

Claiming an identity you didn't know you had

“Exploring Being Autistic” a peer run programme for adults diagnosed, self-identified or wondering if they are autistic.

(apologies to Michelle Cliff whose book **Claiming an identity they taught us to despise** inspired this title)

You're you.

What if that

you is

Autistic

?

The human constellation



The autism constellation



Johari Window

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	1 Open Known to self and to others	2 Blind Not known to self but known to others
Not known to others	3 Hidden Known to self but not to others	4 Unknown Not known to self or others



What is Autism?

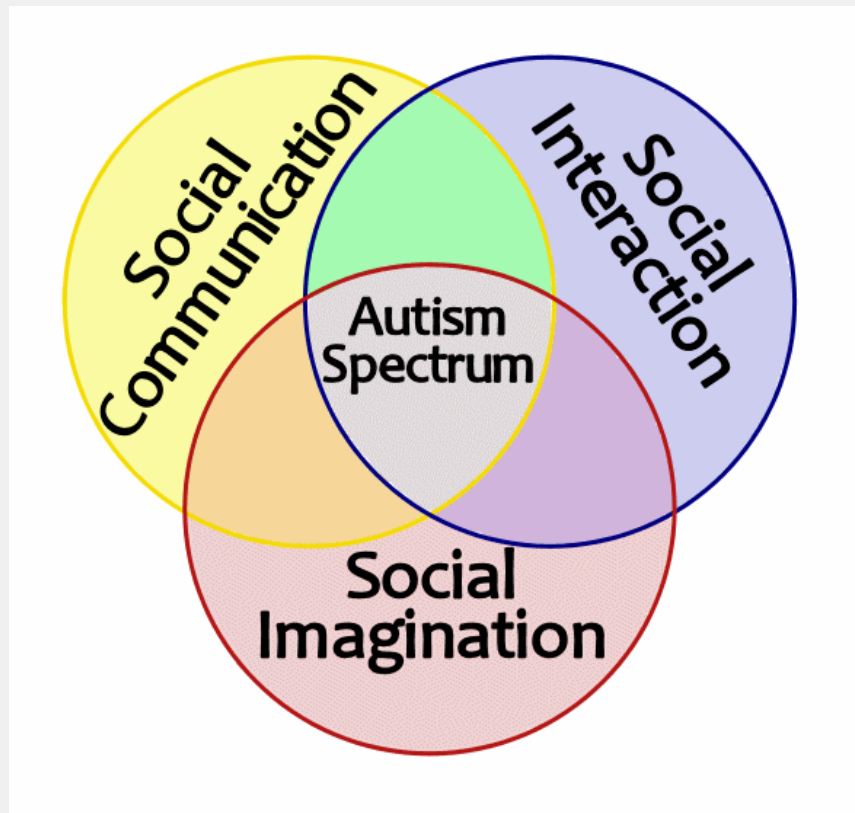
Autism is the most severe of the developmental disabilities

From <http://www.autismuk.com/autism/what-is-autism/#1> accessed 14th August 2016

Head banging child

Rainman

Triad of Impairments or Neurodiversity



differences in
Control
Tolerance
Connection

Who controls the narrative?

Media “charities” & “experts”

Rainman. The curious incident of the dog in the night. Computer geeks

Autism speaks/NAS

Baron Cohen/ Attwood

Autistic groups/individuals

Autistic UK/AutscapeASAN

Donna Williams/Ari Ne’eman/Michelle Dawson/Damian

Liberation movements

Whose stories are believed?

Aspect of humanity	Initial narrators	New narrators
Race	White people	Non-white people
Sex	Men	Women
Gender and sexuality	Straight people	LGBTQ people
Disability	Able bodied people	Disabled people
Autism	Academics/ "Experts"	Autistic people

Exploring Being Autistic

By offering information about autism, with plenty of opportunities for discussion and some optional role play the group enables people diagnosed, self-identified or wondering if they might be autistic to:

- discover if/how autism affects them
- socialise with peers
- process emotional response to being autistic
- develop strategies to capitalise on strengths and mitigate challenges associated with autism
- consider pros and cons of disclosing identification/diagnosis
- explain autism to others and request appropriate accommodation and/or adapt some of their own behaviour where helpful

Contents of programme

Each session has the same structure

Introduction and sharing autism histories

Social communication.

“Theory of Mind”

Emotions and empathy.

Sensory issues

Executive function.

Social impacts of autistic traits.

Anxiety Depression and Mental Health.

Diagnosis/Identification of Autism – what does it mean for you now.

Where to from here?

