



**From Awareness to Action:  
A World Autism Acceptance Day Toolkit**

**ASNL**

**AUTISM SOCIETY**  
Newfoundland & Labrador

# World Autism Acceptance Day Toolkit

## Purpose:

This toolkit was created to support meaningful participation in World Autism Acceptance Day. It provides neuroaffirming information about autism, practical language guidance, research-informed resources, and accessible ways to show support. Our goal is to move beyond awareness and into action through education, celebration, and community engagement.

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# What is Autism?

There are two common frameworks that are used to describe Autism; the medical model and the social model.

## The Medical Model

The DSM-V defines autism as a neurodevelopmental disability marked by persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, as well as restricted, repetitive behaviours, interests, or activities.

This definition is used in clinical settings to determine eligibility for diagnoses and can act as a barrier to receiving supportive services.

This model **does not** fully capture the rich culture and depth of experience of the Autistic community.



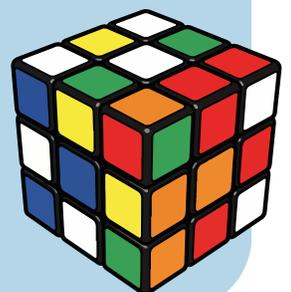
## The Social Model

The social model of Autism, often called the **Neurodiversity Paradigm**, frames Autism as a natural part of human diversity. Neurodiversity recognizes that variation in how brains develop and function is normal. Autism has always existed and includes people of all genders, ethnicities, and stages of life.

According to the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, Autistics think differently, process senses differently, move differently, communicate differently, socialize differently, and may need help with daily living.

There are infinite ways to be autistic. While shared traits exist, each Autistic person has a distinct neurological profile shaped by both biology and experience.

A helpful way to picture this is a Rubik's Cube, which has over 43 quintillion possible configurations. No two arrangements are exactly the same. Human brains are similar. While some patterns may overlap, each Autistic brain represents its own unique configuration.



# Language Matters

Words are powerful. The way that we speak about Autism and disability has an impact on how people are perceived, treated and included. Choosing respectful and affirming words signals allyship for the Autistic community.

## Glossary of Terms

**Neurodiversity:** The diversity that exists within the human population regarding neurological differences resulting from normal variations in the human brain.

**Neurodivergent:** having a brain that works differently from what's considered "typical," affecting how someone thinks, learns, or processes the world.

**Neurodivergence:** differences in mental or neurological function from what is considered typical. Examples include autistic, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia.

**Acquired Neurodivergence:** Acquired neurological conditions such as traumatic brain injury, post-stroke cognitive, swallowing and communication deficits, or patients with dementia, Alzheimer's, Wernicke Korsakoff syndrome.

**Allistic:** A non-autistic person.

**Neurotypical:** A person who does not exhibit neurological differences. Abbreviated as "NT."

**Ableism:** A set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be "fixed" in one form or the other.

**Ableist:** Describes people, actions, or practices that discriminate against or devalue people with disabilities. Ableism is the belief that non-disabled people are superior, and that disabled people need to be "fixed," and it can show up in therapy objectives, social attitudes, or barriers to equitable inclusion.

**Ally:** A person with privilege on a particular axis who makes a conscious choice to work against oppression on that axis. When discussing autistic rights, an ally is a non-autistic person working with and for autistic rights.

**Neurodiversity Movement:** a social, political and human rights movement led by autistic, neurodivergent and other disabled people with the end goals of acceptance of neurological differences, autism acceptance, self-determination, autonomy, the end of discrimination, equitable inclusion, and equal opportunity. It is a cultural movement.

# Neurodiversity Affirming Language Cheat Sheet

Want to be a better ally to the Autistic community? This cheat sheet highlights neuroaffirming terms to help you communicate with respect and clarity.

Always ask the Autistic person you are speaking with about their language preferences and follow their lead. Preferences vary, and lived experience is personal.

