

# Learning from the Strengths of Autism Spectrum Disorder



Natalie Russo  
Assistant Professor, Psychology

## CURRENT RESEARCH

### Increasing understanding of autism leads to clinically relevant solutions

The incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) is on the rise, with recent estimates suggesting that 1:68 children are affected. A greater understanding of ASD can lead to improvements in educational, transitional, and work opportunities that enhance the quality of life for individuals with autism, many of whom struggle to work, despite their clear capacity to do so. One specific area that has been cause for frustration among individuals with ASD and their parents relates to sensory processing atypicalities that include, for example, an oversensitivity to sound, or an aversion to eye contact and touch. Dr. Natalie Russo, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Syracuse University, studies the relationship between clinical descriptions, sensory processing, and the mechanisms underlying their development in children with ASD. By highlighting the strengths of children with autism, like their superior ability relative to typically developing individuals (TD) to detect sensory information in vision, audition, and touch, it is her hope, to improve outcomes of individuals on the autism spectrum by increasing our understanding of the autism phenotype. In so doing, Dr. Russo explains that "instead of jamming a square peg into a round hole," she says, "we can make everyone productive and effective members of society."

Despite treatment advances, 80% of adults with autism are unemployed and the annual cost of autism in the US is estimated at 126 billion, making this disorder an important concern. Through the study of sensory processing atypicalities, the most frequently endorsed and yet, most poorly understood symptoms of autism, Dr. Russo brings together clinical, behavioral, psychophysical, and neurophysiological...

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## AFFILIATION

Syracuse University

## EDUCATION

- Ph.D., School Psychology, 2007 , McGill University
- Postdoc, 2007 - 2011 , Albert Einstein Medical College

## AWARDS

- 2013-2018: National Institutes of Mental Health, Role: P.I. (RO1: MH101536-01.BRAINS initiative): The neurophysiology of sensory processing and multisensory integration among persons with an autism spectrum disorder
- Hill Environmental Medicine Collaboration
- Director, Integrated Learning Major in Neuroscience, Syracuse University

## RESEARCH AREAS

Life Science, Diagnostics, Neurological / Cognitive, Neurological / Cognitive

## FUNDING REQUEST

Your contributions will support the continued research of Dr. Natalie Russo, of Syracuse University, as she seeks to improve the outcomes of individuals on the autism spectrum by increasing our understanding of the autism phenotype. Donations will fund personnel, participant costs, and equipment. Additional funds will assist in the purchase of additional brain physiology equipment in order to increase the number of participants that Dr. Russo can see. Join in advancing our understanding of ASD, support Dr. Natalie Russo and her team.