

8 January 2009

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Daniel Tammet may offer insights into how an autistic person's mind works
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[Autistic Scientist Can Explain How His Mind Works](#)

Daniel Tammet recited 22,514 figures of the number pi from memory

We all know that brilliant minds are everywhere around us, and that, among those minds, there are some that stand out like a single star in the night sky. Unfortunately, many of these extremely bright and endowed scientists suffer from harsh forms of autism that do not allow them to communicate very well with the outside world, and so how their mind works remains a mystery to everyone else.

Daniel Tammet is different, because he suffers only from a mild form of the disease, and can communicate with people around him. He is able to provide potentially invaluable insights into how the human brain creates the connections that allow us to relate notions to each other. "You wouldn't use a word like 'giraffe' without understanding what the words 'neck' or 'tall' or 'animal' mean. Words only make sense when they are in this web of interconnected meaning and I have the same thing with numbers. Numbers belong to a web. When somebody gives me a number, I immediately visualize it and how it relates to other numbers. I also see the patterns those relationships produce and manipulate them in my head to arrive at a solution, if it's a sum, or to identify if there is a prime," he told *New Scientist* in an interview. "There is immense potential, and instincts for language and numbers, in everyone. We could train these intuitions - especially at an early age, but also at any age - and learn how to break down preconceptions about how numbers should be thought about or how language works. Then, though people might not necessarily be able to do all the things I can do, they will be more comfortable with language and mathematics, and learning and education in general," Tammet added. "I have synaesthesia, which helps. When there is an overlap between how I visualize a word and its meaning, that helps me remember it. For example, if a word that means 'fire' in a new language happens to appear orange to me, that will help me remember it. But more significant is my memory and ability to spot patterns and find relationships between words. Fundamentally, languages are clusters of meaning - that is what grammar is about. This is also why languages interest me so much. My mind is interested in breaking things down and understanding complex relationships," he concluded, talking about his abilities to learn new languages with great speed and accuracy. Among the languages he learned to speak, he enumerates French, Finnish, German, Spanish, Welsh, Lithuanian, Romanian, Estonian, Icelandic and Esperanto. At the age of 29, Daniel Tammet works as a writer and a linguist, teaching language classes online.