

# Autism disclosure

## Creating inclusive communities

This guide aims to assist people and communities in creating spaces where Autistic individuals feel safe and supported, whether they disclose being Autistic or not.

Although autism is widely recognised, **research** reveals a significant gap in the comprehensive understanding of what autism really is and what it means to be Autistic.

To foster meaningful societal change, it's essential to proactively engage non-Autistic people in shouldering the responsibility for cultivating a more inclusive and informed society.

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What can be done to create a more inclusive society?



Create a safe and inclusive environment



Mindful communication and responses



React positively



Broader social understanding and community engagement

"If you haven't heard from your #neurodivergent employees, your #culture is likely an unsafe place to disclose!"

Disclosure is a personal and private choice. It is not for you to share without their consent.

# Quick tips for inclusive interactions



## What can be done to create a more inclusive society?



### Create a safe and inclusive environment

**Encourage open conversations:** Promote an environment where discussions about disability and neurodiversity are not just welcomed but actively encouraged.

**Sensory-friendly spaces:** Assess and adapt the environment to be sensory-friendly. Engaging an expert can provide valuable insights for creating comfortable spaces.

**Respect and value diversity:** Embrace and celebrate diverse perspectives, recognising the unique contributions of Autistic individuals.

**Educate yourself and others:** Commit to ongoing education about autism. Share this knowledge to dismantle misconceptions and challenge stereotypes.



### Mindful communication and responses

**Challenge assumptions and stereotypes:** Actively avoid and correct stereotypes like "You don't look Autistic!" Understand that autism is a spectrum and manifests differently.

**Respond with empathy and openness:** Show understanding rather than surprise or scepticism. Acknowledge the validity of the Autistic person's experiences.

**Active and respectful listening:** When an Autistic individual shares their experience, engage with attentiveness and respect, validating their perspective.



### Broader social understanding and community engagement

**Promote accurate representation in media:** Advocate for media portrayals that accurately and respectfully depict the diverse realities of the Autistic community, moving beyond stereotypes to include varied representations as seen in individuals like Chloé Hayden, Anthony Hopkins and Greta Thunberg. Challenge misconceptions by highlighting the multifaceted nature of autism, which is not limited to a single narrative or appearance.

**Foster community engagement and awareness:** Participate in and encourage community events or initiatives that support Autistic individuals. This includes workshops, awareness campaigns, or support groups, which can foster greater understanding and solidarity.

**Encourage inclusive policies and practices:** Support the development of inclusive policies in workplaces, educational institutions, and community spaces. Advocate for practices that accommodate the needs of Autistic individuals, such as flexible work arrangements or quiet spaces in educational settings.

**Build partnerships with Autistic advocates and organisations:** Collaborate with Autistic advocates and organisations to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and perspectives of the Autistic community. Such partnerships can inform more effective strategies for inclusion and support.

**Educational initiatives for broader awareness:** Engage in or sponsor educational initiatives that aim to spread awareness and understanding of autism among the general public. This could include seminars, informational campaigns, or collaboration with schools and community centres.



### React positively

**Cultivate a welcoming environment:** Ensure that Autistic individuals are not just included but feel genuinely welcomed in all settings (e.g. an inclusion statement at the start of a meeting).

**Demonstrate curiosity and inclusivity:** Show authentic interest in understanding their experiences and views, fostering a culture of inclusivity.

**Celebrate Autistic strengths:** Acknowledge and value the unique strengths and insights associated with being Autistic.

**Tailored support:** Ask about and respond to specific support needs, showing a commitment to accommodating individual preferences.

**Access to resources:** Provide and promote access to relevant autism resources that include Autistic voices – Autistic people are experts on autism.

Remember, making a place where everyone feels welcome is about more than just doing a few things differently. It's about all of us working together to really understand and respect Autistic people.

We're not just trying to fit Autistic people into our world; we're learning how their unique views and abilities can make our community better for everyone. This guide isn't just a bunch of tips – it's a call to everyone to help make a world where everyone, just as they are, is valued and has the chance to shine.

## Our purpose a different brilliant®

Understanding, engaging  
and celebrating the strengths,  
interests and aspirations of people  
on the autism spectrum.

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This guide was informed by autism disclosure **research**:

- [‘Most people have no idea what autism is’: Unpacking autism disclosure using social media analysis](#). Autism. 2023.
- [Using Experience Sampling Methodology to Capture Disclosure Opportunities for Autistic Adults](#). Autism in Adulthood. 2023.



Research Centre  
for Autism Practice