

Hammad's autism resource

Introduction:

My name is Hammad Ul-Haq. I am 30 years old. I live in West Yorkshire with my mum, dad and my three sisters. I am writing this article to raise awareness for anyone who doesn't know or understand much about this condition.

What is autism?

Autism is a lifelong condition that can affect people in many different ways. The ways it affects people are unique, but generally they can affect people's eye contact, communication skills, senses and worries. It also has an effect on their interests. There are 700,000 people on the autism spectrum across the UK according to the National Autistic Society website.

The rate of employment of autistic people

As far as 2019's rate of employment goes, it is very difficult for autistic people to find work due to difficulty in communication. Only 16% of adults with autism are in full-time employment and 32% are in some kind of paid work. 77% that are unemployed say that they would like to work and 40% say that they have never worked.

Making friends and relationships

People on the spectrum will generally struggle to make friends because they might have strange interests that their peers aren't interested in. Communication can also make it difficult to interact with new people and they may be scared to talk about specific things. A second example of why people may struggle to make friends is because of their eye contact. This can make the other person think they are uninterested in them.

What's more, people who have autism may also find it difficult to form relationships either long or short term or with family. Some people may struggle to form relationships altogether due to the lack of communication skills, interests, hobbies and lack of eye contact. Lots of people who have autism may end up living with their parents or family members for the rest of their lives.

Communication and eye contact

Depending on the level of their condition people with autism may have poor communication. An example of this is a person may end up repeating the same words and others may be too scared to communicate. People who are on the spectrum can also get distracted easily, so they can end up looking away even when they're talking to people directly. This may make them seem uninterested in people when actually they aren't. This is one of the reasons why they may struggle to form friendships or relationships.



Senses

Lots of autistic people are scared of loud noises, don't like strong smells, don't like bright lights, don't like the feel of certain objects and/or don't like being touched.

Experiencing discrimination

Many people with autism experience bullying, discrimination and name calling. This is unacceptable behaviour and this sort of unkindness can lead to the person being extra sensitive if it keeps happening. My advice to those who have experienced bullying, discrimination or indeed name calling would be to talk to someone who they can trust, e.g. teachers, friends or family members, and if the matter is serious then contact your local police.

Friends & loneliness

People with autism might feel lonely due to the fact that they might find it difficult to make friends. This might stop their confidence. They might start to feel lonely thinking that they can't make friends.

Staying safe online

While the internet is a very useful tool for researching information relating to a subject of general interest, it can also be risky to a person's life as there are many online sites which can put an autistic person in danger. An example of this is when using social media sites like Facebook or Twitter. Many people who are on the spectrum won't understand about staying safe online. They may put confidential information up about themselves or others without realising. A second example is they may end up talking to people who they don't know in real life. They may then also decide to meet up with that person.

This, in particular, can be dangerous as these people may not be who they say they are and could possibly have a harmful agenda. In order to prevent this, parents should explain the dangers of meeting people online before allowing children and adults on the spectrum to have internet access. They should also regularly catch up with children and adults on the spectrum about who they have been talking to online.

Another way for parents and teachers to safeguard children on the spectrum is by having up to date security and antivirus software installed on their computer or smart devices. A good way to put a stop to any suspicious activity from happening in the first place is to add a parental control lock on sites that they don't want that person to visit.

Advice for neurotypical people who meet autistic people

Some advice for meeting autistic people that we would give is to be friendly. Don't presume that they aren't interested if they aren't looking at you or engaging in the conversation too much. This is likely because they struggle with communication and eye contact. They can also be shy. This is also down to their autism. This means that you should still continue to chat to them, but they may struggle interacting with you.

Useful websites

There are many websites that autistic people can visit but two of the popular ones are:

- www.autismspeaks.org
- www.autism.org.uk