

Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network

INFORMATION & RESOURCES FOR NEWLY
DIAGNOSED OR RECOGNIZED AUTISTIC
WOMEN & NONBINARY INDIVIDUALS

**Welcome to Autistic Women &
Nonbinary Network (AWN)!**

We are a community by and for Autistic women, girls, and nonbinary individuals. Some of us were diagnosed as children, many were diagnosed or recognized later in life. We all share a common Autistic identity.

You belong here!



awnnetwork.org

AWN respects and affirms the value of Autistic lives.

We believe that Autism and Disability are natural variations of the human experience.



In doing so, we seek to support, accommodate and respect Autistic individuals through the ideals of

**the neurodiversity paradigm,
disability justice,
transformative justice,
and pride in our Autistic identities.**

Our community is diverse and welcoming to all who seek to uphold our mission.

AWN is happy to have you!

This can be a confusing and exciting time for you, with many questions and uncertainties.



It is also often a time when a lifetime of questions have finally been answered. At AWN, we hope to help you find the resources and community to navigate all the information on autism that is available.

We want to assure you that you are not alone.

There is a vibrant and welcoming community of Autistic women & nonbinary people who have been where you are and are waiting to help support you on your journey of self discovery.

ADVICE & SUPPORT FOR THE NEWLY DIAGNOSED OR RECOGNIZED AUTISTIC:

"Welcome! Congratulations! It will be better than OK.

It will be great. Our community has a need for someone just like you.

Please don't let anyone make you second guess yourself because you're 'too feminine' or 'not like their autistic nephew' or whatever.

We come in all flavors of girly and not, and we DON'T tend to present like boys.

You are not required to suffer fools kindly, even if you've spent your whole life doing so. This isn't something to mourn. You are not a failure. You are perfect. And there are a lot of us out here who want you in our lives exactly as you are."

- Kassiane

"Be kind to yourself.

Often, a later in life autism diagnosis and/or recognition is met with a strange sense of relief and overwhelming angst.

Don't expect that your story will be exactly like another person's. We are all individuals in our own right. Our life experiences play a big role in how we learn to accept who we are, so be open to learning from others. Be careful not to buy into myths like 'high/low functioning' as these labels are not representative of Autistic people overall.

Lastly, reach out to the greater disability community. There are so many wonderful people who are reaching out across all disabilities and experiences to help one another."

- Sharon

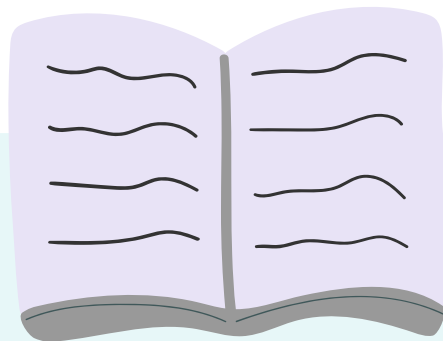
"Welcome!

Take your time working through this information and your feelings about it. Whatever you're feeling is fine. Our society makes it hard to be autistic and to make sense of our experiences in light of that, and that's not your fault.

Consider doing some things differently in your life to make things easier on yourself. There's no mandate to do things in a way that's as hard for you as possible.

Read about experiences of invisible disabilities other than autism. A lot of the things we go through with having our experiences denied or hidden or being made to feel lazy, wrong, or incompetent, have commonalities with people with other disabilities, and they have a lot of valuable things to say. "

- Emily



"This is a good thing.

No, really, *this is a good thing.*

Diagnosis means you're going to have access to ideas for coping strategies and tricks to help your brain into not being mad at you/the universe/everything around you.

This is not a punishment or a sentence; this is a description that gives you access to resources. This is empowering!"

- Taennyn

**“You see the world differently.
You know you think differently.
And that’s a beautiful thing.”**

-Anonymous

"Don't commit to anything right away.

Give yourself time to find your feelings. The time right after being told that you are Autistic is like a roller coaster and you will have many emotional ups and downs.

You need time to reflect on your personal history, viewing everything again through this new lens of information you have: the knowledge that your life history is an Autistic life history.

Take this time to get reacquainted with yourself and don't be too quick to commit to things and people until you feel a little more like you have your feet underneath you.

Until then, just drink in the flood of new information and spend time being gentle with yourself as you learn anew who you are."

- Maxfield

**“You’re not broken and this is
nothing new. It's how you are, how
you’ve always been, and this is just
the name of it. You are wonderful!”**

- Lorraine



"Be gentle with yourself

as you review your life through a new perspective. You will likely be reviewing your life through your new set of 'eyes' for a significant time.

