



The Autism Relationship Dilemma

Autistic people cannot feel what neurotypicals feel. We are incapable of imagining what it is like to be in a body that feels emotion.

Neurotypicals cannot feel an autistic person's inability to feel. They are incapable of imagining what it is like to be in a body that cannot feel emotion.

In romantic relationships, neurotypicals tend to avoid saying what they really mean. They beat around the bush and hint at what they want. They assume the other person will understand the implied meaning. This doesn't work on autistic people. If you want something from an autistic person, you must say so directly.

Autistic people cannot provide the emotional support that a neurotypical partner usually expects. Nor can they receive any emotional support that their partner attempts to provide. The best way to help an autistic person is not to help him/her.

Explaining Autism to My Partner

To My Beloved,

I take everything literally. Autistic hyperfocus gives me no choice about this. My mind fixates on what you say and doesn't let me run a second mental program questioning how you use words. You say the words, but I have to own them.

I am unaware of nonverbal communication. I cannot pick up on subtleties or take hints. You must put into words everything you want me to know.

My only purpose in talking is to exchange information. The content of what we talk about is important to me. Any social context is irrelevant and distracting.

Interruptions may be experienced by me as anywhere from annoying to devastating, depending on how locked in thought I am at the time.

It is impossible for me to be spontaneous. My mental health requires structured routine.

My senses easily overload. I am hypersensitive to loud noises and bright lights. Hearing unwanted conversations overwhelms me. Sensory overload makes it impossible for me to think or focus.

I am unable to defend myself against emotional attacks.

- David