



ÂU ISN'T JUST THE 1ST 2 LETTERS IN ÂUTISM,  
IT'S ALSO THE PERIODIC SYMBOL FOR GOLD!

## AUTISM AMBASSADORS CORPS

### AUTISTIC/ASPIE SELF-IMPROVEMENT & ADVOCACY SUPPORT GROUP

#### KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE GROUP'S SUCCESS

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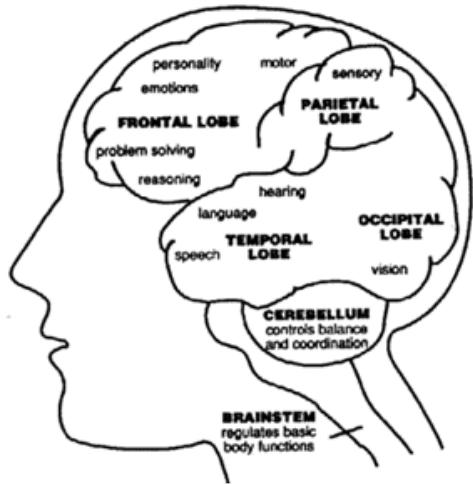
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#### BASIC AUTISM SCIENCE

(ACCURACY OF WHICH HAS BEEN REFINED BY DR. BRYAN WOODRUFF, NEUROLOGIST, MAYO CLINIC)

- 1) **Jason's Definition of Autism:** Autism is an atypical neurological connectivity paradox resulting in heightened activity in some areas of the brain and decreased activity in others, compared to non-autistic individuals.



Some of the issues that Autistics face because of their atypical neurological connectivity include:

- ❖ Sensory Processing Issues
- ❖ Hypersensitivity to Stress and Emotions
- ❖ Stimming
- ❖ Seizures
- ❖ Delayed and/or Impaired Language Development
- ❖ Delayed and/or Impaired Social Development
- ❖ ADD/ADHD
- ❖ Tourette's Syndrome
- ❖ Impaired Executive Functioning
- ❖ Impaired motor skills
- ❖ Hypersensitivity to Medications

- a) **Atypical:** most individuals have similar range of development, as well as means of completing certain routine tasks, problem solving, socializing, etc. The individuals who are outside that range are "Atypical." The question is, what do you make of these differences? Are they deficits, are they a superior way of functioning, or are they just different?
- b) **Neurological Connectivity:** The simple explanation of this is that Autism/Asperger's is, at its neurological roots, a neuro-connectivity issues. Our neuro-connections are atypical. How Autistic/Aspie neurology is a complex, multi-faceted topic that takes a long time to properly explore.
- c) **Paradox:** The paradoxes of Autism/Asperger's can result in Autistics/Aspie being extremely gifted in some areas, and extremely inept in others. The struggles Autistics/Aspies deal with are often aggravated by people who do not accept that Autism is a paradox; but instead focus solely on one aspect of Autism while refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of the paradoxical opposite.

**2) Brain Plasticity:** The brain of every life form on Earth is constantly changing, enabling it to adapt in both positive and negative ways. This provides us with a scientific basis to believe that some areas which Autistics/Aspies struggle with may self-correct and/or be modifiable.

**3) Developmental Disabilities Do Not Affect All Areas of the Brain in A Universal Manner:** So the part of your, or your child's, brain that enables speech development is underdeveloped. What does this have to do with the part of their brain that enables them to understand what others are saying about them? Nothing! What does the part of the brain that enables bowel control have to do with the parts that allow them to memorize what they hear? Nothing! What does the parts of the brain that enables us to do complex mathematical problems have to do with the parts involved in social interaction? Nothing! Just because your, or your child's, brain may be affected in one area, that is not an indication of the level of functionality of other parts of our brain. Some areas may even be affected in a way that is to our advantage in certain situations.

**4) Natural Countermeasures:** It is well known fact that someone who loses their sight will develop an increased sense of hearing. This concept is not just limited to the blind; but is a well-known factor in so many other physical disabilities that the healthy part(s) of a body will compensate for unhealthy or injured parts. Not only do I believe that this gives us a basis to consider the possibility that this same principle may at play for those with developmental disabilities, but I believe that I can provide specific examples of it being a factor in the day-to-day lives of Autistics/Aspies.

### WHAT THIS GROUP IS

The Autistic/Aspie support groups have seen and/or lead have at least one thing in common with church Sunday school classes and Bible studies, as well as other support groups. They all have members with a variety of mindsets, many of which are incompatible, trying to pull the meetings in the direction they want." This handout gives clear definition as to the group's number one priority. If your primary focus is incompatible with the group's, please leave us in peace instead of trying to hijack us and forcing us to be just like the vast majority of groups that are already out there.

**1) This group is a self-improvement group that gives Autistics/Aspies, and all of those who are personally invested in their lives ...,**

- a. ...the chance to learn about Autism from each other points of view to foster greater understanding of each other.
- b. ...to talk about the specific challenges that we face in their day-to-day lives and how to overcome them.
- c. ...address issues related to the humanity of Autistics/Aspies that are overlook by those who are too focused on Autism/Asperger's specific issues.
- d. ...figure out how to apply the general knowledge about Autism/Asperger's that we learn about to our own personal lives.

