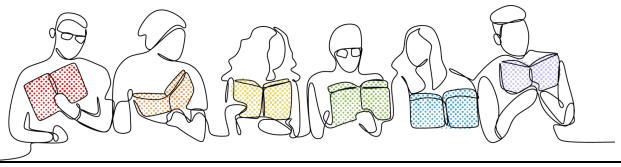
Autism Acceptance Month

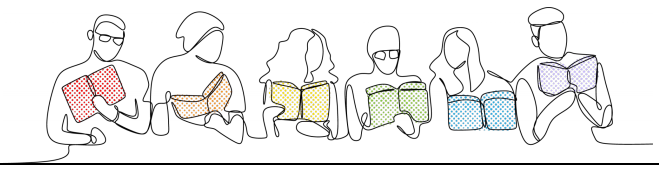
April 2022



SKINNER NORTH
DIVERSE NEEDS
COMMITTEE

What is autism

- Autism is a difference in the way a person's brain develops
- Autism often appears when a person is very young
- There is no known single cause for autism



K-3 /4-8

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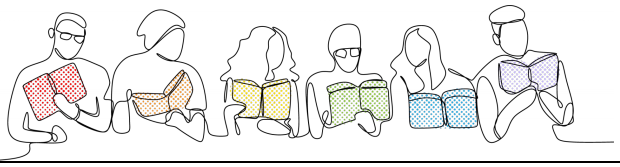
What is autism

Autism is a **Neurodiversity**

Neurodivergent people experience, interact with, and interpret the world in unique ways



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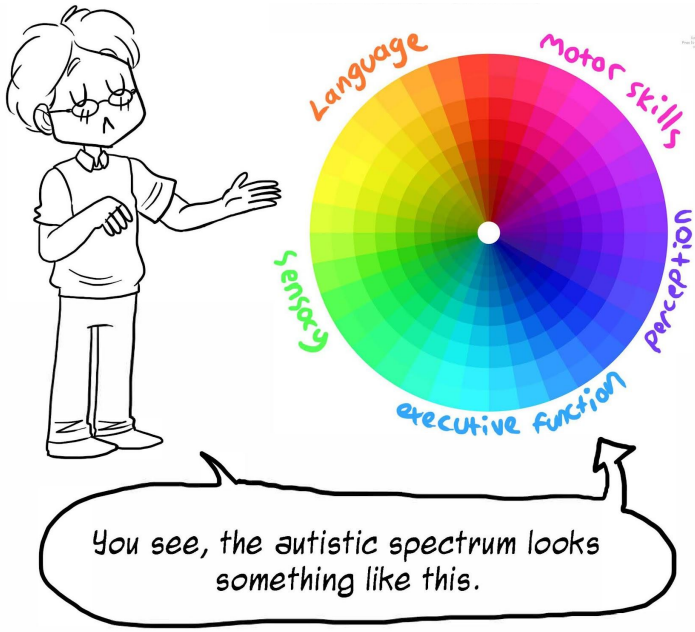
What is autism

You might hear people call autism a **spectrum**.

That means that every autistic person is different.



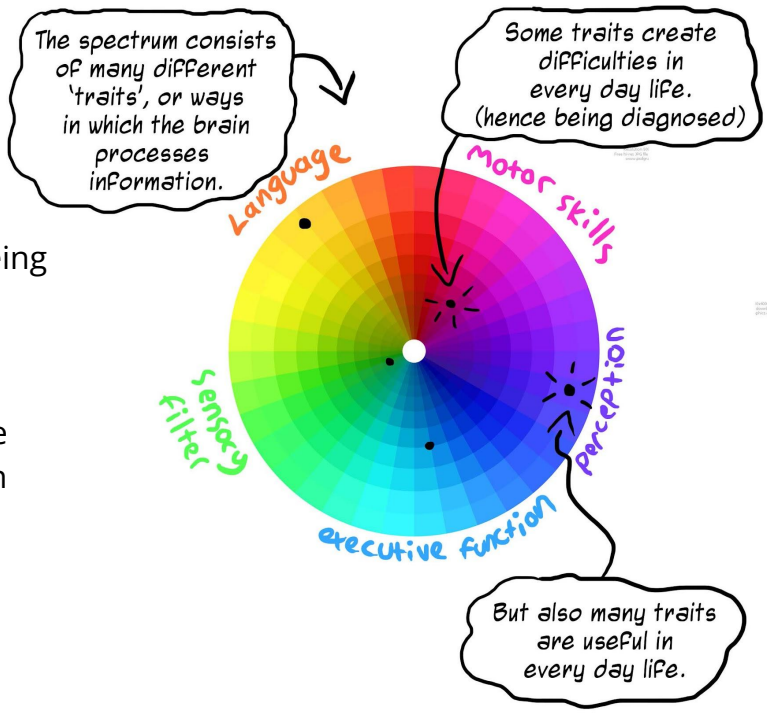
K-3 /4-8

https://the-art-of-autism.com/understanding-the-spectrum-a-comic-strip-explanation/

Autism Spectrum

There is no such thing as being “more” or “less” autistic.

Traits are ways in which the brain processes information



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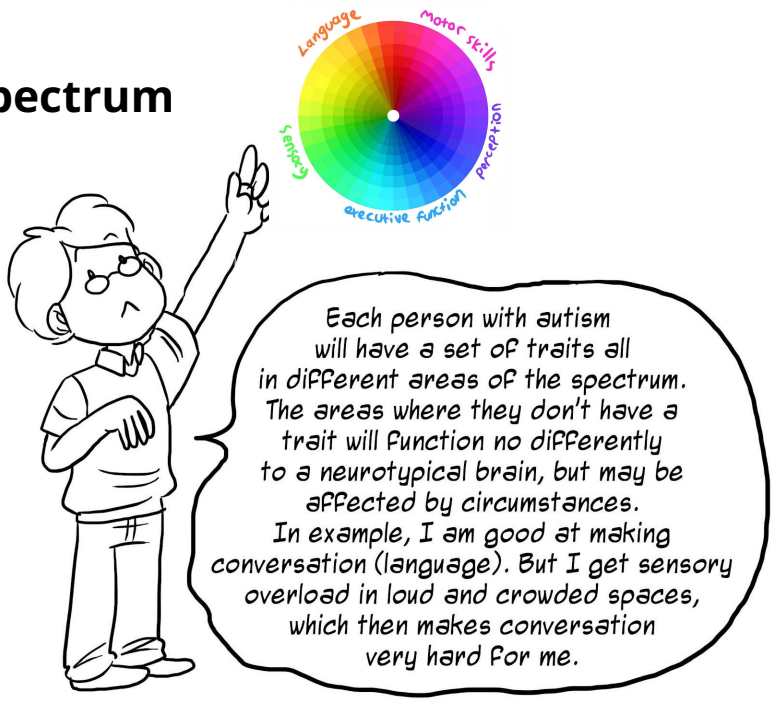

