



What
is
Autism
Demystification?

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SPED 794 Socialization and Imagination: Autism (Spring 2021)





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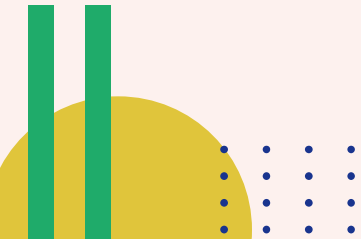
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AUTISM & RELATED AREAS

- Mental Health
- Eye-Contact
- The media

Person vs. Identity-first
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PROJECT DESIGN

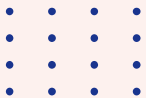


Identify Project:

- Created a public instagram page @autismdemystificaton
 - Social media platform to reach as many people as possible - worldwide

Target participants*/audience - demographics:

- Parents, family members, young professionals, speech therapists
- Public service professionals (social workers, law enforcement, doctors, grocery store workers)



Objective/Goals:

1. For neurotypical individuals to have basic understanding of what it means to be diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
 - a. Rationale: To educate others about autism and to promote understanding, acceptance, empathy for neurodiverse learners. Also, we Attempting to bridge the gap between neurotypical and neurodiverse individuals
2. Can be used in the future as a resource to the families we support
 - a. Rationale: Provide information for families, professionals in public service to have knowledge about individuals with differences.
3. Can double as a presentation if we want to train other professionals about Autism / Autism demystification
 - a. Rationale: Teach neurotypical and neurodiverse individuals how to engage and interact with one another.

Pre-Survey Questionnaire



Pre-Survey Responses

When you hear the word "autism" what comes to mind?



When you hear the word "autism" what comes to mind?

As a piano teacher who teaches autistic students, I find that they thrive best with routine and structure. They are all very different and it takes time to find out what they are good at and use that to their advantage (some have amazing memory, etc). As performers, they don't have stage fright compared to other students. Teaching them requires a lot of patience and love but at the end it is so worth it.

Not super knowledgeable about the topic. The first thing I think of is that someone is special needs however not everyone who has autism is the exact same. I've had people on my staff that had autism and we were all kinda given a heads up, like getting the rest of the staff onboard to be extra patient and understand where he was coming from.

I don't know much about it. I know that there are high functioning people with autism and not so high.

"Oh he/she doesn't look autistic."

"What're they good at?"

"I do have a cousin with autism. But there's so many degrees of it? I guess just a disadvantage."

"Behavior issues. A lifelong disorder and dependency on parents forever pretty much. It's a spectrum, some are high functioning aspergers some are lower. But most are lower."

Autism is pretty common and cannot be cured but treatments or therapy can be provided to lessen the disadvantage. There are a lot of levels involved.

PROJECT DELIVERY & EVALUATION

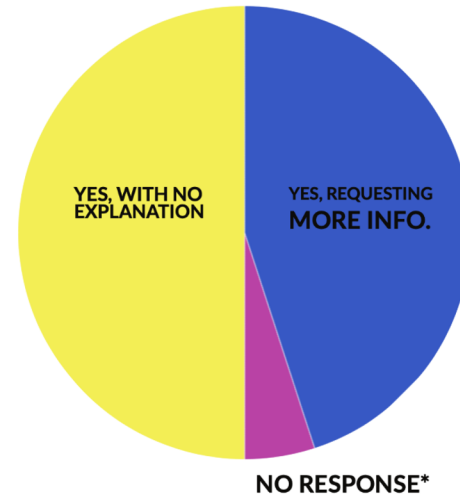
- Survey professionals in related fields to gather preliminary information
- Provide information via instagram and share our page with large groups of people
- Survey professionals in related fields after they've had a chance to review our instagram page and find out which information was helpful.

Feedback/Evaluation:

- Most people appreciated the tips on how to interact with Autistic people
- We have obtained a good amount of followers.
- Some professionals outside out the education field found the page to be informative and simple to read.
- People enjoyed the graphics
- Professionals are looking forward to additional tips regarding assisting autistic individuals and mental health.
- Some participants shared that they have a better understanding of Autism and what it looks like.
- Most people reported they learned new information.
- Some reported they appreciated the misconceptions information


Post-Survey Responses

Did you find Autism Demystification IG useful?





