

Autism and Mental Health: Who cares?

AT-Autism Conference London October 29, 2022



- Why should we care? Because suicide is the second leading cause of death in Autistic adults.
- Why should we care? Because Autistic people die 10 to 15 years earlier than the general population in part because how much harder it is for us to *access and receive, **timely*** medical care
- Why should we care? Because when an autistic person "*in distress*" is brought into a psychiatric hospital, the response -from a generally short-handed staff- can be brutal. Being misunderstood, handcuffed, or forced to receive medication, only increase suffering, shame, and the determination of never seeking "help" again.
- Last but not least, we should care because the level of ignorance about autism in the medical profession is abysmal.

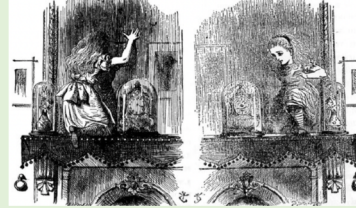
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Bernadette Grosjean. MD.

Original drawing by Sir John Tenniel

Perspectives from both sides of the Looking-Glass

Bernadette Grosjean. MD.



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When someone can overcome the obstacles however, the change can be spectacular.

Temple Grandin, by publicly sharing her personal story, started transforming the autism narrative within the community itself, and then with the world.



Temple Grandin. 1986

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Dr. Fryer, disguised as *Dr. Anonymous*, shared his struggles as a gay psychiatrist at the American Psychiatric Association Meeting. One year later, homosexuality was removed from the DSM as a disorder.



John Fryer aka
H. Anonymous, M.D. 1972.

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0-6 years



Yours truly ☺

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6-12 years



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12-18years



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18-25years



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Original drawing by Arthur Rackham

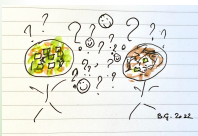
25-30 years



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The "double empathy problem"



Communication is a 2 ways street. Research has now demonstrated that people from a similar neurotype can communicate more easily among themselves, the problem is about *mutual* understanding, or lack of, *between* neurotypes.

Milton, D. E. M. (2012). On the ontological status of autism: The 'double empathy problem'. *Disability & Society*, 27(6), 883-887.

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Original drawings by Sir John Tenniel

California 1999-



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Original drawing by Sir John Tenniel

Los Angeles



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“Who...are... you?”



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Autistic Doctors International



Dr. Mary Doherty

<https://autisticdoctorsinternational.com/>

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- The Unicorn: ‘What—is—this?’
- Haigha: ‘This is a child!’ ‘We only found it to-day. It’s as large as life, and twice as natural!’
- ‘I always thought they were fabulous monsters!’ said the Unicorn. ‘Is it alive?’
- ‘It can talk,’ said Haigha, solemnly.
- The Unicorn looked dreamily at Alice, and said ‘Talk, child.’
- Alice: ‘Do you know, I always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters, too! I never saw one alive before!’
- ‘Well, now that we have seen each other,’ said the Unicorn, ‘if you’ll believe in me, I’ll believe in you. Is that a bargain?’
- ‘Yes, if you like,’ said Alice.



Original drawing by Sir John Tenniel

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Through the Looking-Glass. Lewis Carroll. 1871.

« Let the people be »

“Accepting one another’s divergences, we succeed to an extent in seeing the world through their eyes.
This is not just anxiety reducing for neurodivergent people.
It literally transforms ourselves and the world we live in.”

@JoBervoets



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wE9GjgN2Um8&t=766>

Six Eight impossible things before lunch...



- Bring accurate information to the general public and expose damaging stereotypes of autism.
- Educate health care providers and administrators, so they can design friendlier facilities for autistic people and their families.
- Sensitize physicians and nurses to the different ways autistic people perceive pain, and express suffering-
- Encourage mental health professionals to reexamine previous diagnoses, in particular in women who were labelled with "personality disorders", "bipolar" or schizophrenia, especially when catatonia is present.

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Six Eight impossible things before lunch...



- Teach psychiatrists and therapists how to work with autistic people, : their mental health problems are not dismissed as being "part of the Autism" and not addressed.
- Really incorporate autistic "voices" in research, education, healthcare and legal systems, not as a "tokens" but as partners.
- Make all autism treatments- all "therapeutic treatments" neurodiversity-informed and neuro diversity-affirmative, in particular those in the ABA for profit industry but, really, everywhere.
- Last but not least, let's not forget that **WE, autistic people**, need make sure to: rest, drink water, eat, sleep and prevent burnout...because I know a little bit about how "**we**" can get involved in our passions, and forget all about the basics!!

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Original drawing by Sir John Tenniel

Thank you !

and now

Let's go to lunch and then, to work ☺

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(small) Bibliography

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