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## **November 2025 Autism Alliance**

### **Topic: Autism and Self-care**

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

**Location: Online (Microsoft Teams)**

**Chair: Lisa Richardson (LR) and Kirstie Lodge (KL)**

### **Session Structure**

- Welcome and Introductions (10:30-10:40am)
- Discussion Topic 1: What is self-care and what are your experiences of engaging with it? - (10:40-11:12am)
- Break (11:12–11:22am)
- Discussion Topic 2: What is the importance of self-care and what is the impact on personal wellbeing? - (11:22-11:50am)
- Any Other Business and Meeting Close (11:50am-12:00pm)

### **Introduction:**

The chair(s) introduced the topics for the meeting, which were to include views on autism and self-care.



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## Discussion Topic One: What is self-care and what are your experiences of engaging with it?

- **LR** introduced the topic of self-care and shared a summary of what it is and some categories that self-care falls into. These were: physical, social, mental, emotional and setting boundaries. LR shared some examples of how they engage in self-care and shared that they can sometimes struggle to make time for self-care.
- **KL** shared some examples of how they engage in self-care. This included engaging in creative tasks such as dancing and having quiet time watching a film or reading a book. KL opened up the discussion to everyone by asking everyone in the group about their own self-care.
- **A member** shared that they lean into self-care to help accept themselves and see their strengths more, after grieving over their limitations.
- They shared that time spent purposely engaging in self-care (by allotting specific time to self-care tasks), helps to ensure that the time is protected and that self-care is not forgotten about. They shared that engaging in creative tasks, such as drawing, painting, listening to music etc helps as a reset and means that more difficult aspects of life can be approached with a higher level of capacity.
- **KL** agreed that creative tasks tend to act as an output for all sorts of emotions, which then allow for an increased level of capacity in other areas.
- **A member** shared that they had a new coach. This coach had emphasised the importance of self-care and creativity. They shared that this has helped them to feel calm and relax.
- **LR** shared that sometimes it can be difficult to schedule in time for self-care, as they are a mum of 3 and are very busy with a household to run and 3 children (who are also autistic) to look after. LR shared that one of their children struggles



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with daily routine and finds it hard to shower regularly, as an example of her daughter's difficulty with physical self-care.

- **A member** agreed and shared that they struggle with daily routine and although they would really like to follow a structured routine, this can be tricky. They also shared that they can get distracted when doing chores.
- **KL** said that it can be easy to think that completing chores are self-care. While it could be considered self-care as it is time taken for yourself and your environment, chores don't necessarily make you feel calm or allow time for your battery to recharge.
- **LR** said that they related to this, as they can sometimes become distracted doing chores and then they may not get finished. Which can cause more stress, anxiety and increases the feeling of being overwhelmed.
- **A member** shared that individuals should want to help themselves and be motivated to care for their own health. They shared that they feel there is limited support out there for vulnerable individuals to access in regard to looking after their general health and becoming motivated to seek community activities.
- **A member** shared that they attend a wellbeing adult day centre once a week. They can choose an activity and often choose to engage in gardening, woodwork or craft. They said that this is a massive self-esteem boost and that they feel heavily supported by the qualified professionals that run the group. They shared that they struggle at home when they are alone and find it easier to get tasks completed with support from someone else.
- **KL** said that sometimes having something booked and paid for can help to access the activity as the time is allotted in advance and you've already paid for the service.
- **A member** shared that prepaying for something is helpful to them as it 'forces' them to go and they really enjoy themselves once they've attended. They shared a brilliant group that they are involved with called 'plot to plate' which is run by disability direct. They also shared that they would like to become a gardening volunteer for the national trust as this is an area of interest.
- **A member** shared that they feel that services are more Derby centred and that there is not much support available in north Derbyshire. They also shared that



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they are concerned about vulnerable relatives who need support from services but are not motivated to reach out to any.

- **A member** suggested looking into GP's social prescribers as they are fantastic and can do the research for you.
- **LR** reiterated the importance of setting aside time for self-care and its importance to wellbeing.
- **KL** thanked everyone for their insightful contributions and how it was great to hear so many personal experiences and suggestions for social and community groups. KL said that we would have a short break and return at 11:22.

#### Break (11:12–11:22am)

#### Discussion Topic 2: What is the importance of self-care and what is the impact on personal wellbeing?

- **KL** introduced the second discussion topic and opened up the conversation to thinking about self-care and its connection to wellbeing.
- **A member** shared that they can find engaging in self-care to be a double-edged sword as setting time aside for hobbies is a good thing but learning not to be hard on yourself if a goal is missed is important.
- **KL** shared the importance of being kind to yourself in situations where something may not have gone the way you planned it to go. Sometimes these experiences are integral to learning about ourselves and how we deal with certain situations. KL said that this links back around to self-care well as showing yourself kindness and allowing yourself to have time engaging in a self-care activity gives us time to recharge and regroup.
- **A member** agreed and said that as a society, we should stop treating hobbies as a reward or as an example of practising discipline.



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- **LR** spoke about how sometimes we can use preferred activities as a motivator or reward for completing other less desired activities. However, having the self-care activity at the end can sometimes mean that by the time you reach it, you can feel so exhausted and drained that the self-care activity isn't enough to recharge your battery.
- **KL** said that maybe it can be better practice to space out self-care across the day/week to reflect battery drain and how it manifests from person to person. Having self-care mixed in with other tasks can actually boost capacity and help reduce battery drain.
- **A member** shared that they find body doubling really useful. They said that they have an allotted time each week whereby they will engage in a self-care activity while on video call to a friend. They said that this really helps as there is no pressure to chat or talk but it means that the time is spent doing self-care as you know that there is someone there doing it with you. The member shared that even if their friend is unavailable that week, they still use the time to complete a self-care activity because the time is already put aside.
- **A member** shared that they also find body doubling a helpful tool for completing activities.
- **KL** said that blocking out specific time in the week for self-care is a great idea as it makes the time sacred to that activity and almost forces you to give that time to yourself.
- **A member** shared that using self-care tasks as motivation to complete other tasks meant that they were not feeling any support from themselves and ultimately self-care brought on feelings of guilt. They have now switched to engaging in self-care at different points and find that this works much better for them.
- **Members** talked about the importance of ignoring the thoughts and opinions of others and concentrating on what is important to the individual.
- **Members** agreed that societal pressures are very high now and that being kind to yourself and engaging in self-compassion is of high importance. This led to a



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member sharing that they recently went to a dentist appointment and stopped the dentist using a loud piece of equipment briefly so that they could put their loop earplugs in. The member shared that they were proud of themselves for advocating for what they needed in that moment and felt that by doing so they were practising self-compassion.

- **LR** said that the experience sounded very empowering and agreed that stopping the dentist to put loop earplugs in is an act of self-care as you are setting those boundaries for yourself.
- **A member** shared that grieving limitations at the same time as celebrating strengths has helped them heal over time.

### Meeting Close – End of Business

- **KL** and **LR** thanked everyone for attending and for their honest reflection and contributions about today's topic.
- **KL** 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. One topic keen to be mentioned was '**Unmasking**'
- The next Autism Alliance will take place on **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December 10.30am-12pm via Microsoft Teams** and an agenda will be sent closer to the time.