Instagram Posts

- The following slides you will find the different types of resources we provided and shared on our instagram page.
 - We developed a list that included the foundation of world of Autism to how you can interact with others.
 - We followed this format:
 - What is Autism Demystification?
 - What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?
 - Occurrences
 - Age of Diagnosis
 - Diagnostic Process
 - Neuroscience
 - Things to look for
 - What it looks like?
 - Myths and Facts
 - Things to be aware of: person-first or identity-first, eye-contact, media, mental health and theory of mind.
 - Tips
- 

About Autism

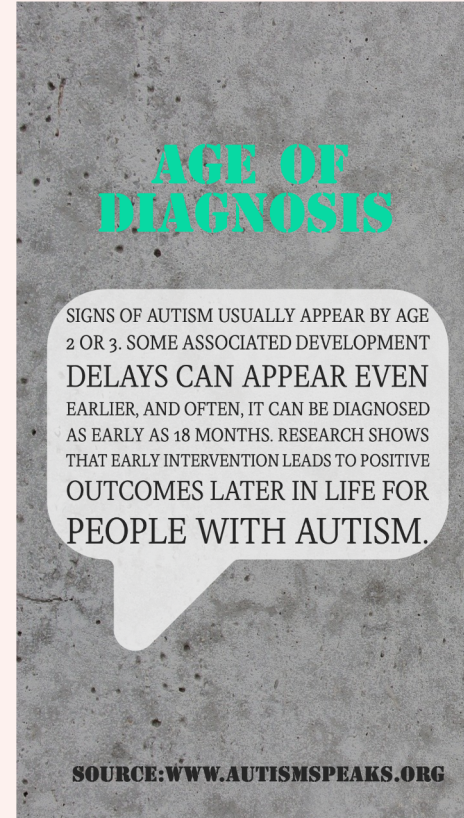


WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?

A neurological disorder that affects the brain development impacting a person's ability to communicate and socially interact with others appropriately. It is important to know that it is a spectrum which means there is a wide variety of symptoms and severity.

SOURCE: MAYOCLINIC.ORG

The infographic features a stylized illustration of a person with long dark hair sitting at a blue desk, working on a laptop. To the left of the person is a stack of three books in blue, red, and purple. Above the person are two thought bubbles: a blue one containing the title and a pink one containing the definition. The background is a light blue gradient.



AGE OF DIAGNOSIS

SIGNS OF AUTISM USUALLY APPEAR BY AGE 2 OR 3. SOME ASSOCIATED DEVELOPMENT DELAYS CAN APPEAR EVEN EARLIER, AND OFTEN, IT CAN BE DIAGNOSED AS EARLY AS 18 MONTHS. RESEARCH SHOWS THAT EARLY INTERVENTION LEADS TO POSITIVE OUTCOMES LATER IN LIFE FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM.

SOURCE: WWW.AUTISMSPEAKS.ORG

The infographic has a dark grey, textured background. At the top, the title 'AGE OF DIAGNOSIS' is written in large, bold, teal letters. Below it, a white speech bubble contains the main text in a black, serif font. At the bottom, the source is listed in bold black letters. In the bottom right corner, there is a decorative pattern of blue dots arranged in a 4x4 grid.



About Autism

Occurrences

According to the
Centers for Disease
Control, autism
affects an estimated
1 in 54 children
in the United
States today.



Beliefs



Neurophysiology & Autism Spectrum Disorder

fMRI detected increased activity in sensory areas of the brain normally associated with stimulus driven processing and decreased activity in areas associated with higher cognitive processing

Hyper arousal in response to sensory input, and decreased ability to select between competing sensory inputs

Amygdala - part of the brain associated with processing of memory, decision-making and emotional processes has been shown to have a similar pattern of deficits to those seen in patients with amygdala lesions

Reduced activity has also been found in left medial frontal cortex during a theory of mind (empathizing task)

Baron-Cohen S, Ring H, Moriarty J, et al. Recognition of mental state terms: a clinical study of autism, and a functional neuroimaging study of normal adults. *Br J Psychiatry*1994;165:640-9.



