

Lets take a moment to better understand

autism

Made in collaboration with @AU_Scot & @AutismIS_

Awareness vs Acceptance

Autism Awareness

Research carried out on behalf of the Scottish Government in 2019 indicated that while 99% of the population had heard of autism, general knowledge and understanding of it was low, and largely based on inaccurate stereotypes.

There is a difference between being aware of something and understanding it. Awareness can invite negativity and pity – the idea that autism is something to be careful of.

Autism Acceptance

Acceptance is about acknowledging the full autistic experience – the good and the bad while fostering a deeper understanding.

It means those working with, supporting, employing, or raising autistic individuals can be better equipped to address the sensory, social, and emotional needs and the human rights, of autistic people rather than seek to 'cure', eliminate, or train them to be more 'normal'.

Autism **acceptance** is about raising autistic voices, valuing and learning from autistic lived experiences, and supporting members of the autistic community to advocate for their own needs.

What is Autism?

'If you've met one autistic person, you've met one autistic person.'

Simply put, autism is a **lifelong neurodevelopmental difference**. It **presents differently** in each autistic person. Autistic people have brains that are built in a **fundamentally different way** from non-autistic people. More generally, autistic people have differences in how they **process information, communicate, and interact** with the world.

Autism is sometimes referred to as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). Asperger's Syndrome is a form of autism, so someone with an Asperger's diagnosis is autistic. Many people within the autistic community are **moving away from these terms as they do not feel disordered**, the term "condition" can be viewed as medicalising being autistic, and Asperger's is generally not given as a separate diagnosis anymore.

Autistic people are often seen as quite different from their peers. They usually have what is referred to as a **spiky profile e.g. they excel in some areas and may struggle in others**. For example, an autistic adult may be a professional, highly skilled in their field, yet struggle to carry out household tasks.

What barriers do Autistic people face?

Each autistic person will face their own series of barriers in life but a common barrier for many autistic people stems from negative stereotypes and misinformation. ***With so many myths surrounding autism, it's not surprising that many autistic people describe feeling misunderstood. For a better understanding of autism, let's separate fact from fiction.***

People saying 'everyone's a little autistic.'

This is a common misconception. Some people have autistic characteristics e.g. being hyper-focused or rigid in routines, but that doesn't make them autistic. Autism is about how the brain works. Autistic people see and experience the world in a fundamentally different way.

The idea that autism mainly affects only young children.

False. Neither age, gender nor ethnicity matter – people are born autistic. Some autistic people don't get a diagnosis until adulthood, but they have still been autistic their whole lives.

People thinking autism is a mental health condition.

Not true. Autism is actually a neurological difference – MRI scans show distinctions in the ways that autistic and non-autistic brains receive and process information.

What barriers do Autistic people face?

That autistic people like to be on their own/anti-social.

This may be true of some autistic people, but it's certainly not true of all. Just as it would be for some non-autistic people. Some autistic people can find socialising more tiring than non-autistic people if they feel the need to suppress their autism to 'blend in'. Where this is the case, it can take some autists time to recover their energy after socialising. But they're not being anti-social; if anything, they're actively making an effort to socialise.

That all autistic people have a learning disability.

This is not true. Over two thirds of autistic people don't have learning disabilities or difficulties. However, many autistic people do have learning differences – a different way of learning. This shouldn't be viewed as negative like everybody else, autistic individuals are just that: individuals. Some might require extra support – educational, employment or emotional – but this differs from person-to-person, just like non-autistic people.

Trying to tell if someone is autistic by looking at them.

You cannot. There are autistic people in all walks of life; in different professions, of different ages, genders, ethnicities and religions. Autism doesn't have 'a look'. Nor does it always have visible, identifying characteristics, and when it does, they don't apply to all autistic people.

How can I be an ally and support autistic people?

1. listen

The best way to understand more about autism is to listen to autistic people themselves, whilst acknowledging that no two autistic people's experiences are the same.

2. learn

We suggest learning about autism from autistic people.

The Autism Understanding information hub is a great starting point:

<https://www.autismunderstanding.scot/information-hub>

#ActuallyAutistic is a good hashtag to follow on Twitter to see experiences, commentary, and more from the autistic community.

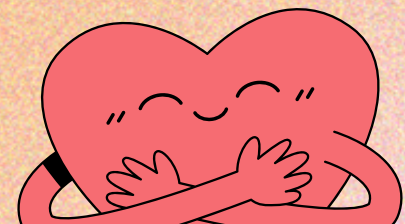
3. avoid

Actively avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes and myths about autism and kindly correct people who do.

4. amplify

Support the amplification of the autistic voice to help further the understanding of autism across society.

Take Action and SHARE!



Phase 2 funded charities

Autism Understanding Scotland
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Autism Atlas
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Central Advocacy Partners
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