 Say This!	 Not That
Autistic person/people/adult/child	Person/people with autism
"Sam is Autistic"	"Sam has autism" "Sam suffers from autism" "Sam lives with autism"
disability disabled difference	disorder handicap dysfunction deficit
"Sam's support needs are _____"	"Sam is high/low functioning" "Sam has mild/severe autism"
non-autistics allistics neurotypicals	normal people
non-speaking uses alternative and augmentative communication has intermittent communication needs	non-verbal

# Resources

## VRAIE-IDEA



VRAIE IDEA offers practical, evidence informed resources to support more inclusive workplaces for people with disabilities. Their resource page includes toolkits, research summaries, podcasts, and workplace guides that will be useful for employers and community partners. The project is part of Inclusive Design for Employment Access (IDEA), which is a national initiative focused on strengthening systems and employer capacity. It is a great starting point for anyone looking to improve disability inclusion in employment settings.

## AASPIRE Healthcare Toolkit



The AASPIRE Healthcare Toolkit is a practical resource created to support autistic adults in navigating healthcare systems. The toolkit includes clear guidance, interactive worksheets, and a tool to generate a personalized accommodations report to help self-advocates communicate their needs effectively. Created by the Academic Autism Spectrum Partnership in Research and Education, the toolkit reflects a strong commitment to advancing the health and well-being of autistic people.

## AIDE Canada



AIDE Canada includes a free lending library where people across Canada can borrow books, ebooks, audiobooks and more on autism, neurodiversity and intellectual disability. This resource also offers practical toolkits, webinars, courses and community guides for families, professionals, allies and individuals themselves. Resources cover topics from communication and independent living to inclusion and back-to-school supports, all in one place and searchable by topic. It's a go-to hub for reliable, evidence-informed materials and information.

# Resources

## Workability - Youth Employment Services

The Youth Employment Services (YES) WorkAbility program helps employers build inclusive, mentally healthy workplaces and access free toolkits, coaching, training and HR resources. Its online toolkit and training modules are designed for workplace leaders to learn strategies around mental health, accommodation and retention that benefit all employees. WorkAbility also connects employers with diverse candidate pools and practical hiring and onboarding supports. It's a useful resource for any organization looking to improve workplace inclusion around mental health and disability.



## For Diverse Youth (4DY)

For Diverse Youth (4DY) is a national initiative connected to Inclusive Design for Employment Access (IDEA) that focuses on improving employment systems for youth with disabilities. It brings together researchers, industry partners and disability advocates to develop practical tools that help employers recruit, hire and retain diverse young workers. The goal is long term, system level change that creates more accessible and inclusive workplaces.



