

Audiobook Supplement

FUNNY, YOU DON'T LOOK AUTISTIC

A COMEDIAN'S GUIDE TO LIFE ON THE SPECTRUM

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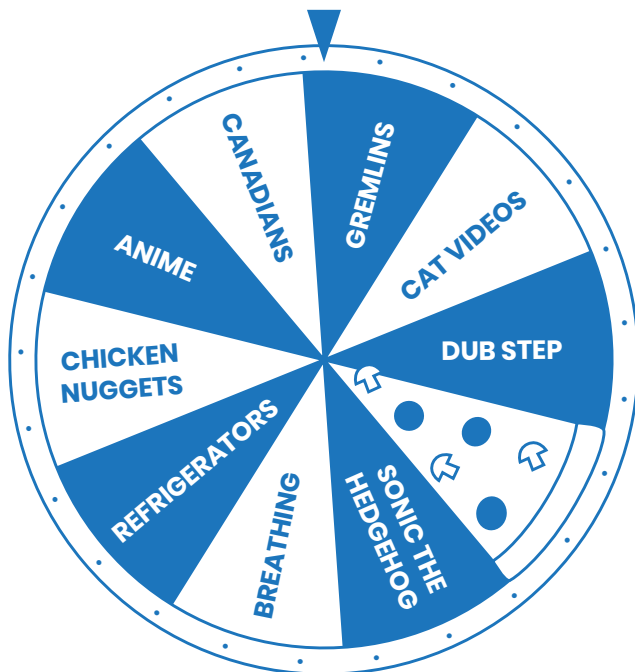


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What Causes Autism?

There's a lot of speculation as to what causes autism. Much of it is pretty silly and baseless. The truth is, we don't know the exact causes of autism, though research points to a mix of genetic and environmental factors. Personally, I don't care so much about the cause; the fact is, people with ASD are here, and a more interesting question to me is what we can do to support them.

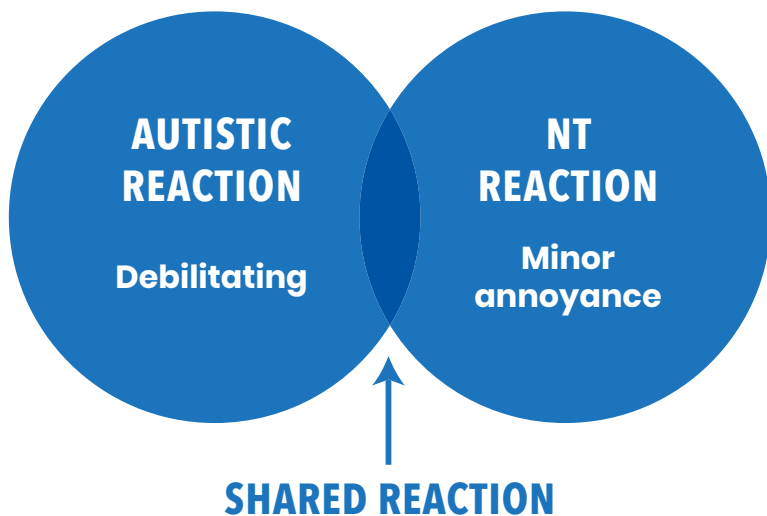
THIS WEEK'S CAUSE OF AUTISM



Is Everyone a Little Bit Autistic?

Neurotypical. Autistic. They have things in common, but at the end of the day, you can't be "a little autistic," or, as I like to call it, "autist-ish." You either have autism or you don't, and while saying things like "Oh, I hate loud noises, too" might be meant to make people feel included, it also potentially trivializes a person's daily struggles.

There's a world of difference between having autistic tendencies and actually having autism. Like any neurological variation, autism borrows traits found in most of the neurotypical population. But everything a neurotypical feels, a person with autism feels at an 11. Still, while not everyone is autistic, it is good to notice the things we share in common so we can find ways to connect.



like strength and dexterity. Now imagine you have 100 percent of one attribute and 15 percent of everything else. That's what being autistic can feel like: it's an imbalance. For instance, you might have a strong drive to act on your impulses, but less of the common sense that would help you control said impulses. Or you might have too much common sense, to the point where you can't take action because you're always thinking about what could go wrong. I've been both of these at different points in my life.

People sometimes use terms like “high-functioning” and “low-functioning” to describe folks on the spectrum, which can be wrongly taken to make assumptions about people's intelligence. Really, what they're meant to tell you is to what degree someone can get through their day independently, or how much assistance they might need in their daily lives.

There are a lot of other stereotypes about autism. For example, some people think being autistic means you're unable to perceive the thoughts and emotions of others.

