

Far From The Tree

Chapter 5: Autism

Megan Gregory

This presentation will discuss the following questions:

- What is problematic when persons are identified by their disability labels?
- What disability myths need demystifying, and why is this necessary?
- Should disabled persons be or not be an inspiration?
- Should the society create supports for disabled persons, but what if it doesn't?

Autism

The author describes autism as a highly variable collection of symptoms and behaviors.



Symptoms may include violence, wordlessness, inappropriate interpersonal behavior, and manifestations of anxiety and despair.



There is More to Autism



It's more than being socially ascertic or sensory disabled. It's not just someone who merely has no speech, is extremely anxious, or is someone who bangs his head against a wall.



Identity versus Illness



It is a syndrome, not an illness. Autism is a rich identity, even if it is about disability. All people should be treated equal and not viewed as an inspiration.



Parents are Activists



The hyperactive, associated with autism, can be a challenge for parents. It's not just about the child, but also about the parent's experience.



Autism of Acceptance

The author calls it a form of acceptance of the child's unique identity. It's not about the child's behavior, but about the parent's acceptance of the child's unique identity.



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Parents are Activists



The relationship between parents and children with autism is a complex one. It is not just about the child's behavior, but also about the parent's behavior. It is about the parent's role in the child's life.

It is not just to be a parent but



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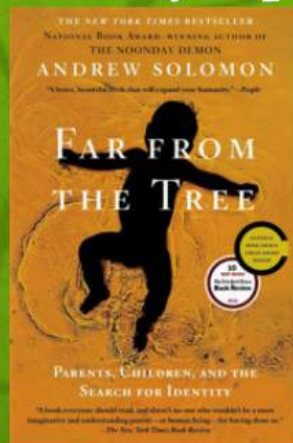
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History



Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler in 1912 used the word autism to describe a state in which "thought is divorced both from logic and from reality."



In 1943, Leo Kanner, an Austrian psychiatrist, identified autism as a distinct disorder. He chose autistic because it underscored the extreme aloneness of the children he had studied.

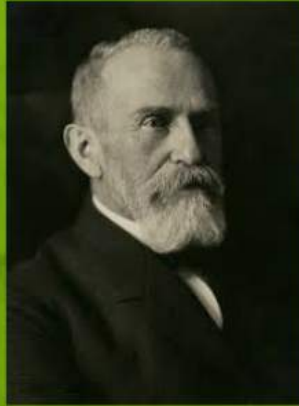
Statistics



1 in 2,500 births in 1960
1 in 88 today

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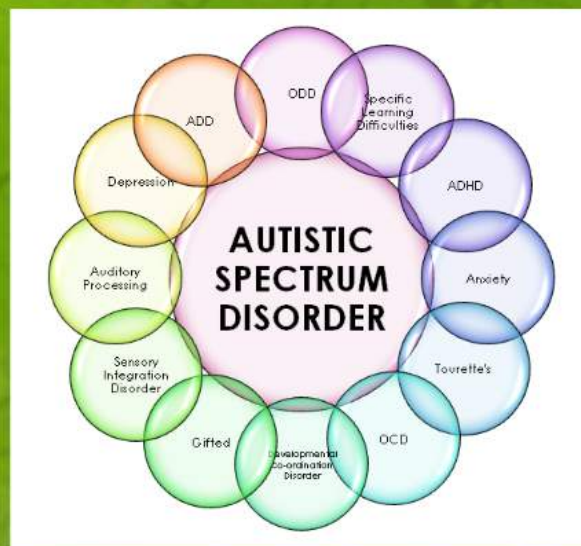
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Myths

- People with autism cannot love or show affection
- Cannot learn or be taught
- Cannot develop independent learning skills
- Have an intellectual disability

Though some may have these traits, not all do. Autism signs and symptoms may or may not occur in any individual at any end of the spectrum.

What if?



"If we can understand autism, we can understand the brain!"

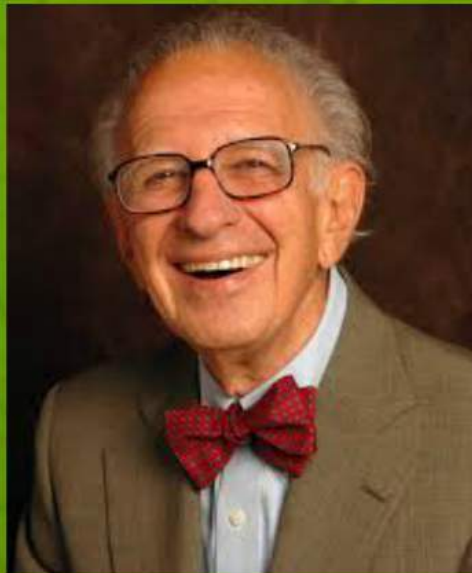
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Case Studies

The author, Andrew Solomon, presents many stories about those who care for people with autism, at varying degrees. What is brought to light is the dedication, heart, and heartbreak that this can entail. Each family has their own journey, and we can learn from all of them.

Why? What? How?



Cece, designer of Betty Burns and Jeff Hansen

"Cece is the Zen lesson. Why does Cece have autism? Because Cece has autism. And what is it like to be Cece? Being Cece. Because no one else is, and we'll never know what it's like. It is what it is. It's not anything else. And maybe you'll never change it, and maybe you should stop trying."
—Betsey Burns

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—Betsy Burns

Parents are Activists



Bill and Chris Davis

The incompetencies associated with autism can cause pain for the person with autism, and pain for those who attempt to care for that person.

Bill learned he had to be a parent first.

What is the Neurodiversity Movement?

It's a different way of thinking, and it's a different way of being. It needs to be respected. People who have autistic tendencies should not be "normalized."

People with autism are behind several inventions and have extraordinary splinter skills. Autism isn't only deficits. There are things autistic people can do that non-autistic people can't do.



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Meet Temple Grandin



"Genius is an abnormality, too."
—Temple Grandin.

She designed a great deal of cattle handling equipment because of 1) her ability to relate more to animals than people and 2) her ability to conceptualize things in 3 dimensions. She has reformed how cattle are handled in the beef industry.

Altruism or Acceptance

More than half of the children murdered in the United States are killed by their parents, and about half of those parents claim to have acted altruistically.

Families suffer, but the people with autism suffer more.

What is gleaned from these stories?

As a person, teacher, and collaborator, it is important for me to acknowledge and understand the identities of my students who have disabilities. My perceptions should support the students, not hinder them. All students are able, and it is up to me to guide them along the way.

Lesson Learned



Stigmatizing people with autism is both shortsighted and dangerous. Overall, we need to accept autism.

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Parents are Activists



The relationship between parents and children with autism is complex and often fraught with difficulty. Parents are activists because they are fighting for their children's rights.

It is not for me to be a parent that



Autism of Acceptance

Autism is a spectrum of conditions, and it is important to understand that it is not a disease or a disorder. It is a way of being.

Autism is not a disability, it is a difference.



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