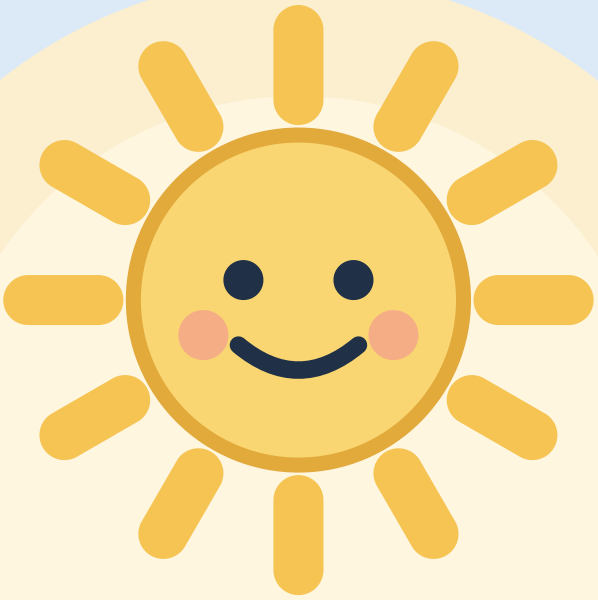


My Brilliant Brain

A book about being
autistic, and all about me

This book belongs to

.....

ANDREW RYDER Neuro-affirmative resources



Hello! I'm Ray.

I'm a little sunbeam. I'm going to help you explore your brilliant brain.

You might have met some people who asked you questions, played some games and listened to you and your family. They were finding out how your brain works. They found out that **you are autistic**.

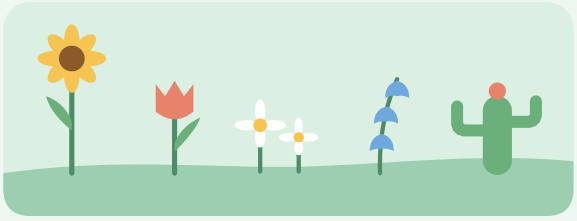
This book will help you understand what that means. It is all about **you**.

How to use this book

- Read one page at a time. There is no rush.
- Read it with a grown-up you trust, or on your own.
- Skip any page you like. You can come back later.
- Draw, colour and write in it. It is your book.

There are no wrong answers in this book. Everything you think and feel is OK.

My brain is autistic



Every brain is different, just like the flowers in a garden. Some flowers grow tall, some stay small. Some love the sun and some like the shade. They all need different things to grow, and **they all belong in the garden**.

Autistic is one kind of brain. Lots and lots of people are autistic: children and grown-ups, all over the world.

Autistic brains often...

- notice details other people miss
- feel sounds, lights and touch very strongly
- love some things very, very much
- like knowing what is going to happen
- think and solve problems in their own way
- talk and play in their own way

Some things might feel easier for you, and some things might feel harder. That is true for everyone. A grown-up word for "all brains are different" is **neurodiversity**.



True or not true?

People sometimes get muddled about autism. Let's find out the facts.

"I was born autistic."
Your brain has been autistic since you were a baby. Nothing anyone did made you autistic.

✓ TRUE

"Autism is an illness."
You are not ill. Being autistic is a way of being, not something that makes you poorly.

✕ NOT TRUE

"You can catch autism, like a cold."
Nobody can catch it, and you cannot give it to anyone else.

✕ NOT TRUE

"All autistic people are the same."
Every autistic person is different, just like every person is different.

✕ NOT TRUE

"Autistic people can be all sorts of things."
Scientists, artists, builders, teachers, vets, chefs, game designers, and lots more.

✓ TRUE

"Autistic brains need fixing."
Your brain is not broken. Everyone needs help with some things, and that is OK.

✕ NOT TRUE

Here is another true one: there is only one you, and you are just right as you are.

My super senses

Your senses tell your brain about the world. Autistic people often feel things **more** or **less** than other people. Circle how each sense feels for you most of the time.

