



WHY THE AUTISTIC COMMUNITY NEEDS YOU TO USE IDENTITY-FIRST LANGUAGE

@NEUROCLASTIC



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But I was taught we
should never use
identity-first language
because a person is not
defined by their
diagnosis.

-EVERYONE



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WE KNOW.

**We were taught the
same thing. Here are
some other messages we
were taught about
ourselves.**



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**"DESPITE HAVING AUTISM, YOU
ARE SO SMART."**

**"YOU DON'T USE YOUR AUTISM
AS A CRUTCH."**

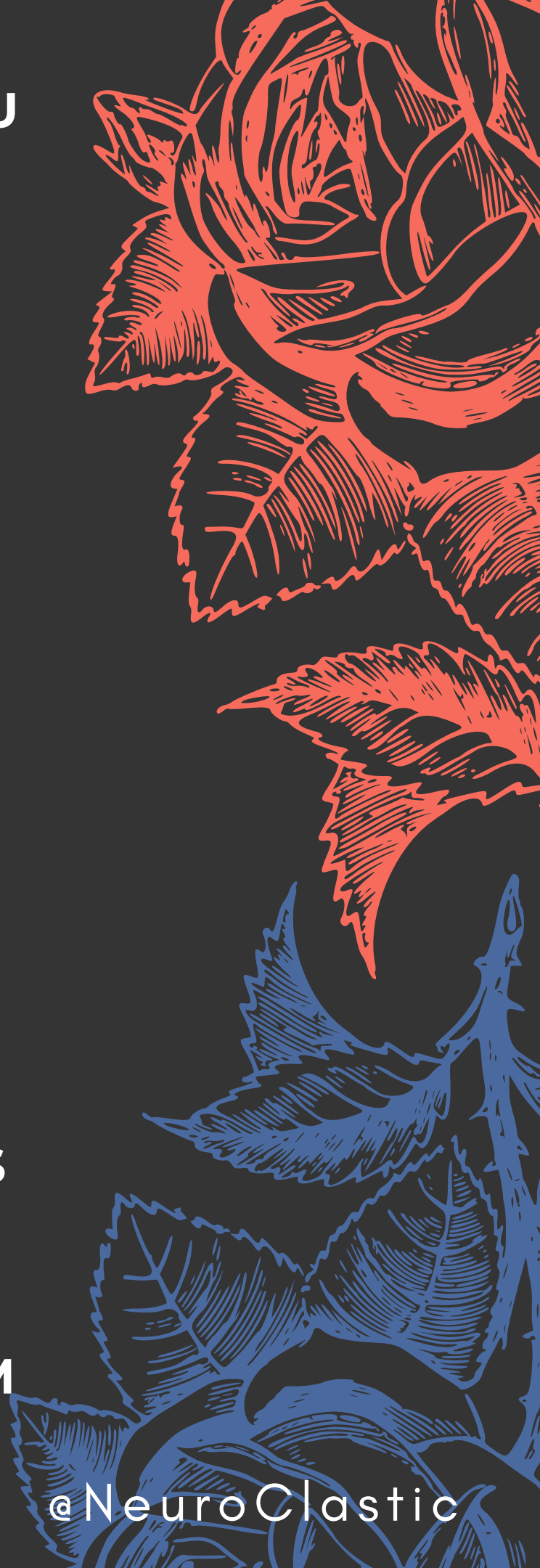
**"YOU ARE SO MUCH MORE
THAN YOUR AUTISM."**

**"EVEN THOUGH YOU HAVE
AUTISM, YOU CAN DO
ANYTHING YOU PUT YOUR
MIND TO."**

**"BUT YOU'RE SO HIGH-
FUNCTIONING/YOUR AUTISM IS
MILD."**

**"YOU OVERCAME YOUR AUTISM
TO ACCOMPLISH THIS."**

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AS CHILDREN, WE
WERE CONDITIONED
TO BELIEVE
THESE WERE
COMPLIMENTS.

*We learned that autism was
bad, but we could still be
"normal" enough if we just
invested the right kind of
effort.*

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BUT HERE'S WHY THOSE MESSAGES CAUSE HARM:


- They imply that autism keeps us from being a whole human
- Accomplishments are dependent on how well we are accommodated or how much suffering we can tolerate, not on how much we "overcome"
- Accommodations are not embarrassing or a moral failing-- even when they are literal crutches. "Walking it off" causes permanent damage. This isn't 1950
- Autism discussed as a choice or an obstacle empowers bullies & disempowers an autistic person's access to self-determination & agency



We are different, we think differently, we behave differently, and we experience the world differently because our brains are different from the majority.

How our brain is wired and structured and operates impacts every thought we have and action we produce. These differences can be assets or can be debilitating.

What is an asset in one context may be disabling in another.



What makes many situations disabling is prejudice, lack of understanding of others, and poor or limited access to accommodations.


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Implying we are separate from "our autism" sends these false messages:

- Being different is a choice.
- Our disability is not real.
- Success is a product of our work ethic and decisions and not related to the prejudice, attitudes, and behaviors of others.
- Needing accommodations is a moral failure instead of a human right.
- The way we are wired should not be credited for our needs or our accomplishments.



Being autistic is our way of existing. This isn't positive, negative, "special," a crutch, or shameful. It is a fact that can be mourned or embraced.

A detailed botanical illustration in a sketchy, hand-drawn style. It features various plants, including a large, spiky, reddish-brown flower on the left, and several smaller, delicate white and blue flowers on the right. The background is a mix of light blue and white, with some darker blue and brownish-red accents. The overall style is artistic and naturalistic.

We don't need to be made to seem or
feel "normal." We're not
"handicapable" or "differently-abled."
We are a neuro-minority, and that is
inherently disabling because the
world operates according to the
needs of the majority. That fact needs
to be at the center of discussion, and
autistic people need to lead those
conversations.

We need to be accepted and
acknowledged as different to be
embraced as our authentic selves.

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