

October 2025 Autism Alliance

Topic: Autistic Joy and Special Interests

Date/Time: October 2025, 10:30am–12:00pm

Location: Online (Microsoft Teams)

Chair: Anna Tyson (AT)

Session Structure

- Welcome and Introductions (10:30-10:40am)
- Discussion Topic 1: What are your personal experiences of autistic joy and special interests? (10:40-11:10am)
- Break (11:10–11:20am)
- Discussion Topic 2: What positive impact does autistic joy and special interests have on overall wellbeing and mental health? (11:20-11:50am)
- Any Other Business and Meeting Close (11:50am-12:00pm)

Introduction:

The chair introduced the topics for the meeting, which were to include views on autistic joy and special interests.

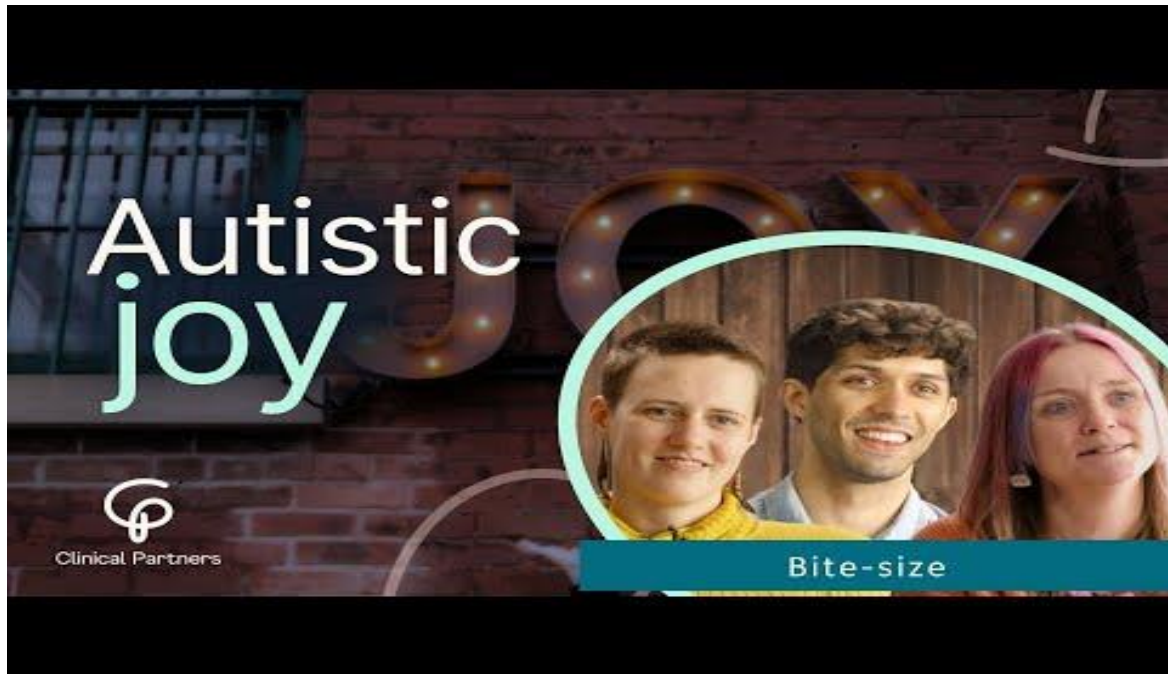
Discussion Topic One: What are your personal experiences of autistic joy and special interests?

- AT described how autistic joy is a relatively new term and relates to how autistic people embrace feelings of happiness linked to their autistic identity.
- A member shared that they lean into their special interests and the joy they experience to help accept themselves and see their strengths more, after grieving over their limitations.
- They shared that moments of autistic joy are those that make them feel alive and belong somewhere. They talked about their special interest in creative self-care, such as singing, music, art, and anything further that brings them joy, such as bright colours and trying to grab a learning concept within the activities they do such as their enjoyment of using spirals in the artwork.
- AT and members discussed that some individuals can experience shame around autistic joy due to this being linked to stimming which can make some autistic individuals self-conscious due to negative societal views around autistic traits.

AT and member discussed the importance of embracing autistic joy and how this can help support wider self-acceptance for autistic individuals through embracing interests that bring the individual intense feelings of happiness.

- A member asked for clarification on what autistic joy is and how this differs from the joy others experiences who are neurotypical. AT said this was a great question and explained that autistic joy is the intense feeling of happiness that autistic individuals experience, which is often linked to special interests and how an autistic person can experience intense joy from engaging in the things they are passionate about. They explained that this can sometimes be displayed outwardly through stimming, e.g. hand flapping or noises made. AT reiterated the importance of autistic people being allowed to embrace these moments and not feel embarrassed about their joy or their personal expressions of it and explained this may look different from person to person, with one member sharing that their autistic joy makes them feel calm.
- AT posted links to videos from Purple Ella and Divergent Voices where these things are explained further for anyone that might find this beneficial.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HV1ypYXghCA>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwYBdlL9b90>



- AT and members spoke about how special interests might differ from the interests of neurotypical people, which can sometimes make it difficult for autistic individuals to share the interests with others. For some autistic people, they enjoy sharing this information regardless, as talking about their interests and sharing these with others brings them happiness.
- A member opened up about a personal life event that led them to sort through some family possessions. This inspired them to look through some of their own old things which got them back into scrapbooking. They described how scrapbooking cheered them up during difficult times and the joy they felt looking back at old memories and how far they'd come.
- A member shared that they've had a lot of different interests over the years but have recently enjoyed learning about their family history. They explained that they enjoying having links to this interest displayed around their room as this brings them joy and motivates them by reminding them what they are care about and what brings them happiness, which can be really helpful in day-to-day life.
- AT shared that its common for autistic people to collects things relating to their interests that bring them joy and is not uncommon for autistic individuals to have themed rooms or spaces within their homes that reflect their interests to help



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create a self-space. This led to members sharing what else brings them joy within their homes such as sensory lights or projectors.

