

GUIDELINES FOR AUTISM-FRIENDLY SELF-QUESTIONNAIRES

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Respect

- Instead of applying a deficit approach, be non-judgemental and respectful. Avoid pejorative or stigmatising descriptions that have connotations to experiences/traits being abnormal/unusual, such as “disorder” or “impairment”.
- Use gender-inclusive language to actively address everyone with your words.
- Do not use stereotypes.
- Consider and accept language preferences of the community, such as identity-first (autistic person), instead of person-first language (person with autism).
- Differentiate between behaviour towards allistic and towards (other) autistic individuals. For instance, autistic individuals might get misunderstood by neurotypical interlocutors but not necessarily by other autistic individuals.

One of our collaborators commented:

“Soziale Interaktion mit allistischen/neurotypischen Menschen! Mit anderen Autist:innen und z.T. auch mit anderen neurodivergenten Menschen fällt die Kommunikation leicht! Wenn man in einer ND-Familie aufgewachsen ist und sich ein ND-Umfeld gesucht hat, fällt die meiste soziale Interaktion auch als Autist:in leicht! Sehr ableistische und auch tatsächlich eine unverschämte, einseitige, defizitäre Herangehensweise.”

(Marie Maroske)

Accessibility

- Make sure the literal interpretation of the text matches your intended interpretation. Instead of using figurative language and metaphors, or quotation marks to indicate conditional word meanings, make everything concrete and explicit.
- Be precise, instead of using vague formulations. Imprecise language might create an obstacle for autistic individuals. For instance, “several times a day” is clearer than “often”.

One of our collaborators commented:

„Präzision = Barrierefreiheit. Das ist wichtig. Wenn das nicht gegeben ist, kann das zu großer Frustration führen, kostet enorm viel Energie und Kraft, die wir wenig haben, kann dazu führen, dass der Bogen gar nicht ausgefüllt wird, kann zu Missverständnissen führen und zu falschen Ergebnissen.“

(Marie Maroske)

- Where necessary, make it broad enough (e.g., always give at least two examples) but do not generalize too much because, in some cases, examples might be counterproductive as they can distract autistic individuals.
- Do not assume that people are always aware of the strategies they apply or the reasons for their behaviours.
- Guide people to consider the relevance of statements both in the present as well as across their lifetime. This would help capture persistent characteristics of respondents' disposition, as opposed to their current context.