This could potentially bring about some sadness and anger, especially if your autistic traits were ignored by the people around you for a very long time. I know, for myself I was angry at the many professionals that I sought out to help me over the years.

Be relieved, you've found who you are, had unanswered questions answered and it can only get better from here on out."
- Kimberly

**"I came to understand that autism was
not something tragic or shameful....
I was born right the first time."
- Finn Gardiner, "Letter to People at the
Intersection of Autism and Race"**



"Embrace what you are feeling.

It's a pathway to liberation of who you have always been.

You are not alone in how you view the world. Its ok to experience a variety of emotions or none at all. Take the time to process the information and seek other women like us who are willing to be a safe space."

- Sabrina

"Use this as a tool to seek balance in your life.

It can be a good place to start to identify which things about your life can be changed to fit you (like sensory things that stress you out a lot more than you may realize), which things you can work on to improve your quality of life (healthy coping mechanisms, assistive technology, social skills that are worth the work to develop), and which things should not be part of your life (abusive relationships, attempts to fit certain social norms that are destructive, etc.)

My diagnosis was the start of a process of self-examination that let me build a life I want to live, rather than just enduring someone else's idea of what my life should be like. "

- Angela

**"Love yourself because
you're worth it!"**

- Annalynn



"As someone who was diagnosed late in life, at age 44, I can guess what you're feeling -- relief, curiosity, excitement, confusion. With knowledge comes power, and self-understanding and awareness can give you a new sense of confidence & self-acceptance, both very powerful tools."

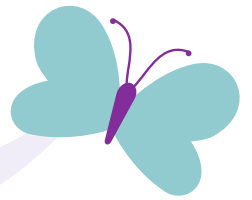
- Donna

“You didn’t just ‘get’ autism.

Autism is a name for a collection of traits you’ve had your whole life, that are part of you. This diagnosis doesn’t make you a different person.

Autism presents us with challenges, but it’s not something negative or shameful, and doesn’t make us deficient or less valuable. Don’t be ashamed to need accommodations or help. We’re all interdependent as a race; nobody accomplishes anything on their own.”

- Angela



“You are not alone!

Finding others who have similar experiences and ways of being can be one of the most helpful things in learning to understand yourself better. It also can feel really good to be a source of support and understanding for others.

Especially look for other autistics who have found positive ways to maximize the really awesome parts of being autistic, while learning to understand and manage the more challenging parts. Learn what accommodations you can make for yourself (or ask of others) that will help you most, and never feel badly about these, because proper and timely accommodations will keep you strong and healthy, and at your best.

It is completely possible to live a good and fulfilling life as an autistic person.”

- Julia

"Be yourself, whoever that is.

People will tell you that you have to be 'masculine brained,' 'good at math,' 'bad at math,' 'delicate and sensitive a la 'Aspergirls,' or any number of other outlandish things. Ignore anyone who tells you how to be an autistic woman. There are as many ways to do it as autistic women. No one who wants to tell you how to do it is your friend.

Find your own voice."

- Larkin

"Accept yourself.

Accept who you are, and accept that autism is part of who you are. Accommodate yourself and your needs (what those are varies person to person).

Don't fight to appear "normal", trying to look "normal" is futile and miserymaking. Instead of trying to be a second-rate allistic person, be the best autistic person you can be."

- ischemgeek



WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism is a pervasive developmental disability that impacts communication, movement and sensory processing.

"Pervasive" means that autism affects every part of us because it is our neurology.



Autistic people are as diverse as any other group of people and we each have our own strengths and weaknesses.

The amount of support that each autistic person needs can vary greatly between individuals and even in the same person from day to day. However, each and every one of us experience and interpret the world around us in distinctly autistic ways.



The best way to learn about autism is to ask an autistic person! We are the only true experts on our own lives!

AUTISM IS...



**"Autism is not what we have.
Autistic is what we are. "**

- S.R.

"I view autism as realness. "

- Morénike

**"Autism is different for each of us.
It's hard and joyful and confusing
and wondrous. Just like life."**

- Cynthia

"The way I love? It is deep.

Autism is deep love. People write it off as special interest or obsession, but even if it's not something I can excel at, I can excel at loving what I love, loving what I do, loving who I love. Autism is being able to be consumed by love and interest; it is giving 100% because it is an insult to the thing one loves to give any less. Autism is going big or going home"

- Kassiane

WHAT IS ACCEPTANCE?

