



Southdown

World Autism Awareness Day

Understanding and
Embracing Difference

The Importance of World Autism Awareness Day



Challenge misconceptions



Hear from and empower autistic voices



Encourage you to become allies and make the world a better place for autistic people

Our speakers



Tanja - Autistic Professional



Katie - Co-Chair,
ADHD Aware



Christopher - The Illustrated Autist



Emily - Expert by Experience



Fiona - Employment Specialist



Alice - Peer Tutor



Thank you



Possability
People



Southdown

Today's agenda

- Myths, facts & realities (audience participation) – Tanja, Autistic Professional
- Understanding autism and masking – Emily, Expert by Experience
- The overlap between autism and ADHD (AuDHD), and Q&A – Katie, Chair ADHD Aware
- Comfort break
- Panel Discussion: Lived experiences and audience Q&A - Alice, Emily, Tanja (hosted by Fiona)
- The Illustrated Autist - Christopher's story
- How to be an ally beyond Autism Awareness Day – Alice, Peer Tutor at Southdown Recovery College

Understanding Autism And Masking

Presented and Delivered by Emily Nuttall from an Expert by Experience Perspective and working for Grassroots Lived Experience Advisory Group and many other Organisations



Who Am I And What Do I Do As Emily?



- I'm A Woman Who Has Overcome Adversity I All About Empowering People, Inspiring Long-lasting Change, Removing My Masks, Revealing The Brave, Broken Bruised. Real Emily And Growing In Recovery.
- I'm An Abuse Survivor, Have Overcome Traumas, Family Breakdowns, Violence, Domestic Violence, Homelessness And Other Challenging, Painful Life Events.
- I Have An Anorexia Diagnosis, Autism, Gambling Addiction, Other Co-morbidities Including Self Harm, Depression, Ptsd, Anxiety, Suicidal Thoughts And A Range Of Physical Disabilities, Medical Challenges But These Do Not Define Me I'm Still Emily
- I'm An Expert By Experience, Lived Experience Lead, Project Worker, Speaker, Trainer In Autism Mental Health, Eating Disorders, Disability, Children's Other Education Hsc, Family Services, Lived Experience Advisory Board Member And Project Worker. I Am Also A Speaker, Co-author, Volunteer, Disability Sports Coach, Campaigner, Fundraiser, Advisor, Business Woman And Ambassador Making A Difference Everyday With Various National And Local Charities.
- I Work With Orri, Maudsley, Kings College, Freed, Peace Pathway, Grassroots Suicide Prevention, Samaritans, Guernsey And UK Mind, Beat, States Of Guernsey, Edac, Edcrn, Afc, Peds, Ceds, Abed, University Of Birmingham, University Of Bournemouth, Family Action And Independently With My Motivate The Mind Business And Will Share More Throughout The Session
- I Am A Trainee Counsellor I Have Completed Both My Level 2 And 3 And Starting My Level 4 In January 2026
- I Am Creative And Musical Through Art, Poetry, Piano, Singing Guitar, Love Musicals, Love Alfie The Therapy Dog, The Beach, Nature And Have 3 Very Special Cousins Who I Adore And Live In Guernsey Which Is In The Channel Islands

What Is Autism And Masking? What Happens With This? What Can It Look And Feel Like?



Signs of Autistic Masking



- “Masking Is A Strategy Used By Some Autistic People, Consciously Or Unconsciously, To Appear Non-autistic. While This Strategy Can Help Them Get By In Life, Work And In Social Situations, It Can Have A Devastating Impact On Mental Health, Sense Of Self And Access To An Autism Diagnosis”
- It Can Often Feel Like A Washing Machine Locked Inside A Brain On Its Full Spin Cycle, Churning At Full Speed Or A Tug Of War Inside Your Head And Masking Then Comes To Ground Yourself, To Be Present And Keep Yourself Safe From How Your Feeling And Others Views, Thoughts Or Judgements
- Burnout, Low Self-Esteem, Meltdowns, Exhaustion, Loneliness And Poor Mental Health, Self-harm, Gambling, Eating Disorders To Cope What Does This Mean?

What Is My Story Of Autism And Masking And How Did I Remove My Mask?



