

## Exploring Being 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 autism . 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.