

# From Facial Expressions to Emotional Experience

## **Original question:**

I wanted to use visuals to help autistic children understand the emotions triggered by facial expressions and different tastes.

## **Early experiments:**

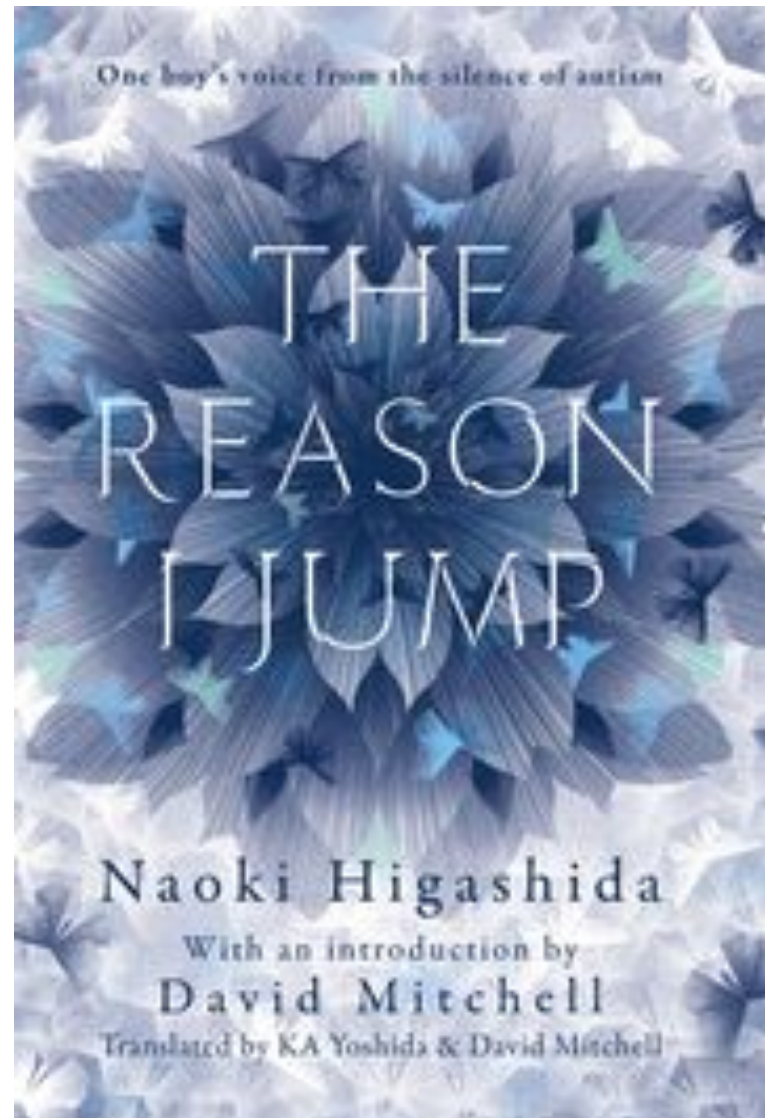
Illustrated flashcards

A system for recognising facial expressions.

## **Challenges:**

The relationship between facial expressions and emotions turned out to be too complex, and it couldn't truly reflect the real experiences of autistic individuals.

# The Reason I Jump



《The Reason I Jump》 is a first-person account written by a autistic boy, offering insights into how autistic people think, feel, and experience the world.

## Q25 WHAT'S THE REASON YOU JUMP?

What do you think I'm feeling when I'm jumping up and down clapping my hands? I bet you think I'm not really feeling anything much beyond the manic glee all over my face.

But when I'm jumping, it's as if my feelings are going upwards to the sky. Really, my urge to be swallowed up by the sky is enough to make my heart quiver. When I'm jumping, I can feel my body parts really well, too — my bounding legs and my clapping hands — and that makes me feel so, so good.

So that's one reason why I jump, and recently I've noticed another reason. People with autism react physically to feelings of happiness and sadness. So when something happens that affects me emotionally, my body seizes up as if struck by lightning.

'Seizing up' doesn't mean that my muscles literally get stiff and immobile — rather, it means that I'm not free to move the way I want. So by jumping up and down, it's as if I'm shaking loose the ropes that are tying up my body. When I jump, I feel lighter, and I think the reason my body is drawn skywards is that the motion makes me want to change into a bird and fly off to some faraway place.

But constrained both by ourselves and by the people around us, all we can do is tweet-tweet, flap our wings and hop around in a cage. Ah, if only I could just flap my wings and soar away, into the big blue yonder, over the hills and far away!

Instead of making a new visual taste-expression system to teach emotions, I decided to show what emotions feel like through stop-motion animation.

I wanted others to feel what an autistic person feels.

It's a shift from explaining emotions to sharing them through movement and visuals.



# Thinking in Pictures – Visualising Emotion

## **Grandin's view:**

“I think in pictures. Language is my second language.”

