

JCCC wants to help you celebrate Autism Acceptance Month!

Autism Awareness Month stems from the United Nations recognized holiday of Autism Awareness day on April 2nd each year. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) refers to a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. Autism affects an estimated 1 in 44 children in the United States today.

Autism is a diagnosis that looks different for each and every person with it. This newsletter of events in April are very education-heavy as it is not as common to host events centered around Autism at this time. The best way to celebrate Autism Awareness month is to learn more about the diagnosis and use this education to create a more accessible society. We have listed a few organizations that work heavily with and for Autistic individuals.

Be wary of the difference between Autistic Advocacy Organizations and Autism Charities.

Autistic Advocacy Organizations: involve autistic people, and are created by autistic people themselves. They use preferred symbols and language of the autistic community, such as identity first language (“autistic” rather than “has autism”) and using the rainbow infinity loop as the symbol for neurodiversity rather than a puzzle piece, which has a negative and ableist history.

Examples: Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), Association for Autistic Community, Autistics Against Curing Autism, Association for Autistic Community, Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network (AWN), or Communication First.

Autism Charities: are geared towards families of autistic people. They characterize autism as a tragedy, use outdated research to support their statements and rarely, if ever, involve autistic people in their organization. A majority of the budget for most autism charities goes towards cure and treatment research, administration, and conferences that support the medical model of disability versus actually helping individuals with Autism and accessibility. Examples to avoid: American Autism Association (AAA), Autism Hope Alliance (AHA), Autism One, Autism Science Foundation, Autism Society of America, Autism Speaks, Generation Rescue, National Autism Association (NAA), National Autistic Society. PLEASE AVOID THESE ORGANIZATIONS.

Definitions

[Information from 'Welcome to the Autistic Community' Click here for more information.](#)

#ActuallyAutistic

Actually Autistic is a social movement that promotes supporting businesses, organizations and stories of those who are Actually Autistic rather than supporting businesses and stories of those who speak for Autistic People.

Asperger's Syndrome

This is an example of a Functioning Label that is no longer used, primarily because of the shift away from functioning labels, and additionally due to the namesake, Dr. Hans Asperger, being heavily involved in the Nazi party and responsible for sending children with disabilities to Spiegelgrung, a ward in Vienna where children were euthanized or subjected to experimentation. While some individuals choose to use this term to self identify, it is no longer used in the DSM or for diagnoses

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ACC)

This refers to using something other than oral speech to communicate. Some Autistic people are nonverbal and use alternative communication tools.

Eye Contact

Many Autistic people struggle with eye contact. Remember that eye contact is not a fail-safe for politeness or respect - some people express these things in a different way and it's important to respect those differences.

Functioning Labels vs Support Needs

Functioning labels are words that are used to try to show different 'Types' of Autism. An example of this may be 'High Functioning or Low Functioning'. Other labels include 'Mild or Severe Autism' or 'Savant'. Functioning Labels are no longer being used as they do not help Autistic People get the support they need and contain hurtful language. Support Needs is what is now used to describe the different needs and accommodations that an Autistic person may need.

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is a word used to explain the unique ways people's brains work. Being neurodivergent means having a brain that operates differently from average or from a 'Neurotypical' brain.

Neurodivergence is an umbrella term that can include Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Tourette's Syndrome, etc.

Person First vs Identity First

Person First language is when you use the word 'Person', then say the disability. For example: Person with Autism or Person with a Disability. Someone may prefer Person First terminology because they want to be recognized as a person separate from their disability.

Identity First language means you say the disability first, then 'person', For example - Autistic Person. Disabled People. Many Autistic people prefer identity first terminology, but it is important to ask someone's preference! The reason for preferring Identity First may be because someone feels that their disability is an integral part of who they are.

Problematic Autistic Symbols

The puzzle piece symbol was assigned to the Autistic Community without their input and has been used to stigmatize Autism for decades. It has been popularized by Autism Speaks - an organization which does not employ or defer to Autistic People. Autism Speaks regularly refer to Autism as a disease while not using most donations to help Autistic people. Instead, most money collected by Autism Speaks goes to their executive suite or to 'curing' Autism - an unnecessary expenditure - instead of going to support efforts to make social and environmental spaces more accessible for all. The color blue is also not preferred by most Autistic people due to its ties with Autism Speaks.

