifications in social work, Management and a MEd (distinction) in Training and Development.

Over the past twenty-five years he has delivered training to professionals and parents in the UK, Europe and the Middle East. His training has been described as inspirational and very practical. Has been shortlisted for the **Lifetime Achievement Award** with the UK, **National Autistic Society** and the **Bussion-lang award**

His current interests include Autism and happiness through the life stages, Holistic approach to behaviours of concern and Autism Adolescence Sexuality and boundaries.

Geoff has worked with children and adults and their families for thirty-five years. This has included twenty-one years with the National Autistic Society working in residential and school settings. He worked for ten years as Head of compliance and quality for the Options group a provider of autistic specialist schools and homes.

Geoff is a frequent conference speaker on holistic approaches to behaviours of Concern, sexuality adolescence and autism, sensory and behaviour and Happiness and wellbeing.

Books and articles which Geoff have written are:

- Chapter in **Autism and Learning a guide to good practice**, Stuart Powel and Rita Jordan Classic edition 2011.
- **Good autism practice journal** 2015, Outdoor adventure programme one young man's experience May 2013.
- **Network Autism March** 2015. Using the SPELL framework to support best practice and partnership when working with children with autism.

About Geoff's presentation:

In this session you will gain:

- How **behaviour which challenges** in autism is complex requiring a complex and holistic response.
- How **Individual and organisational responses** including values, beliefs, understanding and responses impact upon behaviour.
- Understanding of **what contributes to challenging behaviour** in autism including communication, environmental factors, sensory issues, anxiety and stress and lack of meaningful activities and engagement.
- Knowledge and insight of how building on **strengths and abilities**, promoting **happiness, wellbeing** and developing social and life skills contribute to supporting with behaviours that challenge.
- **Practical approaches and solutions** to behaviours of concern including supporting with self-regulation, self-managing high levels of stress and anxiety and communicating more effectively.

Whilst this talk does not view behaviours in autism as problems the areas, Geoff will address how we need to move away from trying to make autistic people behave "*normally*" and seek to enable them to develop the skills and behaviours to manage their own behaviours and achieve the best possible outcomes available to them.

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