



AASPIRE

# Healthcare Toolkit

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## Autism Information: Meeting Others on the Spectrum

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# Autism Information: Meeting Others On the Spectrum

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[www.aaspire.org](http://www.aaspire.org)

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## 1 What is this topic about?

This topic is about Autistic culture, and how to find other people on the autism spectrum both in person and on the Internet. Meeting other people who are like you can be rewarding.

## 2 Autistic Culture

Culture brings people together to share everything from common beliefs and principles, to goals, identity, customs, and arts, to literature, history, shared experiences and communal achievements. Most people end up sharing their family's culture. For example, children of Latino parents often adopt a Latino culture. This is not always the case, though. Individuals from heterosexual families can adopt a LGBT culture; deaf people from hearing families can adopt the culture of the Deaf community, and autistic individuals from non-autistic families can adopt an Autistic culture. For cultures that are not always passed through family lines, culture and information are passed from established members to newer members in a cycle that continues to build on and create tradition. Examples of Autistic cultural events include [Autreat](#), [Autistic Pride Day](#), [Autism Acceptance Day](#), and [Autistics Speaking Day](#). There is an

Autistic community that many Autistic people enjoy being a part of. The Autistic community is similar to [the Deaf community](#) though it is much newer (the Deaf community has been around since the 1800s) and more often considers autism to be a disability. Like other minority communities, the Autistic community has its own support systems, leaders, values, social spaces, traditional events, and organizations. There is much to gain by meeting and befriending other autistic people. Interacting with autistic people can positively impact an autistic person's social life and well being. We have much to learn from each other and our individual experiences. The Autistic community generally champions [neurodiversity](#), including appropriate services and support<sup>1</sup>.

### 3 Meeting autistic people in person

If you are interested in in-person social gatherings, advocacy groups, and support groups, here are some ideas for finding groups in your area:

- Check [Meetup.com](#) for local autism-focused groups in your area. Some groups will likely be for parents of autistic children, but others may be for autistic teens and/or adults. If your area has groups for teens and adults, you might find advocacy-focused groups, social groups such as gaming groups, or support groups.
- If you are a student, check out the student-run groups at your university to see if they have any established chapters for autistic students. If not, you might consider if you have the time to start a group at your university.
- Check out your favorite autism or disability rights organizations to see if they have chapters in your area. For example, you could check with Autism Society of America ([ASA](#)), Autistic Self Advocacy Network ([ASAN](#)), Self Advocates Becoming Empowered ([SABE](#)), or [ADAPT](#).
- Do an Internet search for groups with your city or town name included. For example, google "adult autistic social group Portland".

Groups may have different goals and areas of focus. When you come across a group that interests you, find out about their mission and goals to see if it fits what you're looking for. You might need to try a few groups before you find one that fits your needs.

If you're interested in self-advocacy, look for an advocacy-focused group where you can get involved with other autistic people who are interested in changing legislation (laws) that affects autistic people. Advocacy groups also educate the public about autism and work to combat fear, pity, and negative stereotypes.

#### **4 Meeting autistic people online or learning about the self-advocacy movement online**

If you're interested in meeting other autistic people, but you feel more comfortable doing it online, there are many listserves, forums, and web sites that you can visit. To find local groups and listserves, go to [Google Groups](#) and browse for autism-focused groups in your city or state.

The sites below can help you get started. They will have links and resources that might be of interest to you:

- [Association for Autistic Community \(AAC\)](#)
- [Autistics.org: The Real Voice of Autism](#)
- [Making Sense of Autism](#)
- [Shift Journal of Alternatives: Neurodiversity and social change](#)
- [The Autism Acceptance Project \(TAAP\)](#)
- [The Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#)
- [The Autism Society of America \(ASA\)](#)

- [The Thinking Person's Guide to Autism](#)
- [WrongPlanet.net](#)
- [Jim Sinclair's archive via the Way Back Machine](#)
- [Autism Women's Network \(AWN\)](#)

## 5 Finding autistic people you like

It's important to remember that autistic people are as unique, varied, and shaped by personal life experiences as anyone else in the world. If you run across an autistic person who does not treat you well (either online or in person), try not to take it personally. Just like everyone else, autistic people range in personality and interests. Keep on looking and exploring, and eventually you'll probably find an autistic person who shares some of your interests and views.

## 6 Reflections from autistic people

"I recently met a lot of autistic people at an advocacy group I attended last night. For the first time in my life, I felt like I could be myself and that people would understand me and not judge me for being autistic. I was in good company!" Ernie "Autistic people should reach out to each other for friendship and support. You never know who you will meet that you might end up having a lot in common with." Alice "I've been around autistic people all of my life. But I did not realize that I was autistic too until I was diagnosed in adulthood (shortly after my son received a diagnosis). I had always known there was something different about me, as I always felt that I was from another planet. I had joined an autism-focused listserve shortly before my diagnosis. And that is where I met one of my friends. Like me, she is autistic. Over the years we

have had many deep conversations about autism and about being autistic, from what it was like growing up to defining ourselves in the here and now. It brings happy tears to my eyes to admit that it is my autistic friend who helped me to find myself and who helped me to explore and understand myself, my needs, and my relationship to the world.” Jemma ”Autistic people ROCK!” Kramer

## 7 Summary

- Autistic culture has common beliefs, goals, customs, arts, literature, history, and community achievements.
- Some ways to meet autistic people in person are through meetup.com, through student-run groups, and through autism or disability rights organizations.
- There are many web sites, listserves, and forums for meeting autistic people online, or for learning more about the self-advocacy movement.
- Many autistic people enjoy meeting others like them and participating in Autistic culture. Just like any people though, not everyone will get along. When you do find people you do get along with it can be rewarding.

## 8 Links and Resources

### General Autism Groups

- <http://autisticcommunity.org/> Association for Autistic Community (AAC)
- [The Autism Society of America \(ASA\)](#)
- [Autism Women’s Network \(AWN\)](#)

- [The Autism Acceptance Project \(TAAP\)](#)
- [WrongPlanet.net](#)

#### Disability Rights and Advocacy Focused Groups

- [The Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#)
- [Self Advocates Becoming Empowered \(SABE\)](#)
- [ADAPT](#)

#### Other Information and Resources

- [Autism Now](#)
- [Autistics.org: The Real Voice of Autism](#)
- [Making Sense of Autism](#)
- [Shift Journal of Alternatives: Neurodiversity and social change](#)
- [The Thinking Person's Guide to Autism](#)
- [Jim Sinclair's archive via the Way Back Machine](#)

## 9 References

<sup>1</sup>Kapp, S. K., Gillespie-Lynch, K., Sherman, L. E., & Hutman, T. (2012, April 30). Deficit, Difference, or Both? Autism and Neurodiversity. *Developmental Psychology*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1037/a0028353