

## What is Autistic experience?

Just as there is diversity among non-autistic people, the same applies to the Autistic population. Autistic people do, however, share some similarities that connect them as a minority community, which include differences in:

- experience of the sensory world,
- communication,
- thinking, socialising, & movement

It is often said that Autistic people lack “social insight” & empathy. However, research has shown that non-autistic people lack “social insight” & empathy into Autistic culture & communication, as perspective-taking is not one-way. This is known as the double empathy problem (Milton) & can mean that non-autistic people are often poorer at empathising with Autistic people, but often we Autistic people are expected to adapt & change.

Think of the double empathy problem like two cultures sharing a language but different life experiences & frames of references – much gets lost in translation.



As with all human beings, Autistic people have individual challenges & strengths, known as a spiky profile, which change due to the environment. While we experience the world differently from non-autistic people & can be disabled, we are not failed, broken, or disordered neurotypicals (non-autistic people).

It is important to learn that we are Autistic people, not “people/person with autism spectrum disorder”, & we live in three dimensional space (Farahar & Foster), not “on the spectrum” (often misrepresented as a binary continuum from “severe/low functioning” to “mild/high functioning”, ignoring our spiky profiles of challenges & strengths).

There is an important difference between being treated as an Autistic person who is part of a minority & community, & pathologising us as “people/person with autism spectrum disorder”. Autism is a difference, even when we are disabled. To be Autistic is not to be “diseased” & “suffering with autism”.

Importantly, we are not “all on the spectrum” or “a little bit Autistic” – if this were so we would not be disabled as the world & our society would be built Autistically.



Autistic people are not only white males: our community is made up of women; trans people; non-binary people; Black people; people of colour; people of all abilities; all communication methods; & rarely are we math savants with “extreme male brains”. Like the non-autistic population, we are a diverse community.



Autistic people are disabled by a world not built for our sensory & neurological differences. Many of us may use invisible disability lanyards &/or communication cards to let you know we are disabled, in what way, & how you might help. These green sunflower lanyards signpost that the wearer has an invisible disability.

**You can be part of the change we need so that we face fewer disabling barriers in everyday life: please call out prejudice & discrimination when you witness it.**

∞ Thank you ∞

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At Aucademy, Autistic people deliver: training; education; & weekly live streams about Autistic experience for everyone, as well as holding online, Autistic-only groups.

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