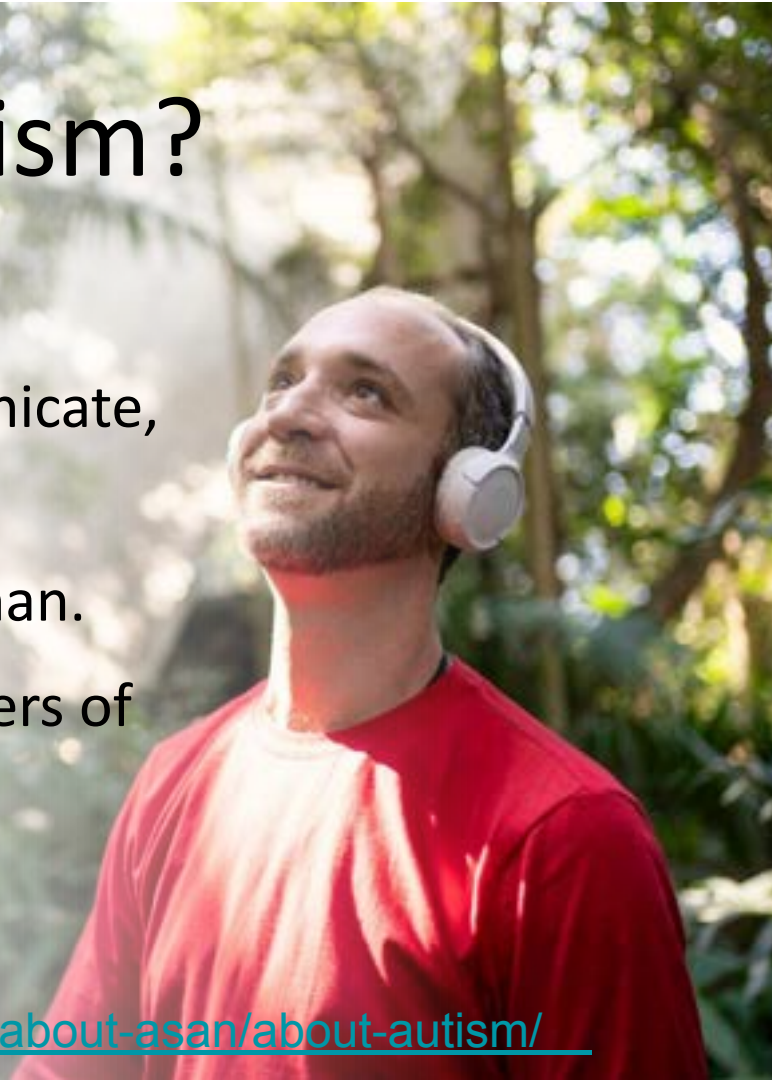


# What Is Autism?

- Autism is a developmental disability.
- It affects how we think, feel, communicate, and experience the world.
- Autism is a natural part of being human.
- Autistic people are important members of our communities.