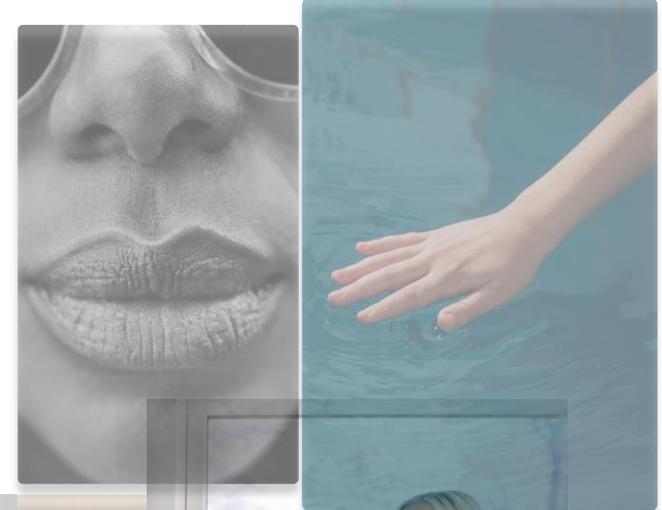
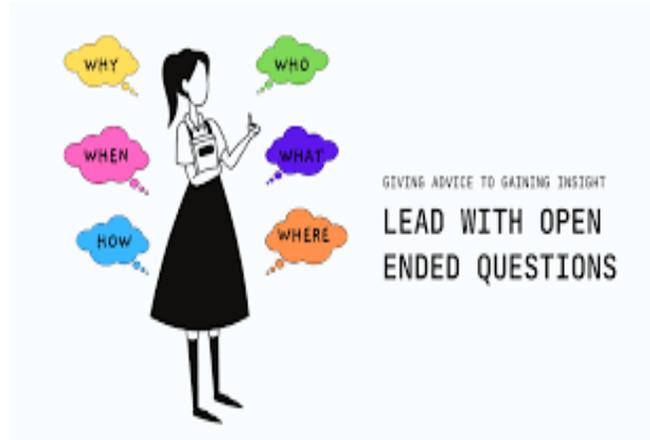
Wearing This Mask Of “I’m Fine” Has Blocked Out Distress, Fear, Trauma, Flashbacks, Health Challenges, Voices, Devastating Life Events. It Has Guarded Me From The Pain, Protected Me From People’s Judgements, Actions And Hurt, Given Me Control, Completely Numbed Me And Been A Way To Be Able To Disconnect And Forget, But Yet Still Be This Strong, Smiling, Determined, Thriving, Giving, Achieving Emily For Everyone Around Me In My Life.

But Underneath This Mask Has Been So Much More. Depression, Anxiety, Self-harm, PTSD, Autism, Flashbacks, Gambling, Anorexia Which Then Led To Suicidal Thoughts/Attempts Had Consumed Both My Mind And Body In A Terrifying And Frightening Way, But It Was Also Like They Were My Best Friends That I Never Had The Comfort, The Safety Blanket And Coping Mechanisms I Desperately Needed, Something That Was There For Me, That Would Help Make Everything Feel Ok And Get Me Through The Trauma, Turmoil, Fear, Pain, Devastation And Loss Of Control That Life Had Thrown My Way. This Made It So Much Harder For Me To Be Open And Accepting Of Help And Support, Which Prevented Me Accessing Treatment. I Felt A Lot Of Guilt And Shame For Being Emily

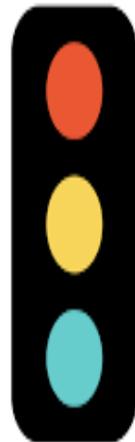
I Had To Be Brave To Feel It To Heal It And Peel Back Slowly And Ask For Help, What Did This Look Like And Mean For Me?

ASKING FOR HELP
IS A SIGN OF
STRENGTH,
BE BRAVE ENOUGH
TO DO IT.

The Importance Of The Environment, Sensory Needs And Support Alternative Therapies And Support For Autism And Masking How Do We Implement This In Practise And How Did This Support Me



**The Traffic
Lights System
for Emotional
Regulation**



Communication, Sensory And Care Passports And Shared Systems What Are They And Why Are They Important And How Did This Empower Me And The Support I Received?



Sensory Summary

Mark where you think you are on the below scales. Hypersensitivity means you are **highly sensitive** to sensations and may try and **avoid them** where possible; hyposensitivity means you have **lower sensitivity** and may try to **seek out** these sensations. There are examples below each scale. If you think you are neither hyper/hyposensitive and have no sensory differences, mark yourself in the middle as a 5.

Taste

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

(Hyposensitive) (No sensory differences) (Hypersensitive)

If I am hyposensitive, I might add lots of salt to my food to make it taste stronger. If I am hypersensitive, I might prefer to eat bland foods as I find them too strong.

