



**Autistic
and Living
the Dream**

GENDER CREATIVITY AND THE SPECTRUM

BEING AUTISTIC AND
TRANSGENDER AND / OR
NON-BINARY

By Katie Munday

OVERVIEW

- What is 'biological' sex?
- What is gender?
- Different gender identities
- Being trans and / or non-binary and Autistic
- Q&A



A LITTLE ABOUT ME

- Katie Munday (they / them).
- Trans masculine non-binary, bisexual, queer.
- Autistic, Attention Hyperactive (ADHD), OCD.
- Autistic and Living the Dream – advocacy and training.
- MRes in Gender Studies - Exploring trans and / or non-binary Autistic adults narratives.
- Writer, community researcher, book reviewer, youth work leader, podcaster...



‘BIOLOGICAL’ SEX

- Assigned at birth based on observable genitals. Babies are either assigned male at birth (AMAB) or assigned female at birth (AFAB).
- Intersex people can be born with a mix of observable genitals and / or differences in hormones, chromosomes or internal reproductive organs.
- Sex traits are often based on genitals but are much more complicated than that!
- The idea of a binary sex is outdated – there are more combinations of chromosomes than XY and YY, people can be a mix of male and female based on hormones, hormone receptors, genitals and chromosomes.

All sexes are valid and everyone should be treated equally.



GENDER

Gender is based on identity and expression and is usually heavily influenced by cultural norms.

Identity

- How you feel on the inside
- Doesn't have to be binary or static
- Can change throughout the life time
- Can be difficult to unpick for Autistic people due to interoceptive differences and alexithymia

Expression

- What you wear
- Pronouns (she/her, they/them etc)
- How you hold yourself
- Name
- How you walk
- Outward displays / behaviours

Some things can be both gender identity *and* expression, such as pronouns, names and 'labels' you use for yourself.



GENDER IDENTITIES

Cisgender

Identifying with your assigned sex at birth: male, female, intersex.

Transgender

Identifying outside of your assigned sex at birth: trans man, trans women, trans masculine, trans feminine...

Non-binary

Identifying outside of your assigned sex at birth and sometimes outside of gender or between genders: agender, bigender, gender flux, gender fluid, gender queer..

TRANS AND / OR NON-BINARY IDENTITIES

- Trans women – *usually* AMAB people who are women, may undergo transition.
- Trans men - *usually* AFAB people who are men, may undergo transition.
- Agender – a person who may feel entirely outside of gender constructs – no gender or gender neutral.
- Gender fluid – a person who may go between different genders.
- These lists are non-exhaustive!
- You can have more than one identity and your identity can change.



**THERE IS NO 'WRONG' WAY TO BE
TRANS OR NON-BINARY!**

**YOUR GENDER IS VALID, JUST AS IT
IS.**



BEING AUTISTIC AND TRANS / NON-BINARY

Can be different to non-Autistic people's experiences due to:

- Alexithymia and interoception differences
- Sensory differences
- Different experiences around trauma and gender dysphoria.
- Different experiences around trans joy.



ALEXITHYMIA

From Greek meaning “no words for emotions”

- Difficulty identifying feelings.
- Distinguishing between feelings and the bodily sensations of emotional arousal.
- Difficulty describing feelings to other people.

Common in Autistic people (and non-Autistic people too!).

Culturally bound - ‘difficulty’ to identify and describe may be due to communication and language differences between Autistic people and non-Autistic people (Double empathy problem – Damian Milton and Luke Beardon). Exp: rating pain from 1-10.



INTEROCEPTIVE DIFFERENCES

The sense of the internal state of the body. This can be both conscious and non-conscious (hunger, thirst, pain, fatigue etc).

Links to alexithymia: physical sensations can affect mood and both can be misunderstood or overlooked (exp: “hangry”).

This can be attached to sensory differences in people with sensory processing ‘disorder’.



SENSORY DIFFERENCES

Our gender expressions can be different due to:

- Texture issues with clothes: itchy, heavy, uncomfortable, clingy etc
- Olfactory issues: strong smells, perfumes, colognes, deodorant.
- Tactile: facial and body hair.

Sensory seeking – sensory avoidant – spikey sensory profiles.

Also, we get used to and comfortable in routines and what we wear (same clothes).



ALEXITHYMIA, INTEROCEPTIVE AND SENSORY DIFFERENCES FOR TRANS PEOPLE

- What does it *feel* like to be a certain gender?
- Gender identity based therapy and healthcare may be inaccessible or inappropriate.
- Gender exploration can be very emotional and hard to process.
- Starting hormone replacement therapy can change emotions and interoceptive signals.
- These differences have meant that different genders have arisen from within the Autistic and Neurodivergent community.



NEUROGENDERS

Genders which are understood to be entwined with divergent neurologies, including:

- Autistic – autigender.
- Borderline Personality – bordergender.
- Schizophrenia / voice hearing – posigender.
- Anxiety – genderanxious.
- Dissociative Identity – systemfluid.

Although these genders *can* support self-understanding, they are not reflective of every neurodivergent person.



AUTIGENDER

- Autigender can be understood as a definitive gender or as a way for some autistic people to explore and understand their gender expression and identity.
- Can be used as an explanation for gender, a standalone gender or used alongside other genders, for example, someone could be autigender, trans masculine and bi-gender.
- Autigender is not inherently queer but may make sense for Autistic people who tend to be more divergent in their genders
- Not every Autistic person agrees or identifies with this and that is valid.