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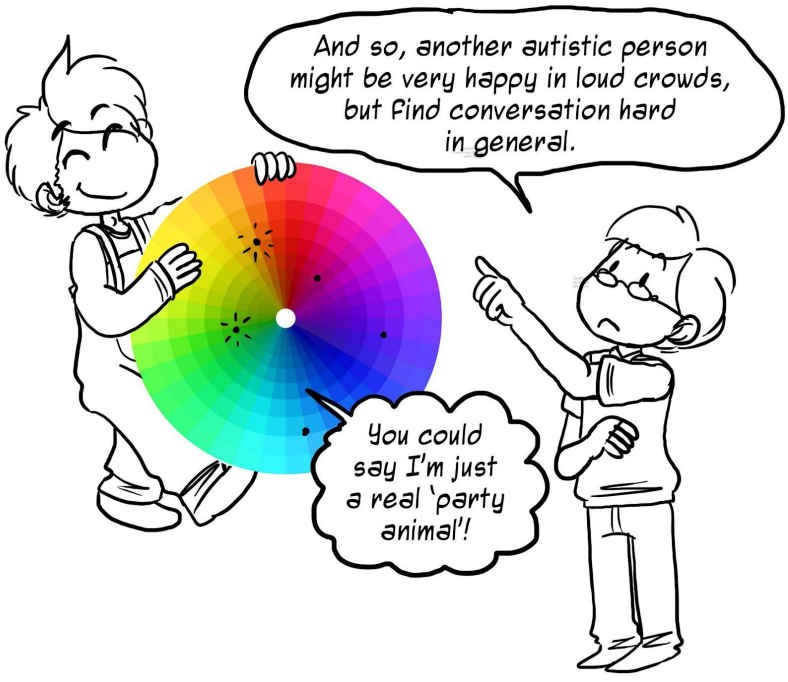

4-8

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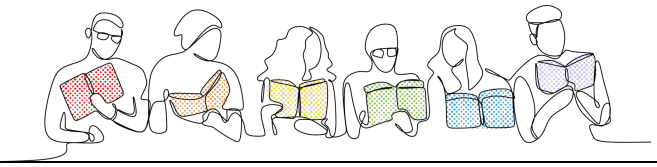
What does autism look like?

- We might not know that someone is autistic **just by looking** at them.
- We might not know what an autistic person **needs** just by seeing them.



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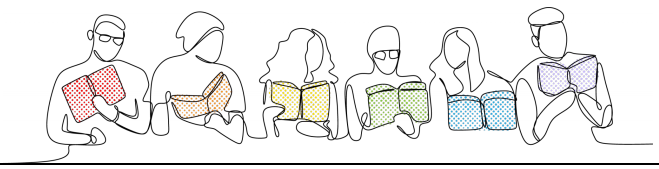
SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

What does autism look like?

- We might not know that someone is autistic **just by looking** at them.
- We might not know what an autistic person **needs** just by seeing them.
- One autistic person may need a lot of help with one thing, while another autistic person may not need any help with the same thing.
- Autistic people all like and dislike different things, and they all need help with different things.



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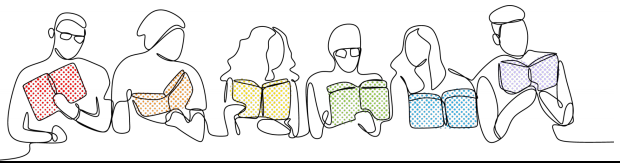
Getting to know people on the spectrum

Here are some differences that some autistic people may share.

- Special Interests
- Meltdowns & Shutdowns
- Stimming
- Thinking
- Sensory Processing
- Motor
- Communication



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The following slides go through these points.
Pick two or three? Depending on time available in class

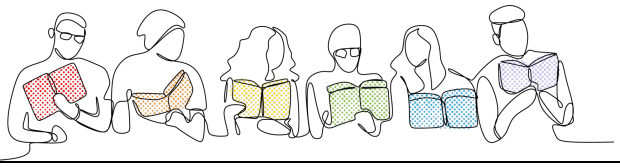
Getting to know people on the spectrum

special interests

For example, a special interest might be TRAINS!

- They think about trains a lot, and know more about trains than other people.
- They want to spend most of their time thinking about trains.

Do you have a special interest?



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SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

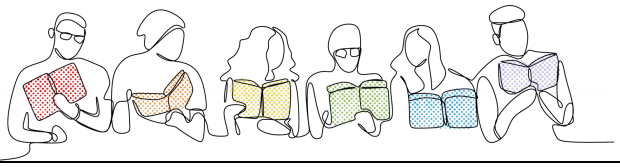
Many autistic people have very strong interests, which we call **special interests**

Getting to know people on the spectrum

special interests

- Special interests make people on the spectrum HAPPY!
- They can use their special interests to help people
- And be useful in their jobs

How does your special interest make you feel?



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SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

Many autistic people have very strong interests, which we call **special interests**

Special interests are **really important to most autistic people**.

Special interests are good, because they make people on the spectrum **happy**!

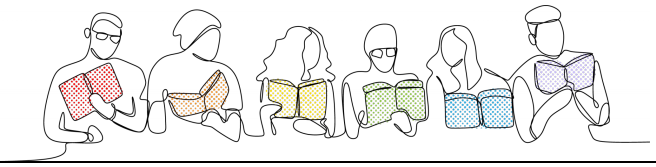
useful in their jobs

Getting to know people on the spectrum

special interests

- Special interests might be something big, like science, or it might be something smaller, like a favorite band.
- Special interests stay last for varied lengths of time. It could be for a week, a few months or years, or our whole lives.
- There might be times when there are no special interests, and there might be times when you have a lot of special interests.

Did you have a special interest that is not so interesting to you anymore?



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SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

Many autistic people have very strong interests, which we call **special interests**

All of this is normal.

Getting to know people on the spectrum

meltdowns and shutdowns

- Feel scary to autistic people and can look scary to other people
- Don't happen on purpose
- Not the same as tantrums
- Autistic people can't control when they have meltdowns or shutdowns

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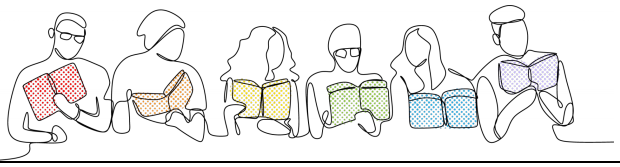


SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

Meltdowns and shutdowns feel scary to autistic people, and they can look scary to other people. But they don't happen on purpose, and they are not the same thing as tantrums. Autistic people can't control when we have a meltdown or shutdown.

