

1: Autistic people deserve to be included even if that makes people uncomfortable.

The discomfort from the weird, insensitive or disturbing things an autistic person has said or done lasts moments. The loneliness of social isolation so many autistic people experience is almost constant, crippling and soul destroying.

No one ever died from being offended or creeped out. But social isolation is a mental health killer. Autistic people may seem like loaners but often they experience much greater loneliness than their non autistic peers which is hugely damaging to their mental health.

2: With autistic people it's often more a question of can't than won't.

Autism is a social and communication disability. Autistic people's brains do not process or comprehend social interaction the same way as most people. Things that most people understand intuitively about the interactions they have with others are a complete mystery to many autistic people.

Autistic people need to expend time and mental effort to infer logically what most people know intuitively about interacting with others and even then may still get it wrong. So when you ask why they won't stop doing and saying things that upset, offend, and disturb the people around them remember it's more likely to be can't than won't.

3: Autistic people shouldn't have to fake normality to be accepted.

Autistic people are often compared to aliens living on earth. The culture they live in is not their own and it's a hard one for them to adapt to. But unlike aliens they didn't choose to be trapped in a world that seems alien to them.

There is a limit to how much adaptation you can ask them to do before you are effectively telling them to pretend not to be an alien, to deny their uniqueness. When you say to an autistic person don't express any weird interests, ideas or behaviour you're basically saying 'pretend you aren't autistic.'

4: Insensitivity often goes hand in hand with autism and that's not a crime.

For autistic people insensitivity isn't a choice but a natural consequence of a brain that works differently. A brain that naturally hyper focuses on what it finds interesting without being particularly aware of how those ideas or the words used to express them will be interpreted by others. A brain that focuses on what is being said to the exclusion of how, where and to who it is said.

It's not a crime to say what you think and feel. Even if you say it in an insensitive way. Especially if autism makes it hard for you to communicate your thoughts and feelings without upsetting people. Autistic people have an equal right to express themselves even if they're more likely to offend people when they do.

5: Excluding autistic people can be illegal and should be more often.

The equality act states that disabled people, which includes autistic people, should be treated differently from non disabled people. There is a legal requirement in many situations to make special allowances for autistic people. If a venue, activity group or social club kicks out an autistic person without a good excuse they may be breaking the law.

It doesn't matter that they would kick out a non autistic person under the same circumstances because the law says they must be treated differently. What matters is whether they have a good excuse not to make allowances. Unfortunately the courts haven't really defined yet what a good excuse is.

6: Autistic people belong here and they belong here now.

For many autistic people there is no other place to take responsibility for including them. No matter how difficult you find them if they are sticking around it probably means they feel they fit in with you, possibly more than any other place. There is a good chance there is nowhere else more suitable, they aren't going to suddenly learn the social skills you feel they need to be a part of your group somewhere else.

They don't belong with 'their own kind.' As far as they are concerned you may be the closest thing to their own kind. Being autistic doesn't make people a good fit for each other socially any more than sharing race, gender or age. Autistic people belong, right here right now.



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