

Scottish autism

WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED

Social and Media

Advice and Thoughts from the Autistic Community

Social

'While some of us are used to self-isolating for various reasons, others are finding the sudden loss of direct social contact hard. I'm finding that Social Media can be the next best thing...'

'My whole life is about trying not to isolate myself because of my "shyness". I like and need to be in contact with people every day, otherwise I feel isolated. So that's one of the main things I've learned in life, that for my own mental health I have got to force myself to find the courage every day to stay connected with other people. For some reason I struggle to believe that they would want me to contact them - I never seem to know if acquaintances like me or not from day to day for some reason.'

'For that reason I find it hard to trust people properly apart from family and a few close friends and neighbours. But when I do find a friend that I can trust, in my heart they will be a friend for life. But it still takes a lot of courage for me to contact them out of the blue. I guess social adeptness just is not my thing! But I persevere, as the rewards of human contact are always worth it.'

'I avoid most social media... I've quit Twitter, I wilfully neglect Facebook, and I can't stand most others... It's more the platforms and the experience they foster though tbh (to be honest)'

'Each day I make sure I do some social contact even if I don't always feel like it. It's easy to let slip. My transition a few years ago from when I was out at work each day to when spending much more time at home showed me how important the social connections are – even though spending too much time with people tires me greatly.'

'Another social activity that helps and I sometimes count on - especially when I can't go out - is to have a phone call (or internet face to face) with a friend who I can do that with. For me, phoning someone I don't know that well causes me stress, so there is only a few people who I would ring. I also have found Facebook at times invaluable for keeping touch with friends. I post nature photos which people like!'

'I'm hearing on the media that the whole population is becoming like me and walking along without making eye contact, then discovering that it's good to reach out to people!! I recently said to someone coming towards me on the pavement 'it's nothing personal!' as I moved well away from them – that actually felt really good as he smiled back and said something nice too! I felt good for a while after that, and determined to do this more often, although with the anxiety I'm feeling I often just can't bring myself to.'

'Doing something useful for others I find rewarding and adds to my wellbeing and also gives me something extra to discuss in everyday conversations.'

'I find myself getting unusually irked by things other people do and say (there's my neighbour power-washing his slabs while I'm trying to enjoy the sunshine!). My husband has been saying he's really concerned about my stress levels and how this will be impacting my immune system. I've done some really long, exhausting, crying which has helped, and I'm also trying to get away from difficult situations before they become unbearable (I know my tolerance levels are particularly low just now). But most of all I'm trying to just let things go...it is often possible, for me anyway!'

Media

'With all this additional anxiety and stress, I am more noise sensitive than ever. Some things that have helped: Reducing background noise, and trying to focus on one thing at a time. I've discussed with my work that I may need to turn off communication channels in order to focus. Turn off news alerts on devices. I googled how to do this and it was straightforward (Yay! I've learned something new!!). However, in doing so, I discovered that there were two different news apps pre-installed so had to turn off notifications for both. Turn off notification sounds if you still want notifications (they drive me crazy!)

'Try not to watch too much on the news/social media regarding Covid-19 as it can be overwhelming. Set a time of day to catch up on events then forget about it.'

'I do keep track of the news and what's going on and feel a little anxious. If the news gets too bad I might take time out from following it. I won't list my anxieties so I don't pass them on – I am sure you have your own. I suppose I know that in the end it will pass by and there will be difficulties and sadness. However I also tend to think and remind myself that there is likely to be some good come out of it as people discover new ways of doing things or discover resources in themselves.'