



## AUTISM: WE DON'T DREAM OUR LIVES; WE LIVE THEM MYTHS & FACTS : AUTISM

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**ABSTRACT**

Autism is a name given to a set of neuro developmental disorders in which the way that a person communicates and interacts with another one is impaired. The first explanation of autism was offered in the 1950s by Leo Kanner<sup>1</sup> and to a larger extent, Bruno Bettelheim.<sup>2</sup> Various myth which are still prevailing in society to make person alone and isolate and in some extreme cases it may lead to bullying and abuse.

**KEYWORDS :****INTRODUCTION:**

Myths and controversies have defined, and always will define, human views about the cause-effect relationship of diseases. Nowhere is this truer than in the field of mental and neurological illnesses, where the understanding of disease etiologies lags behind the rest of medical disciplines,<sup>3</sup> and autism is one of them<sup>4</sup>. Even in today's scenario the lack of understanding about Autism can make it hard for the person on the autism to have their condition recognized and to take/access the support which they basically in need. For centuries, manifestations of Autism were stigmatized as mental retardation, schizophrenia, and at best as bizarre behaviors.<sup>5</sup>

**Various myths with their facts of Autism are as follows:**

**MYTH 1: Bad parenthood is the cause of Autism.**

**FACT:** Till now, no single cause of Autism has been identified. Although Genetic and environmental part plays a role in Autism but the only idea of "Bad parenting" is incorrect.<sup>6</sup>

**MYTH 2: Person with Autism is not smart as others and is intellectually impaired always.**

**FACT:** It is a dangerous assumption that undermines the autistic person from reaching their fullest potential. Infact, person with Autism can be incredibly smart sometimes.<sup>6</sup>

**MYTH 3: Person with Autism cannot read emotions of others and empathize with others.**

**FACT:** Autism doesn't make an individual unable to feel the emotions you feel, it just makes the person communicate emotions and perceive your expressions in different ways.<sup>6</sup> Just like a shy person at cocktail party may look down or look away untill they warm up, similarly person with Autism may need a little warm up period before they can look up at your face.<sup>7</sup>

Gernsbacher and colleagues measured the emotional reactivity of these persons, they found that the individuals were processing emotion in the same way as everyone else, but that they had a preference for not looking at the face because it was overloading and somewhat stressful.<sup>7</sup>

**MYTH 4: Autism can be cured.**

**FACT:** There is no cure for Autism.<sup>8-13</sup> Autism is a lifelong difference but it is always possible to improve the functioning and capabilities of person with Autism. Studies have shown that some programs can improve social skills, job skills, education outcomes and reduce the distress for autistic

people struggling with those things.<sup>14-18</sup>

So it can't be cured but possible and are their certain ways by which person can reduce the challenges associated with Autism.

**MYTH 5: Autism person are prone for violence.**

**FACT:** In some research studies in which violent behaviour have been reported in autistic people, these studies are either reported by a single autistic person (means there were not any other representative) or have not been compared with studies of a similar group of people without autism.<sup>19-20</sup> A recent high quality review of the published research on aggression in autistic people found that there was no evidence that autistic people are more violent than the general population.<sup>19</sup>

**MYTH 6: Person with Autism does not want friends.**

**FACT:** They are struggling with their social skills which always makes it difficult to get interact with peers so they might seem unfriendly and shy.<sup>21</sup>

**MYTH 7: People with Autism can't feel or express any emotion—happy or sad.**

**FACT:** Autism doesn't make an individual unable to feel the emotions you feel, it just makes the person communicate emotions (and perceive your expressions) in different ways.<sup>21</sup>

**MYTH 8 : Autism can always be a male condition.**

**FACT:** Autism affects both males and females.<sup>22</sup>

**MYTH 9: Autism is a developmental disability**

**FACT:** It's a difference in how your brain works. Autistic people can have good mental health, or experience mental health problems, just like anyone else. **They have an IQ in the average to above average range. Although just under half of all with autism also have a learning disability.**<sup>22</sup>

**MYTH 10: Autism only affects children's.**

**FACT:** Children with autism grow up to become adult with Autism.<sup>22</sup>

**MYTH 11: Person with Autism cannot make relationship.**

**FACT:** Although social interaction is impaired in people with Autism, this does not mean they cannot form relationships with others. Most people with autism want to form relationship with others. Despite such desire, it is still difficult for people with autism to understand social cues and navigate social relationships. Social media or any other mode of online

networking may be helpful to form and maintain relationship.<sup>23</sup>

#### MYTH 12: Certain vaccines causes Autism.

**FACT:** Although there is no single cause of autism but still there is no evidence to support a link between vaccines and Autism(American Academy of Pediatrics 2017) The American Academy of Pediatrics has compiled a list of research studies that demonstrate there is no link between vaccines and Autism.<sup>23</sup>

There are certain environmental and genetic factors that are associated with a higher risk of Autism due to their effect on brain development. Environmental risk factors associated with Autism include advanced paternal age (over 34), poor maternal physical and mental health, maternal prenatal medication use, maternal exposure to chemicals, preterm birth, complications during birth, low birth weight, jaundice, and post birth infections (Karimi, Kamali, Mousavi, & Karahmadi, 2016). Mumps, measles, and rubella are among the infections associated with an increased risk of Autism, so the preventative MMR vaccine helps mitigate the risk of developing Autism from these infections.<sup>23</sup>

#### MYTH 13: People with Autism are best suited for jobs which entail repetitive tasks.

**FACT:** There is no one single type of job which get fitted for all people with Autism. People with Autism have different strengths, talents and skills. Yet the unemployment rate is higher (between 50 -70%) for Adults with Autism. The reason behind this rate is that they lack social skills necessary to be successful during job interviews and at workplace. Hence it is always important to take into account and consideration the strengths, needs, interests and preferences of the person pursuing employment.

#### Myth 14: Autism is a mental health disorder.

**FACT:** Autism is a neurological disorder. Fact is that the individuals with developmental disabilities are twice as likely to have a co-occurring mental health disorder that also needs treatment or, at times, may render them in need of acute mental health stabilization, while also taking into consideration the developmental disability.<sup>24</sup>

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