Smell

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

(Hyposensitive) (No sensory differences) (Hypersensitive)

If I am hyposensitive, I might not notice strong smells and enjoy smelling essential oils. If I am hypersensitive, I might dislike smelly places like a canteen and find smells overpowering.

Vision

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

(Hyposensitive) (No sensory differences) (Hypersensitive)

If I am hyposensitive, I might really like watching bright light displays. If I am hypersensitive, I might prefer to have lights dimmed or turned off.

Sound

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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(Hyposensitive) (No sensory differences) (Hypersensitive)

If I am hyposensitive, I might turn my music up loud and dislike silence. If I am hypersensitive, I might dislike loud spaces and put my hands over my ears.

Touch

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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(Hyposensitive) (No sensory differences) (Hypersensitive)

If I am hyposensitive, I might enjoy rubbing my hands on soft fabric or a soft toy. If I am hypersensitive, I might dislike and avoid touching certain fabrics.

Contributed by Emma Kinnard (PhD Student- PEACE Pathway)

peacepathway.org



Version 1. One-Page Communication Passport

My name is

My Communication Passport

How I would like you to communicate with me:

Sensory needs:

My special interests and strengths are:

Other things you should know about me:

My dislikes and things that I struggle with and how you can support me:

Main message that I would like you to know:

You can support me by:

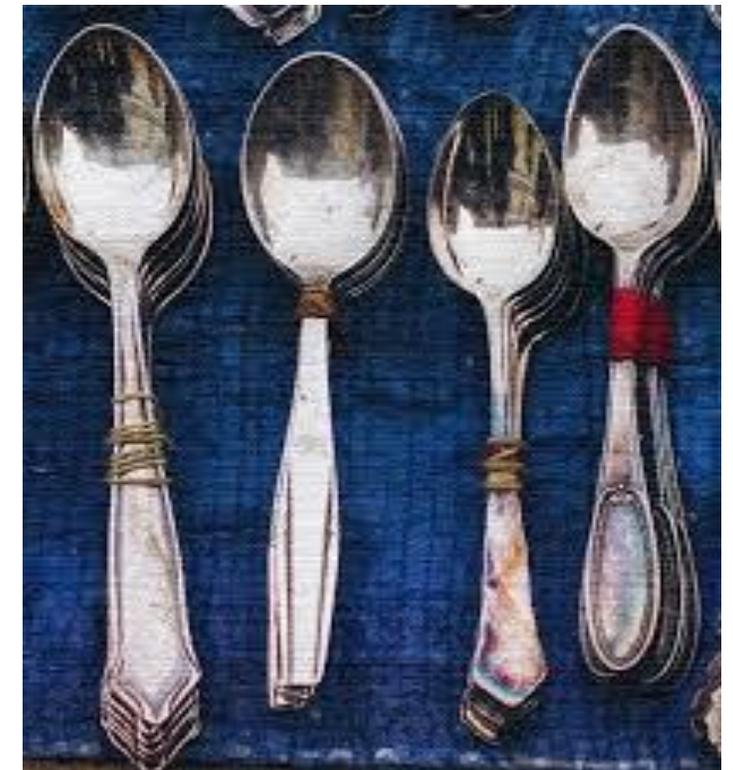
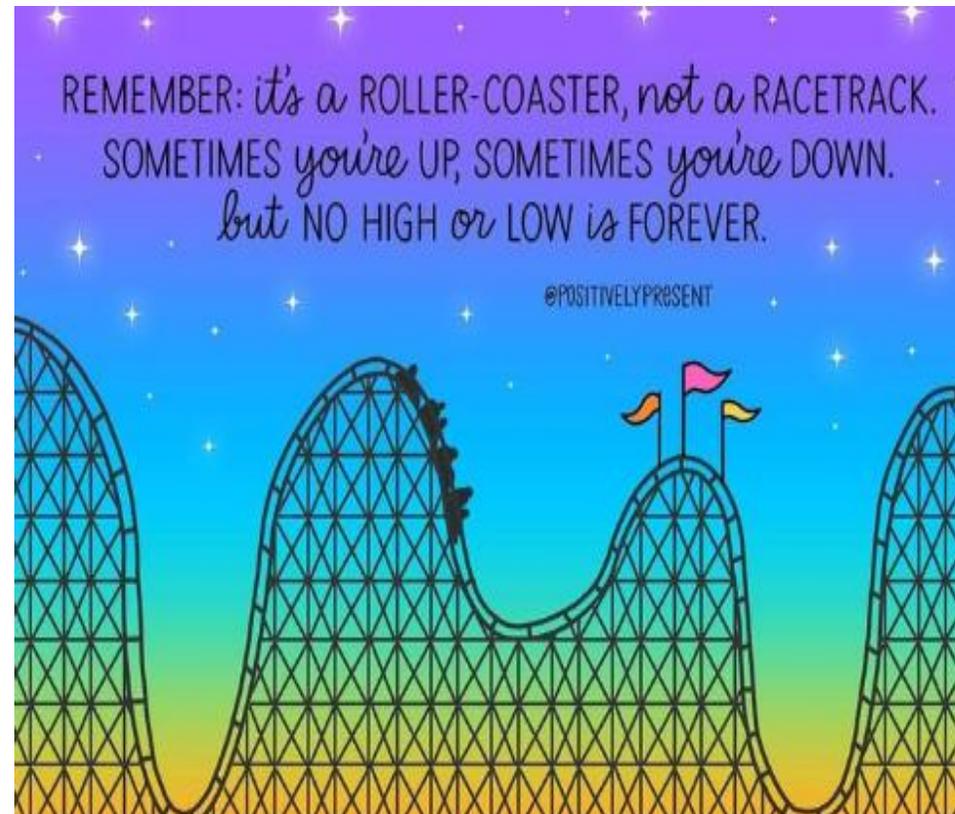
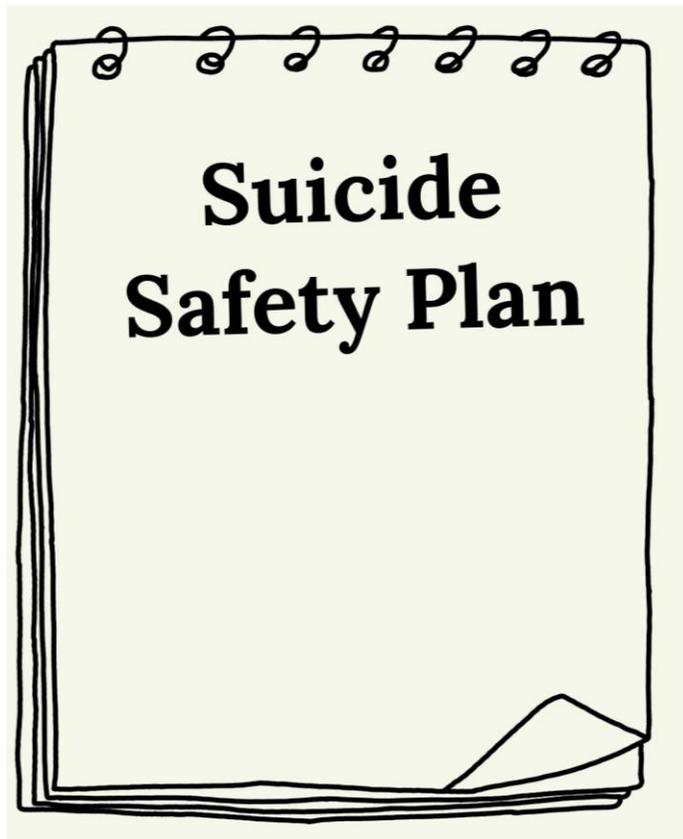
Version 2. Extended 'Wellbeing Communication Passport' booklet