When we refer to dealing with "underlying issues," we are not talking about performing any type of therapy that the facilitators are not qualified to administer. We acknowledge that we struggle with such issues, which allows others in the group to discuss what they may have done to overcome them. This is what Alcoholics Anonymous refers to as "sharing your experience, strength, and hope." However, how can we share are most relevant experiences with them that can help them overcome these underlying issues that are doing most to undermine their personal development if we're not allowed to ask questions that enable us to identify them? Nevertheless, anyone who needs actual therapy will be referred to those who are qualified to provide it.

Those who are committed to becoming the best person that they're capable of being are a minority. This is especially true when self-improvement requires the individual to overcome emotional pain, fear, resentments, etc. Any organization, including churches and support groups of any kind, who puts too much stock in attendance will feel they have to compromise by watering down their program to get more people to come. Unfortunately, many of these programs have little or no substance to them because the majority doesn't want substance, they want personal amusement. Those who are in desperate need of substance to overcome their past are deprived of it when one of the few places they could go to get it stops providing, forcing them to leave groups that they put their heart and soul into so they can find another group that whose number one priority is to provide the substance that they used to get at their previous group.

## 2) Some of the major befits of participating in this group is...

- a. ...the setting aside of what the textbooks say about our diagnosis in order to obtain self-awareness of who we are as unique individuals based on our personal attributes. We recognize...
  - i. ... that we have unique personalities that have nothing to do with our Autism/ Asperger's
  - ii. ...our unique gifts, talents, and special interests in order to use them as much as we can to maximize our quality of life.
  - iii. ...what struggles we have that are related to our Autism/Asperger's, as well as what struggles that are listed in the textbooks that we don't have and/or learned how to manage to whatever extent we have.
  - iv. ...what of our struggles are actually impacting us during specific situations that we face so we can respond effectively and/or ask for the correct accommodations.
- b. ...learning how to express our needs, wants and desire in the most effective manner possible in order to achieve the best results possible for the circumstances that we find ourselves in.
- c. ...receiving the support we need to overcome the fears, pain, and resentments that sabotage our efforts to become what we want to be.
- d. ...consensus, not cutting-edge, science as the best source for finding practical solutions that we can implement right now. All forms of media are filled with researchers who are releasing statements to the press about studies that get people excited about the future. Dr. Bryan Woodruff, a neurologist who used to fact check all the scientific explanations that I would present, taught me to take a more skeptical approach. Although there are a lot of good scientists out there doing their best to learn new truths to better humanity:
  - i. Press releases and conference presentations are often times little more than sales pitches designed to raise more funding for more research. Bottomline, America is a capitalist society and everyone doing scientific research has to operate in accordance with its rules.
  - ii. Some researchers have motives that have been corrupted by the pursuit of wealth and/or personal agendas.

Therefore, although we should keep tabs on the latest research to learn what truths have been discovered, we should not state theory that have not actually been proven as if they been proven.

WHAT THIS GROUP ISN'T**1) A social club or dating service.**

- a. Although discussion about their social life is especially relevant for Autistics/Aspies, especially for those who are socially isolated, that doesn't mean that group members should be used to EXPLORE opportunities to "hookup" after group. Nor should the meeting be used for finding dates.
- b. If you want to have a social event, provide the facilitator information all the information necessary in order that it can be promoted during the announcements and on the Meetup page.
- c. Individuals who are not ready to deal with the underlining issues that may be hindering their ability for self-improvement should not be allowed to hijack the meeting.

**2) A venue for sectarianism and generalizations.** It's understandable that human beings seek commonality with those around them as a means creating a safe environment around themselves that they can function in. However, such mindsets can...

- a. ...cause you to embrace status quo viewpoints about yourself, which are often reinforced with confirmation bias...
  - i. ...in order strengthen the bond with the group you want acceptance from.
  - ii. ...because many have lost their self-confidence in the analyzation and decision-making process.
  - iii. ...because having others simply telling you what to believe is quicker and easier than genuine self-exploration.
- b. ...create us vs. them hostility towards those whom you can't find commonality with, in spite of the fact that you could if you actually tried.

**3) To enslave its members to what the DSM,\* textbooks, and Autism "experts" have to say about Autism.** Although valuable insights about Autism can be gain from all of these sources, most of them...

- a. ...provide a deficit-based understanding of Autism, even though almost all of them say they take a "positive" approach to Autism because it's the newest catch phase to draw people in. However, if you look at their "what is Autism" material they provide to those who are just learning about it, almost none of them have anything positive to say.
- b. ...focus entirely on what 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> parties can do for Autistics; but won't provide opportunity for successful Autistics to tell of what they have done for themselves.

Many Autistics/Aspie twist their assessment of an incident to conform to the textbooks' stereotyping, resulting in errors in their analysis of what happen which they recite in a mindless, robotic fashion when ask about it later. Because of this, the they won't be able to implement effective solutions to their problems that they've been distracted from by the stereotypical issues the textbook gets them to focus on.

