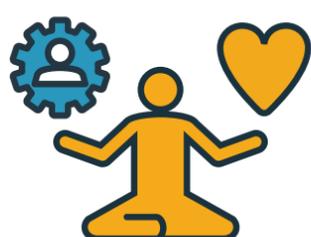


# The Double Empathy Problem



## Therapist Neurodiversity Collective International

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**Autism has been defined as a deficit in 'theory of mind.'** and ... "when applied to the education of those diagnosed becomes a 'treatment program' of modifying the 'autistic person' as 'best one can' to fit in with the mainstream culture of society."

Damian E.M. Milton (2012) On the ontological status of autism: the 'double empathy problem', *Disability & Society*, 27:6, 883-887,  
DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2012.710008

**The Double Empathy Problem (DEP) refers to a "disjuncture in reciprocity between two differently disposed social actors" who hold different norms and expectations of each other, such as is common in Autistic to non-Autistic (Allistic) social interactions.**

Milton, D. (2012). On the ontological status of autism: The "double empathy problem.". *Disability & Society* 27(6), 883-887. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.710008>.

"There is a tendency... to incorrectly assume that there is a set of definable social norms and rules that exist for people to follow. The 'theory of mind' and 'empathy'... refers to the ability a 'neurotypical' (NT) individual has to assume understandings of the mental states and motives of other people. When such 'empathy' is applied toward an Autistic person however, it is often wildly inaccurate in its measure."

Milton, Damian (2012) On the ontological status of autism: the 'double empathy problem'. *Disability & Society*, 27 (6). pp. 883-887. ISSN 0968-7599.

**The stigma of being 'othered' and the normalisation agenda, and Implications for Service Providers:** "it is true that autistic people often lack insight about NT perceptions and culture, yet it is equally the case that NT people lack insight into the minds and culture of 'autistic people...' One could say that many autistic people have indeed gained a greater level of insight into NT society and mores than vice versa, perhaps due to the need to survive and potentially thrive in a NT culture. Conversely, the NT person has no pertinent personal requirement to understand the mind of the 'autistic person' unless closely related socially in some way... Differences in neurology may well produce differences in sociality, but not a 'social deficit' as compared to an idealised normative view of social reality."

Milton, Damian (2012) On the ontological status of autism: the 'double empathy problem'. *Disability & Society*, 27 (6). pp. 883-887. ISSN 0968-7599.

"The research data shows that while Autistic people scored lower on the measures of cognitive empathy and theory of mind, Autistic people are no different from controls on one affective empathy scale of the IRI (empathic concern), and scored higher than controls on the other (personal distress)." Therefore, we propose that the issue of empathy in AS (Autistic People) should be revisited.

Rogers, Kimberley & Dziobek, Isabel & Hassenstab, Jason & Wolf, Oliver & Convit, Antonio. (2007). Who Cares? Revisiting Empathy in Asperger Syndrome. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. 37. 709-15. 10.1007/s10803-006-0197-8.