My Wellbeing Communication Passport

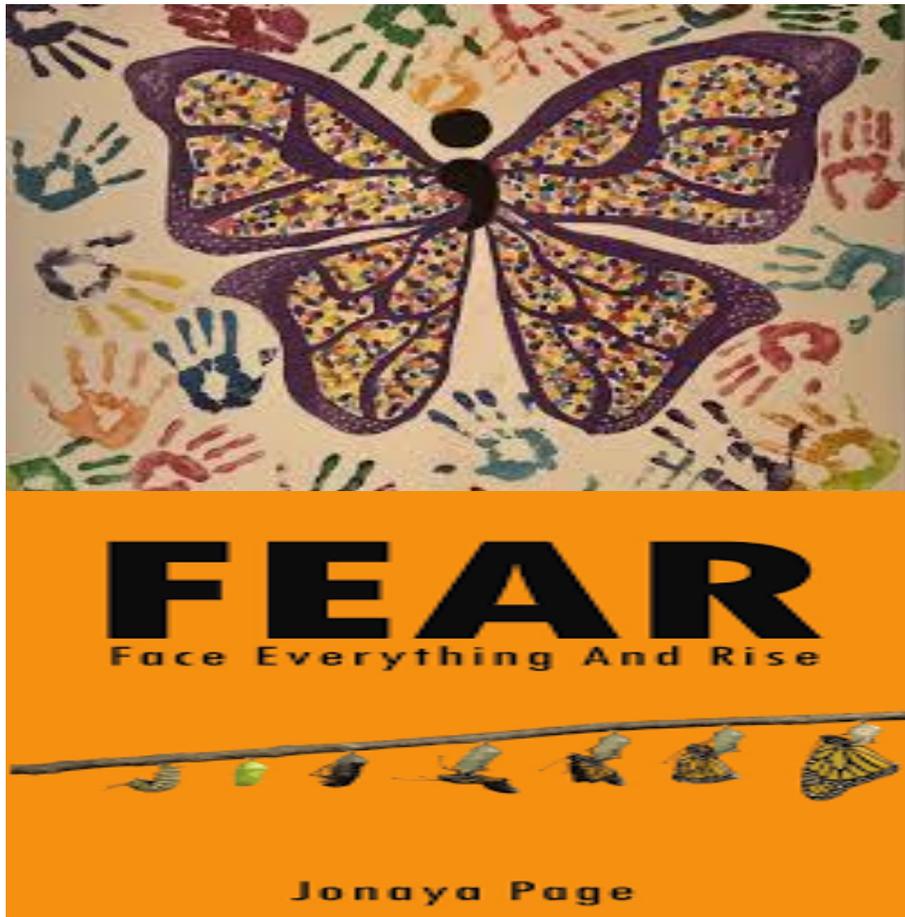
People who care for my wellbeing (My communication passport) has important information about me.
Please make sure you read it before you help me.

This communication passport needs to stay with me but please take a copy for my file.

The Use Of Safety Plans, Trigger Plans And Recovery Plans And Other Useful Support Resources



Where Am I In My Journey Of Recovery Now And How Does It Inspire The Work I Do?



- I have become my own loving best friend
- I am over a year self-harm free, been in a sustained eating disorder and mental health recovery for 18 months and just celebrated 7.5yrs free of inpatient treatment
- I am truly empowering Emily in every way possible
- I bravely remove my im fine masks
- I embrace motivate inspire and love you for who you are as emily
- I am feeling it to heal it and Facing Everything and Rising
- I have prevention, trigger, safety, coping skill support plans in place
- I describe it as a butterfly putting together again her wings and setting herself free

Important Reminders To Take Away, Final Thoughts And Quotes, Contact And Questions



What Can You Take From Today. Let's Continue To Connect, Train, Work Together And Grow Because The Journey Will Take Us To New Places Of Light And Opportunities That Are Empowering And Encouraging To Know"

"Rock Bottom Is Often The Solid Foundation On Which We Grow, Learn And Rebuild Our Lives And Come Back Stronger"

"The Bravest Thing I Ever Did Was Continue To Live When I Wanted To Die" " I Am Brave I Am Bruised I Am Who I'm Meant To Be"

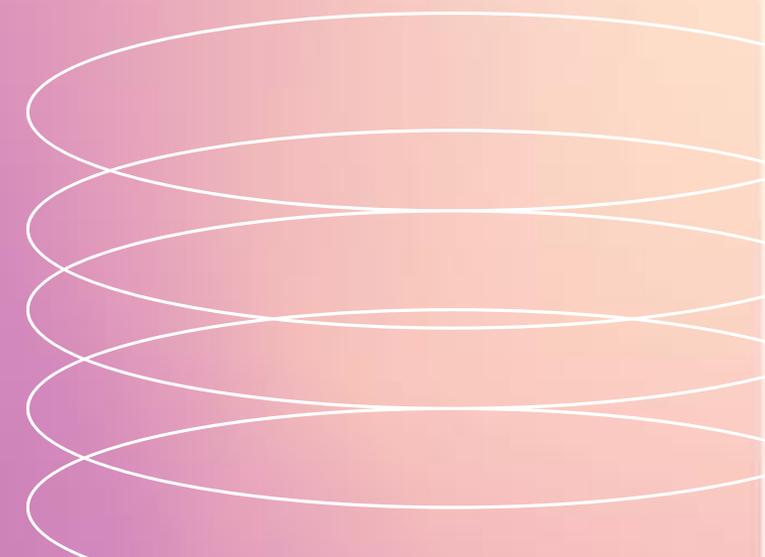
"Look At You, Challenging That Voice, Healing Those Traumas, Addressing The Difficult Challenges, Helping Us To Help You In Your Way And Finally Speaking Bravely And Vulnerably.