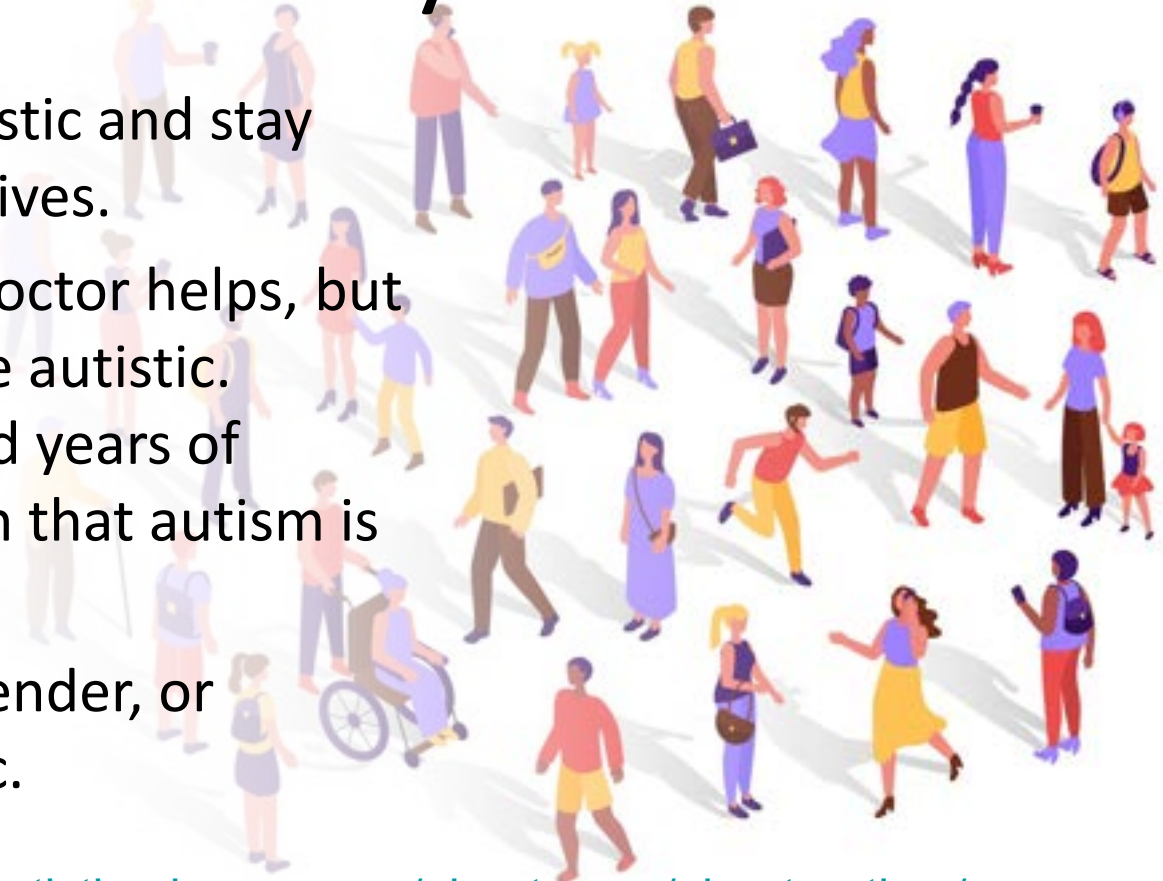
# Autistic People Are Everywhere

A detailed illustration of a busy city street filled with a diverse crowd of people. In the foreground, a man in a green jacket and blue jeans walks towards the left, while a woman in a bright orange dress walks towards the right. A man in a purple blazer and grey trousers is also visible. The crowd continues into the background, with people of various ages, ethnicities, and styles of dress. The street is lined with trees and buildings, creating a vibrant urban scene.

- We are part of every community.
- Autistic people can be: People of color, immigrants, Women, LGBTQ+, Religious or non-religious, Poor or wealthy.
- We often belong to more than one of these groups.

# Autism Has Always Existed

- People are born autistic and stay autistic their whole lives.
- A diagnosis from a doctor helps, but it isn't required to be autistic.
- Billions of dollars and years of research have shown that autism is linked to genetics.
- Anyone—any age, gender, or race—can be autistic.



# Vaccines do not cause Autism

- Recently, the false idea that vaccines cause autism is coming up again. This has been proven wrong over and over again by real science.
- **Vaccines do not cause Autism.**
- Health messages should be based on facts.





# There's No One Right Way to Be Autistic



- Some speak, some don't.
- Some need a lot of support; others need less.
- Some have intellectual disabilities; some don't.
- All autistic people are smart in their own way.
- We all deserve acceptance and respect.

# We Are Getting Better at Diagnosing Autism

If more people are being diagnosed with Autism, it doesn't mean there is more Autism now. It means we are getting better at noticing it.

Doctors and schools are doing a better job of screening children. More adults are also getting diagnosed—some for the first time. This helps Autistic people understand ourselves better. We can learn more about our strengths and the things we find hard.



# Things Many Autistic People Have in Common

- We think differently.
- We like routines.
- We experience our senses differently.
- We move, communicate, and socialize differently.
- We may need help with daily life.
- But everyone is different!



GMSA adapted from <https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/about-autism/>

# Thinking Differently

- We may have deep interests.
- We notice small details.
- Making decisions or starting tasks can be hard.
- Changing activities might be tough.