GENDERVAGUE

- A gender identity influenced by being Neurodivergent: feels undefinable / partly definable because of one's neurodivergence (neurogender).
- Vague can also be used as a prefix to the part of the gender that is defined, like vaguegirl, vagueboy, or vagueagender.
- Some Autistic and / or Neurodivergent people do not identify with this and this is valid.

Gendervague / Autigender – you can be cis, trans or non-binary and recognise how your being Autistic effects your gender identity and expression.

Coined by: neurodivergentkin and strangledlove[23]



TRAUMA AND GENDER DYSPHORIA

TRAUMA

- Bullying, abuse, neglect...
- Living in a world not made for us.
- Homelessness, self harm, self-medicating, substance use, suicide ideation and attempt.
- Sadly, some practitioners do not take Neurodivergent trans experiences seriously – “confusion”, “misunderstanding”, learning differences such as being non-verbal or non-speaking.

I am keen to go into further detail with how to support yourself / those you love and support with these issues – if this is something needed I am happy to do another training session based on this.

GENDER DYSPHORIA

- Discomfort or distress that can occur for people whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex.
- Diagnosis can be important to gain gender affirming care.



AUTISTIC TRANS JOY

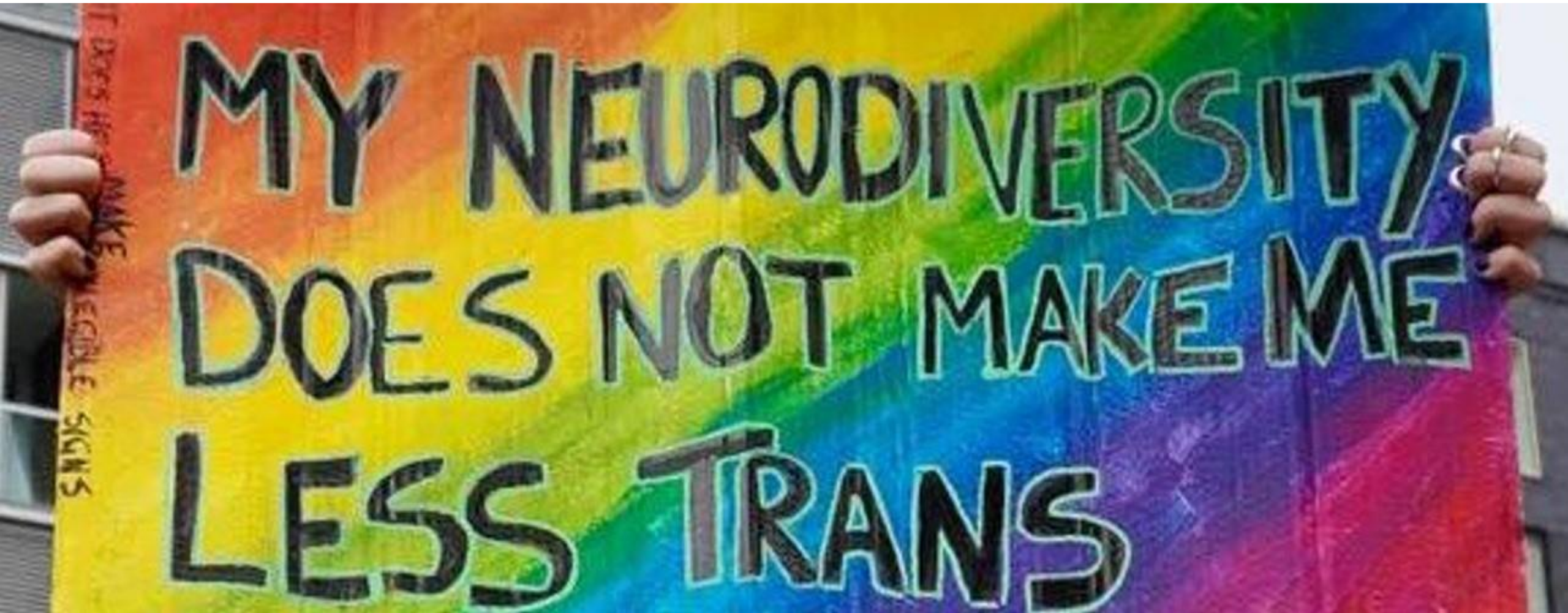


- Thinking outside the box! Being more accepting of ourselves and others.
- Self stimulating behaviours / stimming (exp: twirling in a dress, applying make up, stroking stubble / facial hair).
- Sensations (exp: breeze through body hair, chest binding, different perfumes and colognes).
- Creativity – exploring who we are and how we want to be in the world.
- Communities – online and in person.

AUTISTIC TRANS JOY



- Following our interests.
- Sometimes confusion and fluidity is exactly what an individual's gender is meant to be – it doesn't need to fit neat little boxes!
- Gender euphoria – the immense feeling of happiness and 'coming home.'
Example: new pronouns and name, being gendered correctly, compliments connected to gender e.g. being called 'handsome' as a trans masc person).



Being Autistic does not make us any less trans and being trans does not make us any less Autistic!

Q & A



CONTACT ME



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