

Melanie Martinelli & The Little Black Duck

Autism education,
consultation, and support

Melanie has a Master's Degree in Autism Studies through Griffith University and is currently applying to become a Registered Developmental Educator. She has been working with autistic people for over a decade. Melanie herself is autistic and has four autistic children. This has helped to make her adept at relating to and understanding the unique needs of autistic adults and children.

Melanie is the lead Researcher and Presenter for the Albury Wodonga Autism Community of Practice and sits on the Governance committee for Amaze's Autism Connect. Prior to its finishing up, she was on the Governance committee for the Mindful Autism Assessment Capability and Capacity (MACC) project.

Melanie has presented at major autism conferences, such as APAC, The Victorian Autism Conference, and has had poster presentations at both ASFAR and ECIS. She runs workshops and education programs about autism and trains people in Lego®- based therapy. She has also developed a journal-based program helping people understand anxiety.

Melanie is trained to use the MIGDAS, SACS-R and ADOS-2 and has undertaken additional training in Differential Diagnosis, and Autism and Anxiety through Mindful and The University of Melbourne. She has completed additional formal training in DIR-Floortime®, Autplay®, Trauma informed practice, Client-centred Support, Narrative Therapy, and Play-based Therapeutic approaches.

Melanie is now available for Pre-school autism screeners (free-of-charge) using the SACS-R Screener Assessment tool, and Adult and Child Autism Assessments using both the ADOS and MIGDAS-2 Assessment tools. She is qualified to provide formal assessment reports to individuals and families that can be used by pediatricians, psychologists or psychiatrists to determine an autism diagnosis in the same way a Speech Pathologist or Occupational Therapist can.

Methodology

Melanie has developed a unique methodology, based in autistic lead research, focusing on developing the strengths in autistic development, that encourages Authentic Autistic Development. Her methodology is based on 3 pillars of autistic cognition and thinking styles, sensory awareness and how it informs identity and safety, and how autistic people seek and develop connections with others.

The traditional model of support and intervention is based on a deficit-focused research model, focused on neuro-normative development, that does not include autistic voices in its conceptualisation and development. Research underpinning Melanie's methodology recognises autism as a minority neuro-type and seeks to understand and support how the autistic neurotype functions authentically. Her focus is on improving autistic wellbeing and providing a safe space that encourages authentic communication, body safety and awareness, and regulation.

Melanie uses a person-centred and person-led model that allows the individual to follow their own path to self-awareness and construct their own narrative around their identity. She works collaboratively, in partnership with their clients, focusing on wellbeing centred goals.

The Little Black Duck, and those trained by The Little Black Duck, work within this model, focusing on the individual's unique strengths, skills, and resources available to the individual.



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So many Acronyms, but what do they mean?!

SACS-R Screener Tool

The Social Attention and Communication Surveillance-Revised (SACS-R) and SACS-Preschool (SACS-PR) tools developed over 15 years by Associate Professor Barbaro at La Trobe University. The tool is used to identify a set of behaviours that are characteristic of children on the spectrum from as young as 11 months old, including infrequent or inconsistent use of:

- gestures, like waving and pointing at objects
- response to name being called
- eye contact
- imitation or copying others' activities
- sharing interest with others
- pretend play

SACS-R is now used state-wide in Victoria and Tasmania, and training has been completed in New South Wales, Queensland, and South Australia.

Health professionals in ten other countries around the world – including China, Singapore, Poland, Japan, New Zealand, Nepal and Bangladesh – have also been trained in using the tool.

Not only is SACS-R the world's most effective screening tool, unlike many it can be used within the community on large populations, enabling early identification of very young children across the board

ADOS-2 Assessment Tool

The Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule Second Edition (ADOS-2) is a semi-structured, standardised assessment of communication, social interaction, and play. It provides a series of standardised contexts in which the individual's social, communication and repetitive, stereotyped behaviours can be observed. It has been designed to assist in the diagnosis of autism and pervasive developmental disorders and is suggested as a complementary instrument to the Autism Diagnostic Interview Revised (ADI-R). Standardised toys and activities are used to present opportunities for social and communicative interaction with the examiner. A diagnostic algorithm consistent with DSM-V and ICD-10 clinical diagnoses is generated.