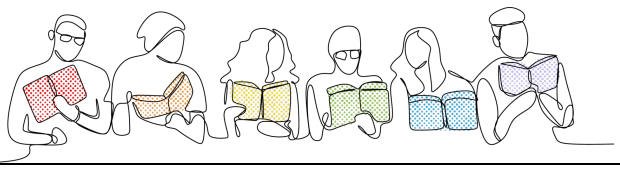
Meltdowns are when an autistic person can't control our feelings, and they happen when someone gets too stressed. People having meltdowns might scream or cry, run away, or lose control of our body.

Shutdowns can also happen when someone gets too stressed. A shutdown is when someone stops being able to do anything. We might not be able to talk or move.

Getting to know people on the spectrum

meltdowns

- are when an autistic person can't control their feelings
- happen when someone gets too stressed
- might scream or cry, run away, or lose control of our body



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SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

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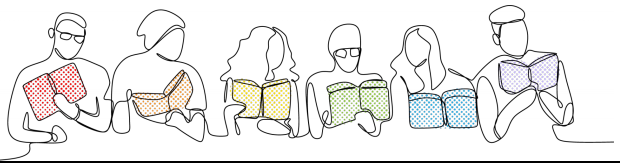
Getting to know people on the spectrum

shutdowns

- also can happen when someone gets too stressed
- this is when someone stops being able to do anything
- might not be able to talk or move



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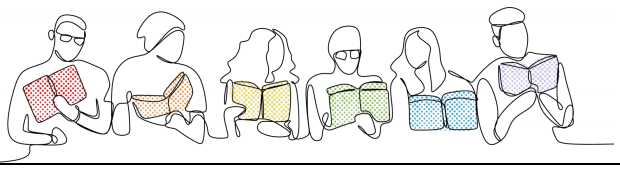
Getting to know people on the spectrum

stimming

- moving in the same way over and over again, for many reasons
- help balance out their senses
- show how they feel
- help to focus on something
- can help an autistic person feel better



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SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

Stimming is moving in the same way over and over again. People stim for all sorts of reasons. People on the spectrum sometimes stim to help balance out their senses, show how they feel, or focus on things. Stimming can help them feel better.

There are a lot of ways to stim, and here are a few examples: Rocking back and forth. Flapping your hands. Rubbing soft things on your face or body. Humming, grunting, mumbling, moaning, or singing. Spinning things or holding objects in front of your eyes

Non-autistic people stim too! For example, clicking a pen or tapping your foot is stimming. Everyone stims, but autistic people stim more than other people. Sometimes, they choose to stim because it helps them, and other times, they can't control how or when they stim.

Getting to know people on the spectrum

stimming

- Rocking back and forth
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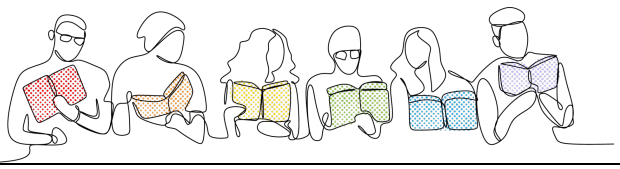

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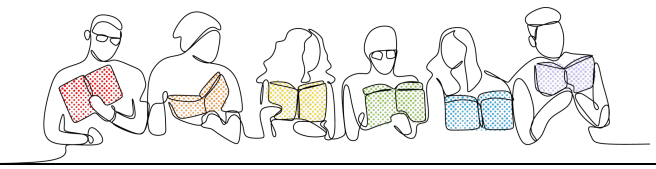
Getting to know people on the spectrum

stimming

- Non-autistic people stim too! Everyone stims!
- clicking a pen or tapping your foot is stimming
- autistic people stim more than other people

What's a something that you do that helps to calm down or feel better?



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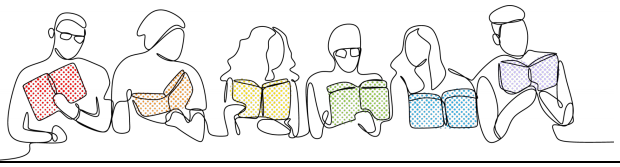
Getting to know people on the spectrum

thinking differences

- autistic people may pay a lot of attention to things other people don't
- can have very good memories for facts, like facts about our special interests
- can notice small things that other people don't notice
- can notice small mistakes that other people don't see, like typos



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SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

Autistic people think differently than non-autistic people. Think about when you brush your teeth. Your brain thinks about a lot when you brush your teeth. You think about how to hold the toothbrush, how to put it in your mouth, and how long you should brush your teeth. Autism can change how you think about all of those things. Here are some examples of thinking differences.

We can pay a lot of attention to things other people don't think are important. We can have very good memories for facts, like facts about our special interests.

Autistic people can notice small things that other people don't notice. We can notice small mistakes that other people don't see, like typos.

Many autistic people like routine. We might like things to be the same every day, or to eat the same foods every day. It helps us to know what will happen each day.

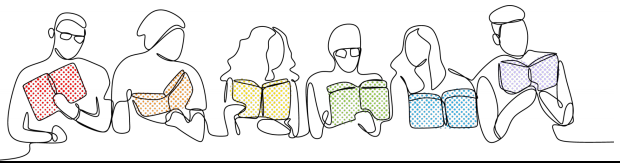
Change can be scary for us, since things being the same helps us stay calm. Knowing what's coming helps us make sense of our lives.

Getting to know people on the spectrum

thinking differences

- Many autistic people prefer routine, when things are the same every day, or eat the same foods every day.
- change can be scary for autistic people
- things being the same helps us stay calm

Is there something that usually happens every day and bothers you when it doesn't happen?



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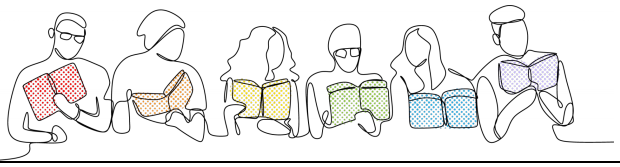
Getting to know people on the spectrum

sensory processing differences

- We all have 5 major senses: vision, touch, hearing, smell, and taste.
- We also have minor senses such as: pressure, hunger & thirst, pain, temperature, and balance.
- Sensory processing is how you think about and understand your senses.



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SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

Sensory processing is a type of processing, which is how you think about and understand your senses. For example, if you look at a sock, you might notice certain things about it, like what color and size it is. If you touch it, you'll feel the fabric, and if you smell it, you'll notice other things. It might smell like sweat or laundry sheets. That's all sensory processing! Autism changes sensory processing in a lot of ways. We have 5 major senses: vision, touch, hearing, smell, and taste. Some minor senses are: pressure, hunger & thirst, pain, temperature, and balance.

- Each person processes their senses a little differently, but autistic people process our senses a LOT differently. For example, loud noises might bother us, or we might like dim lights more than bright lights. We might like the texture of one food and hate the texture of a different food.
- Many autistic people have senses that are too strong or weak. Tags on clothing might really bother us, or we might get too hot even if the temperature isn't very high. We might not feel pain if we get hurt, or we might not notice a really bad smell.
- Sometimes, our senses might feel like too much, which is called sensory overload. Sensory overload can make us angry or upset, or even cause a meltdown or a shutdown.

