

# MISTAKEN IDENTITY: AUTISM AND MENTAL HEALTH

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Autism and Adulthood Conference – 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019

FIRST THINGS FIRST...





A BIT ABOUT  
ME...

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**“Autism is considered a mental disorder by the DSM-5 and to state that autism doesn't affect my mental health one bit is incredibly rude.”**

Source:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnOrJU6JSFc>



# SETTING THE SCENE

**80%** of autistic people will experience a mental health problem in their lifetime.

**Anxiety**  
40%

**Depression**  
30-40%

**Personality Disorders**  
68% meet criteria from one study

# UNDERSTANDING WHY

- Lack of acceptance in society
  - Isolation/loneliness
  - Disconnect within services
- Exploitation (bullying/mate crime)
- Misdiagnosis given by professionals
  - Existing stigma

# CO-OCCURRING OR THE SAME?

“The motivation behind the push to label autism as something other than a psychiatric disorder, in my view, comes much more from fears of stigma than any scientific principle.”

Source:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/abc-s-child-psychiatry/201510/is-autism-mental-illness>

**Correlation**



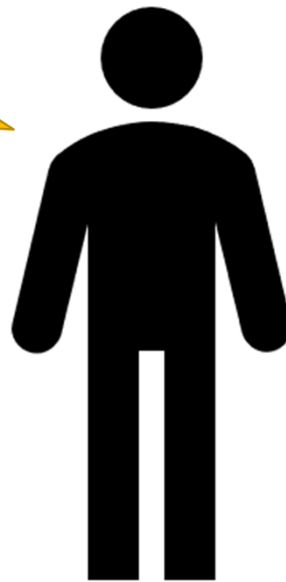
**Conflation**

I've met so many great autistic people online who I've learned so much from and completely changed my view on what it is to be autistic. This has been good for my mental health as I can accept myself.

The autistic person feels like there is something wrong with them and that they have to pretend to be someone else to be worthy of friendship or love.

There's so many 'awareness' campaigns that are all very surface level and do little to achieve what actually autistic people want and need.

Training absolutely **MUST** be done by an autistic person to avoid misinformation and to drive home the point that every autistic person is different.



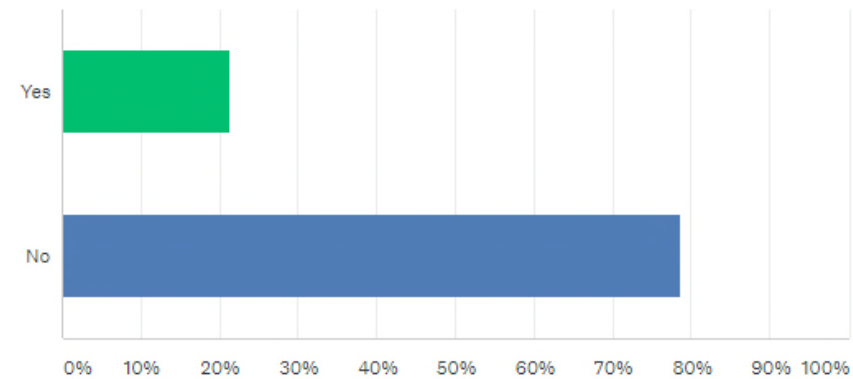
## AN AUTISTIC VIEW



## AN AUTISTIC VIEW – WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

Were you aware or diagnosed as being autistic before your own mental health condition?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	21.43%	3
▼ No	78.57%	11

AN AUTISTIC VIEW – DIAGNOSIS FIRST?





KNOW YOUR NORMAL

## KYN: WHAT WE FOUND...

**“I can feel a difference but I don’t know if it would be as easy for someone else to tell.”**

- **4/5** of participants in the online survey had experienced a mental health problem.
- More felt depressed and/or under strain a higher number than those who were neurotypical (non-autistic).
- Only **10%** were confident they would have the appropriate levels of support and **14%** had indicated in favour of clinician/healthcare professional.
- **36%** were unsure whether their mental health problem was distinct from autism itself.

- 
- A clipboard with a brown border and a silver clip at the top, containing a list of three items.
- ☐ Incentives to reduce stigma.
  - ☐ Increasing training for professionals.
  - ☐ Autistic involvement in service design and delivery.

KYN: WHAT NEEDS  
TO BE DONE?

# MORE TO IMPROVE

\*Flash poll!\* [#AskingAutistics](#)

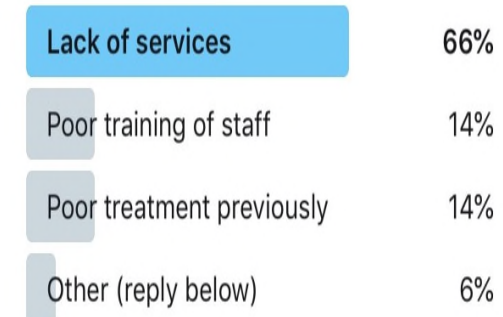
I will soon be presenting at [@Autism's #AutismAdult](#) on [#mentalhealth](#) need your help!

