

World Autism Acceptance Month

Primary schools lesson plan

Years 3–6

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Introduction

This resource pack contains information for teachers, two lesson plans and some printable learning tasks for primary students. The lessons are linked to Personal and Social Capabilities in the Victorian Curriculum and make use of high impact teaching strategies.

It also includes links to short films by autistic children and young people from Spectrospective. Amaze has produced Spectrospective each year since 2015 as part of our contribution to World Autism Acceptance Month. Spectrospective recognises that every story of autism is important and that through sharing their stories, autistic people are playing an important role in building community understanding and acceptance autism and autistic people.

If you feel your students do not have an understanding of autism, we recommend working through lesson one "What is Autism" with them. If your students have a good awareness of autism you may choose to use lesson two "Similarities and Differences". Alternatively, you can use both lessons in order or use your own combination of our ideas and activities to design your own lesson.

Here are some short Spectrospective films by children that we think are appropriate for the primary classroom.

ASH - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElarvaamqyM> length: 3:43mins

SIENNA - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEjCi7IEnwc> length: 3:02mins

Start a positive discussion about autism with students with Spectrospective

JACKSON - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8LW5lofMWo> length: 5:35mins

COREY - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MOTmQWpTeo> length: 1:49mins

BLAKE - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yng3CjHiA_k length: 2:30mins

OSCAR H - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wfxjsBNQ20> length: 4:16mins

The weblink for the full Spectrospective film is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YH2b87sKwr4>

This year's gold coin fundraising activity is focused around students wearing hoodies to school on Hoodie Up Day and attending an 11am assembly to celebrate World Autism Acceptance Month .

Page 17 has a guide for facilitating a special assembly on Hoodie Up Day.

At this assembly, students will be asked to wear their 'Hoodie Up', so that photos can be taken and shared across school social media platforms in a display of supporting autism.

Key messages for students engaging in activities around World Autism Acceptance Month are:

- Having autism can be hard sometimes but there are lots of great things about autism, too.
- You have similarities with and differences from autistic people.
- There are lots of ways you can show support for autistic people.

Talking about autism in the classroom

The way that you talk about autism will influence the way that your students think about it. Keep the discussion positive and strengths-focused.

Consider speaking with autistic students or their parents in advance of teaching the lesson so that they are not caught by surprise.

If you have an autistic student in your class, do not disclose the diagnosis to other students. This is confidential information.

Students may see similarities between your descriptions of autism and one of their peers. Be ready to respond to comments such as “That’s just like our classmate”. A good reply might be “Yes, and it could also sound like you or me... or any of us.” You could draw attention to popular “typical” special interests or repetitive behaviours, such as some students preferring to sit in the same spot on the floor, or do the same activities at play time every day, or listening to their favourite song over and over.

Autistic students may feel empowered by a positive classroom discussion about autism and decide to make a disclosure of their diagnosis to their peers. Your response to a disclosure will depend on the maturity of the student and the situation. Exercise your professional judgement when responding to the student. It may be appropriate to acknowledge the disclosure and then move the discussion on. It would be advisable to follow up afterwards with the student and their parents.



Background information for teachers

Autism Spectrum Disorder (or ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disability with symptoms that appear early in life. We use the terms “autism” in this resource to refer to this group of conditions including autism, autistic disorder and Asperger’s syndrome.

The term “spectrum” is used to describe the range of characteristics and abilities found in autistic people, as well as developmental changes, such as improvement in language ability, which might occur over time.

Autism is not a disease. People are born autistic and remain so all their lives. The way autism affects people may change over time as a person grows and matures. Approximately 1% of the population is autistic. Currently, three times as many males are diagnosed as females.

Every autistic individual is different, but these features are present in some form:

- **Differences in communicating and interacting with other people:**
 - Sharing interests and emotions. This can range from a lack of interaction to wanting to interact, but not knowing how to do it in an appropriate way.
 - Using and understanding non-verbal communication such as body language, eye contact or facial expressions.
 - Making friends, maintaining friendships and adjusting behaviour to different social situations.
- **Repetitive routines in behaviour, interests or activities:**
 - Repetitive speech, movements or use of objects.

- Routines, rituals or resistance to change.
- Interests that are very intense or narrow in focus.
- Being either over- or under-sensitive to sounds, smells, tastes, textures or visual stimuli. Often the same person will be over-sensitive to some things and under-sensitive to others.