Getting to know people on the spectrum

sensory processing differences

Autism changes sensory processing in a lot of ways. Some examples:

- loud noises might bother autistic people
- dim lights might be preferable to bright lights
- might like the texture of one food and hate the texture of a different food

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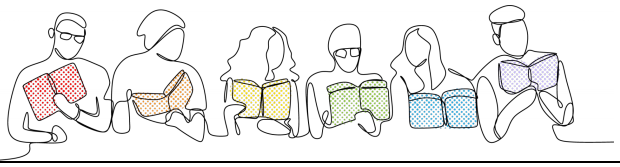

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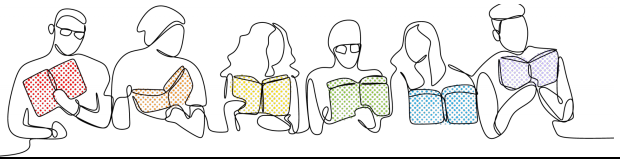
Getting to know people on the spectrum

sensory processing differences

Autistic people may have senses that are too strong or weak

- tags on clothing might really bother an autistic person
- might get too hot even if the temperature isn't very high
- might not feel pain if hurt
- might not notice a really bad smell.

Autistic people can feel sensory overload when their senses might feel *too* much. Sensory overload can cause a meltdown or a shutdown.



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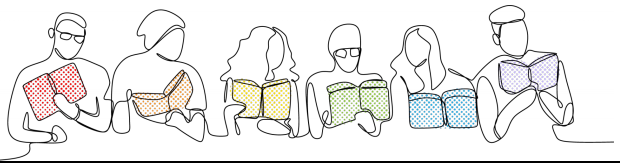
Getting to know people on the spectrum

motor differences

Motor skills are how people control the way their body moves.

Your body moves in big and small ways.

What are some big ways and small ways that your body moves?



K-3 /4-8

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

Autistic people have different motor skills than nonautistic people. Motor skills are how people control the way their body moves. Your body moves in big and small ways. Some big ways are running or swimming, and some small ways are writing or tying your shoes. **Motor skills are also a part of talking, since moving your mouth to make sounds is a motor skill**. Not every autistic person has big differences in motor skills. Many autistic people have small motor differences, and we might not realize we have them! Motor differences can make someone have messy handwriting, be clumsy, or walk differently than other people.

Autistic people can have different kinds of motor problems, like:

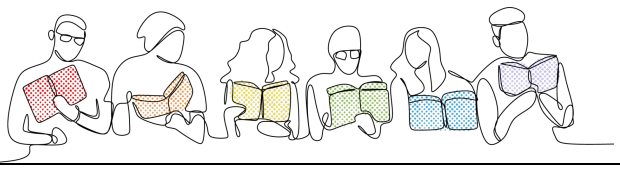
- Planning how you are going to move.
- Having trouble starting or stopping when you move.
- Bumping into things, tripping, or dropping things.

Getting to know people on the spectrum

motor differences

Autistic people have different motor skills, both big and small. Some may have problems such as:

- Planning how they are going to move
- Having trouble starting or stopping when moving
- Bumping into things, tripping, or dropping things



4-8

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

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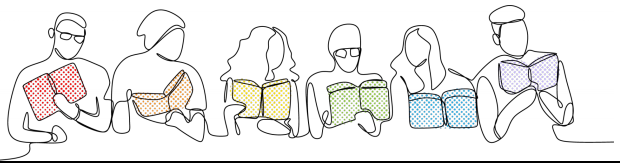
Getting to know people on the spectrum

communication differences

Communication is how we show others what we want and need, and how we exchange information.

K-3 /4-8



SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

Communication is how we show others what we want and need. All autistic people communicate, but they may communicate in different ways than non-autistic people. Some of them use words, while others don't. Some of them talk with their mouths, while others are non-speaking. Autistic people communicate in different ways. If they use words, they might use them differently. They might have a different sense of humor, or not understand when someone is joking. Sometimes they might understand pictures better than words.

- Many autistic people have motor differences that change how they talk. We use our muscles to talk, but their muscles don't always work the way they want them to. This can make talking hard.
- Some autistic people might hear differently, which can make it hard to figure out the right sounds to use. Figuring out the words can be hard, too. They might need to plan out what they want to say, and it can take them a while.
- Some autistic people are non-speaking. Here are a few examples of what a non-speaking person might look like: A person who has not talked at all in their whole life or a person who talked as a kid but can't anymore or a person who can talk sometimes, but writes words instead of talking.

Getting to know people on the spectrum

communication differences

Autistic people may communicate in different ways.

- Some may use words, while others don't. If they use words, they might use them differently.
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- They might have a different sense of humor, or not understand when someone is joking.
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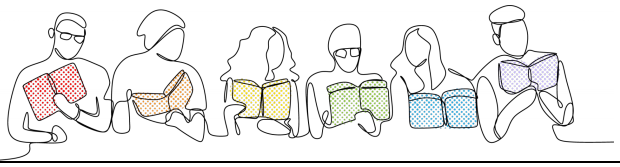

K-3 /4-8

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

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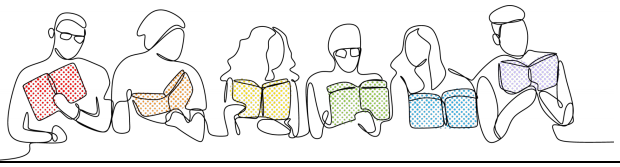
Getting to know people on the spectrum

communication differences

- Motor differences may make talking hard
- Sensory processing in hearing may be different for autistic people, which can make it hard to figure out the right sounds to use, and figuring out the words can be hard, too.
- Some autistic people are non-speaking, but might write words instead of talking



4-8

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

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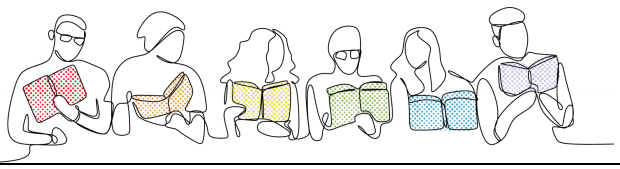
Getting to know people on the spectrum

Other ways that some autistic people communicate:

Nonverbal communication is communication that doesn't use language

- People can guess how someone feels from their nonverbal communication, but people can make mistakes when they guess.
- It can be extra hard for autistic people to guess or to understand nonverbal communication.



