

Autistic Pride Day - A Day of Celebration

Autistic Pride Day is celebrated on June 18th each year, it was first celebrated in 2005 by a group called 'Aspies for Freedom'. (An online group no longer in existence).

The day quickly became a whole community global event with Autistic people across the world choosing to celebrate in all kinds of ways. It is still celebrated widely online including blog sites, Twitter Facebook. The day is also traditionally linked to outdoors events, all types of arts and crafts, music and fun; an inclusive celebration of diversity - neurodiversity. Some people will celebrate quietly at home, go for a walk or have their own family event, maybe a picnic in the park. There are also larger events organised by local communities, this year the organisation I belong to: ARGH, will be marking the day with an open community outdoors event with arts and crafts, information sharing and Autistic speakers: a gathering of Autistic people to celebrate with our families and others : <http://www.arghighland.co.uk/pride.html>

The most important thing to note about the day is that it is an Autistic community event: it originated from and is still led by Autistic people ourselves. It is a day of celebration and positivity, and is marked by Autistic people and families all over the world: there is no central organisation in control unlike some awareness days; the day is owned by community.

By Autistic people and for Autistic people, warmly welcoming families and the wider community to celebrate with us but very much led by us. That means that this is not a day for the larger charities or organisations to promote themselves, it is not a day for them to fundraise or stifle Autistic people's expressions. It is a day for boosting and supporting Autistic people. A day we own, a day where we will hear positive stories instead of pity.

Everyone has the right to be proud of who they are but often Autistic people are denied this right from an early age, people want to change us, to 'cure' us, to make us 'indistinguishable'. Autistic Pride is an antidote to this: a reminder to everyone that all Autistic people are valuable and have the right to live a life that gives them joy. This is not about rejecting support, this is about wanting to be our true selves and to be supported to be successful Autistic people rather than to be viewed as broken nonautistic people, recognising that all Autistic people have potential, that we are all part of a neurodiverse world and that is a good thing.

The symbol for the day is an infinity symbol in spectrum colours: to represent diversity with infinite variations and infinite possibilities.

So, on June 18th please take the time to remember the meaning and ethos behind Autistic Pride Day and think about how you can work with us to make sure that every Autistic child and Adult never has to feel ashamed of their own natural state - how you can be a good ally and how we can all work together to celebrate neurodiversity all year round.

Links for further reading, Autistic People's Organisations:

www.arghighland.co.uk

<http://www.autscape.org>



<http://autisticadvocacy.org>

Notes

Terminology:

Identity first language is used in this article in line with the rejection of person first language use. Many in the Autistic community use identity first language as an affirmation, as Claire Sainsbury puts it:

"... I object to the insistence on using "people-first" language ... We are not people who "just happen to have" autism; it is not an appendage that can be separated from who we are as people, nor is it something shameful that has to be reduced to a sub-clause."
(Sainsbury, 2000, p. 12)

Neurodiversity:

An inclusive term used to describe the diversity of human neurology, it does not refer to a particular neurology but includes all, neurotypical and neurodivergent: as equal and valid.