



Autism Acceptance Month

tips for friends,
family, and coworkers

Autism Quick Facts

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (**ASD**) is classified in the DSM-5 as a developmental disability, meaning it is **not a mental illness**, but **how the brain is formed**. That being said, many do not consider it a disorder either; just a neurotype.
- The month of April is known as **Autism Acceptance Month** (**was Autism Awareness Month**), based around 4/2 as **World Autism Awareness Day** (observed by countries in the UN)
- Vaccines do not cause autism.
- Asperger's, which was in the DSM-4, is now considered a part of autism.

1 in 68

children are diagnosed as autistic in the US

(and since they grow up to be adults, autism isn't only a childhood condition)

What is Autism?

Autism is defined in the DSM-5 as (loosely):

- Differences in social communication and social interaction
- Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities
- Present in early development and causes “clinically significant impairment”

As with many developmental disabilities, it's normal to have more than one, and to have other conditions pop up as a result.

Associated conditions include ADHD, OCD, dyslexia, C/PTSD, and so on.

“Some disabilities happen more in autistic people. Sometimes, people say that means autism is a bad thing, but that doesn’t make sense.

Think of it like this:

People with red hair sunburn more easily.
Sunburns hurt and can cause skin cancer, but we don’t say that red hair is bad. We don’t try to cure red hair, or tell people with red hair to dye their hair. That wouldn’t help with their sunburns. Instead, we make sure people wear sunblock.

It’s the same with autism. Autistic people should get more support for all of our disabilities. We don’t need people to try and fix us!” - **ASAN**

Some Autistic Faces You May Recognize



Elon Musk
CEO of Tesla



Satoshi Tanjiri
Creator of Pokemon



Greta Thunberg
Environmental Activist



Stephen Wiltshire
Artist

Many more are diagnosed:

Tim Burton, Courtney Love, Temple Grandin, Stephen Fry, Alexis Wineman, etc.

Many more are widely speculated:

Albert Einstein, Mozart, Eminem, Emily Dickinson, Bill Gates, Isaac Newton, etc.

“If you’ve met one
person with
autism, you’ve met
one person with
autism.”

Dr. Steven Shore

Autism has a wide variety of possible presentations that can fit under the same diagnosis, hence the phrase “on the spectrum”.



my family
watching a
movie

me explaining
where we've
seen each
actor before



Mo Quirk (they/them)

@monicaaquirk

The creator of Pokémon is autistic and that's why eye contact triggers the battle music

4:13 AM · 25 Jun 21 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

43 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 215 Likes



How to Be An Ally, Friend, or Coworker to an Autistic Person

1 Practice Patience & Understanding

You may notice that we:

- Overshare or undershare
- Avoid/make inconsistent eye contact
- Are masking*
- Have a desire for routine and/or precision
- React to loud noises, bright lights, and other sensory stimuli
- Take longer to respond

Like any personality traits, these can be beneficial or harmful in different situations.



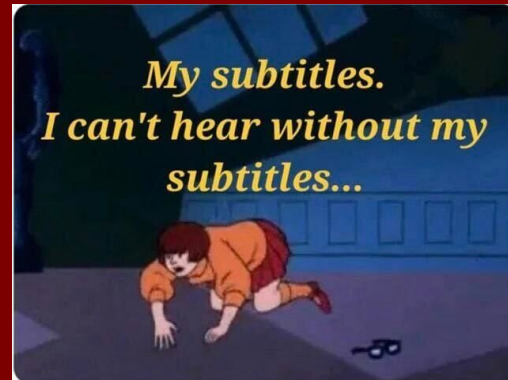
* “masking” is performing/behaving to hide neurological differences. It’s like an intense version of blending in, doing things such as scripting conversations, forcing eye contact, mimicking gestures, pushing through sensory issues, etc.

2 Communicate Clearly & Directly

Many autistic people struggle with the reading-between-the-lines part of communication, whether it be specific social rules or a task.

Clear instructions are always appreciated!

(Note: we tend to prefer written instructions to verbal)



3 Don't Criticize Stimming

Though everyone stims (short for self-stimulation) to some degree, it is important for many autistic people to stim to regulate emotions and energy.

As you can imagine, it's impossible to list out all the ways this presents.



4 Accept Sensory Issues

A nice way I've found to describe autism is like your brain has no filter. Many details, sensory and tactile inputs, and thoughts are hitting us in any given moment.

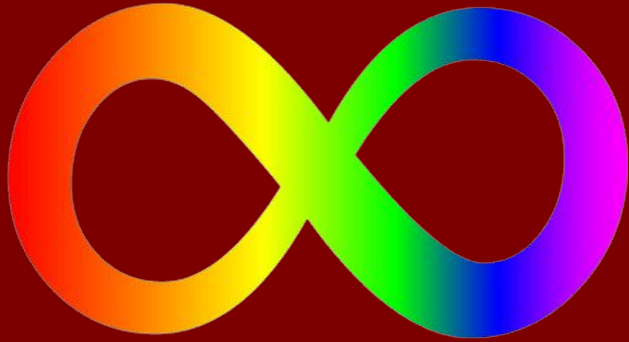
For that reason, we're prone to being overstimulated, leading to meltdowns and shutdowns.

We're likely to have our own sensory profile (i.e. certain smells are overbearing, loud sounds are painful).

Please be weary of our sensory differences and need to be alone to decompress sometimes.



5 Use Respectful Language



Many autistic people do not support Autism Speaks and its associated puzzle piece logo, and instead opt for the rainbow infinity logo. [See the resources at the end if you'd like to learn more.](#)

Many autistic people prefer identity-first language, i.e. “I am autistic” vs “I have autism”, but this preference can vary.

Catch yourself before saying phrases like...

You don't
look autistic

They are
low-functioning

retarded

Everyone's a
little bit autistic

They have
severe autism

Additional Resources

- Why should I reconsider supporting Autism Speaks? [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#)
 - And similarly, why should I reconsider using the puzzle piece logo? [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#)
- Where should I go for resources instead? [ASAN](#) ([Autism Self Advocacy Network](#)); [Embrace Autism](#); [In the Loop about Neurodiversity](#) blog; autistic YouTubers (such as [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#) [\[5\]](#) [\[6\]](#) [\[7\]](#) [\[8\]](#))

Thanks for reading! (:

I'm Addi, your friendly neighborhood autistic, who was inspired to share a little more about autism and ways to support people like me.

If you have any questions/corrections, please feel free to reach out.