## NEurodivergent peer Support Toolkit (NEST)

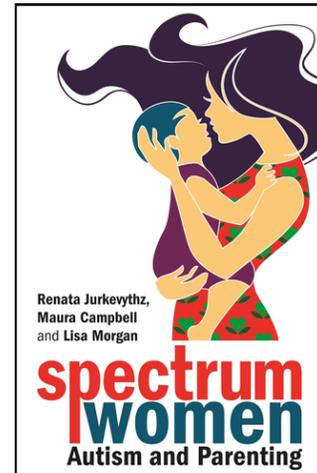
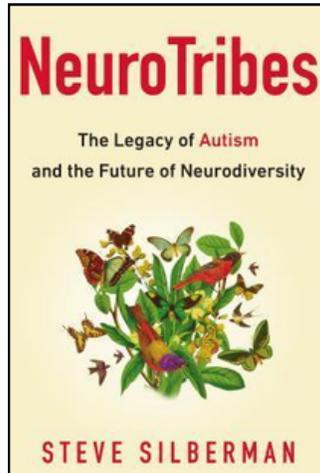
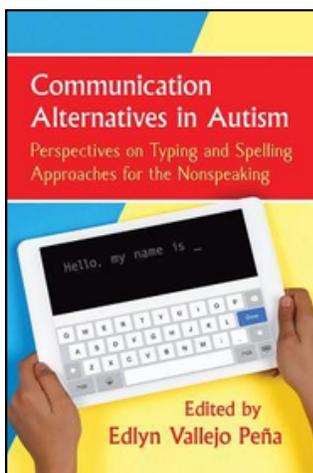
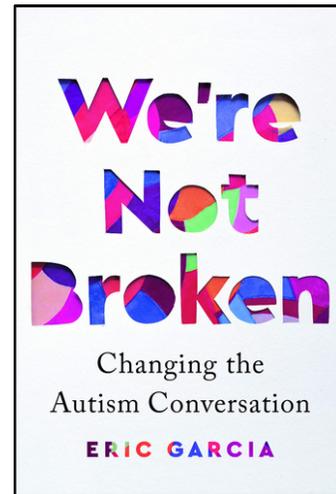
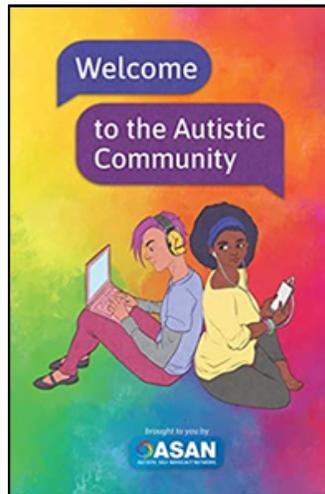
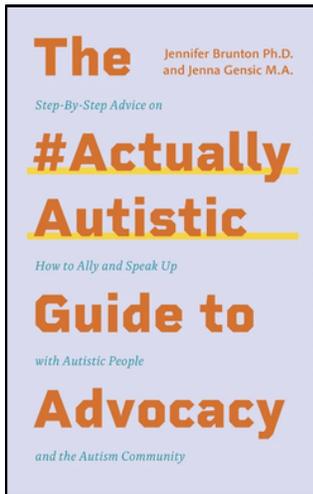
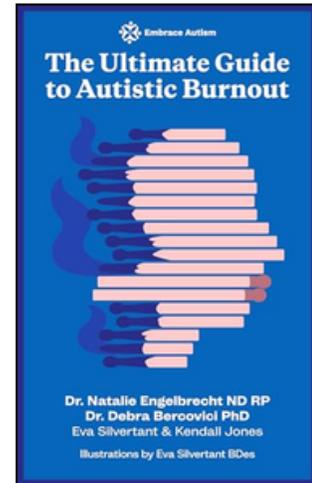
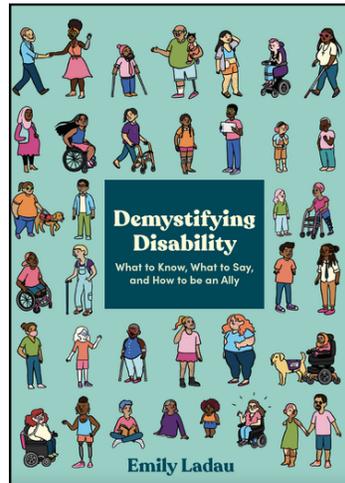
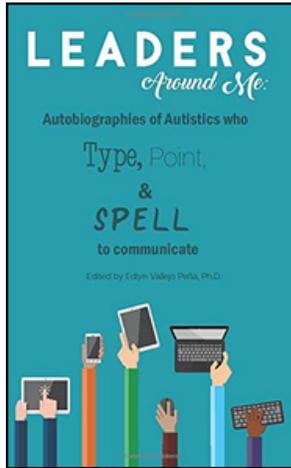
The NEurodivergent peer Support Toolkit (NEST), a free set of materials designed to help mainstream secondary schools create peer support groups for neurodivergent students. Co-created with neurodivergent young people and adults, the toolkit includes a handbook and resources that guide schools on setting up and running student-led peer support spaces. It provides clear steps, activity ideas and practical tips for fostering connection, community and understanding among neurodivergent youth.



