



# Aut'Créatifs

Mouvement de personnes autistes pour la reconnaissance positive de l'autisme

## TELLING THE STORY OF AUTISM DIFFERENTLY Recommendations for Autism Terminology in the Media

Knowledge of Autism is in a great state of evolution. Despite this, a large part of the population still ignores what it means to be autistic, and misconceptions arising from popular myths are widespread. As a result of this misinformation, terminologies referring to the condition of autism and autistic people are quite variable. Often, they take respectful forms, but other times, they can be devaluing.

This document will serve as a guide to any person working in the domain of communications. According to the principles of non-discrimination and the right to fair information, the use of adequate language is recommended. These proposals received the support of Doctor Laurent Mottron. We thank him for his support.

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Recommended Terminology	Terminology to Avoid
<u>In General</u> -Condition -Autism/Autistic condition -Autistic/Non-Autistic Neurodevelopmental Variation -Neurological variation	<u>In General</u> -Problem, illness, affliction, pathology -Autism Spectrum Disorder -Normal/Abnormal -Pervasive developmental disorder
<u>About the Person</u> -Autistic -Autistic person -Person of autistic spirit or nature -To identify as/be autistic -Describe capacities, talents, and aptitudes of a person; in context. -Autonomous/non-autonomous person	<u>About the Person</u> -Person affected by autism/ suffering from autism -person with autism/in the situation of autism -To admit/confess one's autism -person with autism spectrum disorder/ASD -High/Low functioning autistic
<u>Description</u> -Condition -Characteristic, particularity, trait -Different neurology and sensorial sensitivities -Difference -Particular interest, focused intelligence, passion -Rituals, gestures -Unconventional learning -Sense of humor unique to one's structure of thought -Variant of feeling and expression of empathy -Autistic functioning	<u>Description</u> -Problem/disorder -Deficiency, incapacity, deficit -Injuries -Anomaly/abnormality -Obsession, restricted interests -Ticks, manias -Resistance to teaching methods -Doesn't smile, no sense of humor -Lacking empathy -Abnormal functioning

**To contribute to the breaking of myths and stereotypes, here are some guidelines to follow:**

- Avoid generalizations. Make reference to the diversity of autistic people and humanity's neurodiversity in general.
- Avoid using the word "autistic" to describe public attitudes of lacking communication, or as an adjective with the goal being negative criticism or insult. For example: "The autism of radio Canada journalists," Dreuz info, November 16, 2014.
- Avoid making comparisons to the "Rain Man" archetype and exaggerating the talents and intelligence of autistics.
- Avoid blaming parents, society, or the environment.
- Avoid speaking of autism as an epidemic, a social ill, or a tragedy. Describing autism this way reflects on autistics themselves. They suffer damage to their self-esteem, especially for children who often do not yet fully understand, and are vulnerable to discrimination.
- We recognize that, like all human beings, each autistic person possesses a potential, gifts, aptitudes, qualities, etc, as well as limits, weaknesses, faults, challenges to overcome, etc. Autistic people contain as much diversity among them as do non-autistic people.
- Autism is a human characteristic which may or may not be accompanied by dysfunctions. In and of itself, autism is not an illness. For these reasons, vocabularies of pathology are to be avoided, including the word, "disorder."
- Autism is an integral part of the person. It is not an accessory. An autistic person, therefore, does not "have autism."
- Expressions such as "an ASD person" are incorrect from a linguistic standpoint: to say "an ASD" while speaking of an autistic person is like saying "a disorder." An "ASD person" signifies a "disordered person" and "person with ASD" signifies a "person with a disorder." The respect for the dignity of people, as well as respect for language and grammar, justify these recommendations.
- "Levels" of autism favor discrimination. It is preferable to speak of their capacities, talents of the person as well as their challenges and difficulties.

*Guide by Marie Lauzon, Lucila Guerrero and Antoine Ouellette for Aut'Créatifs, a community of autism person in favor of positive recognition of autism mind.*

Translate by Hunter McLean.