Growth And Change Gets Messy, Ugly, Painful But Then The Hope Starts To Find It's Way Through And The Light Shines Brightly, Because When Your Broken And Lost On The Ground, You Will Be Found, Because Perhaps The Butterfly Is Proof You Go Through A Great Deal Of Darkness, Yet Become Something Beautiful." Lets Continue To Work Together – Thanks So Much



Dual Diagnosis: ADHD and Autism

By Katie Hudson, Co-Chair ADHD Aware
2 April, 2025



The dual diagnosis brain

A growing number of people (including me), are increasingly recognised as having both ADHD and Autism. This is called a “dual diagnosis” or “comorbidity.” As an example, what’s going on in my own brain...



ADHD Brain

- Inattention v hyperfocus
- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity
- Executive dysfunction
- Emotional regulation
- Time perception
- Dyslexia very common comorbidity



Autism Brain

- Social communication/ understanding challenges
- Repetitive behaviours, routines
- Hyperfocus and Intense interests
- Sensory processing
- Emotional regulation & expression
- Cognitive and learning
- Comorbidity with ADHD, anxiety, depression, dyspraxia, or epilepsy



Gender-Fluid Brain

- Non-binary – biologically female often told I’m acting like a man and negatively impacted in career
- LGBTQIA+
- Strong, lifelong relationships with any gender, fewer friends but deeper

AuDHD

Often called AuDHD (Autism + ADHD). This neurodivergent overlap is increasingly recognised and creates a unique combination of traits from both conditions, which can amplify, blend, or even contradict each other at times. Commonly, the following key characteristics (**bold**) overlap for many of us:



ADHD Brain

- Inattention v hyperfocus
- Hyperactivity, **fidgiting**
- Impulsivity
- **Executive dysfunction**
- Emotional regulation
- Time perception
- **Masking & burnout**
- Dyslexia very common comorbidity



Autism Brain

- **Social differences**
- Repetitive behaviours, routines
- **Hyperfocus, intense interests**
- **Sensory processing**
- **Stimming**
- **Emotional intensity & rejection sensitivity**
- Cognitive and learning
- Comorbid with ADHD, anxiety, depression, dyspraxia, or epilepsy



Gender-Fluid Brain

- **LGBTQIA+**
- Strong, lifelong relationships with any gender, fewer friendships but deeper



Trauma Brain

- **Childhood trauma very common**
- **PTSD**
- **Addiction**

Physical comorbidities – many “invisible”

- Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS), hypermobility
- Coeliac disease and other gastrointestinal issues
- Lupus and other auto-immune conditions
- Sleep disorders
- Migraines, headaches
- Tourette’s Syndrome
- Allergies & asthma



What can we do to support AuDHD adults?

Everyone is different, so the first advice is to ask – have an open dialogue with the person about their lived experience and how you could support them. Here are some specific ideas...



Health & social services

- Explain and check for understanding
- Have paper takeaways or send info by email afterwards
- Send SMS reminders of appointments



Workplace

- Quiet spaces and policy that wearing headphones is ok/not shamed
- Flexible working hours (circadian rhythm)
- WFH options flexible unless office is essential
- Low sensory zones/relaxation rooms



Transport/public spaces

- Clarity when delays or disruption occur – what is happening and for how long?
- Don't question if they ask for a disabled seat
- Sensory overwhelm – be compassionate if you see someone struggling

Fin

Thank you for listening!

Visit our website:

<https://adhdaware.org.uk/>

Contact me:

katie.hudson@adhdaware.org.uk





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World Autism Awareness Day

Lived experience panel



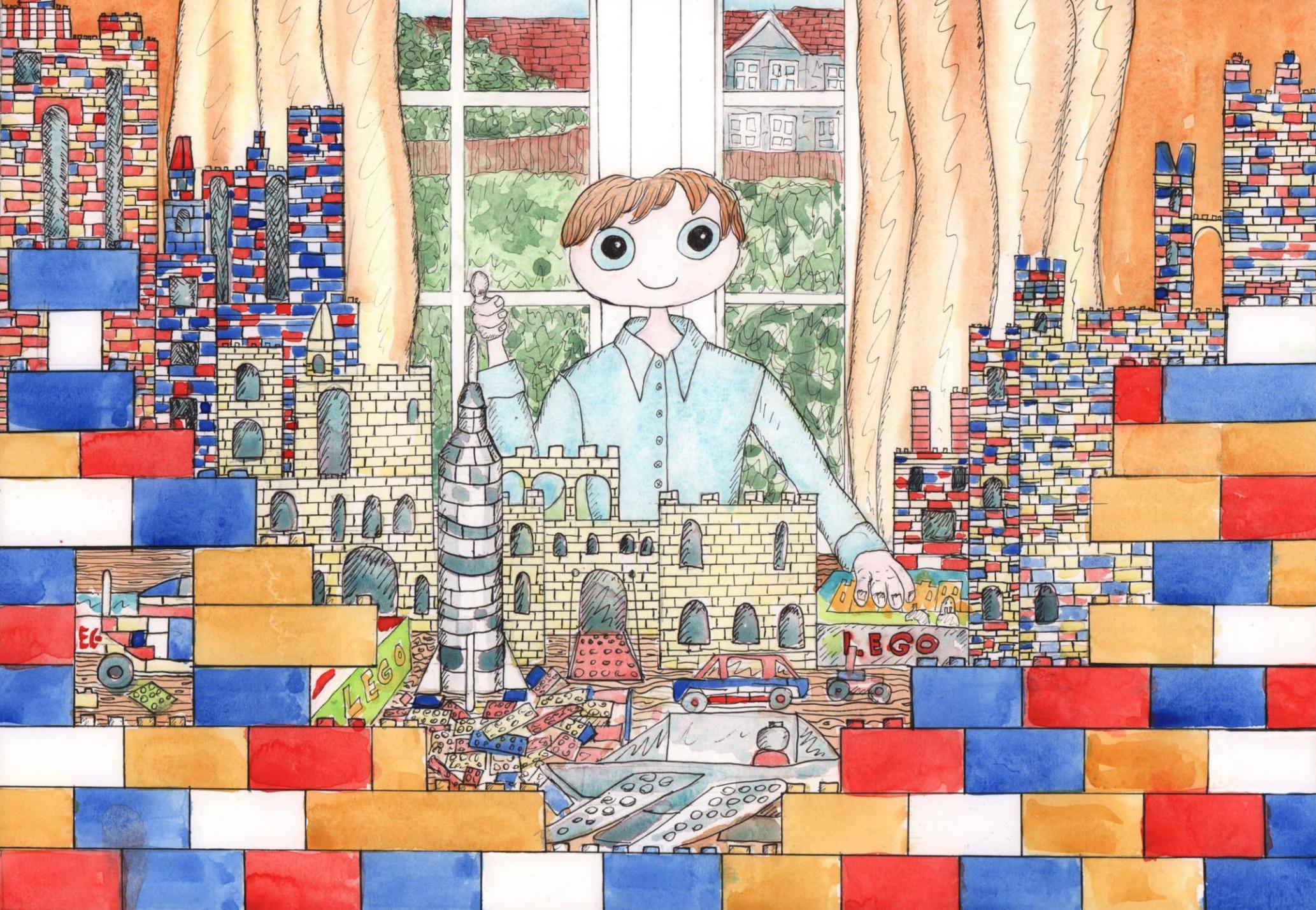
Having the stuffing knocked out of me



Home alone



Party Pooper

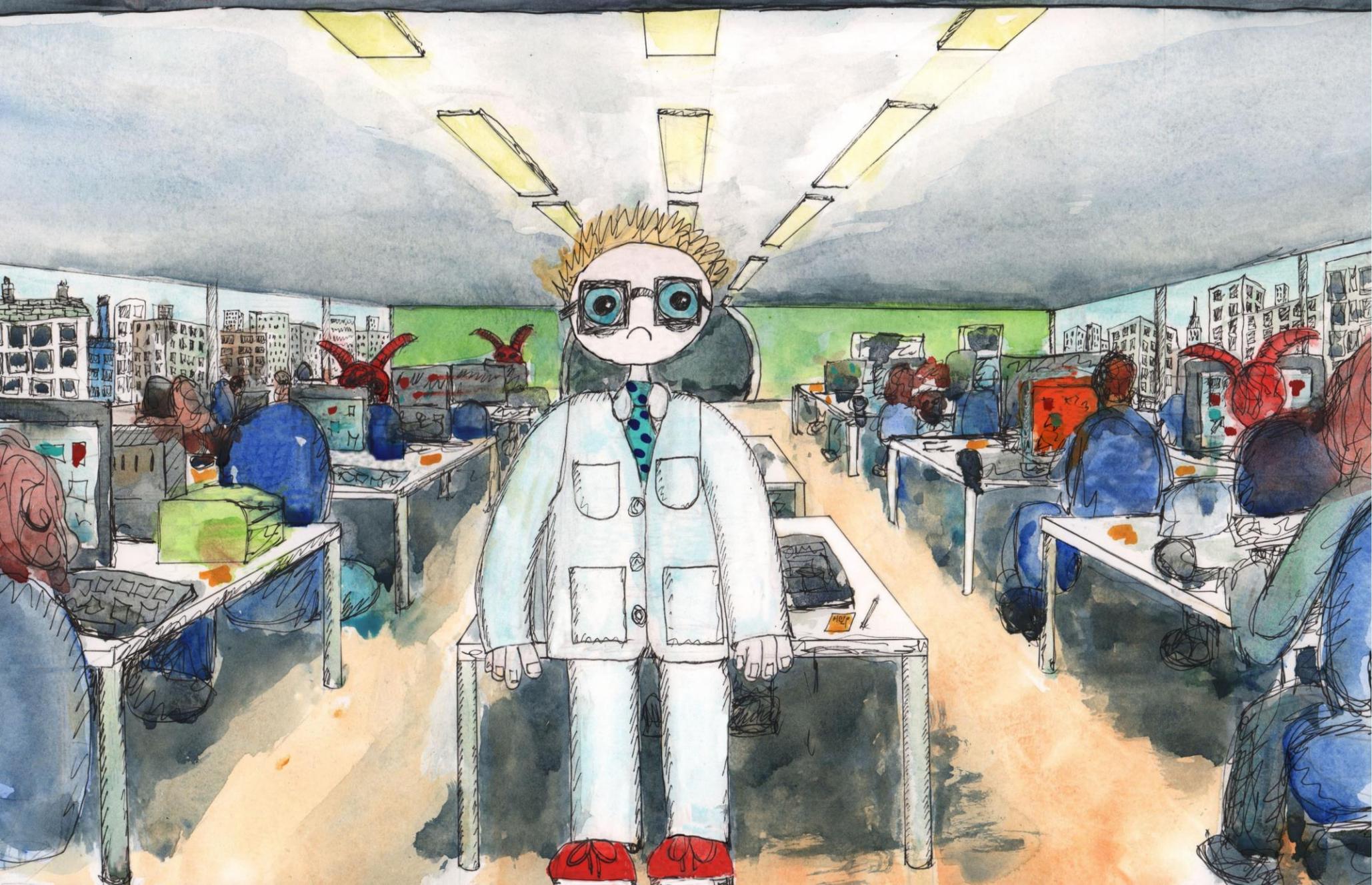


Brick in the wall



I was a rubbish goth

ABRNDON ALL HOPE...