**4) A venue to validate your self-hatred because of your diagnosis.** Such attitudes undermine your ability for self-improvement and makes it impossible to reach your fullest potential. In light of what I wrote in subpoint b of the pervious point, it shouldn't be surprising to anyone that the

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\* DSM: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, provides the mental health community with the diagnostic criterial for all mental health issues. Version 5 has been in effect since 2013.

majority of Autistics/Aspies struggle in this area. Recognizing the validity of our gifts and strengths, rather than downplaying them because the “official” view of Autism is singularly focused on our struggles, is a good 1<sup>st</sup> step to become all that the Autistic/Aspie can be.

- 5) **A venue to validate your hatred of other.** Yes, Autistics/Aspies are wrongly judged, probably for more often than the average human being. However, it is the choice of every human being who has ever been wrong whether or not they will be consume by their hatred, which undermine a person’s ability for self-improvement because it keeps them focused on past failure rather than future potential.
- 6) **A venue for having pity parties.** It understandable that those of us who have struggled through life, and/or having a bad week, need to talk about them. Learning how to deal with our pain, fear and resentments is key to overcoming them. However, getting so focused on our problems that we blind ourselves to the possibility of there being effective solutions that we can implement is counterproductive. This is a problem that is common amongst all humans and it’s the groups job to call out such individuals, in a compassionate and understanding manner, with the hopes that it will help that individual get out of the rut that they’re stuck in.

#### 7) **A venue for firing up lynch mobs.**

- a. I’ve heard so many Autistics/Aspies talk about how society needs to change, but the ones who talk the most are the least likely to show up to activities designed to bring about such changes.
- b. If everyone who talks about how we need to help the homeless volunteered an hour a week practicing what they preach, volunteers might outnumber the homeless about 1000 to 1. Griping about problems that we lack the motivation to do anything about is very common amongst human beings, including Autistics/Aspies.
- c. If it takes our society 20 years to change into everything that I want it to be in order to create my vision of an utopian society, which is direct conflict with the visions of an utopian society that others have, then I’ll probably be too old (71 as of the day this was written) to benefit from it. So, I’ve decided to make choices for myself to improve my quality of life as much as I can, even if society as a whole doesn’t cooperate. As I do, I gain the respect of those around me, compelling them to be enthusiastic in cooperating with my needs that they want to help me meet so they can become part of my success.

**SMALL GROUP RULES**

Although it's preferable that the facilitator/co-facilitator not be nearly as ridged and inflexible as the following rules state, it may be necessary for them to be so if the group is being hijacked. Many of these individuals who come to this group have never been in a self-improvement focused group, especially one that deals with Autism/Asperger's, and are therefore slow to catch on to the protocols of such a group that doesn't operate in accordance with the protocols of the social groups they're used to attending. There are also those who I previously addressed who want nothing to do with self-improvement and may therefore be asked to leave if they refuse to follow the group's rules.

**3-minute check in:** The 3-minute check-in is, in part, a "triage" tool to determine who needs to share first and the most.

- ❖ It makes sure everyone gets a chance to share something before the group starts getting into deeper dialog with those who needed to share the most.
- ❖ Only the person sharing is allowed to talk at this time, unless someone needs to ask a question for the purpose of clarification.
- ❖ When they are finished, the sharer will stipulate if they want to share more and/or receive feedback after the check ins.
- ❖ If someone needs to leave early, let the facilitator/co-facilitator know so he/she can accommodate that individual if they need to share more and/or wants feedback.

**Feedback:** The purpose is to provide the person asking for the feedback with insights that may improve their quality of life.

- ❖ It is preferable for the facilitator/co-facilitator to not assume that they must immediately take the lead at this time, but to ask if anyone has feedback that they want to share because another member might better relate to the situation so they can tell how they handled the situation and what the end result was. HOWEVER, IF MULTIPLE INDIVIDUALS KEEP HIJACKING THE GROUP, IT MAY BECOME NECESSARY FOR THE FACILITATOR/CO-FACILITATOR TO PROVIDE THE INITIAL FEEDBACK IN ORDER TO MAKE SURE THEY CAN ADDRESS THE ISSUES THE GROUP WAS CREATED TO HELP WITH. ONCE THEY HAVE FINISHED, THEY WILL THEN ASK THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROUP IF THEY WOULD LIKE TO GIVE ANY FEEDBACK.
- ❖ The facilitator/co-facilitator will then ask if anyone else has feedback.
  - Those with personal experience should share before those with book knowledge.
  - All feedback should...
    - ...recognize every individual's need and the right to self-determination.
    - ...help the individual receiving the feedback make an informed decision about the pros & cons of options available to them.
    - ...be non-judgmental when it comes to the personal choices of others.
    - ...not be a debate between different individuals with different ideas about the most effective way of doing something.

*\*\*\*ONLY THE FACILITATOR/CO-FACILITATOR MAY ASK SOMEONE THEIR AGE BECAUSE THEY WILL ONLY DO SO TO GAIN QUICK INSIGHT AS TO SOCIETAL ATTITUDES THAT THE AUTISTIC/ASPIE, AND THEIR LOVED ONES, HAD TO DEAL WITH\*\*\**