

# What is Autism?, in Plain Language



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What is Autism?

Autism is one of the many different variations of human brain. Because our brains are wired differently than most people's brains, we think, say, and act in ways that are often different from most people – and the way most people think, say, and act can seem very weird to us sometimes!

Doctors diagnose autism by looking at the ways we communicate and behave. Doctors have all kinds of theories about what autism is and the best way to help autistic people do the things they want to do.

Some of these theories make a lot of sense. For example, one doctor believes that the main difference in our brains is that they have lots and lots of connections between brain-parts that most brains don't have. As a result, we experience colors, sounds, textures, smells, tastes, and emotions more strongly than other people. (This is called the Intense World Theory.)

Some doctors' theories don't make much sense at all. For instance, another doctor believes that autism makes us unable to really understand anything around us, or to really feel love for other people. (This is called Theory of Mind.) You and I both know that's not true!

An autistic brain isn't a "bad" or "wrong" brain to have. It's just different. Because the world is set up to work best with non-autistic brains, having an autistic brain can be tough sometimes. The world isn't designed for our brains! But we can do lots of things to change the environment so that both autistic and non-autistic brains can share it together.



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