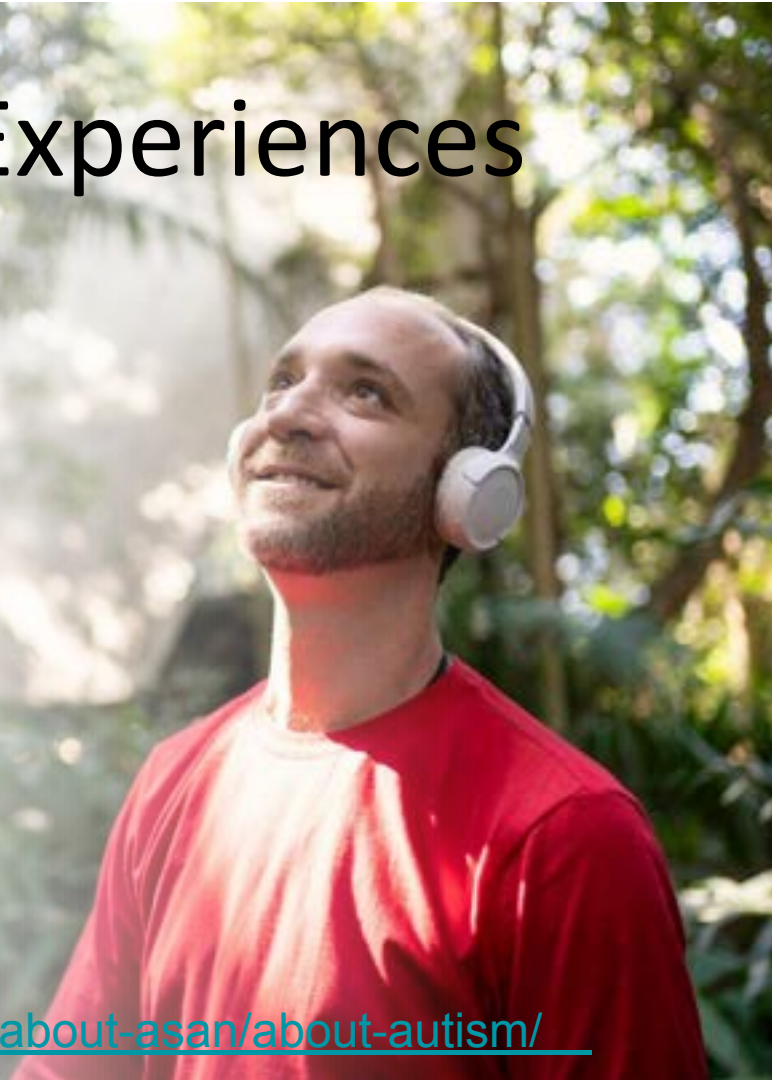


# Liking Routines

- Routines help us feel safe.
- Changes and surprises can be stressful.
- When we get overwhelmed, we might not be able to process our thoughts, feelings, and surroundings, which can make us lose control of our body.

# Different Sensory Experiences

- Loud sounds or bright lights may feel too strong.
- We might not notice pain or hunger right away
- Many of us do something called “stimming”—like rocking, hand-flapping, or humming—to help ourselves feel better and stay calm



# Moving Differently

- Some of us have trouble with coordination or fine motor skills.
- Speaking or moving may take extra effort.
- We may not be able to speak or control our voices, even though we understand what others are saying.

# Communicating Differently

- We may repeat words or use devices to talk.
- We might use pictures or actions to show how we feel.
- Even if we don't speak, we still have something to say.





# Socializing Differently

- We might not use eye contact or facial expressions.
- Some of us speak very directly.
- We may not always read emotions—but we still care.  
In fact, some autistic people feel others' emotions very strongly.

# Support With Daily Life

- The world is often made for non-autistic people can be hard.
- It might make daily tasks, like cooking, working , or going out harder to do.
- We may need support or rest breaks to recover our energy

# Everyone's Experience Is Different

- Not every autistic person relates to everything we said on these slides.
- That's okay—autism is different for everyone.



GMSA adapted from <https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/about-autism/>

# What's Most Important to Know

- Autism affects how we think, communicate, and connect.
- Autistic people are different—but not less.
- We all deserve respect, rights, and equal chances in life.