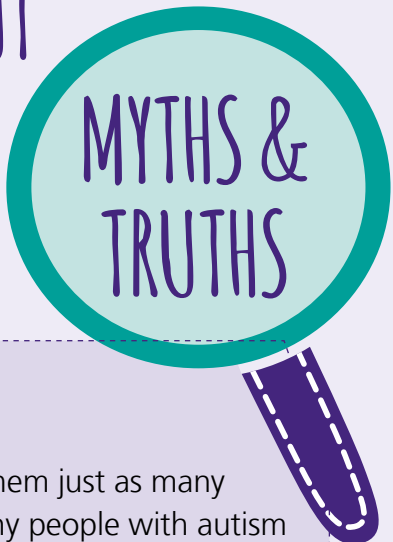


COMMON MYTHS ABOUT AUTISM AND ADHD

Here are some of the common myths we hear about autism and ADHD.



MYTHS & TRUTHS

Myth: *Autistic people and people with ADHD are stupid.*

Truth: Autism and ADHD bring with them just as many exceptional abilities as challenges. Many people with autism and ADHD have normal to high IQs and some may excel at maths, music or another pursuit. Autism is a developmental disability, not an intellectual one. It affects somebody's ability to communicate and interact with people, it can make a person rather fixed in their habits, and it can give them some sensory issues – but none of these affect intelligence. It can be hard to concentrate and pay attention with ADHD which can lower academic achievement but this is not about intelligence and can change with support and treatment.

Myth: *Autism and ADHD only affects children.*

Truth: Autistic children grow up to become adults with autism. ADHD used to be thought of as something that happened just in childhood. However, it is now recognised that ADHD can persist to adulthood for many people and can cause adults significant difficulties if not treated.

Myth: *Autism means people can't understand the emotions of others.*

Truth: Autism often affects an individual's ability to understand unspoken interpersonal communication, so somebody with autism might not detect sadness based solely on one's body language or sarcasm in one's tone of voice. But, when emotions are communicated more directly, people with autism are much more likely to feel empathy and compassion for others.

Myth: *Autism is caused by the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine.*

Truth: This idea is based on a research study published in 1998 by Dr Andrew Wakefield which has since been discredited. His study only involved 12 children, and those children weren't randomly selected – which means, in terms of method, it cannot be relied on. Two major properly run studies since have found no link.

Myth: *ADHD can be cured.*

Truth: ADHD is a behavioural disorder rather than an illness so there is no medical "cure" although it can be treated. ADHD can be treated using medication or therapy, but a combination of both is often best. No medication can be a permanent cure for ADHD but may help someone with the condition concentrate better, be less impulsive, feel calmer, and learn and practise new skills.

Myth: Autism is a mental illness.

Truth: No, it is a neurological condition that means the brain processes information differently. A mental illness is a condition that a person can experience at any time and sometimes recover from. A developmental disorder like autism, on the other hand, is something you're born with and which will be part of you for the whole of your life. Autistic people can have good mental health, or experience mental health problems, just like anyone else.

Myth: Girls don't have autism or ADHD.

Truth: Presently, more boys than girls are diagnosed with autism and ADHD. However, there's some debate as to whether this is a completely accurate reflection of the real statistics, as girls often 'present' their autism or ADHD somewhat differently from boys and may be under-diagnosed as a result.

Myth: Autistic people have mental superpowers.

Truth: This is what families often call the 'Rain Man' myth: that all children with autism have some kind of 'special ability' like brilliant mathematics or musicianship.

What this idea refers to is the phenomenon of the savant (someone with a skill that's exceptional by the standards of the general population) but the fact is that most people with autism aren't savants, and not all savants have autism.