Hearing
sounds and voices

Too much | Just right | I like more

Seeing
lights, colours and busy places

Too much | Just right | I like more

Touch
clothes, hugs, messy hands

Too much | Just right | I like more

Smell
food, soap, places, people

Too much | Just right | I like more

Taste
flavours and how food feels

Too much | Just right | I like more

Moving
spinning, swinging, balance

Too much | Just right | I like more

Body squeeze
pushing, pulling, big hugs

Too much | Just right | I like more

Inside me
hungry, thirsty, toilet, feelings

Easy to notice | Hard to notice



Your senses can change from day to day. When you are tired or worried, things can feel even bigger. That is OK.

My calm toolkit

These things can help your senses feel calmer. They are not cheating, and they are not babyish. They are tools, just like glasses. **Tick the ones that help you.**



Headphones or ear defenders ☐



Sunglasses or a cap ☐



A cosy, soft hoodie ☐



Something to fiddle with ☐



A heavy or squishy blanket ☐



A quiet den or calm corner ☐



Jumping, bouncing or swinging ☐



A favourite thing to hold ☐

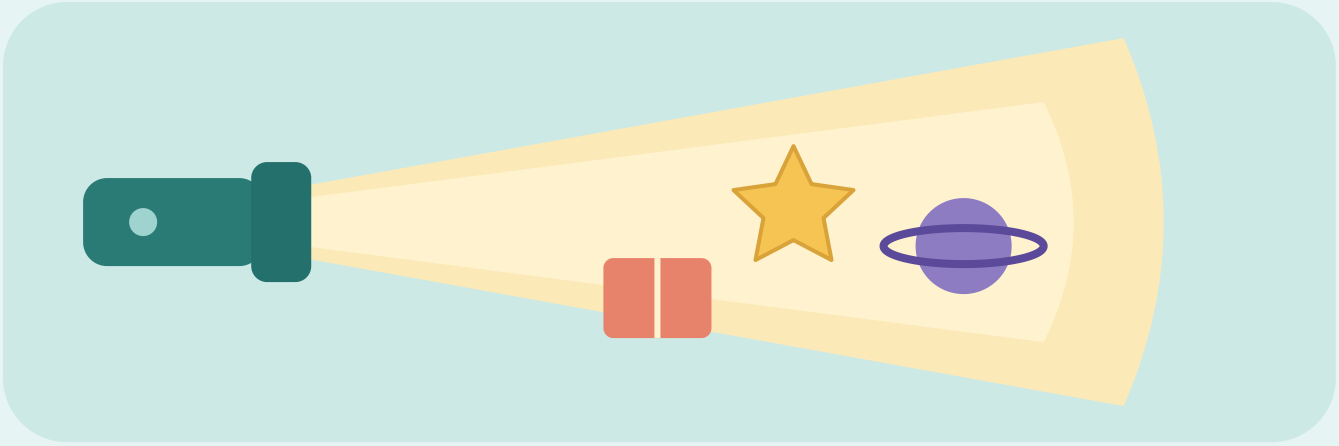


A drink and a snack ☐

My own idea

Draw or write something else that helps you feel calm.

My spotlight brain



Lots of autistic brains are like a **torch with a bright, strong beam**. When the beam shines on something you love, you notice every detail, learn loads and feel really happy.

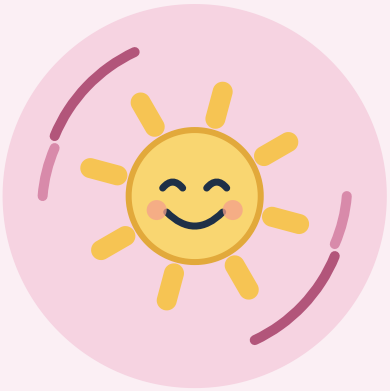
Moving the beam to something new can take time. That is why it helps when people give you a **warning** before it is time to stop.

Things I love

Draw or write about the things that light up your brain.

Your interests are good for you. They help you feel calm, happy and like yourself.

Happy hands, moving bodies



Moving your body or making sounds in a way that feels good is called **stimming**. Lots of autistic people stim.

Stims can look like...

flapping hands	rocking	spinning
bouncing	humming	tapping
fiddling	walking up and down	saying favourite words

Calm
Stims can help your body settle.

Focus
Stims can help you think and listen.

Joy
Stims can show you are happy or excited.

It is OK to stim.

If a stim ever hurts you or someone else, a grown-up can help you find another one that feels just as good.