# Build your Neuroaffirming Library

## Adult Non-Fiction

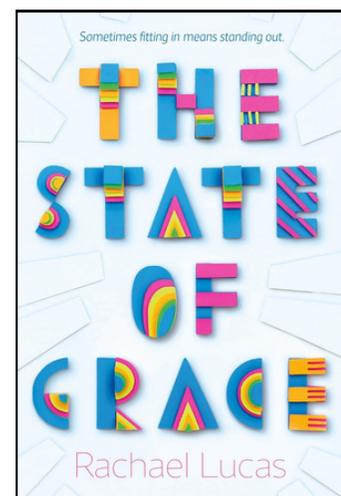
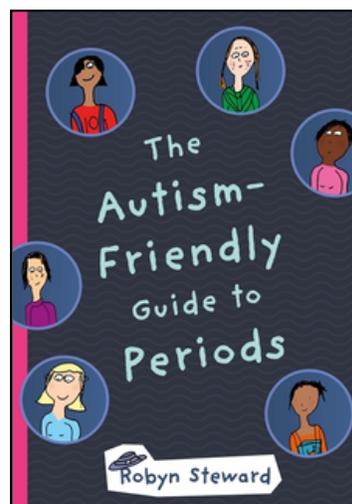
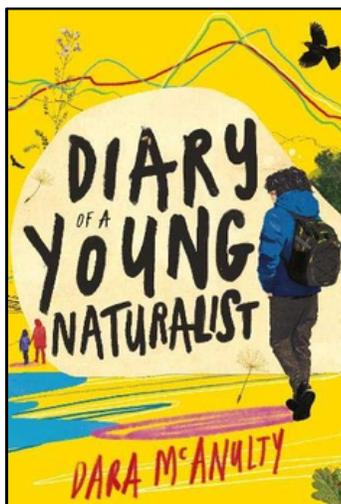
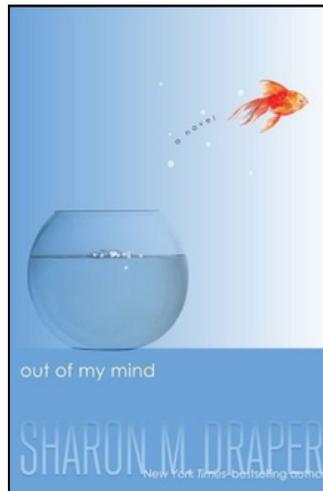
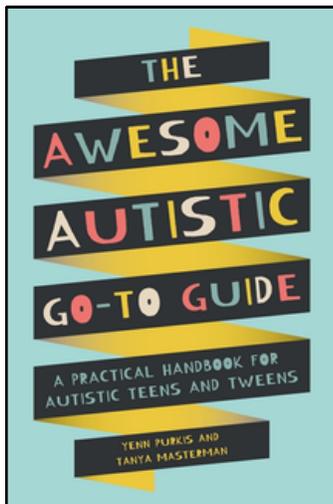
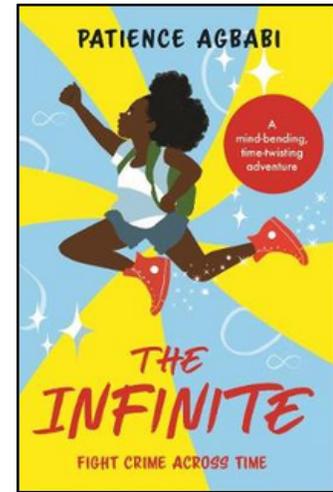
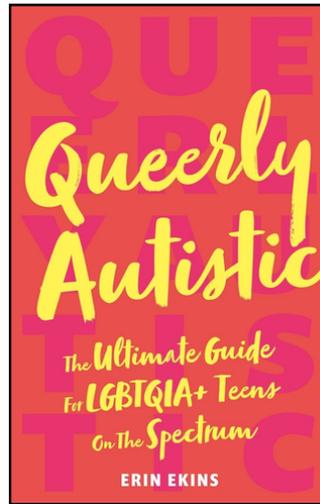
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# Build your Neuroaffirming Library