“Autism isn't a choice,

and we can't change it, but we can change our perceptions. Radical acceptance allows us to embrace Autistic life, with all of its joy and sorrow.”

- Autistic, Typing from 'Autism Moon'

"Acceptance is loving a person as who they are, right where they are."

- Kassiane

“We are all multiple layers.

"We are all multiple layers. Not one of us has only one identity. Seeing all of my identities and the intersections. Providing room at the table to share my experiences without expectations that I will have to sensor, filter, or become invisible."

- Sabrina



"Calling myself an autistic woman without shame. Shedding that shame and loving myself for who I am, not who others need me to be."

- Kat

"Acceptance, to me, looks like inclusion.

I am included because my neurology is respected. My identity as Autistic and Disabled is not seen as a source of shame, but as a part of who I am, and a natural part of human diversity. I am seen as valuable and not a set of deficits. I am seen as worthy of supports, accommodations and help when I do need them because my contributions matter. I matter. Autistic people matter. All of us, including you!"

- Lei



"Acceptance means a sense of having everything you need

to feel comfortable with who you are. It also means that you and the people most supportive of you fully recognize your areas of competence, while allowing for any accommodations you need without making a big deal out of them. So that you feel encouraged and empowered to discover and fulfill your potential."

- Julia

FURTHER READING

"Autism Moon" by Autistic, Typing
facebook.com/AutisticTyping/posts/413085455958525

"Autistic Women: Misdiagnosis and the Importance of Getting it Right"
by Cynthia Kim
awnnetwork.org/autistic-women-misdiagnosis-and-the-importance-of-getting-it-right

"Blasting Stereotypes in Autistic Females" by Elesia Ashkenazy
awnnetwork.org/blasting-stereotypes-in-autistic-females

"Labels" by Amy Sequenzia
awnnetwork.org/labels

"Understanding the Gender Gap: Autistic Women & Girls" by Cynthia Kim
awnnetwork.org/understanding-the-gender-gap-autistic-women-and-girls

"From Ableist to Self Advocate" by Amy Sequenzia
awnnetwork.org/from-ableist-to-self-advocate

"The Gift of Self Knowledge" by Jean Windgardner
awnnetwork.org/the-gift-of-self-knowledge

"You Get Proud by Practicing: A Poem" by Laura Hershey
www.thenthdegree.com/proudpoem.asp

"What Autism Really Is" by Radical Neurodivergence Speaking
timetolisten.blogspot.com/2013/11/what-autism-really-is.html

"25 Things I Know as an Autistic Person" by Corina Becker
autisticsspeakingday.blogspot.com/2011/11/25-things-i-know-as-autistic-person.html

"12 People on What it Felt Like to Discover Autism" by Reese Piper
<https://awnnetwork.org/12-people-on-what-it-felt-like-to-discover-autism>

THE MISSION

The mission of Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (AWN) is to provide community, support, and resources for Autistic women, girls, transfeminine and transmasculine nonbinary people, trans people of all genders, Two Spirit people, and all others of marginalized genders.

AWN is dedicated to building a supportive community where we can share our experiences in an understanding, diverse and inclusive environment. AWN is committed to recognizing and celebrating diversity and the many intersectional experiences in our community.

We welcome all women, transgender and cisgender, transfeminine and transmasculine non-binary and genderqueer people, Two-Spirit people, trans people of all genders, and all other people of marginalized genders or of no gender. AWN recognizes and affirms all people's gender identities and expressions, as well as choices about disclosure, transition, and going stealth.

Our goal is to dispel stereotypes and misinformation which perpetuate unnecessary fears surrounding an autism diagnosis. We seek to share information which works to build acceptance and understanding of disability. **Welcome to AWN!**

You are not alone!
Welcome to a whole new understanding of you!





facebook.com/awnnetwork.org



instagram.com/awn_network



twitter.com/awnnetwork_



awn-network.tumblr.com

AWN INITIATIVES:

DIVERGENT

awnnetwork.org/divergent-when-disability-and-feminism-collide

HEALTH CARE RESOURCES

awnnetwork.org/autistic-womens-health-provider-survey-results

AUTISTIC PEOPLE OF COLOR FUND

autismandrace.com/autistic-people-of-color-fund/

SINCERELY, YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD:

What People on the Autism Spectrum Wish Their Parents Knew About
Growing Up, Acceptance, and Identity

beacon.org/Sincerely-Your-Autistic-Child-PI685.aspx

CONTACT: awnnetwork.org/contact-awn

DONATE: awnnetwork.org/donate-to-awn