If you were diagnosed as an adult, how much support were you offered in relation to your wellbeing?



179 votes · Final results

[#AskingAutistics](#) - What is the biggest problem that prevents access to [#mentalhealth](#) support?



35 votes · Final results

Survey taken via Twitter

# PERSONAL STORIES



# WHAT IS RESEARCH SAYING?

*Autism acceptance from others could be important for autistic individuals' mental health for a number of reasons. Within the mental health literature, perceived stigma from others is thought to contribute negatively to the mental health of stigmatised groups.*

## **Experiences of Autism Acceptance and Mental Health in Autistic Adults**

*Camouflaging also explained significant additional variance in suicidality above depression or anxiety, suggesting that the association with suicidality is, at least in part, independent of mental health.*

## **Risk markers for suicidality in autistic adults**

*Autistic and possibly autistic adults were also significantly less likely to agree with their mental health diagnoses than non-autistic adults.*

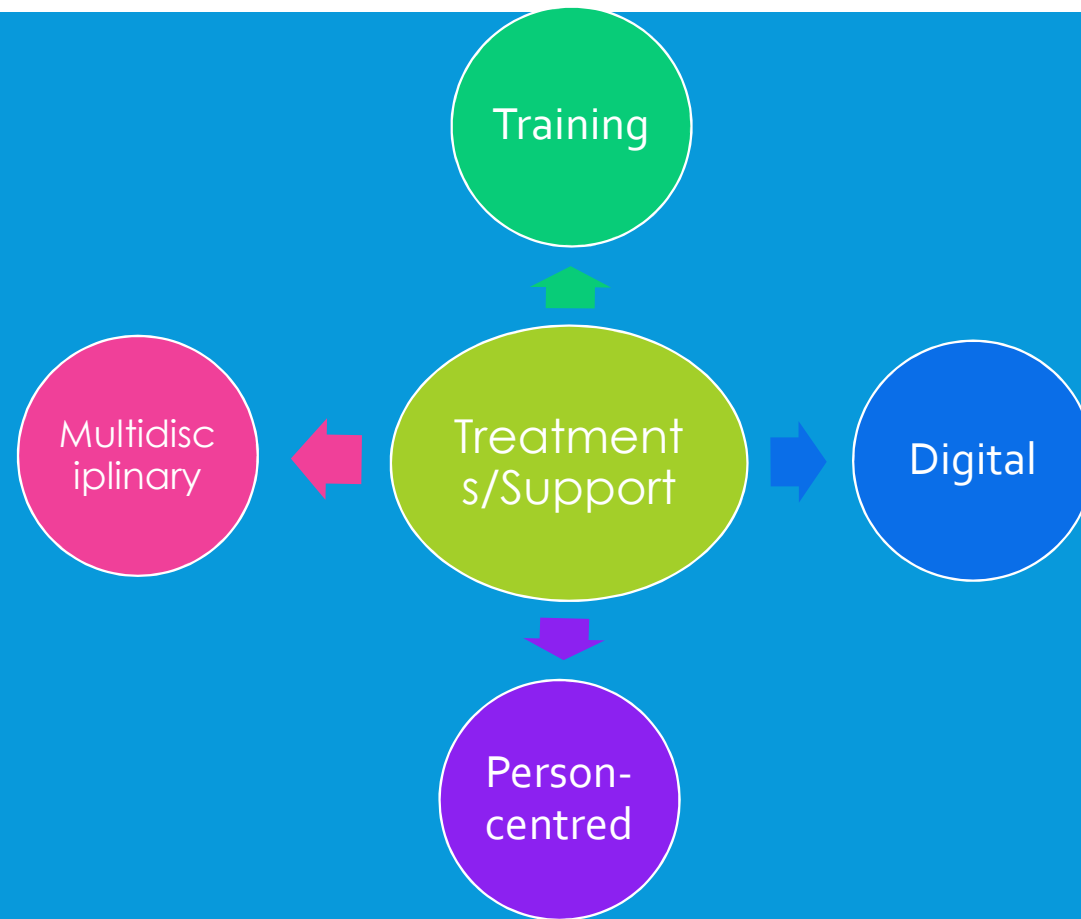
## **Experience of mental health diagnosis and perceived misdiagnosis in autistic, possibly autistic and non-autistic adults**

*Mental health services are currently woefully limited in their ability to provide effective interventions for autistic people with intellectual disability, and tailored interventions are needed for this much neglected group.*

## **Understanding, Recognising and Treating Co-occurring Anxiety in Autism**



# HOW TO HELP





ANY QUESTIONS?

# THANK YOU!

- Twitter: @MrJW18
- Find me on Medium:  
[medium.com/@MrJW18](https://medium.com/@MrJW18)

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

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