The Office



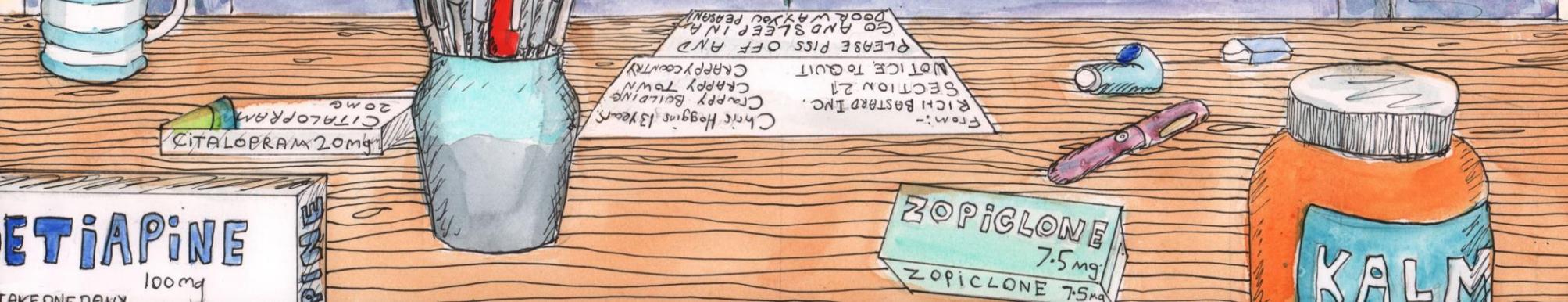
Rainbow Bright



The more things change...



When anxiety attacks





A World Without
Autism



Southdown

Alice

How to be an ally
beyond
World Autism
Awareness Day

Please scan for resources from
today's webinar and more



Hover your phone camera over the code and click on the link