

Craft makes us healthier and has a great potential in the treatment and prevention of disease

30 years experience in the application of crafts at Ruskin Mill Trust

Craft Institute Conference, Norway
Bergen
Thursday 11th October 2018



Aonghus Gordon
Founder and Chairman Ruskin Mill Trust

Craft makes us healthier and has a great potential in the treatment and prevention of disease

The Trust studies the Genius Loci...The spirit of place;

- Industrial making across England, at previous national centres of excellence, may be delivered and transformed as a therapeutic approach for health and mental well being
- This requires a lens and model for human development
- Ruskin Mill Trust adopts an educational model of twelve senses for the development of executive function
- The Trust method provides transformative development for the following conditions; ADHD, Autism Spectrum/Oppositional defiance, mental health, reference by practically minded, Dr Eric Sigman



Glass House College – Glass blowing, Stourbridge/Birmingham



Ruskin Mill College – Textiles, Gloucestershire

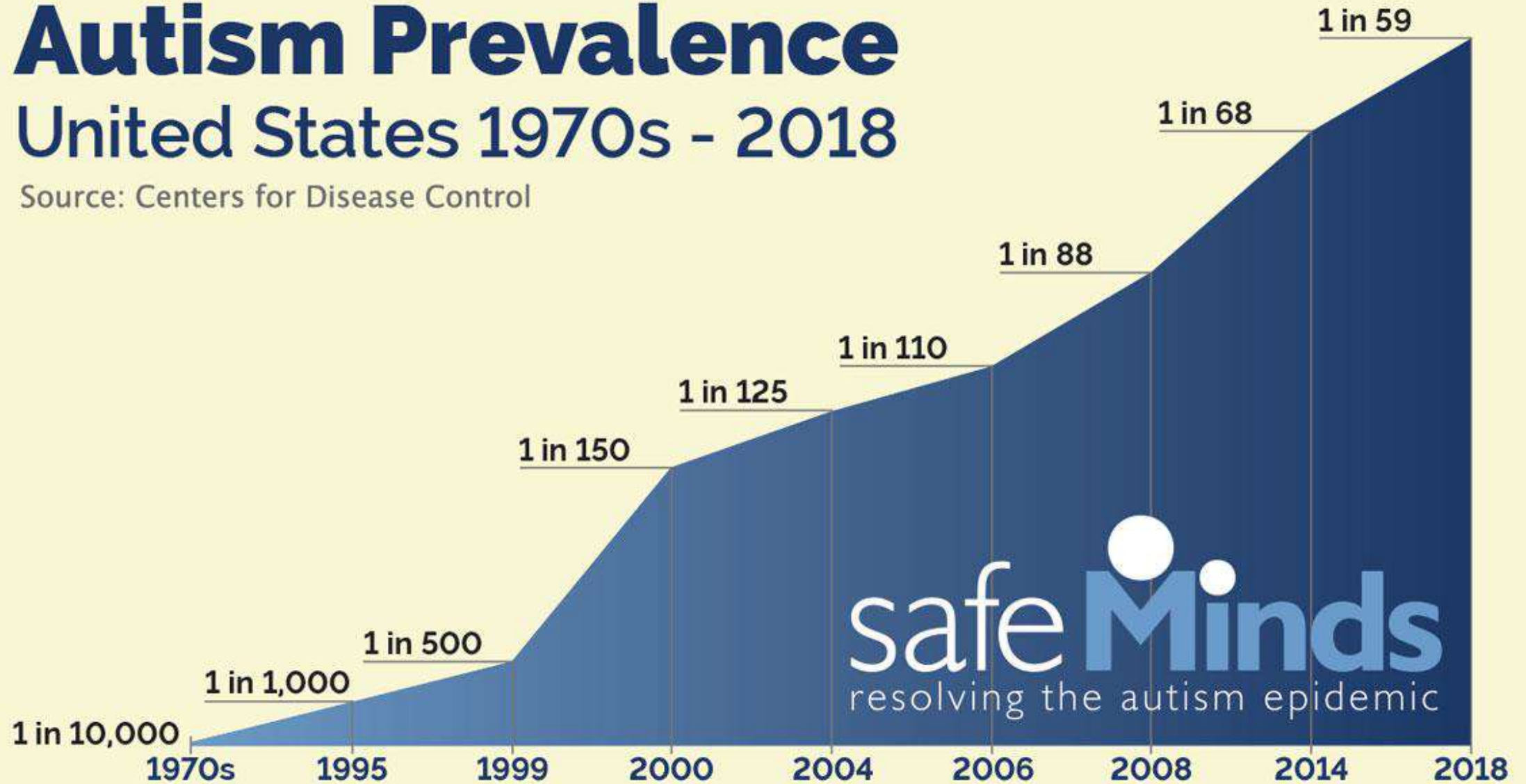


Freeman College – Spoon forging and cutlery, Sheffield

An epidemic

Autism Prevalence United States 1970s - 2018

Source: Centers for Disease Control





Leo Kanner
1943

Many of the Trusts students
