

Exploring Being Autistic. 10 sessions of 2 hours each.

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

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

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 decrease 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 of the group: Brief catch up. Recap last week’s information. Information presentation. Break. Discussion. Some relevant exercises.

1. Introduction and establishing ground rules.

Introductions sharing autism histories. Overview of autism in society. Ground rules.

2. Sensory issues

Stimming hyper and hypo sensitivities. Emotional sensitivity in different contexts.

3. Executive dysfunction.

What gets in the way of moving from motivation to action? Strategies. Time keeping.

4. Developmental trajectory and social implications.

Factual vs social communication. Social radar. Special interests.

5. Intuition of mind. (what is usually termed “Theory of Mind”) Understanding other people

Implicit and explicit rules. Understanding others in real time. Impact of life experiences.

6. Emotions and empathy.

Locating and moderating emotions. Face theory. Empathy. Social skills vs social connection

7. Flexibility.

Dealing with change. Use of routines. Perfectionism. Boundaries.

8. Assertiveness and Mental Health.

The relationship between autism and mental health. Assertiveness

9. Diagnosis/Identification of Autism – what does it mean for you now.

Initial feelings about autism. Is the label limiting or liberating? Benefits and pitfalls of disclosure.

10. Where to from here?

Consolidation. Planning for the future. Course evaluation.