

Face processing tools aid development in children and provide coping strategies for those with conditions

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Credit: Bournemouth University

Researchers have created a series of tools to support face processing development and to provide coping strategies for people with face

blindness.

Researchers at Bournemouth University's Centre for Face Processing Disorders have been studying conditions related to face processing, hoping to understand more about those with a higher-than-average processing ability—known as super recognition—and those with [face blindness](#), also known as prosopagnosia.

Face [blindness](#) is a condition whereby people are unable to determine the identity of an individual based on visual processing of [faces](#) alone. With over a decade of research experience, researchers at the Centre have led on work to understand face processing conditions more, in a bid to produce tools, guidelines and coping strategies to help support face processing.

Research has found that training in face processing among children can deliver a measurable increase in face processing ability. A Guess Who-style tool has been developed to help train children to process faces better, therefore aiding in their development and social understanding. The research found that young children using the tool had an average 7.5% increase in their ability to recognize faces.

In a change from the normal Guess Who game, the face processing tool swaps tiles to make each face look very similar, with one distinguishing different feature. Children were then asked to match cards to the tiles on the game, and over time, developed an increased ability to process facial features.

Professor Sarah Bate led the research and said, "An increase in face processing ability can have a range of positive benefits, from aiding social interactions, to providing a safer world. This research has shown that these abilities can, to an extent, be learned, and as such, we can provide children with a life-long ability to understand the world around

them."

The Centre has also been working with a large group of people who identify as having face blindness, and a lack of ability to process faces. At its worse, the condition means that people cannot recognize members of their own family, or close friends, without other distinguishing markers.

Researchers have been studying the condition for a number of years, and while a cure has not yet been found, the Bournemouth University team have worked to create a downloadable [tool](#) of coping mechanisms, to help those with face blindness live with the condition.

A [downloadable PDF](#) is available to give people with face blindness tools and mechanisms by which they can manage the condition, often with the help of others, and minimize its impact on everyday life.

Professor Bate continued, "We have worked for many years to understand face blindness, a condition that is hard to understand, but can be life-altering for those living with it. At its worse, it means that [children](#) can't recognize parents, or vice-versa, which could be upsetting, or even dangerous. If not managed and understood, it can lead to embarrassment, and social isolation, with associated psychological conditions.

"At Bournemouth University, we're committed to understanding this condition as much as possible, so as to minimize the impact on everyday life for those living with it. This toolkit, while not a cure, provides some handy tips and mechanisms to make life easier, to remove barriers, and bring confidence to those living with the condition. It is our hope that this guide will be downloaded and used as much as possible to help people regain confidence and an ability to live well, even with the challenges that face blindness brings."

Provided by Bournemouth University

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