have spectrums of Autism



Hans Asperger
1944

For both Kanner and Asperger it was the ***inability of autistic children to relate socially*** with other people that was the most pervasive and defining feature of autism.

Today autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is construed as a ***lifelong developmental disability*** defined by diagnostic criteria that include [1] ***deficits in social communication and social interaction*** and [2] ***restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities.***

Losing Focus

The following is research from 2009

Figure 1

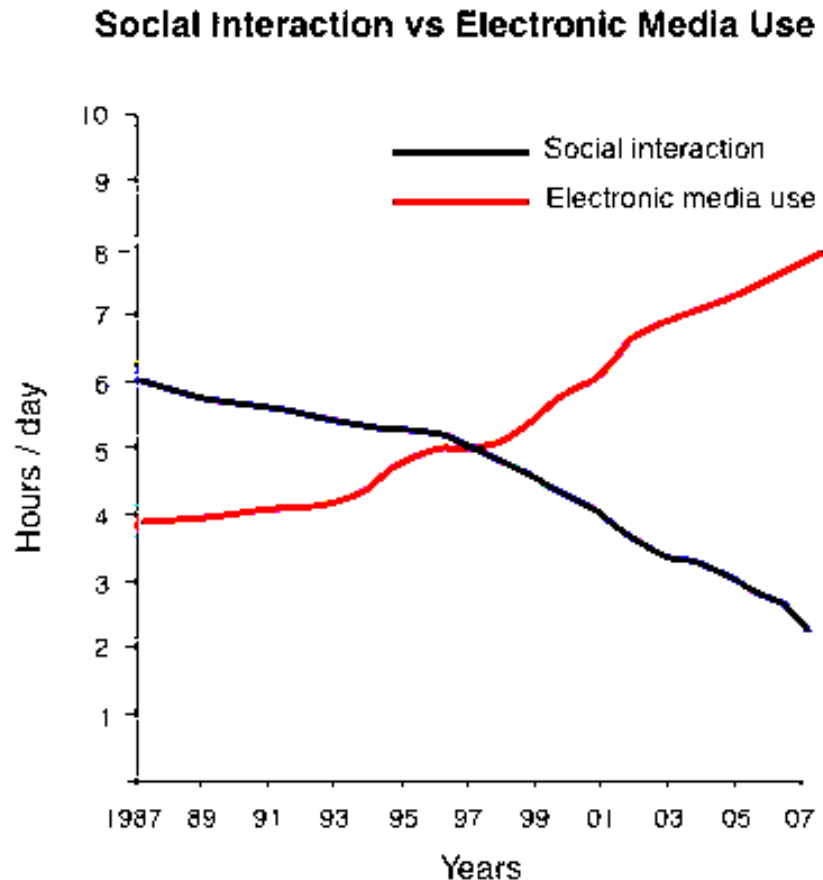


Figure 1. Hours per day of face-to-face social interaction declines as use of electronic media increases. These trends are predicted to increase (data abstracted from a series of time-use and demographic studies) (Sigman, 2009).

Over the last twenty years, social interaction (eye-to-eye contact) has gone down while levels of eye-to-screen-contact has gone up. Just before the year 2000, life became literally virtual: people would spend more time in front of a screen than spending time interacting with other human beings (Figure 1). Across the industrialised world, watching screen media is now young people's main pastime. Children of all ages are watching more screen media than ever before (TV Licensing 2011).

