

Exploring Identifying as Autistic.

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

10 sessions of 2 hours each.

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 contents. Introductions. Sharing autism histories.

2. 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. Anxiety Depression and Mental Health.

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.