

AUTISM MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES

Autism is a childhood condition.

Signs of autism start very early in childhood, but it is a lifelong condition. Autistic kids don't grow out of their autism—they grow up to be autistic adults.

Autistic people have something wrong with them that needs to be fixed.

Autism isn't a disease like diabetes or asthma, and there is no cure for it. Many autistic people say they wouldn't want to be cured. The way they see it, autism is like their gender or nationality—it's part of who they are. Think of autism as a different way of processing information and making sense of the world. Autistic brains find some things more challenging, like relating to others, but they tend to excel in other ways, like noticing details and remembering information.

If someone can't speak, it means they can't understand.

For a long time, doctors thought that if someone couldn't speak, they couldn't possibly be intelligent. Now we know that many non-speaking individuals are very smart, they just have trouble getting their bodies to obey their minds. You can show respect to non-speaking autistic people by talking to them like you would talk to anyone else their age.

Autistic people learn slower than others their age.

Some autistic people do take longer to learn new things, while others learn very quickly, and most are somewhere in between. Every autistic person has strengths and challenges, just like everyone else.

Autistic people are “in their own world.”

People often mistake common autistic behaviors, like fidgeting, covering ears, and lack of eye contact as signs that autistic people are spacing out. Actually, these behaviors do the opposite. If you've ever been to a country where you don't speak the language, you know how overwhelming it is when you don't know what others are about to do and aren't able to communicate with them. That's how autistic people feel all the time! Their behaviors aren't a sign of being lost—they're a sign of working hard to stay calm and focused.

All autistic people are the same.

Autistic people share a few traits, like challenges communicating and relating to other people, but they are unique in every other way. You can find autistic people everywhere—they are athletes, doctors, teachers, actors, Youtubers, counselors, artists, and even moms and dads.

Autism is more common than it was in the past.

Autism used to be very rare because it was only diagnosed in children who showed an exact list of challenges. Today, the autism spectrum is much broader, ranging from those who need a lot of help to those who need a little extra help in certain areas. It's not that there are more autistic people, we've just gotten better at identifying it.

Autistic people don't want to make friends.

If an autistic person doesn't respond the way expected, it doesn't mean they don't want to be your friend. It takes a lot of effort for many autistic people to interact. They may need a break, a quieter place to hang out, or a different way to communicate (like texting or using a special app). If they seem shy or anxious, keep in mind that they might have been teased or bullied in the past. Remember—you don't need special knowledge or skills to be friends with an autistic person. Just be kind, be yourself, and be accepting of others and their differences.