Autism may be present with other conditions and it is important to understand the implications of this for each person. For example autistic people may also be diagnosed with an intellectual disability, language delay, epilepsy, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, anxiety or depression. Furthermore, no two autistic people are alike. Each person has diverse support needs to enable them to participate and contribute meaningfully to their community.

More information about autism and teaching autistic students is available at www.amaze.org.au

Information from the Victorian Department of Education and Training is available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/needs/Pages/autism.aspx>

Every autistic person is different

Language

Language is powerful. The language we use is important because it helps change attitudes towards autism. We have given careful consideration to the language we use in this resource.

We respect the rights of all individuals with a lived experience of autism to choose the language that most powerfully represents the way they identify with autism.

We also recognise that there are differing views within the autism community about how to describe autism. Many people support identity first language, such as “autistic”, as it places autism as intrinsic to a person’s identity and character. Others support person-first language, such as “person with autism”, because it places the primary focus on the individual and thus respects their identity as a person.

Recent research from the United Kingdom¹ examined the preferences of autistic people, their families, friends and professionals around the language used to describe autism. The findings confirmed that there is no single term that everyone prefers. However, they suggest a shift towards more positive and assertive language, particularly among autistic communities where autism is seen as integral to the person. This shift in preference is consistent with the feedback.

We are aware that the terms “high functioning,” “low functioning”, “severe” and “mild” are often used in an attempt to describe the extent of the challenges experienced by autistic people.

However, as described above, every autistic person has different strengths and challenges. Amaze therefore avoids use of these terms because we believe the terms “high functioning” and “mild” invalidate the difficulties an autistic person may experience, and the terms “low functioning” or “severe” may ignore their strengths and capabilities.

We recognise that our community is comprised of people with a diverse range of talents and challenges. We emphasise that our purpose is to serve all autistic people, regardless of their specific diagnoses, capabilities and challenges.

**The
language
we use helps
change
attitudes**

¹ Kenny, L, Hattersley, C, Molins B, Buckley C, Povey C, Pellicano E. Which terms should be used to describe autism? Perspectives from the UK autism community (2016) Autism Vol 20(4)

Lesson:

What is autism?

Year levels: 3, 4, 5, 6. Duration: 45 - 60 minutes

Victorian curriculum content descriptions

Personal and social capability

Levels 1 and 2

Listen to others' ideas, and recognise that others may see things differently ([VCPSCSO012](#))

Describe ways of making and keeping friends, including how actions and words can help or hurt others, and the effects of modifying their behaviour ([VCPSCSO013](#))

Levels 3 and 4

Examine the similarities and differences between individuals and groups based on factors such as sex, age, ability, language, culture and religion ([VCPSCSO020](#))

Levels 5 and 6

Explore and discuss behaviours that demonstrate sensitivity to individual, social and cultural differences ([VCPSCSO029](#))

Resources

- Computer
- Projector or interactive whiteboard
- Youtube clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JdCY-cdgkl> OR
- Strips of paper
- Butcher's paper and markers
- *About Autism* resource, printed and cut into cards on page 15 of this booklet

Lesson introduction

Today we're learning:

about autism and respectful relationships with autistic people.

10 minutes

Success criteria:

I can describe some of the ways autistic people are different from others.
I can describe some ways I could be helpful or respectful to autistic people.

Key vocabulary:

autism, communicate, repetitive, behaviour

Lesson body

Whole group activity

Watch Youtube video together (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JdCY-cdgkl>)
OR Explicit teaching of content from "About Autism Cards" from page 15 of this kit

6 - 10 minutes

Small group activity

Split class into 5 groups. Each group takes a different card from the "About Autism" printable on page 15 of this kit. Students in each group to talk about a way that the attribute on their card might make autistic people seem different or similar to their peers. Students write their responses on butcher's paper.

8 minutes

Whole group

Representatives from each group share their response with the class.
Butcher's paper from each group is stuck up on the board/wall.
Teacher demonstrates how to complete individual activity (worked example).

10 minutes

4 minutes

Individual activity

Students write on strips of paper different things that they could do at school or in the community to be helpful or respectful to autistic people.

5 minutes

Extension activity for early finishers:

Create a poster for the school hallways describing ways that members of the school community can be helpful or respectful to autistic people.