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Cognitive development

Integration through the hand for eye, speech, movement, and touch



Student making a copper spoon at Freeman College

“Frank R. Wilson, a neurologist at the University of California School of Medicine considers the hand as a “musculoskeletal organism” emphasising the centrality to intelligence of our human hand and how crucial the manipulation of the hands are to cognitive learning. The hand should not be regarded as a mere “appendix”, but rather, a fundamental part of the way we create (Wilson, 2005).” (Sigman, 2015)

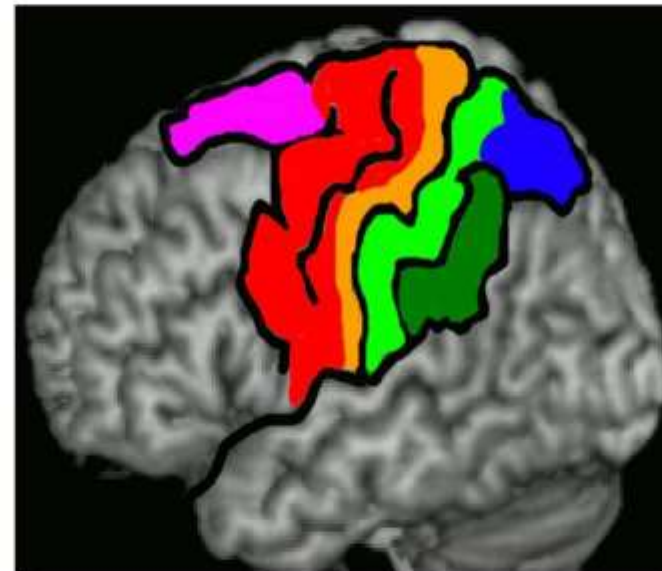
Touch (somatic sense) is processed and used in many parts of the cerebral cortex

Note the large area devoted to hand & body movement and movement planning

Area 8
(eye movements)

Area 6
(hand & body movement,
movement planning)

Area 4
(body movement)



Areas 3a, 3b, 1, & 2
(somatosensation)

Areas 5 & 7
(hand & eye movement,
visual-somatosensory
integration)

Area 40
(speech & movement
control & attention)

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Glass Blowing for student self transformation



*Student at the Furnace at Glasshouse
College, Stourbridge*

A few key insights:

- Students come into context with the lawfulness and limitations of the material
- The teacher's role is to role-model movement over verbal instructions
- To learn to avoid self rejection at the first signs of failure
- The material world is the greatest teacher - craft - so you may experience the limitations of yourself

Clay; An exercise in kneading for inner health and balance



- The material has memory of each nuance of effort
- Your heartbeat impacts your breathing and your movement choreography emerges
- The clay cannot lie
- When your effort is co-ordinated, grace shows up

Student progression from gaze to focus, an interview

Shearing and spinning to weaving a guitar strap



True generosity lies in striving so that these hands – whether of individuals or entire peoples – need be extended less and less in **supplication**, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world.

- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

A visit from HRH Prince Charles to Ruskin Mill College

Prince Charles appreciated deeply the work of the Trust

The following areas were discussed:

- Craft items generate civility
- Making in-service items requires a re-encoding of the muscle memory
- Many students have suffered trauma. This is known to reside in the muscle
- Executive functioning is enhanced through the achievements in craft (Sigman)
- Third party endorsement offers a new, 'locus of control' (Sigman)
- If the craft item in service contributes to social civility, it may afford a new moral power; it is a deed, not a state of mind
- From 'I' to 'you', creating 'thou'



HRH Prince Charles sits in a student's chair

A student speaks about her struggle on her learning journey

“As I began to polish my spoon, my picture of myself began to be reflected.

It looked weird as it distorted my reflection. Sometimes I looked better than I thought, I felt, and sometimes I looked disturbed.

My dislike for myself was tested because the spoon was beautiful. “



A Freeman College student shows the sequence of copper spoon making

Thank you