4-8

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

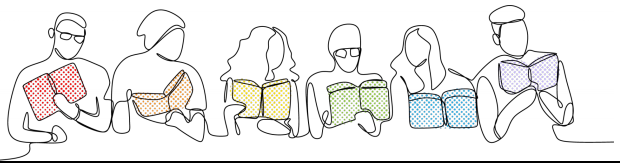
Nonverbal communication is communication that doesn't use language, like: eye contact, body language, tone of voice. Nonverbal communication isn't just about what you do. It's also about what other people think. People can guess how someone feels from their nonverbal communication, but people can make mistakes when they guess. It can be extra hard for autistic people to guess or to understand nonverbal communication.

Getting to know people on the spectrum

Other ways that some autistic people communicate:

Echolalia means repeating things that you have heard before

- They might repeat what another person has just said
- They may repeat the same thing many times
- They may hear something and repeat it much later



4-8

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

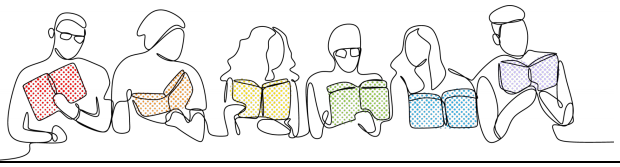
Echolalia means repeating things that you have heard before. For example, you might repeat lines from your favorite movie out loud. Some autistic people use echolalia a lot more and use it to help them communicate. They might repeat what another person has just said. They may repeat the same thing many times. They may hear something and repeat it much later.

Getting to know people on the spectrum

Other ways that some autistic people communicate:

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) means using something other than talking to communicate. There are lots of different kinds of AAC, like:

- Typing on a computer
- pushing buttons on an iPad,
- pointing to letters or pictures on a board
- using sign language
- drawing pictures instead of writing/saying words.



4-8

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) means using something other than talking to communicate. Sometimes, AAC adds onto talking, and other times, people use AAC instead of talking. Both speaking and non-speaking autistic people use AAC. Some people use AAC all of the time, and others only use it sometimes. There are lots of different kinds of AAC, like: Typing on a computer, pushing buttons on an iPad, pointing to letters or pictures on a board, using sign language, drawing pictures instead of writing/saying words.

How many people are autistic?

3.5 million people in the United States are on the autism spectrum

1 in 44 children are on the autism spectrum

K-3 /4-8

Autism occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, and is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States.

How many people are autistic?

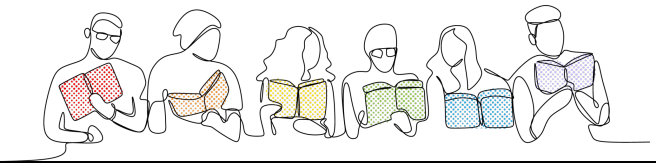
That’s about the same as the number of people that have green eyes!

K-3 /4-8

How many people are autistic?

Defining the actual number can be difficult.

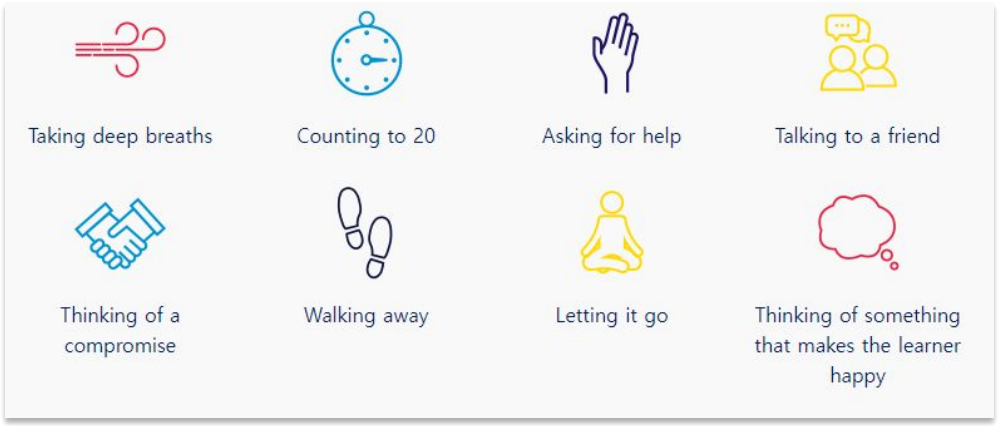
Many people have not been diagnosed!



SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

How many people are autistic?

Just because someone is not diagnosed doesn't mean that they aren't struggling and making use of multiple coping strategies



4-8

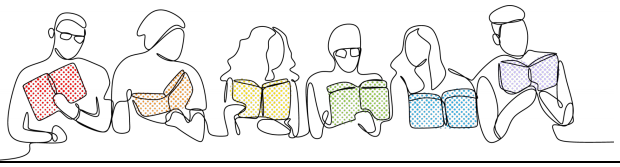
Autism Acceptance

Words Matter

Acceptance goes past awareness

Acceptance is essential for positive change in the lives of autistic people

Acceptance is a pathway to fully integrating autistic people into everyday life



4-8

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

"acceptance" as a means of more fully integrating those living with autism into our social fabric.

Fostering acceptance is essential to igniting positive change in the lives of those with #autism.

We know words matter as we work to create a more supportive and accepting society for those with autism and their families

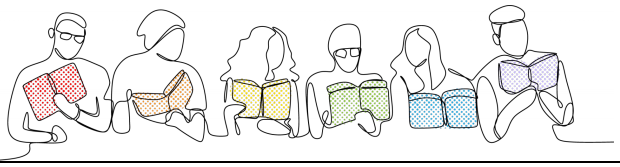
Autism occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, and is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States.

K-3

Sesame Street - meeting Julia

What did you notice about Julia, from the differences that we just discussed?

- EDIT THIS LIST BASED WHAT WAS DISCUSSED IN CLASS
- Special Interests
- Meltdowns & Shutdowns
- Stimming
- Thinking
- Sensory Processing
- Motor
- Communication



K-3

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

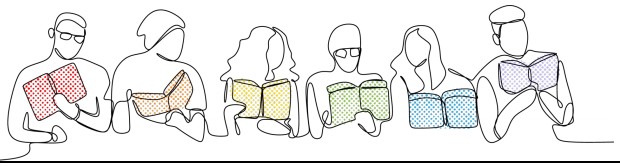
Sesame Street - meeting Julia

How was Julia painting differently from the way Elmo and Abby were painting?

Why was she doing it her way?

Allen tells Big Bird that Julia has autism, and that she likes it when people know that. Why do you think Julia likes for people to know she has autism?

What does autism mean for Julia? What are some things she does differently?



K-3

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

Pause at 4:50 for these questions

How was Julia painting differently from the way Elmo and Abby were painting?

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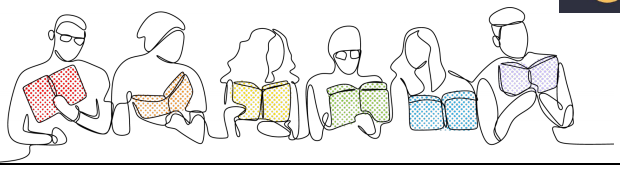
Sesame Street - meeting Julia

Adapt means to change something - like where you play or how you play.