Lesson:

Similarities and differences

Year levels: 3, 4, 5, 6. Duration: 45 minutes

Victorian curriculum content descriptions

Personal and social capability

Levels 1 and 2

Listen to others' ideas, and recognise that others may see things differently ([VCPSCSO012](#)).

Describe ways of making and keeping friends, including how actions and words can help or hurt others, and the effects of modifying their behaviour ([VCPSCSO013](#)).

Levels 3 and 4

Examine the similarities and differences between individuals and groups based on factors such as sex, age, ability, language, culture and religion ([VCPSCSO020](#)).

Levels 5 and 6

Explore and discuss behaviours that demonstrate sensitivity to individual, social and cultural differences ([VCPSCSO029](#)).

Resources

- Teacher computer
- Projector or interactive whiteboard
- Butcher's paper or whiteboard and markers
- One of the short Spectroscopic films (to be chosen by the teacher from the list on page 7)

Lesson introduction

Today we're learning:

about what autism is like for one person. We'll also think about ways to be supportive of autistic people.

10 minutes

Success Criteria:

I can describe some of the ways autistic people can be similar and different to others.
I can describe some ways I could be helpful or respectful to autistic people.

Key vocabulary:

autism, similar, different

Lesson body

Whole group activity

Watch Spectroscopic film/s chosen by the teacher. Teacher emphasises that all autistic people are different, this film shows one person's experience.

10 – 15 minutes

Teacher demonstrates how to complete individual activity (worked example).

Individual activity

Students use Venn diagram (from page 14 of this kit) to describe ways that they are similar and different to the young person in the film.

8 minutes

Whole group

Students brainstorm different ways that they could help/support the young person in the film if they came to this school. Student or teacher to scribe answers on board or butcher's paper. For each suggestion, two volunteers come to the front of the classroom and role play what this would look like.

