

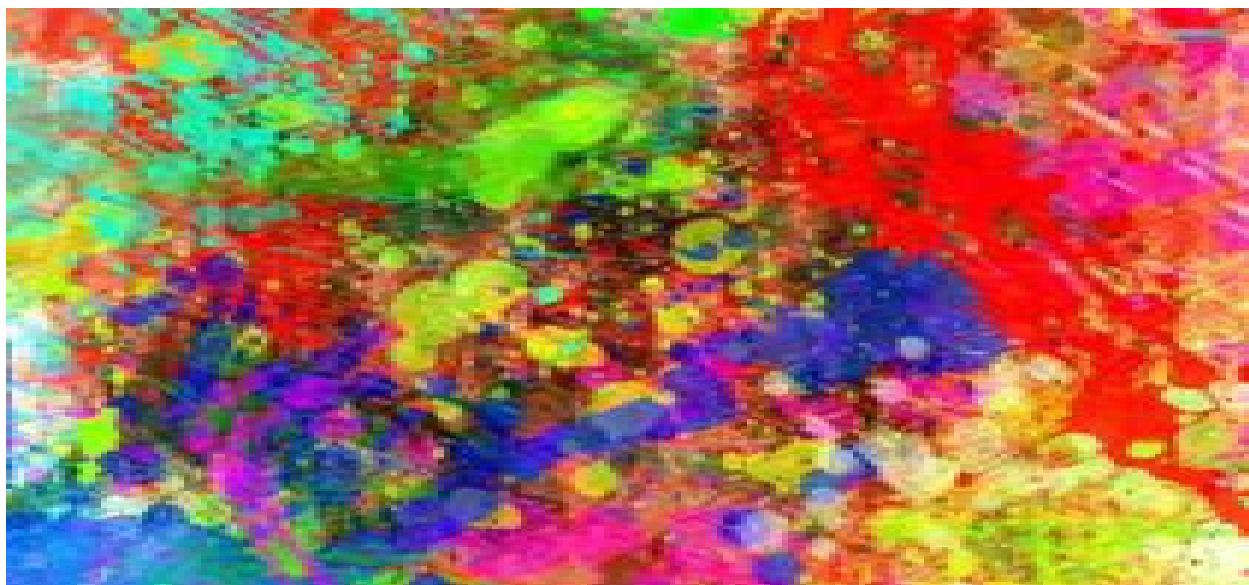
Shifting attention and turn-taking

(Based on an article by Gina Davies)

In stage 3, children learn to shift their attention, participate in interactive activities and take turns.

Turn-taking is a deeply social skill which doesn't make a lot of sense if you are not socially aware. But if you do it as an attention shift, children with autism seem to be able to learn it much more easily. As they become accustomed to the routine of transferring their attention from watching, to taking part, and back to watching again, they don't actually need to understand the social skill underpinning what they are doing.

You might have some big squeeze bottles full of different coloured paints and a shower curtain laid out on the floor. You stand at the front and squeeze one of the bottles to produce a huge red squirt which lands splosh! on the curtain. Then you say: 'Mary's turn,' and Mary comes out and chooses from two bottles you offer her. She knows exactly what to do because she watched you first. So she adds a squirt of green – splosh! – hands back the bottle, and sits down again.



Once everyone has taken their turn, you end up with a glorious painting, which was both fun to do and fun to watch. You have created a shared experience, which binds the group together, making communication and interaction easier.