

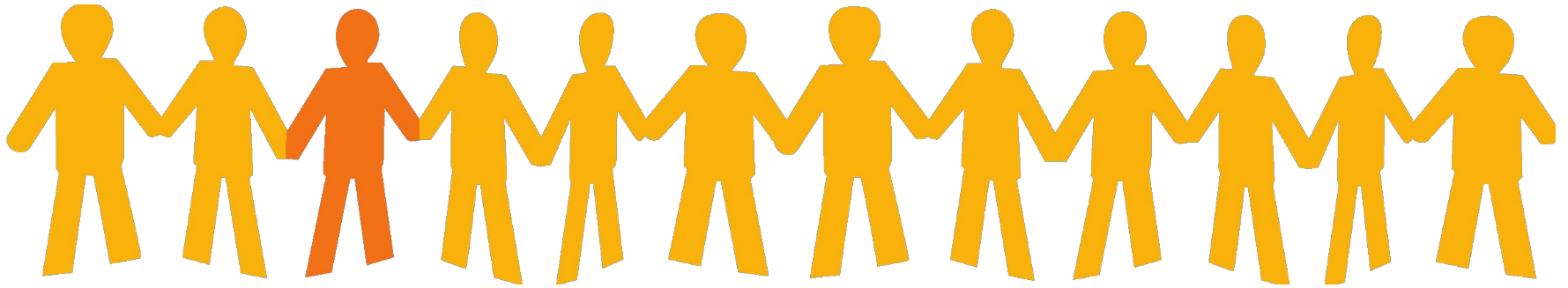
A stylized illustration of a hand with a red skin tone and a green sleeve, pointing its index finger towards the text below.

What is autism?

What we will cover today

- ✓ **What is autism and how do we talk about autism?**
- ✓ **How can you support your autistic friends**





What is autism?

Autism is a **processing difference** that can have an impact on many areas of a person's life.

Autistic people can often experience differences in how they process **communication**, their **sensory** environment and how they **interact** with other people.

Some people say '**autistic**', some say '**person with autism**'.

It is estimated that

One in 100

children, teenagers and adults in the UK are autistic.

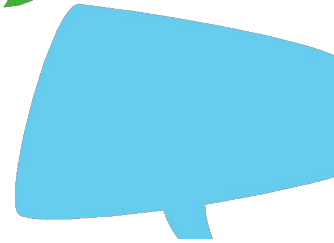
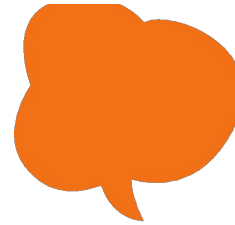
Autism and other conditions

- Some autistic people will have **other conditions or disabilities** alongside autism.
- These conditions can include **learning disabilities**, learning difficulties, mental health conditions, epilepsy and other physical disabilities.



Autism: communication

- The way autistic people communicate happens in a **variety of different ways**.
- Some may speak very clearly and don't appear to struggle with language.
- Some may muddle words or talk at different volumes to what you might expect.
- Some may not use words to communicate or only a few words.



Think about! Make sure you are allowing your classmates to communicate how they are comfortable.

Autism: interaction

Autistic people may show difficulty with:

- Understanding the **social rules** of different situations.
- Working out **when to talk** about something.
- Understanding or showing **facial expressions**.
- **Tone of voice** and what different tones mean.
- Knowing when someone wants to socialise or be left alone.
- Understanding **turn taking** or conversation rules.



Think about! How can you make social rules clear to all everyone in your class? A code of conduct and clear language can make things easier to understand.

Autism: processing information

We process information as an input and output. When there is **too much information** people can struggle to understand it all.

Autistic people may need **more time to process** information, smaller amounts of information and information in **different formats**.



Think about! Give your classmates time to respond to you. They may be thinking about what to say.

Autism: sensory processing

Autistic people can experience the world differently to non-autistic people.

The **sensory environment** can have a big impact on how you process the world around you.

Senses can be **overwhelming** or **muted**.

Sensory processing affects sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, temperature and body awareness.



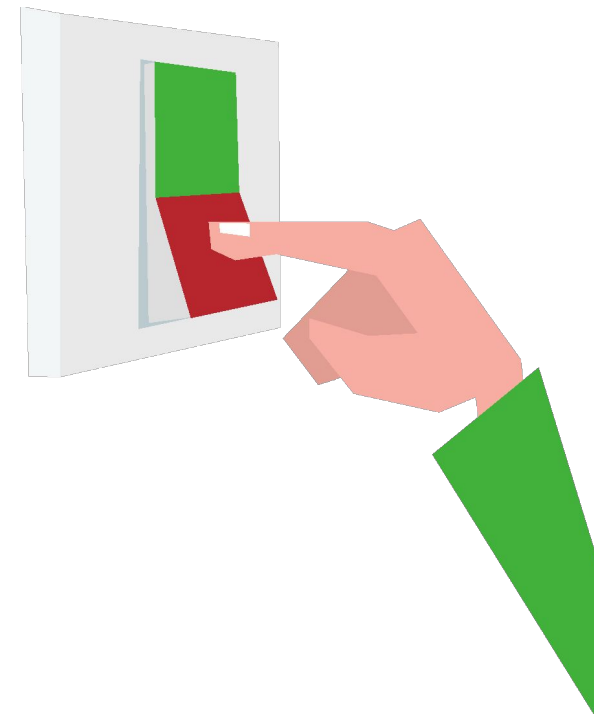
Meltdowns and Shutdowns

A meltdown **isn't a tantrum**. It is the response to a situation that is so overwhelming the person just needs to get out.

To support someone in a meltdown help them to **leave the overwhelming situation** and try not to judge them for their response.

Shutdowns can also happen when someone is overwhelmed. They are so overwhelmed that **they can't respond** to a situation.

People often need time to recover to feel better again.



Things we want our non autistic peers to know

- ✓ If you have any **questions about autism**, please **ask**.
- ✓ **Don't laugh** at others for the way they move.
- ✓ Meltdowns and shutdowns **aren't funny** – please don't try and make others have either of these.
- ✓ **Capabilities can change** from day-to-day and hour-to-hour.
- ✓ Autistic people can have really focused **hobbies or interests** which they like to talk about a lot.



How you can support your classmates

- Ask them what **autism means for them** – what are they really good at and what do they find difficult
- Ask them what they want you to do if they get **overwhelmed**
- Talk to them about their **special interests** – this is something that brings a lot of happiness
- **Be kind and respectful**
- Don't force them to get involved in games they don't want to - but **do invite them** to play or join in
- Understand that **everyone is different** and it is important to accept everyone as they are

