



The Autism Relationship Dilemma

We who are autistic 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 our 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 falsely assume we will understand their implied meaning. If you want something from an autistic person, you must say so directly.

We cannot provide the emotional support that a neurotypical partner typically expects. Nor can we receive any emotional support that our 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 won't let me run a second mental program questioning how you use words. You say the words, and 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.

I may experience interruptions 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