INSTEAD: Use red or gold as colors to represent Autism. Both colors were chosen by the #ActuallyAutistic Movement. Gold, with the elemental abbreviation 'Au' is thought to be a better representation of Autism Acceptance. Red was chosen due to it symbolizing passion and individuality. Additionally, use the gold infinity loop or rainbow infinity loop symbol for support of neurodivergence instead of the puzzle piece.

Sensory Processing

Sensory Processing is how your brain reacts to things. We use our senses to understand our environment. Autistic people experience sensory processing much differently than neurotypical people. Autistic people may have senses that are either too strong or too weak - meaning what is an appropriate volume, scent or brightness for one person may be a very different experience for an Autistic person. When the sensory input is too much, it leads to sensory overload - a common experience for some Autistic People.

Sensory Safe

When an event is 'Sensory Safe' or 'Sensory Friendly', it means the event has been deliberately designed to take into account several sensitivities associated with Autism. These are put in place so Autistic audiences can enjoy an event the same as a neurotypical crowd could. Some of these modifications may include low volume, offering fidget toys, eliminating loud and sudden noises, and more. A sensory friendly environment is moderate and structured.

Special Interests

Many Autistic people have strong interests (special interests). These topics can be lifelong or only last a week. They are a topic that a person knows a lot about and will prefer talking about if able to. Special Interests are very important to most Autistic People.

Stimming

Moving in the same way over and over again. Everyone stims, but autistic people stim more than other people.

Unspoken Rules

Socializing appropriately has a number of unspoken rules - such as when you see someone, you ask how they're doing. Neurotypical people have an understanding of these unspoken rules while Autistic people do not. A social rule may need to be clearly explained. If someone asks you for help with a social rule, remember to use plain language and answer with respect.

Sensory Friendly KC Spaces

Johnson County Museum

During sensory friendly times, changes are made to the museum's exhibit spaces, including KidScape, with the intention of helping make the museum more accessible and enjoyable for children with ASD and sensory challenges.

Low Sensory Saturday - Kemper

Free

Apr 15

Join us at the museum an hour before we open to the public for a quiet and low-stimulating environment and a hands-on activity.

Kansas City Symphony

The Kansas City Symphony hosts special sensory-friendly showings with an extra screen and half-lit house lights so attendees can get up and move around, use electronic devices, and talk during the performance. These performances are limited to roughly 30 minutes, after which everyone is invited to lobby for an "instrument petting zoo."

Kansas City Zoo

The Kansas City Zoo has developed an app to help families with sensory-processing needs plan their trip to the 202-acre nature sanctuary. The app offers the ability to preview spaces in the zoo, create a schedule, play games, and provides a sensory-friendly map and tips for visiting.

The Nelson Atkins

The Nelson regularly hosts Low Sensory Mornings, where they open their doors early to welcome members of the public with sensory-processing needs. Smaller crowds and lowered lights help create a more inclusive environment, with visual resources, hand fidgets, a low-sensory break room, and other accommodations available.

KC Royals @ Kauffman

Aside from hosting annual autism nights and offering noise-canceling headphones, the KC Royals are taking more steps to make games a welcoming experience for all – with two sensory rooms! The rooms feature several sensory and activity objects letting children escape the crowds and excitement of the game if needed. Specially trained attendants are also available to assist parents and children

LegoLand

LegoLand opens its doors early for Sensory Friendly Mornings. During this special time, children and adults with sensory-processing needs are invited to explore the world of Legos with reduced lighting, lowered music, and disabled distracting stimuli.

Martin Luther King Jr. Park

Thanks to the work of The 15 and the Mahomies Foundation, this park now featured a fully accessible and inclusive playground. Packed with colorful attractions like towers, multiple types of swings, climbing nets, suspended walkways, and more, the space also has a number of sensory and tactile features.

Influencers

Next time you open your apps, look for these popular influencers!