My favourite stims

My energy battery

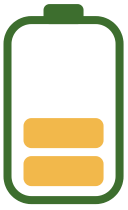
Imagine you have a battery inside you. Some things use up your energy, and some things charge you back up. Autistic people can use up energy quickly in busy, noisy places.



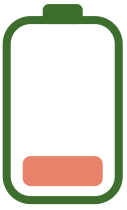
Full of energy



Doing OK



Getting tired



Need to recharge

Things that use up my battery

Ideas: noisy places, lots of talking, changes, a long school day

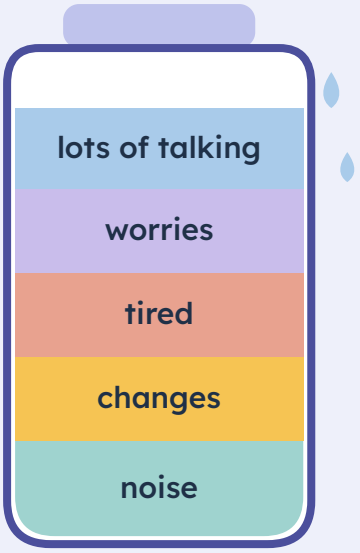
Things that charge me up

Ideas: my favourite things, quiet time, being outside, a pet



When your battery is low, it is OK to rest. Resting is how you recharge, and it is not lazy.

When it all feels too much



Every day, little things fill up a jar inside you. When the jar gets very full, it can **spill over**.

You might cry, shout or run away. Or you might go very quiet and not want to talk or move. People call these **meltdowns** and **shutdowns**.

You are not naughty. Your body is telling you it needs a break.

Signs my jar is getting full (circle yours)

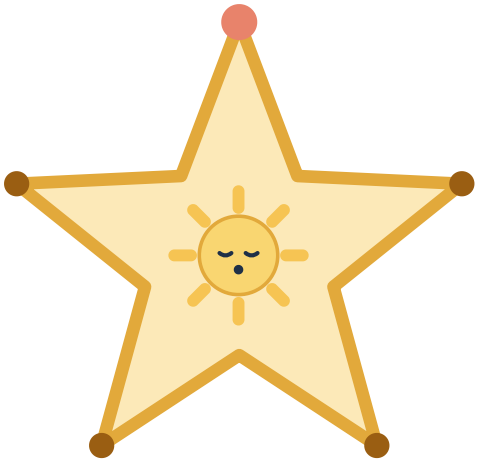
hot face | tummy ache | wriggly body | feeling cross | wanting to hide | covering my ears | no words come out | tears

What helps me empty my jar

If you feel worried or sad a lot, tell a grown-up you trust. You can also call **Childline** for free on **0800 1111**.

Calm ideas to try

Practise these when you feel calm, so they are easy to remember when you need them.



Star breathing

Put your finger on the pink dot at the top.

Breathe in as your finger slides **up** a side.

Breathe out as it slides **down**.

Go all the way round the star.

More things to try

Push your hands together hard, then let go

Find 5 things you can see around you

Hug a pillow or a soft toy tightly

Stretch up tall like a cat waking up

Hum or listen to a favourite tune

Go to your quiet place for a while

If something does not feel nice for you, that is OK. Choose a different idea. You know your body best.

Knowing what comes next

Lots of autistic people like to know what is going to happen. Changes and surprises can feel **wobbly**. Knowing the plan helps your brain feel safe and saves your energy.

A picture plan can show your day


Breakfast


School


Park


Bedtime

Now

draw or write

Next

draw or write

Questions I can ask

What is happening today?

What comes next?

When will it finish?

What will stay the same?

If plans change, grown-ups can...

tell me as early as they can

show me a picture or a map

give me time to get ready

make a Plan B with me

How I communicate

There are lots of ways to share what you think, feel and need. **They are all good ways.**