AUTISM			
Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size - 1 person			
		% Daily Value	
Total Honesty	110%		
Intentional	80%		
Unintentional	30%		
Introverted	75%		
Logical	95%		
Determined	100%		
Focused	100%		
Persistent	100%		
Anxiety	85%		
Underestimated	97%		
Awesome	12397%		
Non-Judgmental	100%	Obervant	90%
Eccentric	89%	Awkward	80%
Original	100%	Hidden Agendas	0%
Direct	100%	Ingenious	100%
<p>Typical individuals with ASD don't attack the reputations of those around them; don't discriminate against anyone based on race, gender, age, or any other surface criteria; don't force others to live up to demanding hierarchies, and so are unlikely to give someone superior status simply because that person is wealthy or has attained a high position in an organization. They do have values that aren't shaped by financial, social, or political influences. They make very good employees when able to control their pace and work within either a solitary or socially supportive environment.</p>			
<p>Daily values may vary by person depending on their disposition.</p>			
<p>The Autism nutritional guide was created by and is the property of Michael McCreary - AspieComic. All rights reserved.</p>			

Small Talk Mad Libs

Almost everything I do is scripted, right down to my social interactions. My folks spent countless hours teaching me how to act natural. The tough part is, life isn't scripted, and after the initial "How do you do," I'd usually panic. To save the next generation of autistic folk from such embarrassment, I've developed a script of sorts to help them out.

_____, how are you? Oh, and how are/is the _____?
(pleasant greeting) *(inoffensive noun)*

I couldn't help but notice your _____. It looks great.
(ugliest thing in sight)

How about that _____? Anyways, I really should be
(inane subject)

_____. You know how _____ is.
(plausible excuse to leave) *(easily relatable work thingy)*

I'd love to pick this up _____.
(much, much later; keep room for prep time)

Perhaps we could _____.
(a social outing that is broad enough to appease anyone, but specific enough to show you both have something in common)

Before I go, could I get your _____.
(contact info that you might already have)

Oh, wait! We didn't do our _____.
(inexplicable secret handshake)

Yeah, now's probably not the time. Well enjoy your _____.
(pick a time of day)

(monosyllabic word confirming that you're leaving forever now)

Smile!

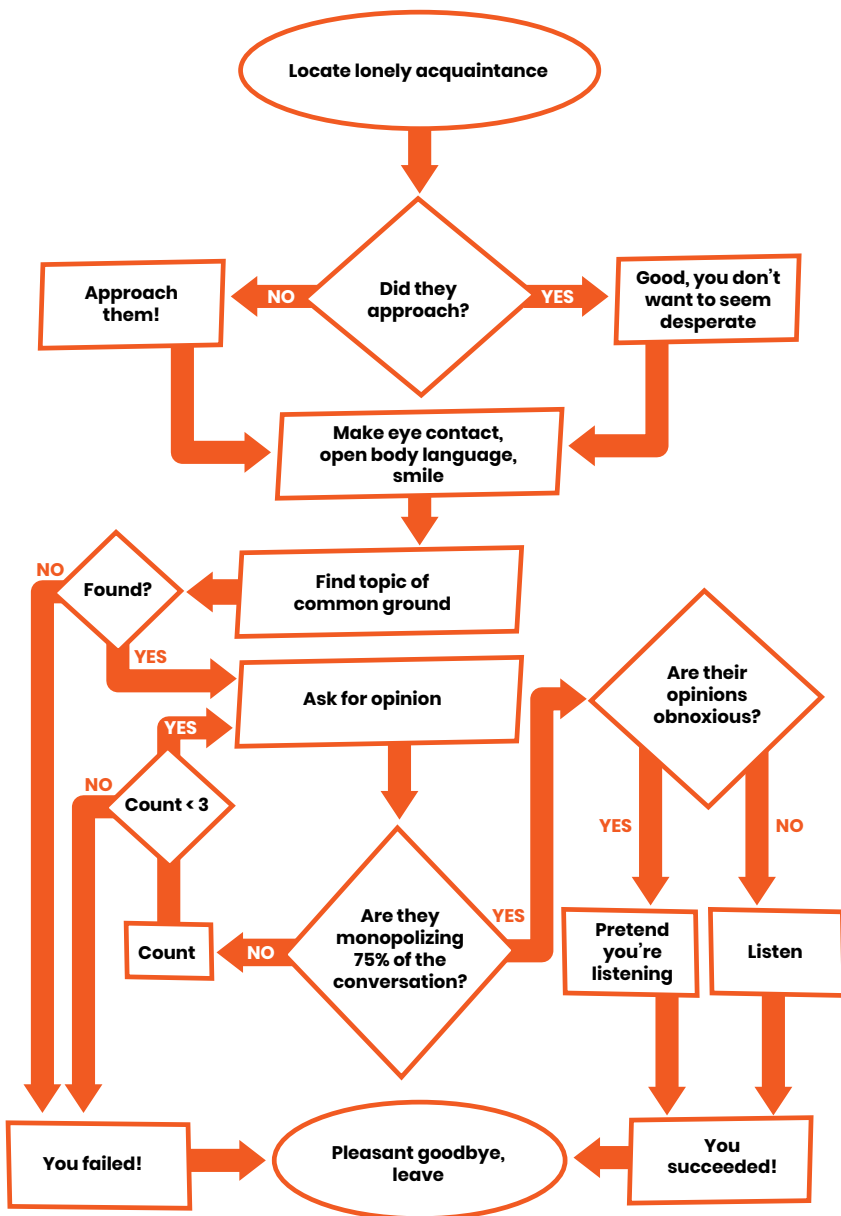
While I was polite as a kid, I wasn't terribly emotive. One thing I get asked a lot that I'm sure many autistic people can relate to is: "Smile! What's wrong with you?" Ironically, one of the only times I got into trouble in elementary school was because I smiled.

