0:05 Clinicians have understood for a long time that sensory issues play a large part in the

0:09 lives of people with autism. However, it's only just recently become part of the classification

0:15 system for a diagnosis of autism. People with autism can be under or over sensitive to a

0:23 particular sensory issue, for example they may not be able to tolerate somebody brushing

0:28 past them lightly, and that may cause them pain, but they are able to tolerate extreme

0:34 levels of pain for a major physical illness. It's important for clinicians to understand

0:40 and to think about sensory issues, because this might explain otherwise apparently unprovoked

0:48 and extreme behaviour.

1:01 Most of the most distressing memories I have

1:03 of early childhood are not emotional but sensory.

1:12 The crowds on the pavements, used to prompt

1:15 me to sort of leap into the road, because if someone just brushed against me, it would

1:21 just create this reaction in me that I couldn't control that made me burst into tears and

1:27 because it was the only thing to do to step into the road.

1:32 I can remember the sound of other people's mums screaming.

1:37 I didn't really get it actually. There are also things to do with how, non-autistic,

1:47 neuro-typical people, how they imagine and interpret autistic behaviour, because it might

1:56 have seemed in some horrific way, like it was some kind of suicidal gesture on the part

2:01 of the infant version of me, when it wasn't that. I was trying to survive, but I just

2:09 couldn't, well clearly I couldn't understand intellectually that if I run into the road

2:16 I was risking all sorts of things, but there was also that I couldn't quite understand

2:20 why people couldn't understand why I did it.

2:32 With light touch

2:39 I don't think that I would say it actually causes me pain, but it causes me what I would still

2:44 call physical distress. One way I can sort of describe it, is if, say I was walking though

2:51 a garden and a leaf just touched, you know there on my hand. It's almost a way in which

2:59 it kind of spreads, so if someone was to very lightly stroke my arm, very lightly, almost

3:10 like I'm being tickled or something. Something would happen in my mouth, that I can't really

3:15 explain, it's as if there's a connection that most people don't seem to have. I don't want

3:20 to give anyone the impression that my hesitation about physical intimacy is to do with just

3:27 wanting to be away from people. It's more like wanting to be away from any kind of unpredictable

3:37 tactile sense.

3:43 When I'm very distressed, I sometimes experience

3:46 total, like sheet lightning, totally overwhelms what you can see, and sometimes it's something

3:55 that I can't see, like for example, someone might say, I'm going to see our friend Emma

4:11 today. When they say Emma's name, I picture her, but it's as if, as if she's been turned

4:16 into a cartoon or something. It's as if I can't picture her as I normally would then

4:21 I start to panic that I'm just losing some kind of mental control and it gets worse,

4:27 but sometimes this kind of blanket lightning will happen and what I see is the kind of

4:38 thing, it's just what I would see when I was on the pavement and I can sort of recall people's

4:45 1980's clothing, the kind of cars I would see, the kind of angle I would see them from

4:51 because of the height I was. Sometimes in moments of distress, I get flashbacks of some

4:57 kind of that.