Autistic people understand the world through images rather than abstract language.

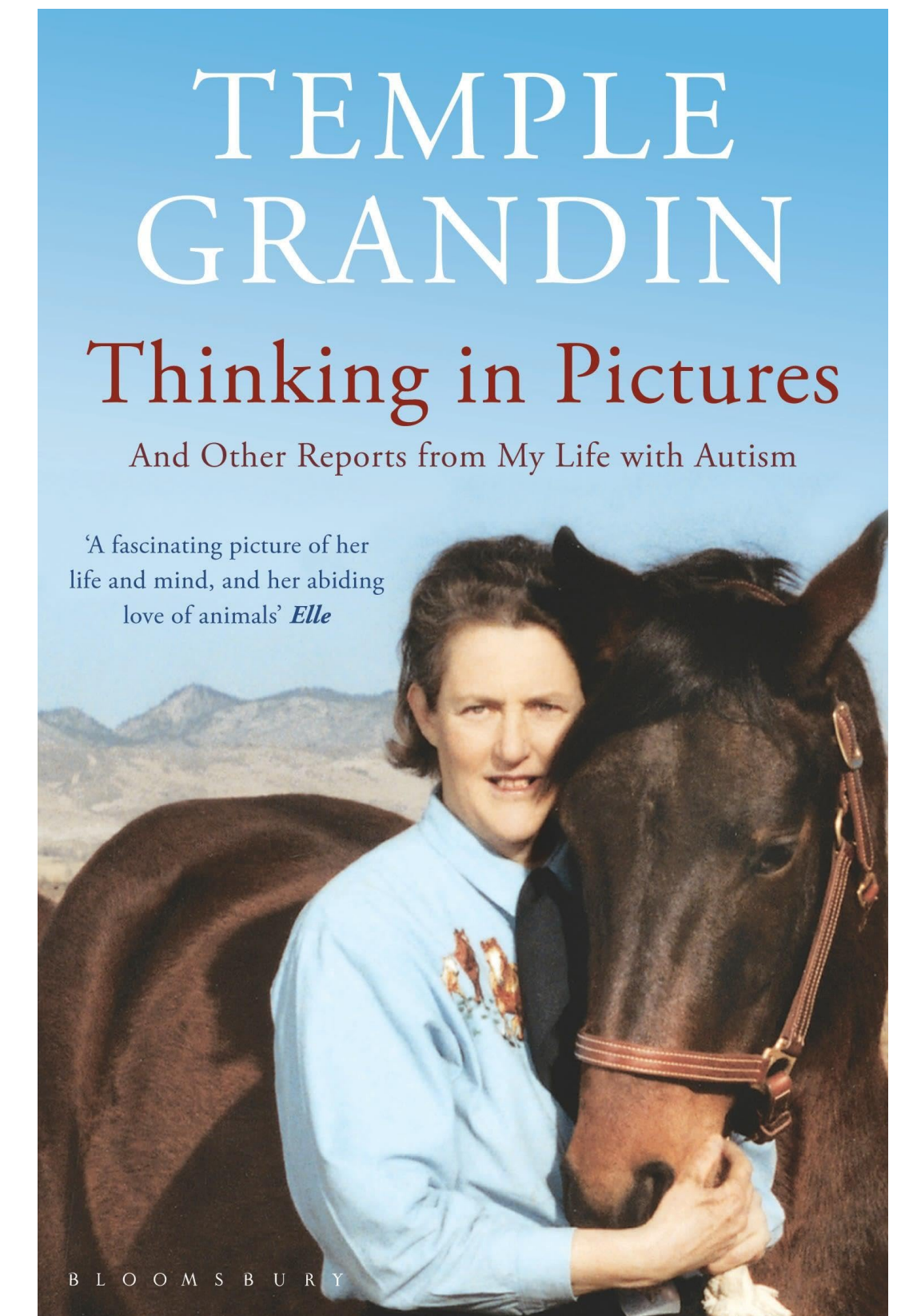
She turns feelings into visual images — for example, she describes happiness as “a calf jumping in spring.”

## **Inspiration:**

Visual thinking can be a powerful way to communicate feelings.

## **Impact on my project:**

It helped me realise that it's more important to *express* how something feels through visuals, rather than just explain what an expression means.



# Why Stop-motion Animation?

Animation allows me to show movement, rhythm, and emotion changes.

Compared to a single image, it has a stronger **sense of progression**, which is well-suited for expressing the emotions within the act of jumping.



# Visual inspiration



Yeji Yun





# Drafts





# Visualising the Emotion of Jumping

**Freedom and imagination** – shown when wings grow and he flies upward, with soft colors and swirls in the sky that feel dreamy.

**Lightness and happiness** – shown at the end as he floats into a colorful sky, with bright shapes and colors showing joy and excitement.

