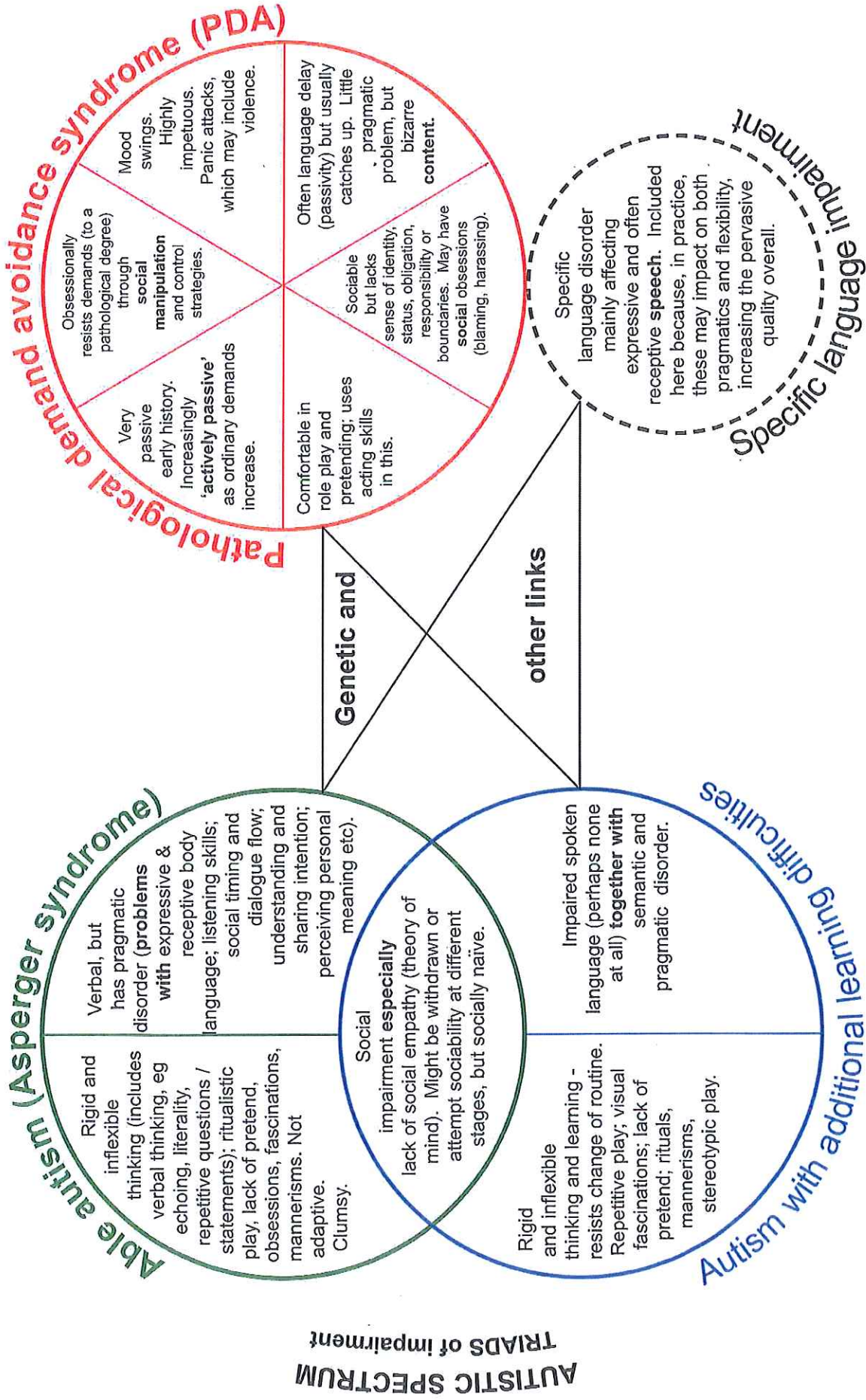


THE 'FAMILY' OF PERVASIVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

(sometimes 'autistic spectrum' is loosely used to describe the whole family)



(The diagram shows clusters of symptoms making up specific disorders/syndromes)

EXPLANATION

- ❖ This diagram shows **clusters of symptoms (syndromes)** which make up specific disorders within the family . These will vary in mildness or severity, and intellectual ability will make a significant difference (as in any disability); so will underlying **personality**.
- ❖ Occasionally a child will show a cluster of symptoms that falls **between** these typical clusters. This is described as **non-specific pervasive developmental disorder**. However, sometimes this child will more clearly belong to a typical cluster as time goes on and particular symptoms take on greater prominence.
- ❖ In every case, the child or adult has difficulty in coding or **making sense of** a particular area of communicative life where we usually regard making sense as biologically normal. This is not necessarily in terms of spoken language, but may be about the non-verbal ways in which we understand each other, such as **meanings and intentions**, or **identity and obligation**.
- ❖ None of these children chooses to be the way they are. These are **biological**, sometimes **genetic**, disorders. However difficult the behaviour arising from them, the child is not wilfully being naughty, and cannot easily behave differently; though we may be able to help him or her to improve over time. None of these conditions has an emotional **cause**, although any might make a child behave emotionally, especially if misunderstood.
- ❖ **Differential diagnosis has practical implications**. Each of these disorders has its own guidelines for education and management, which have different emphases. Some guidelines suitable for one condition may be very unhelpful for another. This is why accurate diagnosis is important. Specific educational management is essential in all cases, having regard also to individuality.
- ❖ In Asperger syndrome the child usually becomes increasingly aware of his difficulties as he moves into adolescence. This, combined with an increasing wish for friends (often unfulfilled), may lead to anger or clinical depression, and a need for informed and sensitive counselling.

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