Advocacy

Neurodivergent Lou @neurodivergent_Lou

Autism Sketches @autism_sketches

Chris Bonello @AutisticNotWeird

Haley Moss @Haley.Moss

Education

Greta Thunberg
@gretathunberg

Chloe Hayden
@Chloeshayden

Daniel Jones
@TheAspieWorld

Lyric Homans
@NeurodivergentRebel

LGBTQIA+

Oliver Quincy @MyautisticSoul

Drewy Curious @DrewyNovaClara

Lydia X.Z. Brown @AutisticChoya

Josh Thomas @JoshThomas87

Wellness

Joy Johnson
@JoyFJohnson

The Chronic Couple
@the.chronic.couple

Dr. Dawn
@DrDawnPsychMd

Sonia Agarwal
@BrownQueerFeminist

Art and Fun

Morgan Harper Nichols @Jmorganharpernichols

Leanne Libas @CallMeMissLibas

Bunny Michael @BunnyMichael

Wyatt @AtypicalToker

Food

Jeremiah Josey @JerCookingAdventure

Brittyn @AutismDietitian

Chef Ava Marie (blog)

Literature

Look me in the Eye: My Life with Asperger's by John Robinson

"Ever since he was young, John Robison longed to connect with other people, but by the time he was a teenager, his odd habits—an inclination to blurt out non sequiturs, avoid eye contact, dismantle radios, and dig five-foot holes (and stick his younger brother, Augusten Burroughs, in them)—had earned him the label "social deviant." It was not until he was forty that he was diagnosed with a form of autism called Asperger's syndrome. That understanding transformed the way he saw himself—and the world."

The Reason I Jump by Naoki Higashida

"A very smart, very self-aware, and very charming thirteen-year-old boy with autism, Naoki writes a one-of-a-kind memoir that demonstrates how an autistic mind thinks, feels, perceives, and responds in ways few of us can imagine."

Thinking in Pictures by Dr. Temple Grandin

"Originally published in 1995 as an unprecedented look at autism, Grandin writes from the dual perspectives of a scientist and an autistic person to give a report from "the country of autism." "

Autism in Heels by Jennifer Cook O' Tool

"At the age of thirty-five, Jennifer was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, and for the first time in her life, things made sense. Now, Jennifer exposes the constant struggle between carefully crafted persona and authentic existence, editing the autism script with wit, candor, passion, and power. Her journey is one of reverse-self-discovery not only as an Aspie but--more importantly--as a thoroughly modern woman."

We're Not Broken - Changing the Conversation by Eric Garcia

"This book by an actually autistic journalist is an important read for both parents and people on the spectrum. It addresses many of the common myths about autism and shows how much neurodiverse people can contribute to the world if people take the time to understand us and give us a chance."

Visit your favorite Library to learn about new stories to read during Autism Acceptance Month

[Kansas City
Public Library](#)

[North Kansas City
Public Library](#)

[Olathe
Public Library](#)

[Linda Hall Library](#)

[Mid-Continent
Public Library](#)

Film

Note: Currently only 6% of media characters are portrayed with disabilities. Only .36% of those characters are played by actors who share the portrayed disability. Most Media about Autistic People has been created without proper consultants or input from Autistic People and is therefore not accurate, and is seen as controversial and ableist. We've listed a few movies here that are #ActuallyAutistic or were created with proper respect and guidance from the Autistic Community.

Autism: The Musical - HBO, Hulu

This documentary gives viewers an unadorned look at the lives of five children on the autism spectrum: Adam, Neal, Wyatt, Lexi, and Henry. Each child takes part in a musical put on by Miracle Project founder Elaine Hall, Neal's mother.

Temple Grandin - HBO, Hulu

Before enrolling in college, famed animal husbandry expert Temple Grandin (Claire Danes) visits a cattle ranch owned by her aunt Ann (Catherine O'Hara) and demonstrates a brilliance for all things mechanical. Grandin triumphs over prejudice to become an innovator in the field of animal care, and a lifelong advocate for humane slaughtering practices.

Life, Animated - Vudu, Hulu

After watching animated Disney movies, including The Little Mermaid and the Lion King, a young autistic man finds a common language with his parents, and sees his communication skills develop.

Loop - (short) Disney+

A non-verbal, autistic girl and a chatty boy are partnered on a canoeing trip. They must both learn how the other experiences the world.

Comedy, Speakers and Music

Hannah Gadsby - Netflix

Hannah has hosted several Netflix Comedy specials where they explore Autism, Queerness, Mental health and more. They have won an Emmy, Peabody award as well as several other accolades in media.

