

JUST SOME THOUGHTS

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Paranoia, or operating under different constructs for behavior?

People with autism operate under behavioral constructs of 'correct vs. incorrect', also known as the Laws of Nature. This phenomenon leaves them confused when socially-oriented people present behavior that is based upon the values and mores of their respective cultures (i.e., morphing 'correct vs. incorrect' constructs for behavior into 'right vs. wrong' constructs).

When people with autism are confronted with the discordance between their correct/incorrect constructs and others' right/wrong constructs, they become anxious, argumentative, and often feel that the world is against them (i.e., they appear paranoid). Consequently, this author has found that individuals on the autism spectrum are too often erroneously diagnosed as Paranoid Schizophrenic later in life.

Is it paranoia? I think not. Rather, it is a different way of looking at the constructs for behavior, one that is based upon the Laws of Nature unfettered by social values and mores.

Hallucinations, or thoughts triggered by physical or emotional events?

It is well established that individuals with autism have hyperactive amygdalae; the amygdala is a region of the brain associated with the formation of unpleasant and highly emotional memories that, when triggered, can stimulate the reticular formations in the brainstem, leading to a fight, flight or freeze response.

When confronted with stimuli associated with unpleasant memories, individuals with autism often exhibit aggressive meltdowns, impulsive darting away/escaping, or freezing behaviors, such as falling to the floor. These 'triggers' are not limited to physical stimuli; triggers can take on any sensory modality (sight, sound, smell, touch, etc.) associated with an unpleasant event.

Oftentimes, individuals with autism will articulate the 'trigger' before engaging in the aforementioned behavioral response[s]. For example, "I hear voices!" before the individual clasps his ears and runs screaming from the room. Was this a hallucination? Or, was this a declaration that the individual was overwhelmed by all the noise/voices in the room?

So, *was* this a hallucination? I think not. It is more probable that the behavior was an articulation of a triggered memory/event resulting from a history of being traumatized by overwhelming auditory input. The behavior was not a hallucination, a qualifying symptom of schizophrenia, where one 'hears' imaginary instruction or other directives not discernible by others.