

People give fascinating insight into their 'autistic selves'

The latest ground-breaking awareness campaign by Dorset charity [Autism Unlimited](#) features real-life stories of the unique traits and behaviours autistic people use to survive and thrive.

My Autistic Self launched online this month (September) and stars people from different walks of life discussing common but often misunderstood autistic traits and behaviours, such as stimming and masking.

Stimming refers to 'self-stimulatory' behaviour' such a finger tapping, hand flapping or rocking back and forth and can help some autistic people manage their emotions and cope with overwhelming situations.

Archie explained: "I have what I call a 'backwards cough' which I do when I am in an uncomfortable situation, and which helps me. I also sometimes scratch my arm or pick my nails if I am somewhere where there are loads of people."

Masking is an unconscious strategy all humans develop whilst growing-up in order to fit in and connect with those around us. Sadly, many autistic people 'mask' so they not unfairly judged.

Willow explains: "I mask because I don't want to upset people or make them worry about me. Masking means that on the outside I can be: "What a great day! While on the inside I'm like: "I'm still alive...."

Becs said: "I've only recently been diagnosed (with autism) and have probably been masking all my life. When I'm masking I am hyper alert...trying not to stand out, worried that someone is going to 'catch me'. It is exhausting. The only time I can completely unmask is when I am alone."

Georgia talks candidly about her daily battles with sensory sensitivity: "My main sensitivity is around food. I prefer to eat bland food with not a lot of flavours and textures, so people call me a 'fussy eater'.

"If I go out to eat and can't decide what to order, I often feel awkward when I have people waiting for me. Sometimes people don't understand and say: "Just try it! It's not going to kill you.

"If I can't find something I want I'd prefer to tell others to eat and I'll get something later. But that's not socially acceptable! Sensitivity also means the tags or seams in my clothes can feel intensely scratchy. Ice packs help, and I have literally hundreds for all the different parts of my body."

My Autistic Self follows the successful Autism Unlimited campaigns See It From My Perspective and Autism Allies - The Same but Different, and also features the stories of parents, teachers and carers.

Autism Unlimited CEO Siún Cranny said: "We are incredibly proud of this latest campaign and the 'stars' who tell their stories so candidly and often movingly. We

hope this will promote understanding of unique autistic traits more effectively and ultimately drive greater autism acceptance.”

The campaign runs until the end of November and can be followed at: [My Autistic Self \(autism-unlimited.org\)](https://www.autism-unlimited.org)

Ends

www.autism-unlimited.org.uk

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