Things to look out for ...

Early signs include:

- Having little interest in other children or caretakers
- Limited display of language (e.g. fewer words than peers or difficulty with use of words for communication)
- Getting upset by minor changes in routine
- Not having established joint attention (e.g. following someone's gaze/finger point)



DIAGNOSIS

How is ASD diagnosed?

There is no medical test. Doctors and psychologists look at the child's developmental history, behavior and communication skills to make a diagnosis.

Early monitoring, screening, evaluating, and diagnosing children with ASD as early as possible is important to make sure children receive the services and supports they need.



Adolescents with Autism may experience difficulties with the following -

- Understanding what behaviors are expected at school or at work
- Developing and maintaining friendships
- Communicating with peers or adults
- Co-occurring conditions such as attention hyperactivity disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety or depression



MYTHS VS FACTS



Autism is caused
by parenting
styles

Autism is only a
childhood condition
which can be
outgrown and cured.

Autism is
just socially
awkward people



There is not a single cause for Autism. Researchers suggest there are multiple factors such as developmental and genetic factors. Parenting style does not cause Autism. However, consider adjusting parenting styles may helpful when their children are experiencing communication, social understanding and sensory processing challenges.

Currently, there is no cure and cannot be "outgrown", however intensive therapy and adequate supports can be beneficial for the child's ability to develop skills in various areas (i.e communication, behavior, emotional and social)

They may have difficulties with social interactions but those skills can be developed and taught. They may be expressing themselves differently so pay attention to body language, gesture and facial expressions. Something to consider: We ALL can be socially awkward when we are around familiar and unfamiliar people.

UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE

SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.AUTISM.ORG.AU/WHAT-IS-AUTISM/COMMON-MISCONCEPTIONS/](https://www.autism.org.au/what-is-autism/common-misconceptions/)

MYTHS VS FACTS



There are autistic people who are lower functioning and some that are higher functioning.

Autistic people are emotionless.



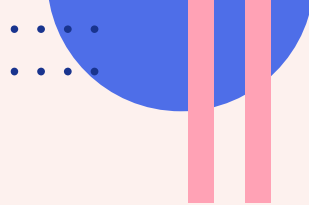
Autism is different for everyone and a spectrum, but associating levels and 'lower' or 'higher' functioning labels to autistic individuals is a misnomer. Degree or levels of functioning are not considered appropriate as it does not clearly show what the individual is capable of doing. Check out [@lifeinautismworld](#) for a better picture.

Autistic individuals may have challenges to accurately identify one's emotions, as well as difficulty thinking clearly about where the emotions are coming from and why (Buron & Wolfberg, 2014). They do well with structure and familiarity but it does not mean they live everyday without emotions.

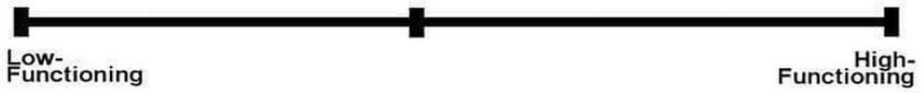
While it is true that autistic people often have a harder time reading social cues, this does not necessarily demonstrate lack of empathy.
Source:
altogetherautism.org.nz/a-shift-in-perspective-empathy-and-autism/

See the next slide!

UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE



People think Autism Spectrum is like this:



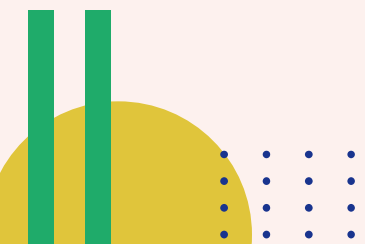
But it's NOT. It's more like this:



Only with LOTS more sliders. Each person with different settings. Some locked in, some variable, especially with stress.

