

3. Same but different: Meet Talia



Talia Grant is 19 and stars as Brooke Hathaway on Channel 4's *Hollyoaks*. Talia has found success in front of the camera but school days were tough and Talia experienced severe anxiety.

Talia doesn't like loud noises, crowds or strong smells. Talia loves drawing, dancing and meditating.

Talia has a younger sister who is autistic and has ADHD while their older sister and younger brother have ADHD. Talia's mother and father are Carrie (pictured) and David Grant.

"There has been so little representation of autistic girls but even more than this, autistic girls from a BAME background."

How does your autism affect you?

I feel like I experience the world more vividly and intensely than others. This can be a good and a bad thing. It means I can be super-passionate about something but then I can sometimes feel totally overwhelmed by everything. I think anxiety is probably the biggest hurdle for me.

What did you find hard, when you were younger?

School, friendships, old Victorian pictures, certain smells, loud noises, mean teachers. I felt like an alien and I didn't know why but now I just accept it. Deep down I've always known who I am, the only difference is I learned that I shouldn't hide it and I embrace my uniqueness.

I remember feeling really low and I think those feelings came from not fitting in and not being accepted.

What do you need from other people as an young autistic person? What should they understand about you?

Be patient with me, sometimes it takes me a little longer to understand what you are trying to communicate. I don't read faces very well. I pick up on people's energy and I can often read their inner feelings. If what someone says contradicts those feelings I am getting, I can sometimes get confused.

What's your advice to other autistic young people who are interested in acting?

Never let anyone tell you that you cannot do something. There is a whole world out there. Especially if, like me, you have had a terrible time at school. Honestly, it does get easier. I'm just about finding out. Find a good theatre group to be a part of and don't be afraid to shine or be yourself.

Personal Profile

Complete this profile of Talia after reading the 'Meet Talia' resource sheet. To get you started, we've filled out an interesting fact about Talia.

Then prepare a profile on yourself. How are you similar to Talia? Do you share any interests? Any likes or dislikes?



Name:

Age:

Family members:

Likes:

Dislikes:

Interesting fact: Talia is one of the first openly autistic actors in a UK soap.

Personal Profile

Put your
picture here

Name:

Age:

Family members:

Likes:

Dislikes:

Interesting fact:

A portrait of a young woman with a red bandana tied around her head, a nose ring, and a small hoop earring. She is wearing a dark grey sweater over a white turtleneck. The background is a plain, light-colored wall with a window visible on the right. The image is framed by a teal and white circular graphic on the left.

4. Quiz: Talia's Journey

"We're all individuals but when we stand together, we're so much stronger."



Watch the Talia Q and A film and have a go at this quiz.

1. What does Talia think young autistic people struggle most with? (Choose one.)

- a) fitting in
- b) not speaking
- c) feeling disliked

2. What did Talia struggle with at school? (Choose one.)

- a) panic attacks
- b) school dinners
- c) understanding teachers

3. What does Talia like about being autistic? (Choose one.)

- a) gathering knowledge quickly
- b) wearing the same clothes
- c) eating the same food

4. Read these statements about Talia. Decide whether they are TRUE or FALSE.

- a) Talia loves getting into a topic
- b) Talia is a massive Robbie Williams fan
- c) Talia found school easy
- d) Talia is a professional dancer
- e) Talia is a big Robin Williams fan
- f) Talia did a lot of masking at school

5. What is masking?

- a) putting on silly faces
- b) covering your emotions
- c) making a mask

6. Talia is one of the first openly autistic actors to

- a) star in a West End play
- b) swim the channel
- c) star in a UK soap
- d) be a newsreader

7. In what way has being autistic helped Talia?

8. Why is Talia celebrating World Autism Awareness Week?

- a) to help increase understanding
- b) to teach people about autism
- c) to show we are stronger united
- d) all of the above

9. Where could you go to find out more about autism and how you can help?