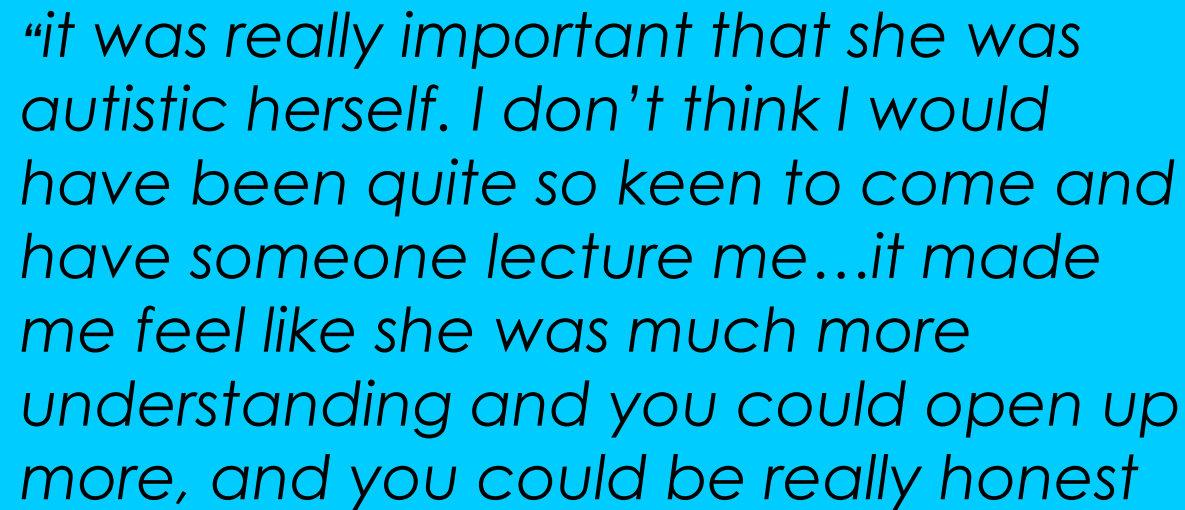
Feedback

it's not this really negative, awful position being me. I'm different...I have got a lot of strengths, they're just intrinsic as being part of me, it's who I am and it's partly because I am autistic, so the group with Caroline made me aware more of myself in a positive way

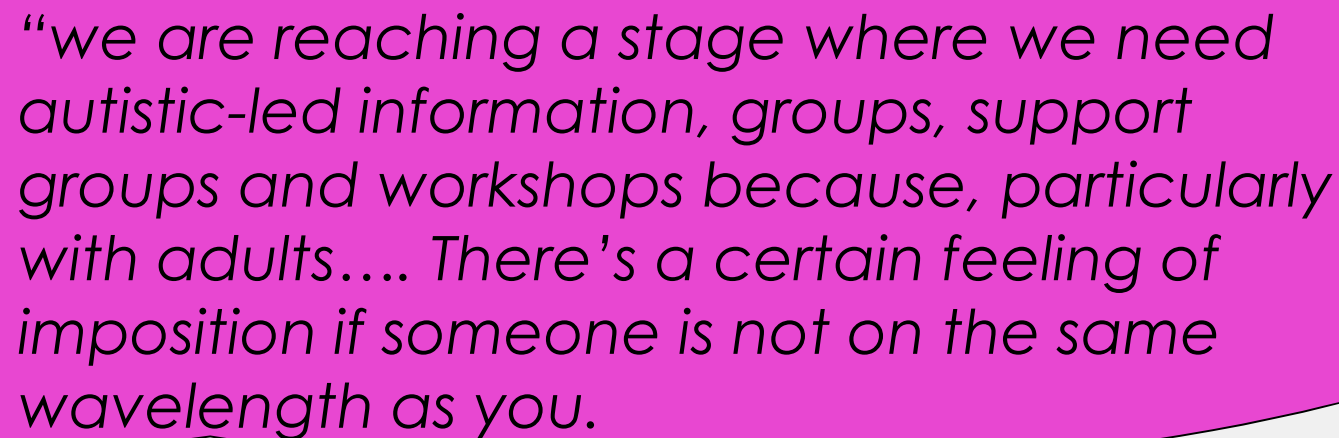
although I know a lot about autism, Caroline was coming at it from a very different angle from most people

I thought it was very useful having different aspects to talk about each week...there was a sort of balance between...sharing what was going on for us and also having a topic that we focused on and then we would reflect on

It's helped me feel positive about the way I am



“it was really important that she was autistic herself. I don’t think I would have been quite so keen to come and have someone lecture me...it made me feel like she was much more understanding and you could open up more, and you could be really honest



“we are reaching a stage where we need autistic-led information, groups, support groups and workshops because, particularly with adults.... There’s a certain feeling of imposition if someone is not on the same wavelength as you.

The programme helps people to move towards self acceptance and an informed insider perspective on being autistic.

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