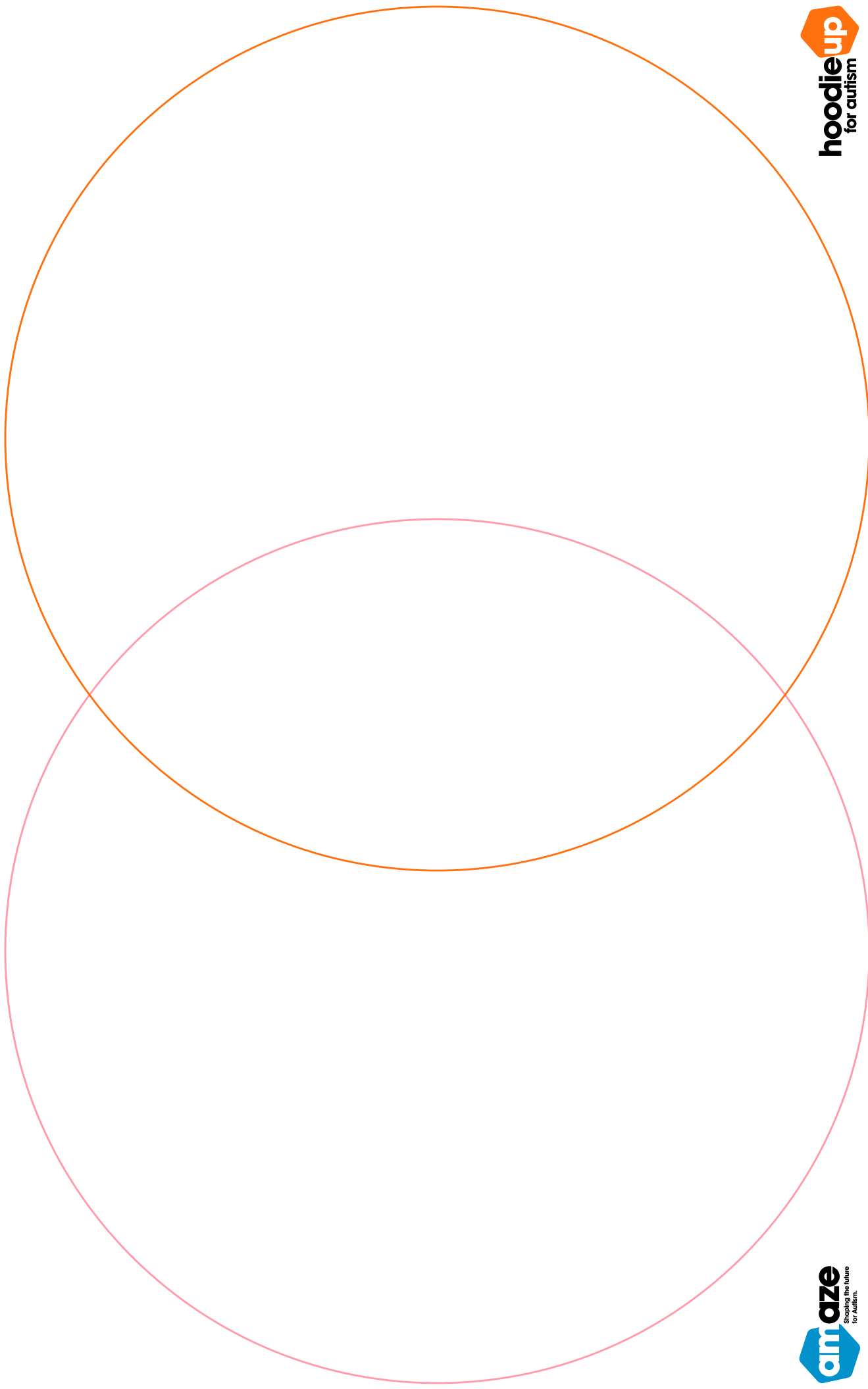
12 minutes

Extension activities

- Students write a short text to publish in the school newsletter, describing what they have learnt about autism and ways to support autistic people.
- Students role play different ways to be inclusive and supportive of others in the classroom and playground.
- Students create posters (for the classroom or for the wider school environment) describing general supportive or respectful behaviours that students can use to respond to diversity.
- Students write and deliver a short presentation at school assembly sharing what they have learnt about autism and ways to be supportive of autistic people.
- Students plan and promote their involvement with the Hoodie Up activity for World Autism Acceptance Month. See pages 2 and 3 for details.
- Students plan and facilitate a special assembly to mark World Autism Acceptance Month.



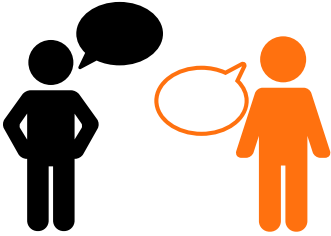
Similarities and differences



About Autism cards

This page can be printed out for use in classroom activities.

Some autistic people find it harder to have a conversation and take turns speaking.



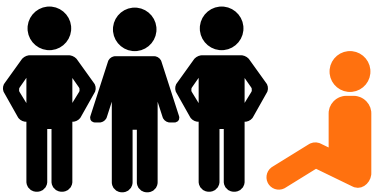
- It can be hard to start a conversation
- It can be hard to know how to finish a conversation
- It can be hard to stay on topic

Some autistic people find it harder to join in with others.



- Sometimes want to join in but don't know how
- Can find it hard to make friends (and keep friends)
- Sometimes want to be left alone

Some autistic people find it hard to understand what people want them to do.



- Can find it hard to read body language or faces
- Might need some help to understand which behaviour is appropriate.

Some autistic people repeat the same behaviour or idea over and over.



- Might like doing the same thing again and again
- Might have one thing that they are very, very interested in
- Might get upset when things are different
- Might not want to try new things

Some autistic people are under or over sensitive.



- Might have very sensitive taste, touch, smell, hearing or sight
- Might have very low sense of taste, touch, smell, hearing or sight

Assembly ideas

Students may present a short text they have written describing what they have learned. This could be presented orally or through use of a powerpoint presentation. (Curriculum links: Literacy, Digital Technologies, Personal and Social Capabilities)

Key messages to communicate to the school community:

- Having autism can create challenges but there are lots of great things about autism too.
- We all have similarities and differences to autistic people.
- There are ways you can show support for autistic people.



Students may present short scenes using drama or dance to depict ways of being kind or supportive to autistic people.

(Curriculum links: The Arts)

Points to consider:

- Will a teacher facilitate the assembly or will it be run by a group of students?
- If students will be presenting a powerpoint presentation or using other audio visual equipment, it is a good idea for them to practice using the technology in advance.
- Setting up (and checking!) computers, projectors and microphones in advance can help to make the assembly flow smoothly.
- Students may like to display their posters in the hall where assembly will take place.
- It may be helpful to ask teachers of autistic students at the school to privately give them some prior warning of the topic for the school assembly.

