



Schools activity for World Autism Acceptance Week, kindly sponsored by Axcis Education



Tutor-time activities

Spencer, an autistic artist and animator, has made a short animation to illustrate how every autistic person is different. *My Journey* charts the experience of two young autistic people called Douglas and Sarah as they make their way to their youth group. Douglas needs the support of his mother to get ready and travel there. Sarah is more independent but experiences very high levels of anxiety when going out in public.

You can download a short Q&A where Spencer discusses his animation from www.autism.org.uk/resources

Share the animation in your tutor group to stimulate a discussion about autism, a lifelong disability that affects how people communicate and interact with the world. There are approximately 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.

Then choose one or more of the following activities to engage students in the challenges that autistic people face and the ways in which they can support them.

spencer



Learning objectives

- learn about autism and autistic characteristics; how autistic students may experience everyday life
- appreciate diversity and respect similarities and differences
- learn how best to support autistic students at school
- use group discussions to express opinions and ideas.

Please let any autistic students in your tutor group know that the group will be doing this activity.

You could ask them if they would like to talk about being autistic as part of the tutor-time.

Activities	Resources
1. A world of difference	Animation: <u>My Journey</u>
2. What is autism?	Resource sheet: What is autism? poster
3. My Journey	Resource sheets: Comic strip template
4. An interview with the artist	Resource sheets: Q&A with Spencer; quiz; pledge

Activities

Choose one or more of the following activities to engage students in the challenges that autistic people face and the ways in which they can support them.

1. A world of difference

Watch the animation <u>My Journey</u> with your tutor group. Explore and discuss the challenges that Douglas and Sarah face as they make their separate ways to a youth group.

Ask them to consider the following questions:

- How much support do Douglas and Sarah need to get to the youth group?
- How do they feel about going to the youth group?
- How do their feelings and behaviour differ during the journey?
- How do they feel when they arrive?
- What could we do in school to help people like Douglas and Sarah feel more comfortable?

2. What is autism?

Share the *What is autism?* infographic poster with your students, exploring key characteristics and significant statistics as a group. Working in pairs, ask students to research one of the well-known autistic people on the poster and present their findings to the class. As an extension activity, students could research and produce their own infographic poster to increase understanding of autism for students in other year groups or classes.

3. My Journey

Brief the students to create their own journeys to a social event using the comic strip templates. How do they feel when they go to an event? What do they notice? What help or support do they need? Is there anything that makes them anxious along the way? Students can share their stories and their thoughts as a class. Then invite all of them to make a pledge: choosing a change that they are going to make to help improve the lives of autistic people.

4. An interview with the artist

Share the Q&A with Spencer on page 7 with your class.

In this Q&A session, Spencer, who is autistic, describes how every autistic person is different and makes suggestions about what people can do to help support autistic students.

Working individually, or in pairs, ask students to complete the quiz then come back together as a group to discuss autism and how they might support autistic students in their school. As a follow up, they could prepare a short presentation on supporting autistic students for other year groups.

Comic strip template: My Journey



Use the following template to create your own comic strip about going to a social event. Remember to show how you get ready, any help you need, and how you feel before, during and after your journey there.

3	4

Comic strip template: My Journey



5	6
7	8
7	8

Q&A with Spencer

We asked autistic artist and animator
Spencer to create a short animation. His
video <u>My Journey</u> shows how every autistic
person is different by following the dayto-day experiences of two young autistic
people called Douglas and Sarah. We caught
up with Spencer and asked him a few questions
about autism, his art and what inspired the video.



When were you diagnosed as autistic?

I don't remember, but I realised I felt different from my peers when I was at college or high school. My mother says I was diagnosed at two-years-old.

What is being autistic like for you?

For me personally, it's more to do with the behaviour and mentality of others and how I would like people to treat me the same way as their non-autistic friends, colleagues and peers.

When did you become an artist and animator?

Drawing is my favourite hobby. My mother tells me I didn't speak until I was five-years-old and the only way I communicated was through drawings. My art skills helped me get into university and, as the years have gone by, I've pursued a career in the art and design industry. Since graduating, I've worked as a freelancer for the National Autistic Society and previously, Google.

We love your artwork and your style is so unique! What inspires you?

I usually experiment with different styles. I'm also inspired by Manga, which is a Japanese style of art and go with my family to many Japanese exhibitions — including Comic Con, of course! I also enjoy ceramics and graphic design.

Why do you think increasing public understanding of autism is so important?

It is important to help society understand every autistic person is different. As I am seeking employment, I think it's especially important to make employers aware of autistic people's many talents. Autistic people should be seen as a positive asset in every aspect of society.

What is the animation you created for World Autism Acceptance Week about and how did you come up with the design?

For this World Autism Acceptance Week short film, I used a bold and simple style for the main characters, as it's animation friendly. To emphasise how every autistic person is different, I focused on two autistic characters. They go through the exact same morning routines as they prepare to go outside.

Douglas, the boy, has high support needs and his mother helps him with things like waking up in the morning, washing and dressing.

The girl, Sarah, is also autistic but does not have high support needs. She is more independent than Douglas, but unlike him, she is very anxious about going out in public and the dangers presenting themselves with every step she takes.

I have a cousin who has high support needs, so I thought it was important to include some of her strengths and challenges — that's what inspired me to create this animation.

Quiz: Spencer's view

"Autistic people should be seen as a positive asset in every aspect of society."

1. When did Spencer realise he was different?

(Choose one)

- a) When he was two
- b) When he was at primary school
- c) When he was at college or high school

2. When did Spencer start to speak?

(Choose one)

- a) Aged two
- b) Aged five
- c) Aged eight

3. How did Spencer communicate before he started to speak?

(Choose one)

- a) Through sign language
- b) Through drawing
- c) By pointing

4. Who has Spencer worked for?

(Choose two)

- Google
- Facebook
- Amazon
- The BBC
- National Autistic Society
- Design Council

5. Which THREE THINGS does Spencer mention enjoying?

- Life drawing
- Ceramics
- Graphic design
- Textiles
- Manga
- Oil painting

6. Read these statements regarding Spencer's feelings about autism and mark them TRUE or FALSE

- a) He wishes people would treat him differently from non-autistic people.
- b) He believes that all autistic people are different.
- c) He thinks most employers are aware of autistic people's talents.
- d) He thinks autistic people have the same job opportunities as non-autistic people.

7. Who inspired Spencer to create *My Journey*? (Choose one)

- a) His brother
- b) His mother
- c) His cousin
- d) His sister

The National Autistic Society is a charity registered in England and Wales (269425) and in Scotland (SC039427)

My pledge for World Autism Acceptance Week



I want to help create a society that understands and accepts autistic people; I will support people like Douglas and Sarah by		