## Children's and Young Adult Novels and Non-Fiction

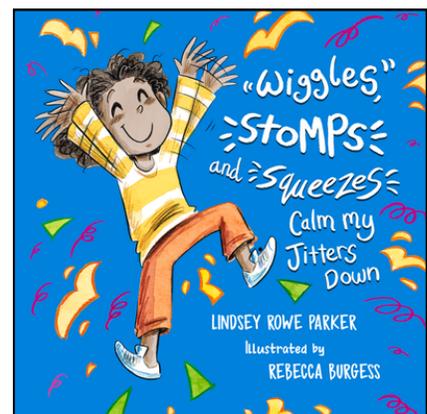
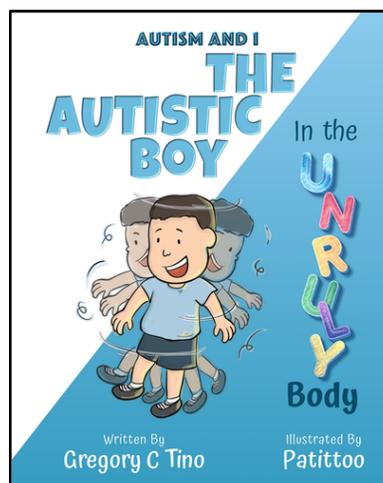
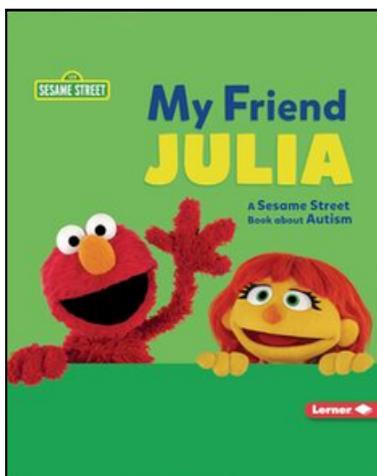
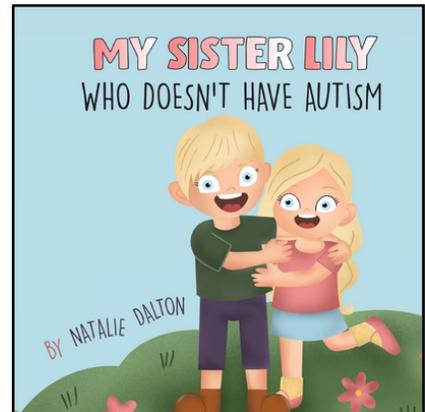
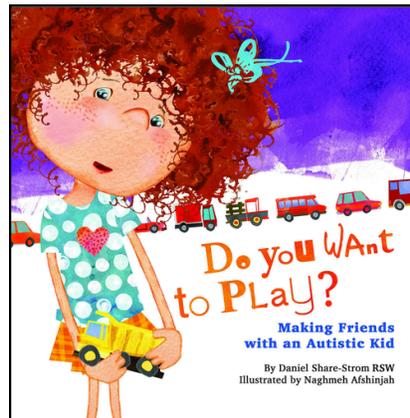
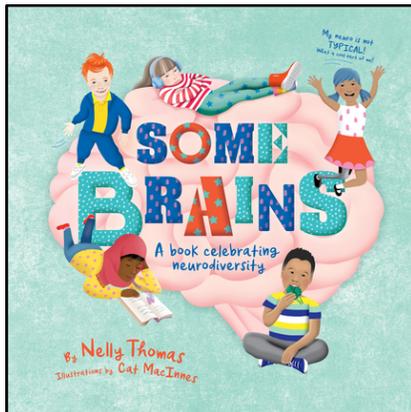
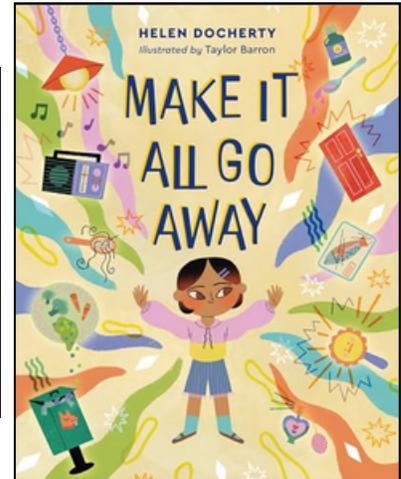
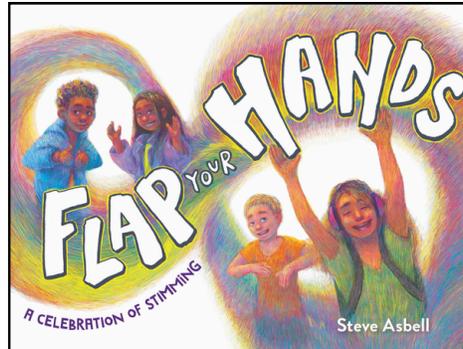
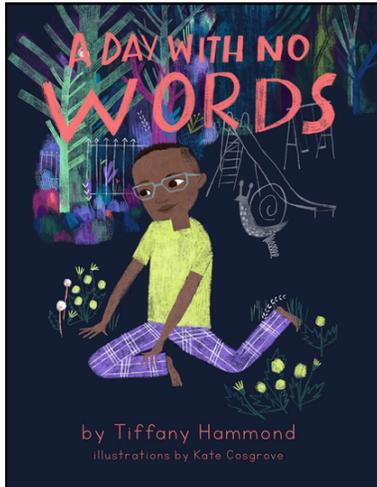
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# Build your Neuroaffirming Library

