

Communities often use symbols as a universal visual depiction to represent a group's shared beliefs, ideologies, and values. The symbols associated with a community are important and have meaning as they can help express ideas and unite communities. The puzzle piece has been a long-standing symbol linked with the autism community. Since the early 2000s, though, there has been a movement toward using other symbols to promote acceptance, diversity, understanding, and empowerment to and within the autism community.

SYMBOLS, MEANINGS, AND USAGE



PUZZLE PIECE AND PUZZLE PIECE RIBBON:

The puzzle piece was introduced in 1963 to symbolize the complexity of autism, but it is now **not** widely embraced by the autistic community, as autism is not a puzzle to be solved, nor are autistic people “missing a piece.” The puzzle piece ribbon is also not being embraced, as autism is not a “disease to be cured.” The autism community prefers symbols that represent inclusion, neurodiversity, and acceptance rather than symbols that can carry a meaning of needing to “fix” or “cure” autism.

INFINITY SYMBOL (Rainbow or Gold):

The infinity symbol represents the neurodiversity movement and was created by self-advocates to highlight acceptance and infinite possibilities. Specifically, the RAINBOW infinity symbol is often associated with inclusion and diversity amongst neurodivergent individuals. The GOLD infinity symbol plays on the chemical symbol for Gold (Au), and it signifies the unique strengths and possibilities that autistic individuals contribute to society.



BUTTERFLY

The butterfly is a fairly new symbol that self-advocates have been using. It represents personal growth and change. The butterfly highlights the beauty and diversity of autistic people. It is often featured in a variety of colors to showcase the benefits of neurodiversity.

This resource was developed by an autistic self-advocate