For context, I was playing soccer in gym class. And by playing, I mean I was watching the three resident jocks (all named Luke) hog the ball for ninety minutes. The teacher didn't like that most of us were standing around and decided to make us wait in the corner until the Lukes finished their game. I thought this was a perfect time to practice my smile so that it would get my classmates off my back about never smiling. But I guess it wasn't, because when the teacher saw me doing this, she screeched: "What are you smiling about?!" In truth, nothing.

**ANGRY****HAPPY****NERVOUS****EXCITED****GASSY****FLIRTY**

Don't fear awkwardness. Embrace it.

But, if you are looking for an airtight, foolproof plan for never feeling awkward again, try following this chart my friend made.



Introducing Team Spectrum

As I noted in the previous chapter, the autism community is really strapped for heroic representation, at least on the comic book superhero front. I wish to rectify this. Introducing ...

THE MONOPOLIZER

Master and commander
of the conversation. His
power is also his weakness!

SUPER SENSORY GIRL

She wouldn't mind the cape if
there wasn't a tag in the back.

Miss Understanding

She's never quite sure if
what she heard was a joke or
not, so she'll laugh anyway!

SPACE JAM

He's a real slam dunk
when it comes to being
waaaaaay too close.

LITTLE STIMMY

He's not flailing for help;
it's just something he does.

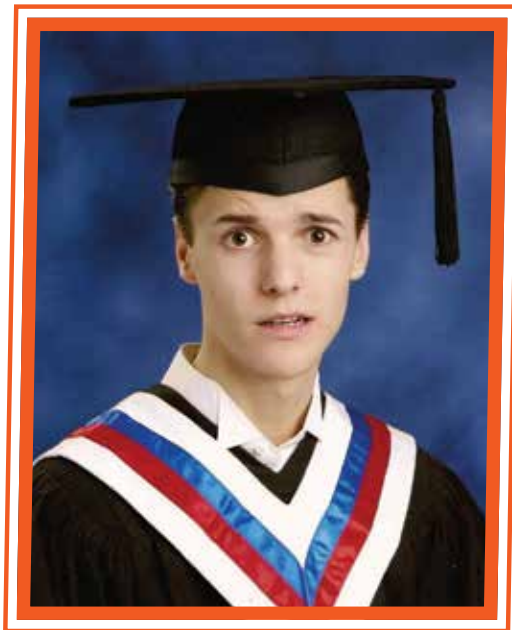
LITERAL MAN

As in, he is very literal,
and also a man.

Before I go any further, I want to make it clear that I'm not going on some diatribe about how technology is the devil and it's ruined my generation. I honestly feel that the Internet has been especially helpful for people with autism. Websites like

because I had literally locked a guy in a closet four years prior. But I was excited to learn that valedictorians were voted in by students rather than teachers. Even more exciting, it turned out my best friend from drama class—one of the same friends from the great *Yu-Gi-Oh!* caper—had single-handedly gotten me the nomination, which put me in debt to him forever. We're roommates now. That's not a joke.

It's one thing to do a favor for a friend, but it's another thing to help your friend realize their dream (er, one of them). The dream in question? Well, it wasn't becoming valedictorian. My dream was far more ambitious. See, at this high school, the valedictorian would give their commencement speech in front of a giant grad photo of themselves, straight-up *Citizen Kane*-style. So I knew that if I won, I'd get to speak in front of this ...



that thing. The label on the Windex telling you not to drink it? It's there because someone tried to drink Windex.

I can proudly say that I am that person for the Metropass instructions on the TTC website.

What They Said vs. What They Meant

Most of us with ASD learn quickly that neurotypical people don't always say exactly what they mean. This is especially evident over texts. In case you need help decoding everyday exchanges like I do, I've put together a guide.

WHAT THEY SAID

"Don't take offense, but ..."

"I'm on my way, I'll be there soon."

"Sorry, I've got a cold."

"Running late. Will get there before the trailers."

"This is going to hurt me a lot more than it's going to hurt you."

WHAT THEY MEANT

"I've now adequately prepared you for offense. Commencing offense... now!"

"Your friend is asleep. This is his mother."

"I'm hanging out with someone else."

"I will arrive one hour into the movie with some guy I just invited."

"This will be agony."

Grandin, and suddenly, I flash back to the first time we met. I'll admit, I was intimidated.

The show, however, goes over quite well. Even Dr. Grandin joins in with the applause. My mom figures that this will be my "in" with her. After Dr. Grandin's closing address, mobs of fans rush the stage. Assuming she's overwhelmed, I go backstage to join my folks. My mom, however, has a digital camera in her hand. "At least get a picture with her," she says.

My mom bellows, "Temple!" The crowd parts, enabling me to walk through, hat in hand, like a bashful newsie. "Temple," I croak, "it was a pleasure getting to work with you. Could I please get a photo?" Here is the resulting photo:

