

The background of the slide is a light gray gradient with several realistic water droplets of various sizes scattered across it. The droplets have highlights and shadows, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

# AUTISM AND NEURODIVERSITY

CHRIS BARBER

(RNLD, BSC (HONS), M.ED)

VISITING LECTURER, BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY

**AUTIST**

## **Learning outcomes**

- To explore the meaning and value of the term “neuro-diversity” as applied to those on the autism spectrum
- To explore autism as a valid and valued form of human identity

# ***Neurodiversity: what does it mean?***

- The idea that people having a range of different types of brain, including those with and without autism, should be regarded as part of normal human development and life
- Autism is part of the normal human condition
- Neurodiversity challenges the view that certain neurological conditions are inherently pathological
- In relation to autism, those in the neurodiversity movement say talk of a cure is insulting because it suggests autism is “wrong” and that autistic people need to be “fixed”.

# *What is identity?*

- The fact of being what and who the person is
- The fact of being myself and not another
- A sense of self
- Condition or character of who a person is: the qualities and characteristics of what makes us all unique
- A close affinity or solidarity

# *An autistic identity?*

- Definitions of autism often evoke the language of disease or abnormality
- Autism awareness or autism acceptance?
- Autism as something valuable and to be accepted as “normal” or something to be fixed and eradicated?
- Am I “allowed” to be who I am?
- Acceptance and diversity rather than a cure (good therapy 2019)
- The desire for authenticity is paramount

## *Mind your language*

- Autistic person or person with autism?
- Condition or disorder?
- “What is this disease called autism”?
- The “human person”?
- Disabled or has a disability?
- Invalid or disabled?

# **Thoughts and actions to take away**

- Autism is for life and not just for Christmas!
- Be aware of the impact that language has on framing autism discourse
- Do we really value difference and neurodiversity and, by extension, those who are different?
- How do we value that difference within the various environments in which we live and work?
- Is autism just another aspect of what it is to be fully human?
- What one action can I do today to ensure that those who may seem to be different due to being on the autism spectrum are valued where I live and work?

# **REFERENCES AND RESOURCES**

- Identity: Good Therapy (2019) *Autism acceptance month: Embracing autism as an identity*. Available from:  
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- Neurodiversity:  
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/neurodiversity>
- Medical Press (2019) *Is autism a disorder, an identity or both?*  
Available from: <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-04-autism-disorder-identity.html>