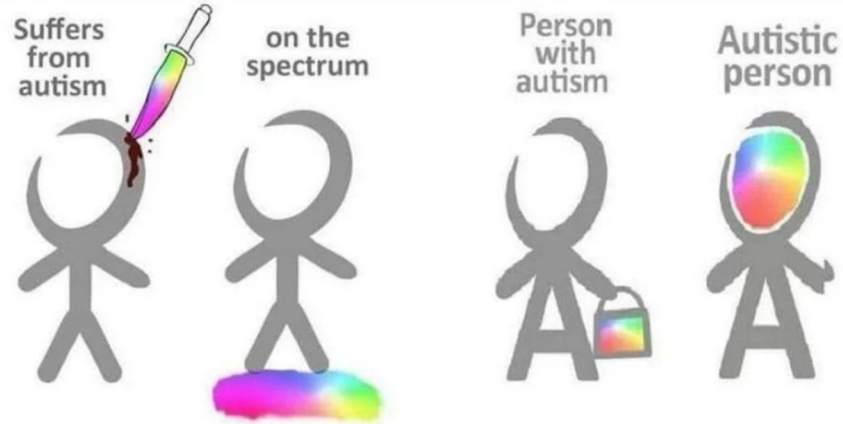
"Low Functioning" and "High Functioning" labels are actually pretty hurtful, and an incorrect way of looking at Autism.

Source: @lifeinautismworld
<https://www.instagram.com/p/COSqAlrMjXu/>



AUTISM & RELATED AREAS

PERSON vs. IDENTITY



Neurology is not an accessory
www.identityfirstautistic.org

PERSON vs. IDENTITY



In 2015, a study conducted by *The National Autistic Society*, the *Royal College of GPs* and the *UCL Institute of Education* asked 502 autistic people their language preferences.

The term 'autistic' was endorsed by 61% of autistic people. In contrast, only 18% of autistic people preferred the term 'person with autism'.

source: www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/describing.aspx

PERSON vs. IDENTITY

How do I address a person with autism or an autistic person?

Answer: It depends on what they prefer! Some prefer person with autism while others prefer autistic person.

🌟 Autism is not an accessory. 🌟

You can't carry it around like a backpack or purse.

🌟 Listen to people with autism/autistic people's perspectives on how they would like to be addressed.

🌟 Ask if you're not sure.

AUTISM &

MENTAL

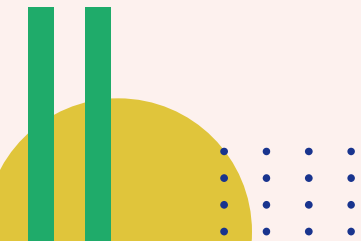
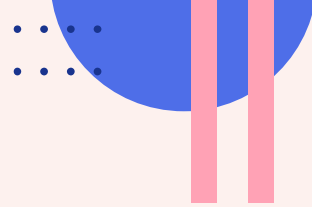


HEALTH

AUTISM & MENTAL HEALTH

- ✦ Anxiety and depression are commonly experienced by autistic individuals.
 - ✦ Young autistic adults do not necessarily prefer aloneness as once assumed, but rather experience increased levels of loneliness related to lack of social skills and understanding
 - ✦ Autistic children are more than 2x higher in developing anxiety disorders than in typically developing children
 - ✦ One-quarter of autistic children and adolescents experience depression, whereas 12 to 40% of adults suffer from depression
 - ✦ According to a study conducted by Quek and colleagues, 17% of young autistic people experience clinically significant levels of anger
 - ✦ All of these experiences lead to lowered self-esteem
- Source: all data cited in Buron & Wolfberg, 2014

AUTISM & THE MEDIA



AUTISM & THE MEDIA

Autism portrayed in the media is very one sided. You usually see the genius savant such as Shawn from “The Good Doctor” or Sheldon from “The Big Bang Theory.”