How Autism Freed me to be myself - Ted Talk

16 year old Rosie challenges the notion of being "normal" and why that's always the desirable outcome! Smart and non-nonsense, Rosie is a delightful person who offers a testament to why human diversity might be our greatest strength.

The World Needs All Kinds of Minds - Ted Talk

Temple Grandin, diagnosed with autism as a child, talks about how her mind works -- sharing her ability to "think in pictures," which helps her solve problems that neurotypical brains might miss. She makes the case that the world needs people on the autism spectrum: visual thinkers, pattern thinkers, verbal thinkers, and all kinds of smart geeky kids.

Everything you know about Autism is Wrong - Ted Talk

Being diagnosed with autism is often seen as a tragedy. But for Jac den Houting, it was the best thing that ever happened to her. In this talk, Jac combines these ideas with her own personal story to explain why we need to rethink the way we understand autism. Jac den Houting is a research psychologist and autistic activist in pursuit of social justice.

What it's really like to have Autism - Ted Talk

"Autism is not a disease; it's just another way of thinking," says Ethan Lisi. Offering a glimpse into the way he experiences the world, Lisi breaks down misleading stereotypes about autism, shares insights into common behaviors like stimming and masking and promotes a more inclusive understanding of the spectrum.

Pop

Ladyhawke

Owl City

Jordan Michael

Indie

Ladyhawke

The Vines

Felt

Irrenoid

Electronic

Diego Vargas

Danny Eaton

Riot Ten

Country

Cory Singer

Cutter Elliot

Sam Finelli

Kasey Rausch*

Need new music?

Check out these artists!

R&B/Soul/Jazz

Brandi Pollard

Jennifer Velasco

Shayne Holzman

Ksusha Miretski

Jackson Haynes

Hip Hop/ Rap

Example

DJ Doshin

Jenn Posey

Craic Boy Mental

Artists with a * are from Kansas City!

Punk/Rock

Travis Meeks

The AutistiX

James Durbin

Courtney Love

Jefferson Airplane

Podcasts

#ActuallyAutistic

Today's Autistic Moment

"Today's Autistic Moment is a podcast for Autistics Adults, produced and hosted by an Autistic Adult. Each episode covers one topic that Autistic Adults can relate to."

I Should Say That Out Loud

Hosted by: Donna Brendel

"When Donna Brendel was diagnosed with autism as an adult, the drive behind her passion for advocacy made more sense than ever. Her special interest is fighting for hurting people. She has a lot to say, and she's finally ready to say it out loud."

SEEDs Cast

"The SEEDs For Autism Podcast is produced by, for, and with autistic adults (on the spectrum) as a vehicle for personalized expression and voice. In today's world, autism is understood most by those who are close, and seldom truly understood by those without experience. By creating this podcast we hope to allow for better awareness, appreciation, and acceptance of the individuals who live within the experience of Autism."

You Don't Sound Autistic (YDSA)

Hosted by: Blake and Rachelle

"Welcome to our mental health awareness podcast. If you're one of the millions of teens, adults and (entire) families being diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD (hyperactive)/ADD (inattentive), Anxiety, Depression or other Neurodiverse conditions without a meaningful support group or a roadmap, jump right in with us.

Our raw and unfiltered journey will help you. We'll break it down and talk about it in a real, raw and sometimes tragic perspective. We lived it. And thanks to a few key people, we're still alive today to talk about it. So let's talk about it."

Adult, Black and On the Spectrum

"A Black woman and her journey to discovering Autism."

1800 Seconds on Autism

Hosted by: BBC Radio

"From home and family to humour and epic geekiness, this is a funny and enlightening podcast about thinking differently. With autistic hosts Robyn Steward, Jamie Knight and guests."

Education

Sensory Matters

"Sensory Matters is a weekly podcast featuring expert interviews from the world of Sensory Seeking, Stimming & Autism. This show is all about helping sensory seekers, and professionals with useful, interesting and inspiring stories."

Josh Has Autism

"This is a podcast about living with an adult son who has Autism. I never know what he's going to say. Sometimes it's funny, sometimes it's insightful, and sometimes it just doesn't make any sense at all."