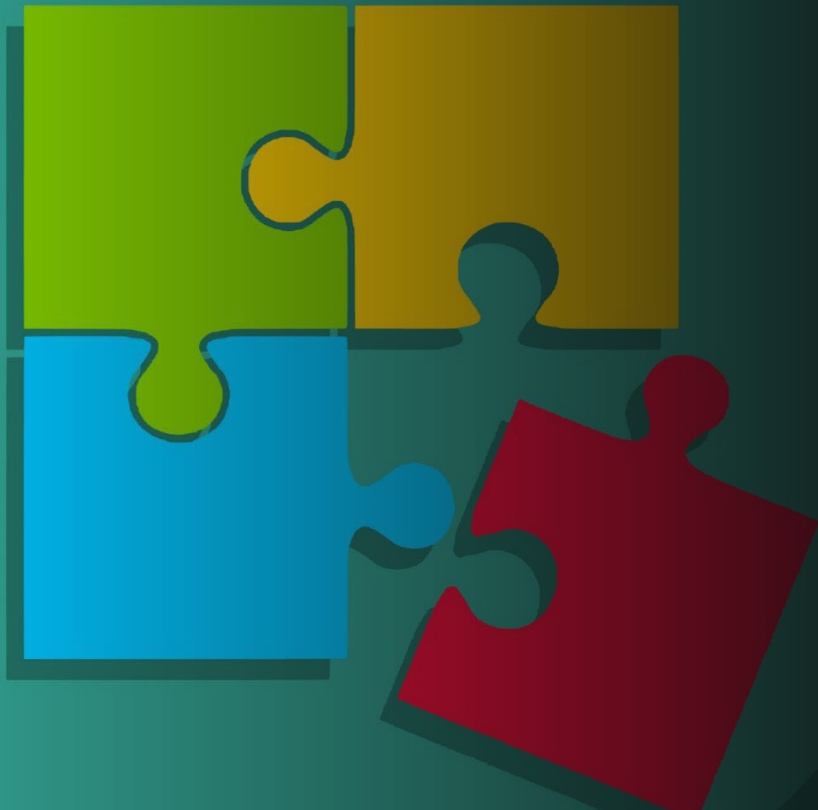


National
Autistic
Society

Autism Awareness Month PowerPoint

AUTISM AWARENESS



Written by Matthew - Year 12

Featuring what it says from the
National Autistic Society Website
and including what Matthew (Year 12 student with
Autism) has said to show how
Autism is a spectrum
and can affect people differently...

What is Autism?

- The National Autistic Society says Autism is a **spectrum condition** and affects people in different ways. Like all people, autistic people have their own strengths and weaknesses.
- It says Autism is a **lifelong development disability** which affects how people communicate and interact with the world.
- More than one in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK

The 6 main characteristics of Autism from the National Autistic Society

Social communication and social interaction challenges

Repetitive and restrictive behaviour

Over or under sensitivity to light, sound, taste or touch

Highly focused interests or hobbies

Extreme anxiety

Meltdowns and shutdowns

Social Communication challenges

The background of the slide features a series of silhouettes of people in various social interactions. From left to right, there is a woman looking at a phone, a group of three people looking at a document, a woman gesturing while talking to another person, a man gesturing while talking to a woman, a man sitting at a desk with a laptop, and a man standing and talking to another person. Above these silhouettes are several colorful speech bubbles in shades of red, green, blue, purple, and yellow, scattered across the upper half of the image.

Autistic people often have difficulties when interpreting both verbal and non-verbal language like gestures or tone of voice. Some autistic people are unable to speak or have limited speech, whereas others have very good language skills but may struggle to understand sarcasm and tone of voice.

Some other difficulties include taking things literally and not understanding abstract concepts, needing extra time to process information and repeating what others say to them.

