**Exploring Being Autistic.** 10 sessions of 2 hours each.

“If you begin to understand what you are without trying to change it, then what you are undergoes a transformation.” Krishnamurti

This programme is provisional and may change depending on the needs of the group

**Aims:** the group will enable people diagnosed, self-identified or wondering if they might be autistic to:

* learn about autism and discover if/how it affects them personally
* process emotional response to identification/diagnosis
* consider pros and cons of disclosing identification/diagnosis
* develop strategies to capitalise on strengths and mitigate challenges associated with autism
* socialise with peers

**Outcomes:** the group will enable participants:

* to have good understanding of what autism means in their life and identify path forward
* to experience connection with a peer group and decreased anxiety
* to be better able to build on autistic strengths and mitigate autistic challenges
* to be better able to explain their condition to others and both request appropriate accommodation and adapt some of their own behaviour

**Contents:** Information about autism, major component is optional discussion and possible role play.

**Structure**: Opening round, review, information & discussion, BREAK, information & discussion, closing round.

1. **Introduction and establishing ground rules.**
The structure of the group. Overview of autism . Introductions. Sharing autism histories.
2. **Developmental trajectory and social communication.**Factual vs social communication. Social radar.
3. **“Theory of Mind”**
Implicit and explicit rules. Understanding others in real time. Impact of life experiences.
4. **Emotions and empathy.**Locating and moderating emotions. Face theory. Empathy. Social skills vs social connection
5. **Sensory issues**Stimming hyper and hypo sensitivities. Emotional sensitivity
6. **Executive dysfunction.**Motivation> action? Inertia. Strategies. Time keeping.. Routines. Perfectionism. Spiky ability profiles
7. **Social impacts of autistic traits.**How various traits affect self and others. Boundaries. Dealing with change and authority/rules
8. **Mental Health and Assertiveness**The relationship between autism and mental health. Benefits and pitfalls of disclosure.
9. **Diagnosis/Identification of Autism – what does it mean for you now.**
Feelings about autism diagnosis. Is the label limiting or liberating? Disclosure in different contexts.
10. **Where to from here?**Consolidation. Course evaluation.