Julia liked playing tag with Elmo, Abby and Big Bird. How did she play tag?

How did everyone adapt the game?

Have you ever adapted play to make sure that everybody can be a part of the activity?



K-3

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

Pause at 4:50 for these questions

Julia liked playing tag with Elmo, Abby and Big Bird. How did she play tag? Was it still fun?

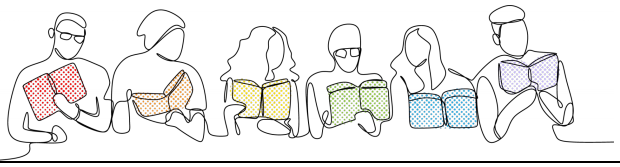
Sesame Street - meeting Julia

Why did Julia go to her favorite spot?

What was she getting away from, and why did she want to get away from it?

Julia did some breathing exercises to try to feel better. Do you do any breathing exercises?

Why do you do breathing exercises?



K-3

SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

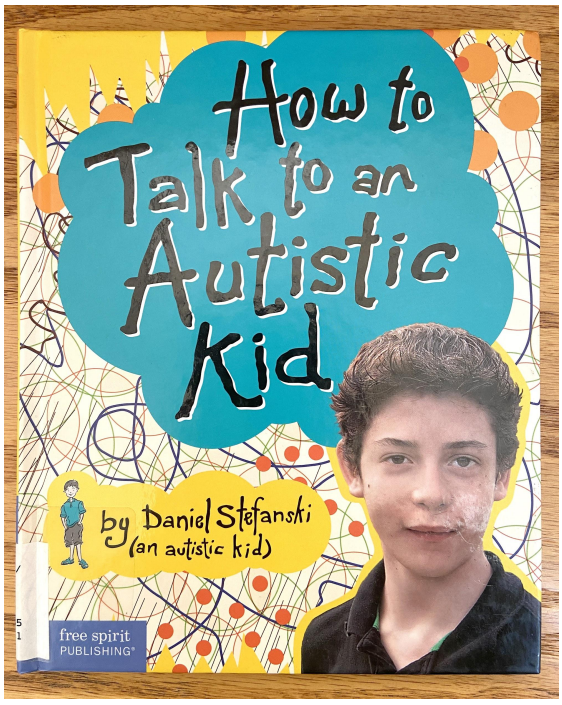
Pause at 8:45 for these questions

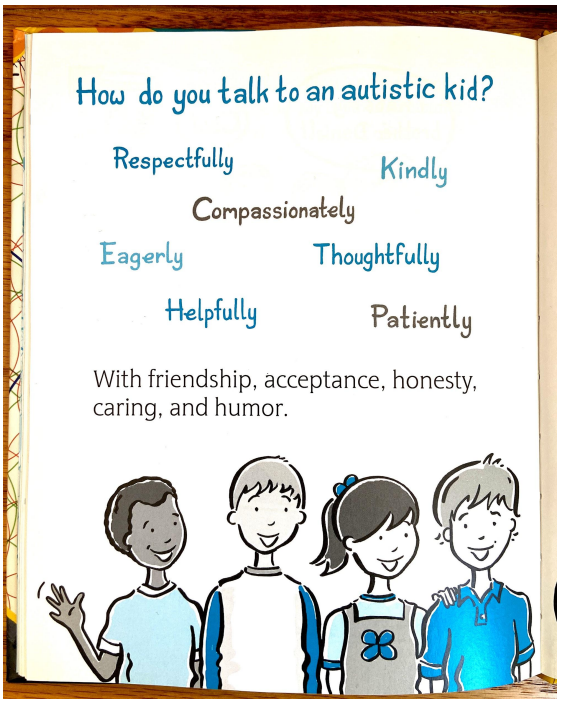
Why did Julia go to her favorite spot?

What was she getting away from, and why did she want to get away from it?

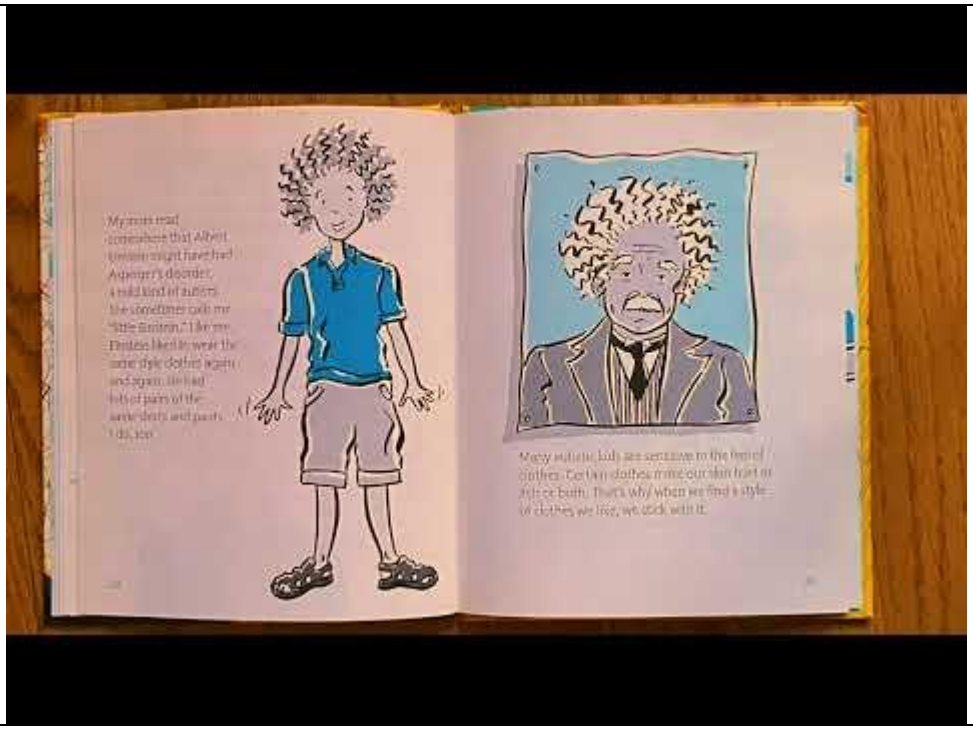
Julia did some breathing exercises to try to feel better. Do you do any breathing exercises?

Why do you do breathing exercises?


How to Talk to an Autistic Kid
by Daniel Stefanski (an autistic kid)
free spirit PUBLISHING


How do you talk to an autistic kid?
Respectfully
Kindly
Compassionately
Eagerly
Thoughtfully
Helpfully
Patiently
With friendship, acceptance, honesty, caring, and humor.

