



The Autism Umbrella Chart

Created by @SEND_PLIGHT (TheAutisticSendMotherUncut)

A little bit about me

I am a late-diagnosed female autistic adult and have 6 children who either have a diagnosis of autism, ADHD or both.

I created this chart on the day that my daughter, aged 16 and severely sight impaired, was diagnosed with autism. She asked if she was “mildly or severely autistic” and if she was “high functioning”, descriptions she’d heard at school. I explained autism doesn’t really work like that, but was unable to find something to explain the complexities of autism in a visual, simplistic way.

So, I created this chart in an attempt to explain the autism spectrum and she immediately ‘saw it’!

Mild or severe autism?

It’s common for autistic people to have difficulties dismissed or described as being “mild”, when in fact, to reach the criteria for diagnosis, there must be considerable difficulties in several areas of life. Likewise, autistic people described as being ‘severe’ can repeatedly experience having skills and strengths overlooked. Autism is often misunderstood, particularly if people can’t ‘see’ difficulties or strengths immediately.

My hopes for the Autism umbrella chart

I hope this chart will help autistic adults/children explain their autism to others in simple and effective ways.

I hope that it will help people understand autism is not a linear spectrum running from mild to severe.

It’s an ‘umbrella’ term that consists of many different characteristics; and within each separate characteristic, it’s possible for someone to be mildly, moderately or severely affected. This means autistic people are highly likely to have ‘spikey profiles’ and therefore, cannot be generally defined as mild, moderate or severely autistic.

I hope that it might support the understanding of individuals in a person-specific way and that it is used in schools, work environments, hospitals, by carers, advocates, teachers, social workers and by all professionals.

Most importantly, I hope that this chart helps families and autistic people to understand how autism affects them as individuals.

Using the Autism Umbrella chart

- This chart has been designed for autistic adults and children to complete themselves. However, it can also be completed with support from a carer, teacher or another professional working alongside them.
- You can either print the chart before filling it in by hand, or download the chart and complete it on your device before printing or sharing with others.
- It might be more appropriate to show individual

unique profiles by simply adding the colourful umbrellas onto Part 1 of the chart, before adding more detailed explanations onto Part 2.

- * There are many ways you can support autistic people when completing and using the chart, but it’s crucial that any adaptations are tailored to suit their individual needs and wishes.

A word of warning and advice from autistic adults

The chart is not ‘fixed’ once it’s complete and the profile should not be interpreted as being ‘set in stone’. It’s crucial to understand how characteristics fluctuate throughout people’s lifetimes, they can also alter depending on the environment and by internal and external stimuli. Therefore, the purpose of the 2nd page is to explain any important anomalies such as these.

Feedback

I’m delighted with the warm welcome this chart has received from other autistic people, but I welcome any constructive criticism, suggestions, or feedback which might improve my ideas. If you would like to provide feedback, please contact me here:

thelightofthesendparent@gmail.com



The Autism Umbrella Chart (Example)



Autism is an 'Umbrella term' used to describe a combination of characteristics (listed in the chart below). Autistic people often have 'spikey profiles', so they might experience mild difficulties in some areas, but severe difficulties in all of the others. This is why autism cannot accurately be described as being 'mild, moderate or severe' and it's likely that **a unique autistic profile will include a combination of mild, moderate and severe difficulties.**

Characteristics	Speech delayed or absent speech	Understanding problems listening, concentration or understanding	Frequent repetition of words or phrases	Taking things literally	Difficulty sensing or interpreting peoples feelings	Difficulty expressing feelings	Rituals or repetitive behaviours	Over or under sensitive to sound, touch, taste, smell or light	Disliking changes to routines	Difficulty making friends and socialising
Severe or a 'big problem'		A big problem for me			A big problem for me			A big problem for me		
Moderate or a 'noticeable problem'				It can be a problem sometimes		It can be a problem sometimes			It can be a problem sometimes	It can be a problem sometimes
Mild or a 'little problem'	Not a problem for me		Not a problem for me				Not a problem for me			

Plot how you experience autism in the chart above and you can add details in part 2. It's important to understand when viewing completed charts, that autism can change with age and in response to external environment or internal state of mind or well-being at any point. Therefore, whilst this chart gives an overview which might aid understanding, it mustn't be viewed as being a 'fixed' profile.



The Autism Umbrella Chart (Part 1)



Autism is an ‘Umbrella term’ used to describe a combination of characteristics (listed in the chart below). Autistic people often have ‘spikey profiles’, so they might experience mild difficulties in some areas, but severe difficulties in all of the others. This is why autism cannot accurately be described as being ‘mild, moderate or severe’ and it’s likely that **a unique autistic profile will include a combination of mild, moderate and severe difficulties.**

Characteristics	Speech delayed or absent speech	Understanding problems listening, concentration or understanding	Frequent repetition of words or phrases	Taking things literally	Difficulty sensing or interpreting peoples feelings	Difficulty expressing feelings	Rituals or repetitive behaviours	Over or under sensitive to sound, touch, taste, smell or light	Disliking changes to routines	Difficulty making friends and socialising
Severe or a ‘big problem’										
Moderate or a ‘noticeable problem’										
Mild or a ‘little problem’										

Plot how you experience autism in the chart above and you can add details in part 2. It’s important to understand when viewing completed charts, that autism can change with age and in response to external environment or internal state of mind or well-being at any point. Therefore, whilst this chart gives an overview which might aid understanding, it mustn’t be viewed as being a ‘fixed’ profile.



The Autism Umbrella Chart (Part 2)



Characteristics	How this affects me Describe how some, or all of these affect you. You could also include where and how it might be different, e.g. at home, school, work, socially etc
Speech delayed or absent speech	
Understanding problems listening, concentration or understanding	
Frequent repetition of words or phrases	
Taking things literally	
Difficulty sensing or interpreting peoples feelings	
Difficulty expressing feelings	
Rituals or repetitive behaviours	
Over or under sensitive to sound, touch, taste, smell or light	
Disliking changes to routines	
Difficulty making friends and socialising	

Cut out the umbrellas to use as counters for the chart

It might not be appropriate for everyone to use words to describe a unique autistic profile in part 1 of the chart. So, you might like to cut out and use these umbrellas to place on the chart instead.

