



THE MISSING PIECE: WHY SO MANY SPECTRUM FAMILIES ARE TURNING TO SPINAL FLOW

Published by Spinal Flow Caboolture





This article is published in honour of Autism Awareness Month – a time to move beyond awareness alone, and into genuine, practical support for the children and families who need it most.

If you're the parent of a child with ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Asperger's, or related neurodevelopmental differences, you already know the exhaustion of searching for answers. You've attended appointments, tried strategies, advocated tirelessly at school – and still watched your child struggle with things that seem to come so easily to others: staying calm, focusing, sleeping, connecting, speaking, or simply feeling safe in their own body.

You are far from alone. Here in Australia, approximately **1 in 25 children** are now diagnosed with ASD – a figure that has risen by more than 25% in just three years, and one that doesn't account for the many children also navigating ADHD, Asperger's, and related profiles. Globally, rates continue to climb. Behind every statistic is a real child, and a real family doing their very best.

What if the missing piece wasn't about doing more, but about helping your child's nervous system feel safe enough to settle?

That's precisely where Spinal Flow comes in.

THE ROOT OF THE CHALLENGE: A NERVOUS SYSTEM STUCK IN SURVIVAL MODE



Children on the autism spectrum, and those with ADHD, are not "broken." Their brains are wired differently — but what is increasingly understood is that a significant part of what drives their daily challenges is **nervous system dysregulation**.

Research shows that children with ASD frequently display what's called sympathetic dominance — their body's fight-or-flight system is chronically switched on, while the calming parasympathetic system, responsible for rest, digestion, focus, and connection, remains underactive. Children with ADHD show a similar pattern: studies indicate they often have reduced vagal tone (the measure of how well the body's calming nerve — the vagus nerve — is functioning), which fuels the ongoing cycle of hyperactivity, impulsivity, emotional overwhelm, and difficulty with attention.

This isn't a parenting issue or a will power issue. It is a nervous system issue — and it lives in the body, in the spine, and in the pathways between the brain and every system it governs.

THE SPINE-BRAIN CONNECTION: WHY IT MATTERS SO MUCH

The spine is not simply a structural column. It is the primary highway of the nervous system — carrying billions of messages every second between the brain and the body. When areas of the spine become blocked by accumulated stress (physical, emotional, or chemical), that communication is disrupted. The brain cannot clearly read what the body needs, and the body cannot properly receive the brain's signals.

For children on the spectrum, one area that comes up repeatedly in clinical observation is the very top of the spine — specifically the **C1 (atlas) region**, known in Spinal Flow as the Pause Gateway. This is the gateway closest to the brainstem, and it sits right at the junction of the brain and body. Tension or blockage here can interfere with the flow of neurological information that regulates everything from sensory processing and emotional regulation to speech, coordination, digestion, and sleep.

Dr Carli Axford, the founder of the Spinal Flow Technique, observed this pattern consistently in her years of clinical practice: children on the autism spectrum frequently presented with significant protective tension at C1. When that blockage was gently released and communication restored, families began reporting meaningful, sometimes remarkable, changes.



THE GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION: ANOTHER PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

Current research into ASD increasingly recognises that what happens in the body doesn't stay in the body. Many children on the spectrum also experience gut issues, immune challenges, inflammation, and metabolic imbalances — and these are not coincidental. The **gut-brain axis**, the two-way communication highway between the digestive system and the brain, is now understood to play a significant role in mood, behaviour, and neurological function.

At the heart of this connection sits the **vagus nerve** — the longest nerve in the body, running from the brainstem all the way to the gut. When the nervous system is dysregulated and the spine is carrying protective tension, vagal signalling is compromised. This can affect digestion, immune response, emotional regulation, and even gut microbiome balance — all areas commonly disrupted in children with ASD.

Spinal Flow works directly at the level of the nervous system, helping to restore the body's own communication pathways — including that vital gut-brain dialogue. This is why families often report not just calmer behaviour after sessions, but improvements in sleep, digestion, and sensory sensitivity too. It is a whole-body shift, because the nervous system governs the whole body.



WHAT CHANGES HAVE FAMILIES WITNESSED?

The outcomes reported by families whose children have received Spinal Flow care are both moving and significant.