Talking	Writing	Drawing	Pointing
Signing	Typing	Picture cards	Talking app

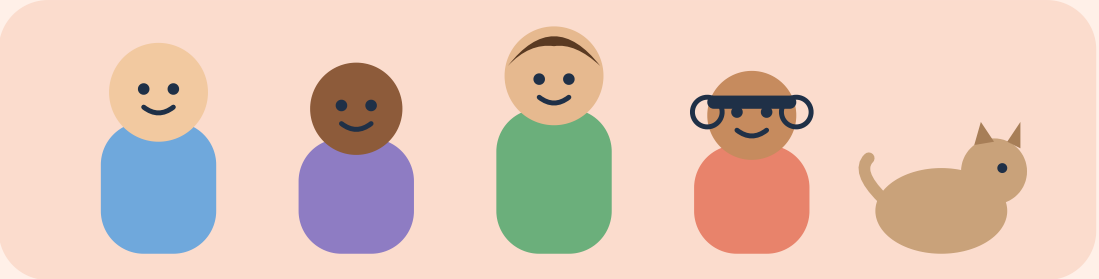
Tick the ones that are true for you

- [ ] I need time to think before I answer.
- [ ] I listen better when I do not have to look at people's eyes.
- [ ] I like people to say exactly what they mean.
- [ ] Jokes and hints can be confusing.
- [ ] Sometimes my words go away when I feel worried.
- [ ] I love talking about the things I am interested in.
- [ ] Instructions are easier when they are written down or shown.



You can ask grown-ups to give you more time, write things down, or say things in a different way.

Friends and being me



Friends come in all shapes and sizes. Some people like one best friend. Some like a few friends, or friends who love the same things. Some people like time on their own too. **All of these are OK.**

When there is a mix-up

Autistic and non-autistic people sometimes understand things in different ways, a bit like speaking different languages. When there is a mix-up, it is nobody's fault. Both people can learn about each other.

A good friend...

likes you for who you are

is kind and listens to you

is OK when you need a break

shares things you both enjoy

A good friend does not...

make you do things you do not want to do

laugh at you or leave you out on purpose

ask you to keep secrets from your grown-ups

If someone is unkind to you, tell a grown-up you trust. It is never your fault.

My brilliant strengths

Everyone has things they are good at. **Colour in the stars that are true for you**, then add your own in the empty stars.



I remember lots of facts



I notice small details



I am honest



I am kind



I am creative



I care about fairness



I know loads about my interests



I am funny



I keep trying at things I love



I am good with animals



I spot patterns



I am a loyal friend









Something I am proud of

All about me

Fill this in with a grown-up. You can share it with your teacher, club leader or doctor.

Draw yourself or stick a photo here

My name is

I like to be called

I am autistic, and that means I

I am good at

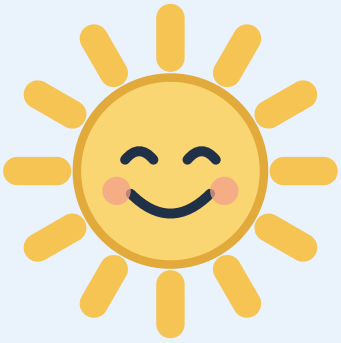
I love

Things that are hard for me

Things that help me

When I am upset, please

My signal for "I need a break" is



You are you, and that is brilliant

My brain is brilliant.

Being autistic is part of who I am.

It is OK to do things my way.

I can ask for what I need.

It is OK to need help sometimes.

There is only one me.

Thank you for reading this book with me. Keep being you!
Love from Ray

A note for grown-ups

This booklet helps autistic children aged around 5 to 11 understand their diagnosis in a calm, positive and accurate way. It works well alongside wider post-diagnostic support, and uses identity-first language, which most autistic adults prefer.

Using the booklet

Go at your child's pace, a page at a time.

Sit side by side. It often feels easier than face to face.

Skip, reorder and come back to pages over time.

Welcome every reaction, including mixed feelings.

Share page 16 with school, clubs and health professionals.

Words that help

Instead of	Try
"has autism"	**"is autistic"**
"symptoms"	**"traits" or "differences"**
"tantrum" or "naughty"	**"overwhelmed" or "meltdown"**
"normal"	**"non-autistic"**
"high or low functioning"	**describe the support needed**

The ideas behind the pages

Page 7 draws on **monotropism**, page 9 on **energy accounting**, page 10 on how stress builds towards **meltdowns and shutdowns**, and page 14 on the **double empathy problem**, where misunderstandings between autistic and non-autistic people run both ways.

When to look for more support

If your child is often very distressed, struggling to attend school, talking about hurting themselves, or has worrying changes in sleep or eating, speak to your GP or school SENCO. Emergency: **999**. Childline: **0800 1111**. PAPYRUS HOPELINE247: **0300 102 2470**.

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