

Autistic

HYPER-EMPATHY



MYTH: Autistics have poor empathy and cannot imagine what other people are thinking.

In one study, 78% of autistics surveyed reported experiencing hyper-empathy. (1)

Very few studies have addressed hyper-empathy in autistics. It is an emerging field.

PATTERNS NOTICED FROM ANECDOTAL REPORTS

- Hyper-perception of social and emotional cues
 - Slow processing time of the abundance of social / emotional data
- “Absorption” of emotions, distress, and pain from others like a sponge

BOUNDARIES

- Learn to trust others to take care of themselves and honor their self-sufficiency and competence
 - Learn to honor your own needs as EQUALLY important
- Learn to honor your own limitations. You are NOT infinite.
 - First rule of helping: You cannot help if you are dead. Or burnt out. Or stuck in inertia. Or melt down. Or shut down.

TRAUMA / AUTISM OVERLAP

- Trauma and PTSD are also associated with hyper-empathy
 - Sensitivity to injustice and PTSD from injustice
- Self-neglect and concessions to others
 - Rescuer behaviors and self-sacrificing boundaries

(1) Kimber, L, Verrier, D., and Connolly, S. (2023) Autistic People's Experience of Empathy and the Autistic Empathy Deficit Narrative. Autism in Adulthood, online ahead of print. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2023.0001>