



How is autism defined? What impact do these definitions have on the neurodiverse community? In this episode we explore how the definition of autism impacts how we view this condition and those on the spectrum.

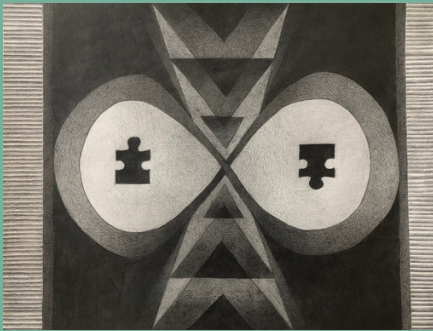
page 1

# UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PODCAST

## SHOW NOTES

### SEASON 1 EPISODE 2

### WHAT IS AUTISM?



*What is Autism?*  
artwork by Nicole Kubilus

## Links

Temple Grandin *Thinking in Pictures* (book)

Judy Singer on "[Neurodiversity](#)" (interview)

[Understanding Autism Podcast](#) (website)

### HOW IS AUTISM DEFINED? (0:43-4:14)

- [CDC definition](#)
- [Autism Speaks](#)
- [WebMd](#)
- [Autism Self Advocacy Network](#)

### LIMITATIONS OF THESE DEFINITIONS (4:14-8:50)

- there are still a lot of unknowns surrounding ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder)
- autism is a spectrum disorder, all autistic people are not the same and experience autism differently
- What is neurodiversity?
- asperger syndrome now not seen as a separate condition but rather a subcategory of ASD.

### IMPACT OF BIAS IN THESE DEFINITIONS (8:55-14:30)

- clinical medical definitions
- based on behavioral observations
- medical model of disability (problem → solution)
- vs. social model of disability (humanizes autism) as (see [Autism Self Advocacy Network](#))
- "solutions" vs establishing support systems in the school or workplace
- multiple perspectives on autism can be beneficial
- autism is more than a disorder



How is autism defined? What impact do these definitions have on the neurodiverse community? In this episode we explore how the definition of autism impacts how we view this condition and those on the spectrum.

page 2

# UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PODCAST

SHOW NOTES

SEASON 1 EPISODE 2

WHAT IS AUTISM?

Understanding Autism  
Podcast Community  
(Facebook group)



## THE AUTISM SPECTRUM (14:30-18:15)

- mild-moderate-severe
- largely based on what kind of supports are needed
- vs. limiting labels such as "high-functioning" and "low-functioning"
- (example) non-verbal autistic people may have high mental functioning
- Asperger syndrome was largely seen as a separate condition until 2013
- PDD-NOS pervasive developmental disorder may also have mild-moderate needs
- PDD-NOS has it's own spectrum

## DIAGNOSIS (18:15-22:01)

- usually comes from not meeting developmental milestones as a child
- 18 months - 6 years as some social behaviors became manifested in group/ school situations
- pre-teen - adult might have a later diagnosis due to successful coping behaviors but still find issues in social settings (for example) as an adult



How is autism defined? What impact do these definitions have on the neurodiverse community? In this episode we explore how the definition of autism impacts how we view this condition and those on the spectrum.

page 3

# UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PODCAST

## SHOW NOTES

### SEASON 1 EPISODE 2

### WHAT IS AUTISM?

## Links

[Autism Learning Partners](#)  
(organization)

[The Highly Sensitive Person](#)  
(book series)  
*Dr. Elaine Aron*

## IMPACT OF AN AUTISM DIAGNOSIS (22:01-24:42)

- early diagnosis reactions: fear, grieving, need to "cure", pressure to mask or to act "normal" and hide autistic behaviors
- later in life diagnosis = relief in finally getting answers & understanding how the brain works = empowerment
- denial
- parent's reaction vs. child's reaction
- goal is acceptance and understanding as we grow to understand ourselves and seek the supports that those on the spectrum need

## HOW TO GET A DIAGNOSIS (24:42- 34:00)

- talking with your pediatrician about behaviors and milestones
- psychiatrist (medical doctor) who addresses mental health issues
- psychologist (health professionals who can help with behavior issues and therapy)
- important to find professionals and supports in your school to help your child be successful in school
- teachers need to know how to help children on the spectrum that are in their class
- adults can speak to their counselor or psychiatrist
- formal diagnosis and testing may be expensive

## STIGMAS AND STEREOTYPES (34:00- 41:47)