



# UNDERSTANDING AUTISM PODCAST

SHOW NOTES SEASON 1  
EPISODE 7



Fixation  
Artwork by Nicole Kubilus

"The Benefits of Special Interests in Autism" by Emily Laber-Warren (article)

How to Heal Your Anxiety When No One Else Can (book) by Amy Scher



UNDERSTANDINGAUTISM.INFO

## SEASON 1 EPISODE 7: FIXATIONS

One characteristic of autistic people is that they can develop a strong fixation on a topic or special interest, often at the expense of other tasks. Is this healthy? Why does this occur more among autistic people than with neurotypical people? What if these fixations are dangerous? In this episode, we explore these questions.

- **Definition of fixations or special interests** 0:00 - 5:44
  - Intense focus surrounding a certain topic or interest
  - can be narrow in the topic but deep in focus
  - definitions and understandings can change over time
- **Examples of Special Interests** 5:44 - 15:00
- **Nicole's Fixations As it Impacted Her Work** 15:00 - 20:22
  - Both are a coping mechanism for stress
  - Behaviors are very similar
  - Those with ADHD may also fidget or stim
  - Not just about focus and attention
  - both can be viewed as socially inappropriate
- **The Neuroscience of Special Interests** 20:22 - 21:50
- **The Benefits of Special Interests** 21:50 - 23:30
  - Incorporating special interest into daily routines vs. as a reward
  - Clubs at school
  - Career training
- **Are Special Interests Problematic?** 23:30 - 27:00
  - Is it an obsession? Questions to ask
  - Does it create anxiety?
  - Physical health issues?
  - Creating social barriers? Isolation?
  - Creating barriers to adult independence?
  - Nicole's personal reflections
- **Personal Experiences with Fixations and How To Manage Them** 27:00 - 41:13

Here we share our experiences with fixations and special interests as a neurotypical parent and as a person on the spectrum.
- **Special Interests in the Classroom** 41:13 - 57:22

Here we share our experiences with helping students with special interests in our classrooms.



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[Verbal to Visual.com](http://VerbaltoVisual.com)  
(Sketch-noting)



FACEBOOK: UNDERSTANDING  
AUTISM COMMUNITY

## SEASON 1 EPISODE 4: STIMMING

One characteristic of autistic people is that they can develop a strong fixation on a topic or special interest, often at the expense of other tasks. Is this healthy? Why does this occur more among autistic people than with neurotypical people? What if these fixations are dangerous? In this episode, we explore these questions.



### What if the Special Interest is Dangerous or Violent?

57:22 - 1:01:20

- Understand root causes and goal of this special interest
- School counselors can have structured conversations with the student
- Is it leading to cause self-harm or harm to others?