



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Autistic-Led Community Groups

Autistic-led community groups are peer communities organized and facilitated by autistic people for autistic people, working from a neurodiversity-affirming view that autism is a natural variation in human neurology, not a disorder to correct. They differ in purpose from clinician-designed social skills programs: rather than training people to perform neurotypical norms, they create spaces where autistic people can be fully themselves and build a positive autistic identity. The foundation is the double empathy problem (Damian Milton): social difficulty is a two-way breakdown in mutual understanding, and research finds autistic people communicate with each other better than with non-autistic people.

WHO IT'S FOR, AND WHO IT'S NOT

- A fit for those alienated from mainstream settings or newly exploring identity.
- Not clinical treatment; not a substitute for mental health care when needed.
- Co-occurring conditions benefit from individual care alongside community.

What it's for

Autistic adults wanting peer connection with others who share their neurotype.

For community where there's no need to mask, and a positive autistic identity.

Some focus on late-diagnosed adults, women and nonbinary, LGBTQ+, or PoC.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 Formats vary widely: structured discussion, social meetups, online communities.

2 Sensory and communication diversity accommodated; stimming welcomed.

3 No expectation of eye contact or neurotypical social performance.

Autistic community connection supports wellbeing.

- A review of 49 studies found positive autistic identity is consistently tied to **better mental health**, with community connection among the strongest contributors.¹
- A feasibility study found **90% satisfaction** with autistic-delivered peer support, addressing needs other services missed.²

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

The relief of not translating. No masking, no performing; that rest is itself healing.

Communicatively natural. The double empathy problem cuts both ways, and here it eases.

Identity, not deficit. Community is where positive autistic identity grows.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1** Is it genuinely autistic-led, and neurodiversity-affirming?
- 2** What sensory and communication accommodations are offered?
- 3** Is it in person, online, or asynchronous?

Ready to find a group?

Browse 2,000+ therapy and support groups in all 50 states.

Free to browse · No account needed · thegroupguide.com



If you're in crisis, call or text 988.

The Group Guide is a directory, not a clinic. This handout is general education, not medical or mental health advice. Listings are written by group leaders and are not endorsements. Confirm details, cost, and fit with any group you contact. Sources on page 2.



Sources

Autistic-Led Community Groups · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Davies, J., Cooper, K., Killick, E., et al. Autistic identity: a systematic review of quantitative research. *Autism Research* (2024), 17(5), 874–897.
- 2 Shea, L. L., Wong, M.-Y., Song, W., Kaplan, K., Uppal, D., & Salzer, M. S. Autistic-delivered peer support: a feasibility study. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* (2022), 54(2), 409–422.

If you're in crisis, call or text 988.

The Group Guide is a directory, not a clinic. This handout is general education, not medical or mental health advice. Listings are written by group leaders and are not endorsements. Confirm details, cost, and fit with any group you contact.