The following list shows other examples of autistic individuals:

★ Netflix Shows 📺🎬: Atypical; Love on the Spectrum

★ Gamers 🎮: Mew2King

★ Activists 🙋: Temple Grandin

★ Actors 🧑: Anthony Hopkins

★ Movies 📺🎬: Rain Man

EYE - CONTACT



Picture Source:

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/eye-contact-how-long-is-too-long/>

EYE - CONTACT

- 🌟 How do autistic individuals experience eye contact? “Results suggest people with a self-declared ASD diagnosis experience adverse emotional and physiological reactions, feelings of being invaded, and sensory overload while making eye contact, in addition to difficulties understanding social nuances, and difficulties receiving and sending nonverbal information.” Trevisan et al. (2017)
- 🌟 Even though they're not making eye-contact, they hear what you're saying. Do not force it. If you're looking at something together, gently guide their attention back. 🌟
- 🌟 Everyone: Hear what autistic individuals have to say and act upon appropriately the next time we interact with autistic individuals.
- 🌟 Teachers: consider not writing therapy goals on improving eye contact.
- 🌟 A tendency to avoid eye contact is an early indicator of Autism and difficulties with eye contact often persist throughout the lifespan.
- 🌟 Eye contact differs based on the person and cultural differences.

Tap Into Their Mind

**Do you know why
autistic individuals
seem to not consider
other people's
perspectives?
Answer this:**





this is Sally



this is Anne



Sally puts her ball in the basket



Sally goes away



Anne moves the ball to her box



where will Sally look for her ball?

Source:
Wimmer &
Perner,
1983.



Your task was to answer: where will Sally look for her ball?

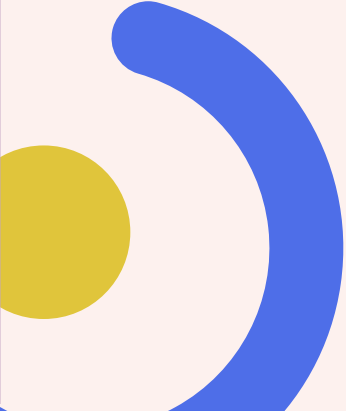
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If you answered that Sally will look in the basket, you have exercised your theory of mind.

Theory of mind is the “ability to attribute mental states to ourselves and others, serving as one of the foundational elements for social interaction. Having a theory of mind is important as it provides the ability to predict and interpret the behavior of others.” (Ruhl, 2020).

·
·

You have attributed the fact that Sally is not aware that Anne moved the ball to the box while she was away. However, autistic individuals have trouble with theory of mind and considering Sally’s mental state, and thus they may answer that Sally will look in the box. Furthermore, false belief is 4th out of 5th in the development of theory of mind. The false belief task, originally studied by Wimmer & Perner (1983), looked at if an individual is aware of the fact that others may have false-beliefs that differ from reality (Ruhl, 2020).



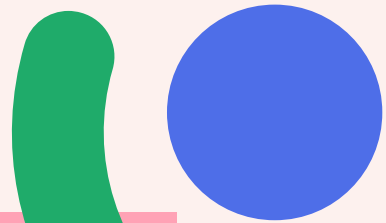
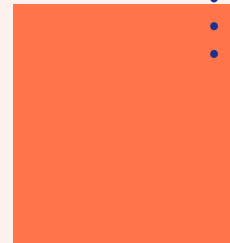


Reflections

[Sam's Reflection](#)

[Asha's Reflection](#)

[Alisa's Reflection](#)



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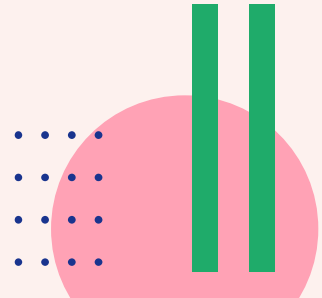
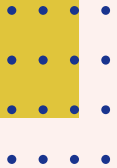
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www.scientificamerican.com/article/eye-contact-how-long-is-too-long



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