

Cardinal Compositions

University of Louisville

Autism By An Autistic: Different Not Less (Infographic & Writer's Memo)

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Cardinal Compositions, vol. 5 (2021), pp. 21-26.

For the Classroom

1. Research the phrase “nothing about us without us.” What is the history of that phrase, and how is it used today? What common threads do you see between this phrase and the ideas expressed in Settle’s project?
2. Settle’s project is made up of an infographic and writer’s memo. How does this multimodal genre affect your experience as an audience member for this project? How does reading the author’s reasoning and description of their topic and creative process affect your reading of the project? How might you use multimodality in your own composition projects?

AUTISM BY AN AUTISTIC

different not less

WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism is a complex, lifelong developmental disability that typically appears during early childhood and can impact a person's social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation.

1 out of 54

children have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder

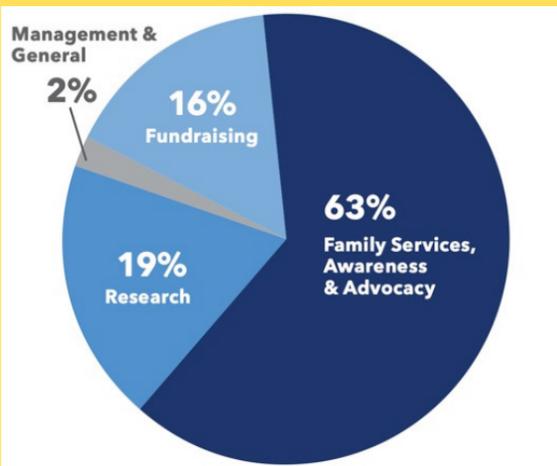
Autism is more common in biological males than biological females.

1 in 145 FEMALES

1 in 34 MALES

AWARENESS VS ACCEPTANCE

Many organizations claim to help the Autistic community. But in reality they don't. Autism Speaks is an organization that pushes awareness, not acceptance. In their published work they talk about all the negative characteristics an autistic person may have, how their money will fix it, and how to recognize Autism based off deficits. Autistics want organizations that accept us, support us, help with accommodations, and push inclusion.



Autism Speaks 2015 "Your Dollars at Work"

Not a single penny from Autism Speaks went to pushing acceptance.

AWARENESS

Recognizing problems

Understanding meltdown triggers

ACCEPTANCE

Working to solve or ease problems

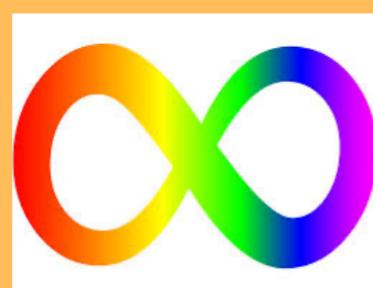
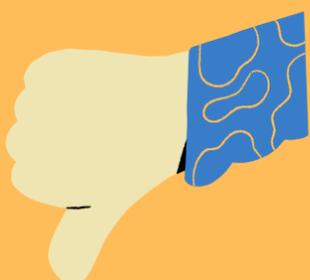
Equipping individuals with tools to avoid meltdowns

I AM NOT A PUZZLE TO BE SOLVED NOR AM I MISSING A PIECE!



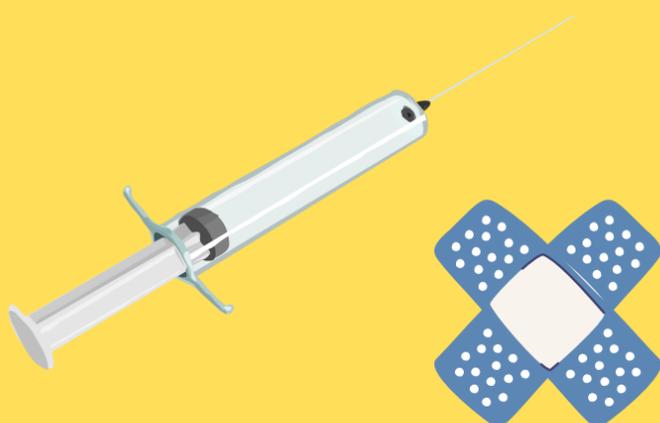
The autistic community wants the puzzle piece gone. It implies we need to be solved and maybe even missing a few pieces.

Instead we would like to be represented by a colorful infinity symbol and the interconnecting circle. The colors represent the diversity of the spectrum while the shapes give us a sense of inclusion.



IS THERE A CURE?

There is currently no cure for Autism and more than likely never will be. Autism is caused simply by the way the brain is formed during utero.



BUT LIKE SHELDON COOPER?

TV shows and movies fail to represent Autistic individuals. We are show cased as emotionless, obsessive, human computers. Autism was named Autism Spectrum Disorder for a reason. Each autistic person has their own set of strengths and weaknesses, and can best be shown on a spectrum.



HOW CAN I HELP?

When dealing with autistic individuals you have to remember we are people too. We have feelings and emotions just like you do. And we want to be seen for what we actually are, different not less.

