

'It's a Spectrum' Doesn't mean what you think!

A colleague recently sent me this link to an article written by a person with autism. It highlighted some very useful information and even more useful insight and understanding around inappropriate and inaccurate assumptions I think are commonly made by many.

I have included the link below ...and a few excerpts.

Everyone knows that autism is a spectrum. People bring it up all the time.

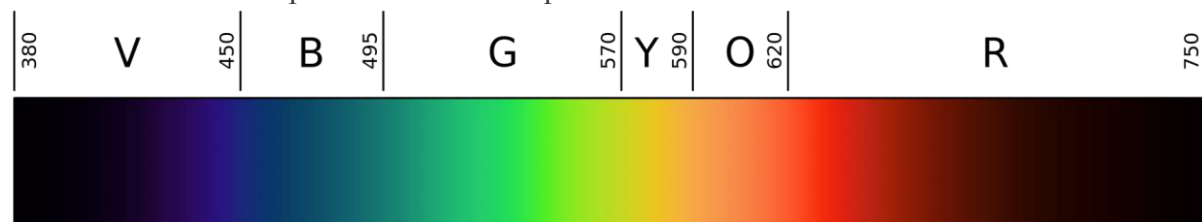
"My son is on the severe end of the autism spectrum."

"We're all a little autistic– it's a spectrum."

"I'm not autistic but I'm definitely 'on the spectrum.'"

If only people knew what a spectrum is... because they are talking about autism all wrong.

Let's use the visible spectrum as an example.



As you can see, the various parts of the spectrum are noticeably different from each other. Blue looks very different from red, but they are both on the visible light spectrum. Red is not "more blue" than blue is. Red is not "more spectrum" than blue is.

When people discuss colours, they don't talk about how "far along" the spectrum a colour is. They don't say "my walls are on the high end of the spectrum" or "I look best in colours that are on the low end of the spectrum."

But when people talk about autism they talk as if it were a *gradient*, not a spectrum at all.

The autism spectrum looks more like this:



Pragmatic Language	Social Awareness	Monotropic Mindset	Information Processing	Sensory Processing	Repetitive Behaviors	Neuro-Motor Differences
Social communication including body language, eye contact, small talk, and turn-taking in conversation.	Ability to pick up on etiquette, social norms, taboos. Ability to form and maintain relationships.	Narrow but intense ability to focus, resulting in "obsessive" interests and difficulty task-switching.	Ability to assimilate and apply new information quickly or to adapt to new environments or situations.	Challenges interpreting sensory information, hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity to stimuli.	Tendency to "stim" in response to varying emotions. Can be beneficial or harmful in nature.	Ability to control body movements. Ranges from clumsiness to complete loss of ability to move with intention.

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All autistic people are affected in one way or another in most or *all* of these boxes – a *rainbow* of traits.

If you only check one or two boxes, then they don't call it autism– they call it something else.

<http://theaspergian.com/2019/05/04/its-a-spectrum-doesnt-mean-what-you-think/>