The ADOS is regarded as the Gold Standard Assessment tool for diagnosing children under the age of 18 years with Autism.

MIGDAS-2 Assessment Tool

The Monteiro Interview Guidelines for Diagnosing the Autism Spectrum, 2nd Edition (MIGDAS-2) is a sensory-based process for gathering and organising the qualitative information needed to diagnose autism in children, adolescents, and adults.

The process includes guidelines for gathering information from parents/caregivers and teachers, and for conducting a sensory-based interview with the individual being evaluated. The result is a comprehensive behavioural profile that describes the individual's distinct way of relating to the world, supplementing assessment scores and informing diagnosis and treatment planning.

The MIGDAS-2 process is designed to facilitate writing a narrative evaluation report and providing diagnostic feedback using language that is easily understood by parents and others involved in the individual's care.

Assessors must hold Master's Level qualifications in Psychology, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Special Education, or an equivalent level of study to perform the MIGDAS Assessment.

Formal Qualifications

Master in Autism Studies | Griffith University

Postgraduate degree in Autism Studies | Griffith University

Bachelor of Arts – Graphic Design | Charles Sturt University (CSU)

ADOS-2 Assessment | Mindful – The University of Melbourne

SACS-R – Application of the SAC-R screening tool | Latrobe University

MIGDAS – 2 | ACER - The Australian Council for Educational Research

CHCCS413B Support individuals with autism spectrum disorder | Amaze

Additional professional development and training courses

Mindful – The University of Melbourne

- ASD Assessment Fundamentals & Comorbidities workshop
- Tracking better with Autism
- ASD and Attachment
- Autism and Anxiety

ACER - The Australian Council for Educational Research

- MIGDAS - Narrative report writing
- MIGDAS - Workshop
- MIGDAS - Certification Training

Relationship Matters

- Becoming a behavioral detective
- Decoding Autism
- Exploring and Applying Psycho-Sensory Interventions and Trauma-Informed Practice

Attwood and Garnet Events

- Autism in Girls
- Autism in Adolescence
- Differential Diagnosis

Autism SA

- Effective strategies to support a person with autism
- Crisis planning around mental health concerns for adolescents and adults on the spectrum
- Understanding sensory processing

Creating Connections

- Social skill professional training
- Creating an autism friendly environment
- Creating and using visual supports
- Developing social skills
- Social stories and scripts
- Strategies for success

Positive Partnerships

Face to Face

- Understanding Autism
- Positive Behaviour Support
- Parent/Carer 2 day workshop

Online training modules

- Parents and carers course
- Planning Matrix

Webinars

- Friendships
- Wellbeing and Resilience
- Implementing sensory strategies

Early Days | Australian Government Department of Social Services

- My child and autism
- Understanding behaviour
- Play and social learning
- Tips for everyday skills
- Progression to school
- Encouraging early interactions
- Helping cope with change

Psychology and Play Therapy Australia

- Be my co-therapist: Engaging caregivers and systems in child therapy
- Child-sensitive service delivery design
- Demystifying trauma recovery: Application of the 3-phase trauma therapy model

Sydney Centre for Creative Change

- A hero's Journey: Narrative therapy and storytelling strategies that celebrate the client's heroic response
- Autplay Therapy
- Introduction to Art Therapy – Practical Methods for Children, Young People and Adults
- Playful Therapy for Children and Young People: Narrative Based Activities for Assessment and Intervention

Other

- Traffic jam in my brain – Geraldine Jereb
- Secret Agent Society – Training and implementation
- MPHN Webinar – Supporting adults on the autism spectrum
- Autism and the ART of cognition – Holly Bridges
- ESDM training – Child Development Institute – Wollongong University
- Belonging Matters - Circles of support and fostering inclusive pathways
- Aspect - Positive behaviour support
- Carers Victoria - Planning for the NDIS
- ICDL - DIR 101: An Introduction to DIR® and DIRFloortime®
- Speaking insights - From Diagnosis to OAM – A Personal Autism Journey
- PECS - Level 1 training



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