4-8


My mom read somewhere that Albert Einstein might have had Asperger's disorder, a mild kind of autism. She sometimes calls me "little Einstein." I like my clothes like it wear the same style clothes again and again. We had lots of pairs of the same shirts and pants. I do, too.
Many autistic kids are sensitive to the feel of clothes. Certain clothes irritate our skin (can or itch or both). That's why when we find a style of clothes we like, we stick with it.

4-8

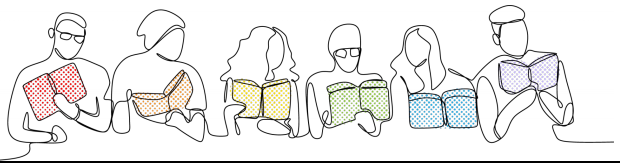
How To Talk to an Autistic Kid

What are social cues? What does Daniel say about autistic people and social cues?

What are some of the things that Daniel suggests you say to an autistic friend if they are talking for a long time about their special interest?

What are ways that Daniel suggests to be a friend to an autistic person?

Why does Daniel say that you should not feel sorry for him?



SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

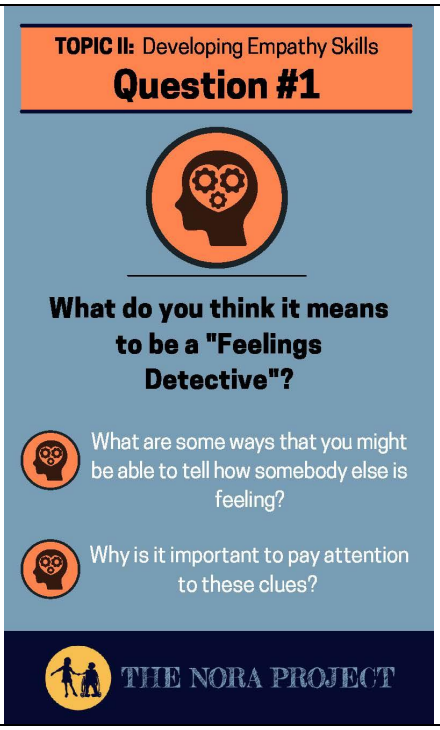
Empathy skills

What are some ways that you might be able to tell how somebody else is feeling?

Why is it important to pay attention to these clues?

#CompassionInAction

K-3



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Empathy skills

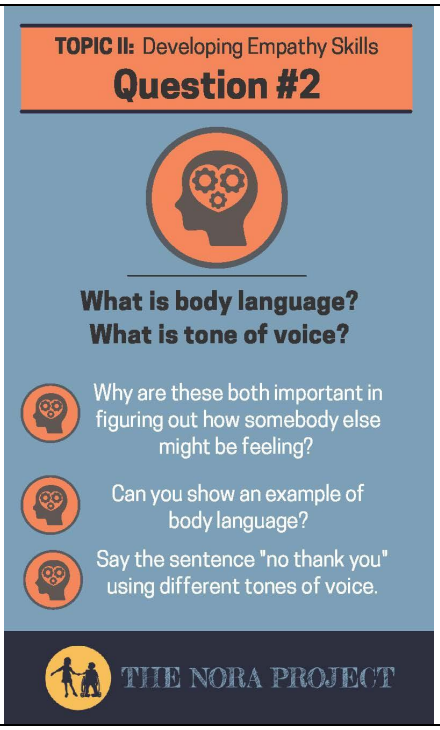
Why are body language and tone of voice important in figuring out how somebody might be feeling?

Can you show an example of body language?

Say “no thank you” using different tones of voice

#CompassionInAction

K-3



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Empathy skills

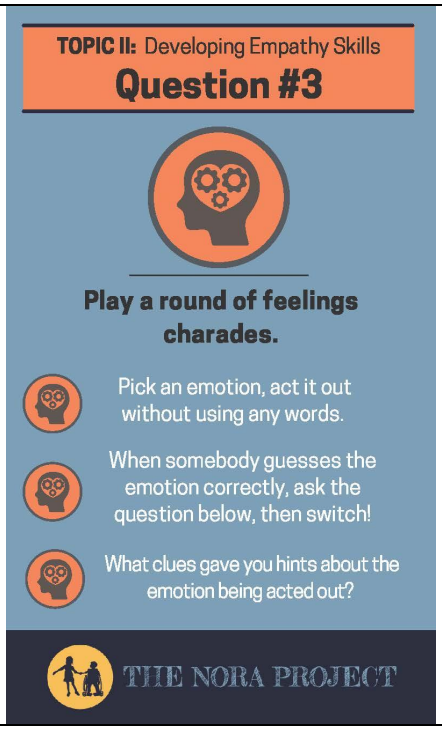
Pick an emotion and act it out without using words

When some guess correctly, ask:

What clues give you the hints about the emotion?

#CompassionInAction

K-3



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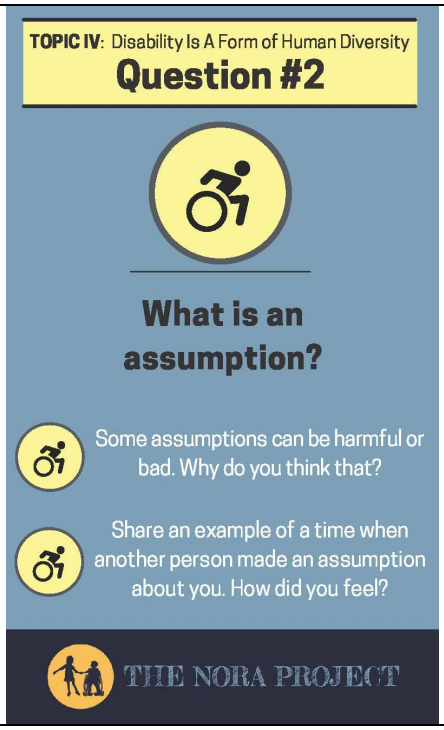
Empathy skills

What is an assumption?

Share an example of a time when another person made an assumption about you. How did you feel?

#CompassionInAction

K-3 /4-8



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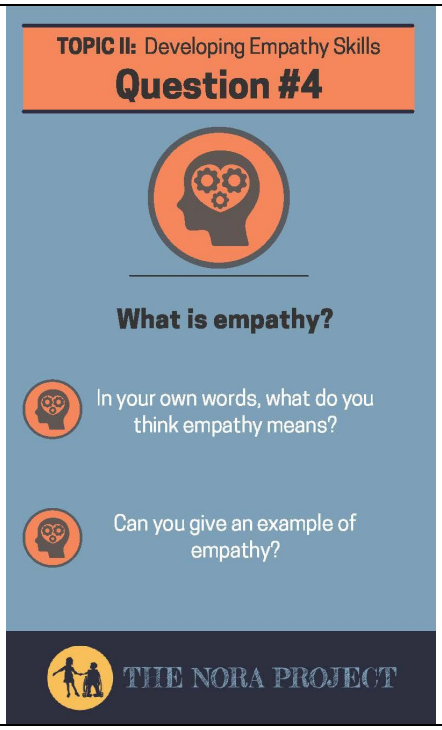
Empathy skills

In your own words, what do you think empathy means?