A few ways you can directly help are:

-USE IDENTITY FIRST LANGUAGE

-STOP USING THE PUZZLE PEICE ITS OFFENSIVE

-OFFER HELP AND SUPPORT WITHOUT ANY JUDGEMENT

-WATCH FOR NONVERBAL CUES AS WE CAN STRUGGLE WITH VERBAL EXPRESSION

-BE CONSIDERATE WHEN IT COMES TO SENSORY STIMULATES AS WE PROCESS THESE THINGS DIFFERENTLY



SOURCES:

[milestones.org](https://www.milestones.org)

[cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

[vice.com](https://www.vice.com)

[autism-society.org](https://www.autism-society.org)

[autismspeaks.org](https://www.autismspeaks.org)

[spectrumroadmap.com](https://www.spectrumroadmap.com)



Autism By An Autistic: Different Not Less (Infographic & Writer's Memo)

Katherine Settle

Everyone has longed to be normal at some point in their life. But what is normal? Is it defined as being neurotypical? Being popular? Maybe even as simple as being average? According to Oxford Dictionary it is defined as, "conforming to a standard; usual, typical, or expected." Notice how it says typical in the definition. I am atypical, yet everyone sees me as normal. I am autistic and I want to be seen as extraordinary.

What do you think of when you hear the word autistic? Do you picture a nonverbal child or a super computer child? Autism is so misrepresented in the media that it is hard to know what it truly means. The Autism Society says, "autism is a complex, lifelong developmental disability that typically appears during early childhood and can impact a person's social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation. Autism is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is a "spectrum condition" that affects people differently and to varying degrees. Either child you pictured is correct because autism is a spectrum. Each autistic person has their own set of strengths and weaknesses, just like neurotypicals.

Autism is actually fairly common. On the CDC website they state, "about 1 in 54 children has been identified with autism spectrum disorder." Yet we still get ignored, looked at weirdly if we stim in public, and get treated as if we are helpless children. When I have mentioned to someone I am autistic they have had the audacity to tell me "at least you don't look autistic" or "at least you don't lose control and act weird." Autism is a spectrum. Stop the stigma around being high or low functioning! None of my diagnosis papers say high functioning autistic. They just say I am autistic. High and low functioning are labels that neurotypical people gave us, not doctors. When you attempt to compliment someone by calling them high functioning you are just dismissing their struggles they worked hard on. You are telling them they aren't autistic enough for neurotypicals to notice. You are destroying the identity they know they are. It is hurtful and unnecessary.

Another stigma around autism that autistics want to stop is the puzzle piece. The puzzle piece was designed as a symbol for autism in 1963 by Gerald Gasson who was a board member for the National Autistic Society in London. He believed it went well together because Autism is a "puzzling" condition, which is stated on spectrumroadmap.com. If platforms and research centers actually listened to autistics they would know it is not a puzzling condition. Yes, it can be difficult, hard, and frustrating sometimes but it is not puzzling. We know what bothers us, what we love, and what makes us ourselves. We do not need solving. We are not incomplete or missing a piece. We just need to be accepted for who we are.

A lot of platforms try to bring awareness but not acceptance and that is a huge problem in the autistic community. There isn't a cure for autism and there never will be. As I stated earlier autism is a developmental disability, it is caused by the way the brain forms in utero. An organization called Autism Speaks is actually hated by the autistic community because for their first 11 years they spent the majority of their money on finding a cure instead of supporting us. They have since removed the word "cure" out of their mission statement, as they should. On their website it states, "since Autism Speaks was founded in 2005, research funded by our organization and others has shown that there is no single 'autism.' Science also tells us there will be no single 'cure.' Today, Autism Speaks is not looking for a cure, and in fact, in 2016, the word 'cure' was removed from our mission statement." I am thankful the organization has personally grew and changed their focus, but the fact that it took 11 years for them to support the autistic people they wanted to fix is upsetting.

There are so many other ways to help and support the autistic community. You can research some blogs and books written by autistic individuals to learn and understand their experiences in life. Always use identify first language as well. And if you personally have an autistic person in your life, remember to be considerate when it comes to anything sensory related. Autistics process sensory completely different than neurotypicals so some noises, lights, tastes, smells, and fabrics can be overwhelming for us. But never treat us less than or stare

when we stim. Most verbal autistics love to “info dump” and will be more than happy to explain what they are doing and how it helps. But some of us do not do well in social settings and will struggle to explain, remember it is a spectrum!

Because of all this I chose to make my infographic on Autism Spectrum Disorder. I want to help and support my community. I do not know every autistic person on this planet but what we do to support the overall community, will in effect support each individual as well. By being an autistic female I believe I can bring more attention to the problem of autistics not being accepted. I would never choose a different community issue to do because this is a strong idea in every aspect.

In the infographic I chose to use a neutral color under bold words to grab people’s attention without being too distracting. I used a beautiful rainbow to add simplicity to the idea of the spectrum. I used bold questions with powerful answers to help my audience retain all the information they read. All the other small images were to support my rhetorical situation. I made sure the visual appeals and form matched my information and purpose.

Overall during the project, I learned about how to make an infographic as well as apply the importance of rhetorical devices, information literacy, and community issues. The process was quite simple. I chose a topic, researched the topic, and then simply typed my thoughts into a paper. I excel in writing papers so I believe my paper will be my strength in this project and the infographic itself will be my weakness. If I had more time to spend on this project I would make my infographic more appealing. I believe overall my topic was a good choice because it is something I am passionate about and know a lot about. If I choose the one thing my professors remember me as, I want it to be extraordinary. Because I am a neurodivergent individual making waves in a neurotypical’s world.

Works Cited

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