## Picture Books

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# Colour it Gold

## Why Gold?

Gold has become a powerful symbol within the Autistic community. Inspired by the chemical symbol for gold, Au, the colour represents value, pride, and acceptance. It reflects the belief that Autistic people are inherently worthy exactly as they are and do not need to be changed or cured.

The Light It Up Gold movement grew from this symbolism and from the use of “Au” as an identity marker embraced by many Autistic individuals. Colour it Gold centers Autistic voices and promotes acceptance, community, and pride.

## The Infinity Symbol

The infinity symbol is widely embraced within the Autistic community. It represents the limitless diversity, strengths, and lived experiences of Autistic people. Many prefer the infinity symbol over the puzzle piece, which has historically been used in ways that suggest Autistic people are incomplete or in need of fixing. The infinity symbol instead affirms that Autistic people are whole, valuable, and part of natural human diversity.



The gold infinity symbol celebrates Autistic identity, while the rainbow infinity symbol celebrates neurodivergence more broadly. Many autistic-led groups support both as positive, inclusive symbols.



# Colour it Gold

## How to Participate

**World Autism Acceptance Day is April 2, 2026**

**We are moving beyond awareness and into acceptance.**

Awareness is noticing, but acceptance is action.

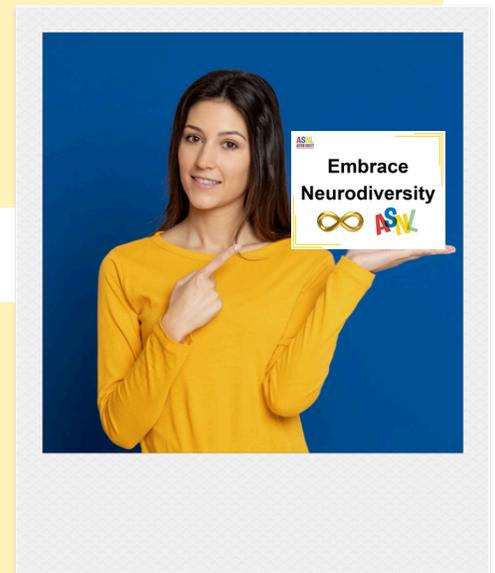
Acceptance means recognizing Autism as a natural part of human diversity. Acceptance values Autistic people, celebrates strengths and perspectives, and is a commitment to more inclusive spaces in our schools, workplaces, and communities.

This April 2, join us in making acceptance visible.

**Join the movement - Colour it Gold!**

- Follow Autism Society, Newfoundland and Labrador on:
  - [Facebook](#)
  - [Instagram](#)
- Wear gold clothing or accessories
- Print your neuroaffirming posters and buttons (provided in this toolkit)
- Gather co-workers, friends, or family for a photo wearing gold and holding your posters
- Post your photo on social media and **tag us** so we can amplify your support

When we work together to build a more accepting world, we create one where Autistic people are valued, included, and celebrated exactly as they are.



# Printables

## Colour it Gold

# Embrace Neurodiversity



# Nothing About us Without us



# Presume Competence



# Accommodations are Human Rights



# Support Sensory Differences



# Infinite ways to Think, Learn and Be



# The Future is Neuro-Affirming



# Respect Communication Differences



# WORLD AUTISM ACCEPTANCE DAY 2026

Print your own Colour it Gold button for World Autism Acceptance Day!



# WORLD AUTISM ACCEPTANCE DAY 2026

Design your Infinity Sign to demonstrate your allyship or express your autistic identity