Can you give an example of empathy?

#CompassionInAction

4-8



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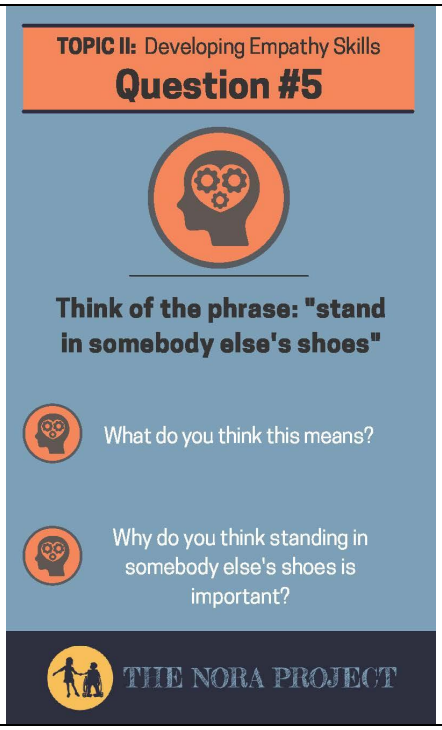
Empathy skills

What does the phrase “stand in somebody else’s shoes” mean?

Why do you think it’s important to “stand in somebody else’s shoes” ?

#CompassionInAction

4-8



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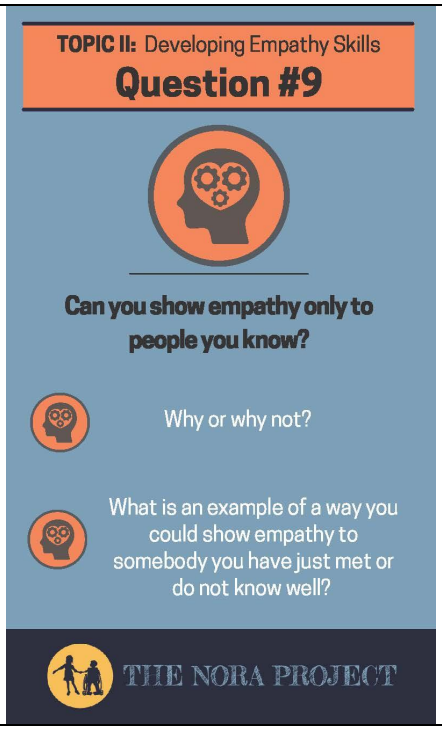
Empathy skills

What is an example of a way you could show empathy to somebody you have just met or do not know well?

#CompassionInAction

4-8



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Empathy skills

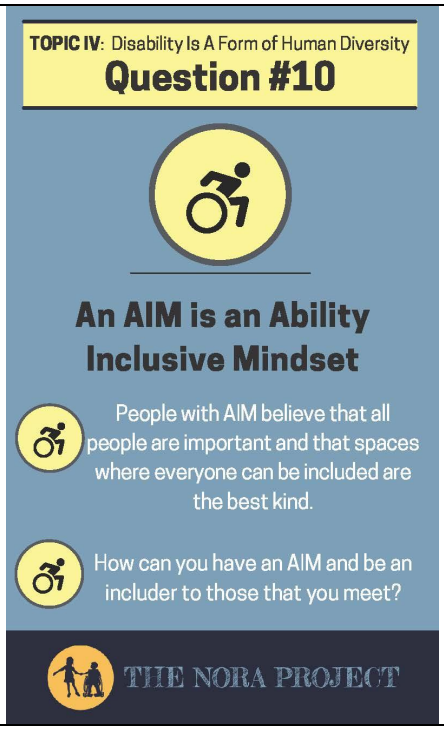
AIM - Ability Inclusive Mindset

Believing that all people are important and that spaces and activities where everyone can be included are the best kind.

What are ways that you can AIM and be an includer?

#CompassionInAction

4-8



Nora Project table top cards - can use as images, conversation starters

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DkU3kWvrGmjgbRAS22so0jorjCoRrNrw/view

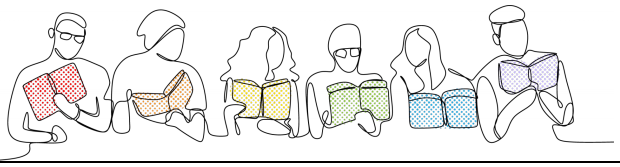
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CdabTkA1fUeWTbxh2kTMLQnbXlz5HCB5/view

What are we *not* seeing?

Is the person getting what they need?

How can we be a good friend?

#CompassionInAction



SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE

K-3 /4-8

Highlighting diverse needs are not always visible - they are often **Invisible Disabilities**

If someone is having a hard time, we can ask ourselves

What are we not seeing? - (NOT ALWAYS AUTISM)

Is the person getting what they need?

How can we be a good friend?

How can we make sure everyone is included?

I feel included when...(finish the sentence)

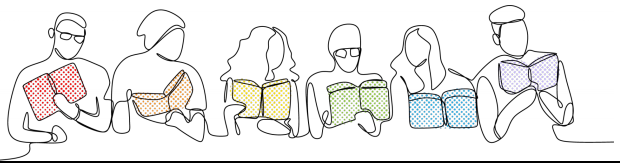
Each person is different and important. What special gift do you bring to the class?

What are we *not* seeing?

Finish the sentence:

I feel included when...

#CompassionInAction



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Resources

Resources from the perspective of people on the spectrum:

autistikids.com

ASAN Autistic Self Advocacy Network: autisticadvocacy.org

How to Talk to an Autistic Kid (by Daniel Stefanski)

How to be Human Diary of an Autistic Girl (by Florida Frenz) author interview Talks @ Google here

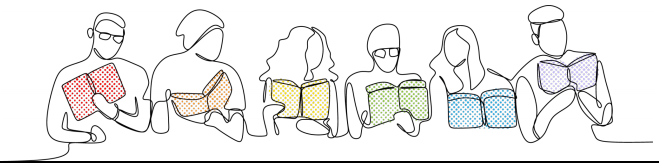
Book for students (with Asperger's/ASD):

Asperger's Rules? How to Make Sense of School and Friends (by Blythe Grossberg, PsyD.)

Books for adults:

Neurotribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity by Steve Silberman

Sincerely, Your Autistic Child: What People on the Autism Spectrum Wish Their Parents Knew About Growing Up, Acceptance, and Identity. Edited by Emily Paige Ballou, Sharon daVanport, and Morenike Giwa Onaiwu.



SKINNER NORTH DIVERSE NEEDS COMMITTEE