- A member thanked everyone for their contributions so far and said they found these insightful to listen to. They shared that their personal interests tend to change a lot over time but often finds an interest they will want to focus on intensely for short periods of time such as live music or football due to impact this can have on their energy levels.
- The member shared that they also find joy in meeting with other members of the autistic and LGBTQ+ community, as well as visiting environments relating to these communities such as their recent visit to a museum looking into LGBTQ+ history. The member shared that they find visiting these spaces help bring them a sense of identity, whilst feeling empathy for others. This helps them to find meaning in life, as well as helping to ground them, which also brings them joy.

Break (11:05–11:15am)

Discussion Topic 2: What positive impact does autistic joy and special interests have on overall wellbeing and mental health?

- AT shared the details of a blog called Authentically Emily, who did a blog post on autistic joy, where they talk about their experiences of autistic joy and their personal triggers such as special interests, connecting with other autistic people and info dumping.
- Members shared that info dumping about a special interest can make them feel joy and happiness and can also help them unmask, which can be really liberating.
- A member shared that engaging in activities linked to special interests can be recharging for them at times, and it is important for them to factor these things into their day to help promote wellbeing.
- Other members shared that engaging in activities around special interests can be an overall joyous experience but often find they need to manage their energy levels or 'spoons' after experiencing autistic joy as they personally find this drains their energy and will need to factor in time to recover.
- A member shared that engaging with positive sensory experiences for grounding or energy revitalising has been really good for them, such as blowing bubble



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mixture in their garden. They spoke about practicing analysing the internal thoughts of worrying or feeling shame or being embarrassed about these activities and to instead focus on the joy and happiness these activities bring instead, which has been helpful.

- The member acknowledged that some of these thought patterns are rooted in when others have judged them in the past and have since distanced themselves from these people because of this. The member spoke about how partaking in different activities such as these can be a lovely way to connect with others, autistic or otherwise and has helped them overcome negative thought patterns.
- AT spoke about how some negative thoughts can be founded in neurotypical or societal norms that can be strict at times, such as certain activities being only for children. AT shared an example from a therapist that suggested people are generally happier if they reengage with things that brought them joy in childhood, such as being silly when needed and used the members example of blowing bubbles in the garden to emphasise this.
- Members talked about the importance of ignoring the thoughts and opinions of others and concentrating on what is important to the individual. This led to a member sharing a negative experience of a family member making negative comments about their home and the negative impact this had on them.
- Members agreed that the home should be a safe and protected space and others don't have any right to pass judgement on it, as what matters most is the feelings of the individual and what brings them personal happiness.
- AT asked if anyone else would like to share personal experiences of autistic joy and a member spoke about the Tomb Raider convention they recently attending in Derby and said they found it uplifting to connect with others that shared their interest. The member said that the event helped boost their confidence and is considering staying overnight for the next convention so they can attend the after party.
- The member said they had an amazing time and felt accomplished for putting themselves out there and meeting new people. They also found that others were accepting of them for having the same interests and found that the people they met didn't care about any of their labels, which helped to make them feel comfortable.
- A member shared they will be attending a meeting next month to present about creative self-care in the hope this will help others. The member said they are



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nervous to try this form of connection but are looking forward to sharing their passions and interests with others and looks forward to sharing this with the group next month.

- Another member shared that they are hoping to try stitching for the first time at a craft group and is looking forward to meeting people with shared interests.
- Another member shared that they are working towards attending a local dance group. The member said that dance is something they are really passionate about but have found it hard to join a local group since moving to the area but found value in the meeting discussions which encouraged members trying new things that are nerve-wracking as you will likely enjoy it.
- A member thanked the group for sharing and said they found the topics interesting and found they related to the struggle of moving to a new area and finding it difficult to find their feet and find what was available in their local community. They shared that they are still working on this and are hoping to form new routines and strengthen their sense of identity
- The member also spoke about wanting to find ways to channel their frustrations about the barriers to support for both neurodivergence as well as mental health and have been attending groups similar to the autism alliance so they can share their thoughts and opinions on this constructively, which has really helped them both emotionally and practically, due to feeling like they are helping to make a change.

3. Meeting Close – End of Business

- AT thanked everyone for attending and for their honest reflection and contributions about today's topic.
- AT asks for suggestions for topics for Autism Alliance to cover in future sessions and asked members to get in touch via email with any suggestions.
- AT confirmed that the next Autism Alliance will take place on **Wednesday 26th November 10.30am-12pm via Microsoft Teams** and an agenda will be sent closer to the time.