For me personally, I am okay most of the time with communication and understanding tones of voice. But if I become stressed, this gets harder. This is the key though, that Autism is a spectrum so things I struggle with, other people may not and vice versa



Social Interaction challenges



Autistic people often have a difficulty “reading” other people- recognising or understanding others’ feelings and intentions - and expressing their own emotions

They may appear to be sensitive, seek out time alone when overloaded by other people, not seek comfort from other people, appear to behave “strangely” or in a way thought to be socially inappropriate and find it hard to form friendships

For me personally, I am affected in this category in the complete opposite way. I feel hypersensitive to other people's emotions and have something that affects a minority of autistic people called “hyper-empathy” which essentially is where if you see someone, you can tell how they are feeling almost instantly and will really want to help them feel better, sometimes at the expense of your own mental well-being. This is also hard for autistic people to manage

Repetitive and Restrictive Behaviour



Autistic people often rely on structured routines to know what is going to happen due to how the world is often unpredictable and confusing. They may want to do things in the same way every day

Autistic people may also repeat movements such as hand flapping or rocking amongst others. They often engage in these behaviours to help calm themselves when they are stressed or anxious, but some do it just because they find it enjoyable.

Change to routine can also be very distressing for autistic people and make them very anxious- and even sometimes refuse to do the change to routine. This could include simple things like a bus detour.

For me, I hate changes to routine, or something happening that I wasn't expecting. Luckily, I am able to manage this because the people around me know this and are able to make sure I know exactly what is going on 99% of the time

Over or under- sensitivity to light, sound, taste or touch

Autistic people may experience over or under sensitivity to sound, touch, tastes smells, light colours, temperatures or pain.

For example, an autistic person may find background music in a restaurant, that neurodivergent people can block out, unbearable.

This can cause anxiety or even sometimes physical pain

Some autistic people avoid every day situations because of their sensitivity issues. Schools, workplaces and shopping centres can be particularly overwhelming and cause sensory overload. There are many simple adjustments that can make this a lot easier

For me, I find sound very overwhelming. I am different to some autistic people in the sense that I am okay with loud noise, like being at a football match or at a concert when I expect loud noises. But when it is lots of different conversations or bits of music happening at the same time, I find that very overwhelming





Highly focused interests or hobbies

Many autistic people have intense and highly focused interests, often from a fairly young age. These can change over time or be lifelong.

Autistic people can become experts in their special interests and often like to share their knowledge. An example of a stereotypical interest is space, trains and maths. But they vary greatly.

Being highly focused helps many autistic people do well academically and in the workplace but they could become so engrossed in the particular topic, that they neglect other aspects of their lives.

For me, I don't really have a special interest that fits what the autism tests say, but every other autistic person I know, does have a special interest of some degree

Extreme Anxiety

Anxiety is a real difficulty for many autistic adults, particularly in social situations or when facing change. It can affect a person psychologically and physically and impact quality of life for the autistic person and their families

It is very important that autistic people learn to recognise their triggers and find mechanisms to help reduce their anxiety. However, autistic people often find it hard to recognise their emotions.

Similarly, to recognising others' emotions, I am hypersensitive to my own emotions and anxieties. I will notice them and have systems in place to try and help, but then I analyse my thoughts too much and end up getting sad about being sad and anxious which makes the whole thing worse.



Shutdowns and Meltdowns

When everything gets too much for an autistic person, they sometimes can go into a meltdown or a shutdown. These can be very intense experiences for the person and their families, friends or anyone else witnessing.

A meltdown happens when someone becomes completely overwhelmed by their current situation and temporarily loses control and may start shouting, screaming, crying, kicking, lashing out or biting.

A shutdown appears less intense to the outside world but can be equally debilitating. Shutdowns are also a response to being overwhelmed but may appear more passive. This is where they just “switch off” and can't get any words out because the mind is past the state of being able to interpret.

I never have any meltdowns; however, I have shutdowns semi regularly.

I think the key for people on the outside if they see one of these two things happening is: if it is a meltdown, don't give dirty looks and give them room to let it all out and they will eventually calm. And if it is a shutdown, then try and ask them if they are okay, but if they don't answer, then take them out to a quieter room, where it is much easier to calm down.



Things to remember



Autism is a spectrum

Although the areas outlined here are common characteristics, everyone with autism is different and will be affected in different ways

Try not to have a “blanket” approach to autism

Try to talk to the person with autism and find out what challenges they live with and how they would like you to help