Calmer, more connected children. One family whose daughter had significant autism-related challenges — including social anxiety, emotional dysregulation, digestive problems, and difficulty making eye contact — noticed profound shifts after beginning regular Spinal Flow sessions. Her kindergarten teacher observed that she had become more socially interactive, wanting to connect with other children rather than withdrawing. Her emotional recovery time shortened dramatically. She began accepting new foods and showing less tactile sensitivity. Her mother described the changes simply: "The changes are just amazing."

Children with ADHD finding calm and focus. A mother named Mandy brought her daughter, who was struggling with ADHD, to a certified Spinal Flow practitioner. After just five days of sessions, her daughter was calmer, happier, and more focused at school — a shift that made daily life measurably more manageable for the whole family.

Children finding their voice — literally. Spinal Flow practitioner Kelly Downing worked with two boys who had speech apraxia, a condition affecting the ability to coordinate the movements needed for speech. Both boys, who had been essentially non-verbal, progressed to engaging in full conversations. The connection between nervous system regulation and speech function is profound: when the body moves out of protective guarding, the pathways that govern communication can begin to function more freely.

These are not isolated coincidences. They reflect what happens when a child's nervous system — which has been working overtime just to cope — is finally given permission to rest, reorganise, and return to a state where learning, connection, and growth become possible.

WHAT HAPPENS IN A SESSION?

Spinal Flow is exceptionally gentle — particularly important for children and teens who may already be highly sensitive to touch or overwhelmed by clinical environments.

During a session, your child lies fully clothed on a comfortable table. Using light contacts at specific points along the spine and head, the practitioner communicates directly with the nervous system — signalling safety. There is no cracking, no force, no manipulation. Many children find sessions deeply relaxing; some experience subtle movement through the spine as stored tension begins to release. Others simply drift into a peaceful stillness.

Children tend to respond remarkably well. Their nervous systems are inherently more adaptable, and when given the right input in a safe, calm environment, they can shift quickly. Sessions for children 12 and under at Sundara are available at a dedicated children's rate, reflecting our commitment to making this support genuinely accessible for families.



A NOTE FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

If you work with children who have ADHD, ASD, or related profiles, you see the daily reality: the child who cannot settle, who melts down unpredictably, who struggles to process instructions, who seems disconnected or overwhelmed in ways that make learning almost impossible on some days.

Nervous system regulation is the foundation beneath all learning. When a child is stuck in fight-or-flight, the brain's higher functions — attention, language processing, memory, emotional regulation, social connection — are all operating under significant strain. No amount of behavioural strategy, classroom accommodation, or reward chart can fully compensate for a nervous system that doesn't feel safe.

Spinal Flow works at that foundational level. It is not a replacement for educational support, occupational therapy, or other interventions — it works beautifully alongside them, creating a regulated baseline from which a child is far more able to engage, absorb, and thrive.

If you are seeing children in your school who would benefit from this kind of support, we welcome a conversation. We are happy to connect with families, support coordinators, and school wellbeing teams to explore how Spinal Flow can complement the care already in place.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO KEEP SEARCHING ALONE

If you've read this and felt even a quiet sense of recognition — a feeling that this might be what your child's body has been asking for — please know that support is genuinely available.

At Spinal Flow Caboolture, I work with children, teens, and their families with warmth, patience, and deep respect for the sensitivity of this journey. I also bring something that no qualification alone can teach — I am a parent of children on the spectrum myself. I know this road from the inside. I have sat with the worry, the searching, and the quiet grief that can come with watching your child struggle. And I have witnessed, in my own family, the genuine and meaningful shifts that Spinal Flow can bring as part of a child's ongoing support.

That lived understanding shapes every session I offer. My aim is never to "fix" your child. It is to help their nervous system find safety — and from that safety, to allow the extraordinary capacity for connection, expression, and growth that already lives within them to emerge.

Every child deserves to feel at ease in their own body. And every parent deserves to feel hopeful.



READY TO FIND OUT MORE?

I'd love to hear about your child and explore whether Spinal Flow might be the right support for them.

Children 12 and under: \$55 per session. Initial consultations available. No referral required.

Call or message Jo directly: 0403 274 576
Learn more: [SPINAL FLOW CABOOLTURE](#)

