

Every one of us has a right to be who we are and not to be judged because of our differences. It can be very damaging to make assumptions about a person based on their culture, ethnicity, or disability. When we judge we draw a line between “us” and “them.” We create division and conflict. We see only what we expect to see and dismiss individual differences. The culture of autism is one of dramatic diversity and complexity. Removing personal judgement and accepting people as they are opens up the world, exposing the beauty that lies within. When we appreciate the individual and accept his unique nature we have a positive effect on that person’s life.



## STRATEGIES FOR REMOVING PERSONAL JUDGEMENT

Avoid stereotyping. Remember that people with autism are diverse with a wide range of individual differences.

Don’t make assumptions. Actively get to know the person you support. Talk, observe, and most importantly, listen to her.

Practice empathy. Work to understand the world from the perspective of the person you support. Take the time to walk in his shoes. Learn about his history and experiences.

## SPEAKING ABOUT AUTISM

Not every person on the autism spectrum uses the same language to speak about autism.

Some use person-first language. “I am a person with autism.”

Others use identity-first language. “I am autistic.”

Asking a someone how they would like to be identified shows you are accepting. This is a good way to develop a stronger relationship and show respect for individuality at the same time.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

1. Consider the perspective and experiences of the person you support. Find out what you share in common.
2. Have a conversation with the person you support or with family members to find out how she wishes to speak about autism. Does she prefer person-first or identity-first language?

