

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 ∞

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

