

# We Don't Treat Autism



## Here's Why



### Pathology Model:

Autism "refers to a group of complex neurodevelopment disorders characterized by repetitive & characteristic patterns of behavior & difficulties with social communication & interaction. The symptoms are present from early childhood & affect daily functioning."

NIH - <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Fact-Sheets/Autism-Spectrum-Disorder-Fact-Sheet>

**There is no cure for autism & therapists should not provide therapy with an intent to "cure" autism.**

### Neurodiversity Model:

ASAN (Autistic Self Advocacy Network): "Autism is a developmental disability that affects how we experience the world around us. Autistic people are an important part of the world. Autism is a normal part of life, & makes us who we are."

**ASAN (& we) believe that instead of trying to change disabled people, we should work to make sure people with disabilities can access what we need."**

### Autistic People:

- Think differently
- Process senses differently
- Move differently
- Communicate differently
- Socialize differently
- May need help with activities of daily living

ASAN: About Autism  
<https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/about-autism/>  
<https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/position-statements/>

**Some Autistic people have intellectual disability, others do not. Some Autistic people can speak, others do not speak. Some Autistic people need a lot of support in their daily lives, others may need less. Some Autistic people have other disabilities in addition to autism, others do not.**

**Therapies should help Autistic people, not train them to appear "less autistic" or meet neurotypical standards or clinical outcomes.**

### We don't "Treat Autism". "Autism Intervention" looks like:

**ABA/Behavior Modification  
Positive Reinforcement  
Training neurotypical social skills,  
& teaching masking  
Insisting on spoken  
communication/Verbal Behavior®  
'Whole Body Listening'  
Gatekeeping AAC  
Goals for sensory tolerance or  
extinguishment  
Denying access to supports,  
accommodations & modifications  
Extinguishing echolalia,  
monotropism, stimming or Autistic  
"quirks"**

### Empathetic & Respectful Therapy for Autistic people looks like:

**Unrestricted AAC access with  
core language & modeling  
Improving communication  
abilities in the client's preferred  
mode  
Teaching self-advocacy  
Providing supports,  
accommodations & modifications  
Equitable inclusion  
Perspective-taking for ALL,  
problem solving, empowerment  
ST/OT/PT using a trauma-  
informed approach**