

# Autism

As someone on the Autism spectrum, I'm often shocked at how little people know about Autism and the lack of education in our school system on it. I want you to ask yourself now: What is Autism? What do I know about it? If you're not sure, that's okay! I'm going to tell you.

Autism is a neurological difference, and a hidden disability! (not a disease, or illness!) It is a spectrum, meaning there are lots of different ways autistic people experience autism. For some, this may mean having difficulty speaking, or having sensory issues. For others, it could mean something entirely different.

In the UK, there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children, (myself included!) A message to the autistic community, a community I feel so lucky to be a part of, and am proud to be a part of: your autism is beautiful, and you deserve to feel so proud of it.

For the people who aren't on the spectrum, here are some things you do, and **don't** say to an autistic person.



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'You don't look Autistic!'

To be honest this is just a bit of a stupid thing to say, because autism is a neurological difference, neurological meaning to do with the brain, so unless you can see that person's brain, you aren't making much sense.

You can't be Autistic! My 5 year old nephew is Autistic and you're nothing like him!

Would you say to someone without autism 'you can't be neurotypical, my 8 year old sister is and you're nothing like her! You probably wouldn't. It isn't logical to assume that every autistic person is the same, because every person who is not autistic isn't the same, and we are also human beings, just like you.



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'Stop flapping your hands. It's weird.'

Stimming. It's something every single one of us do, autistic or not. It's a physical action as a response to the emotions that we feel. When you hum to a song you like, or click your knuckles, you're stimming. We all do it, and for people with neurological differences like autism we experience stimming differently, so it may look slightly different, but we all do it.

Often in school or workplace settings, comments like these are made out of ignorance to autistic people and that's never okay. It can leave a person feeling isolated, confused and more. This can lead to masking. Scroll down to learn more.



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When people are ignorant towards people with hidden disabilities, it hurts a lot, and often autistic people are bullied in places like schools, or offices. A part of autism is called **masking**. Autistic people are often bullied, picked on or laughed at by neurotypical people for traits of their autism, so we pick up mannerisms, and societal cues that neurotypical people might do to look more neurotypical. That's another reason not to tell someone 'you don't look autistic!' Masking is so tiring and can lead to **autistic burnout**. This is when we have been masking in school, or elsewhere for hours and we get mentally exhausted. Burnout can lead to lack of motivation, or increased panic attacks and meltdowns, heightened sensory issues and so much more. Burnout can last for a long time, and trust me, it's not fun. If neurotypical people were more aware of hidden disabilities like autism, the world would be a safer place for disabled people.

I'll probably post more on autism soon, so stay tuned and thank you for reading!