



Why Love & Autism?

If you were **diagnosed while still school age**, then the first thing that comes to mind is measurement. Your life was boiled down into a set of measurable goals, tallies collected, and graphed, perhaps rewards earned for various forms of being “good.” This level of scrutiny would be painful for any grown adult, but for a child, it means that your worldview was largely shaped on the false notion that every little thing that you do defines who you are and that if you don’t perform up to the set forth standards, **you aren’t good enough.**

In fact, you probably heard “Try again” way too many times. This phrase followed by “Good job” when your efforts met someone else’s benchmark of who you should be. Whether your neurology initially was a bit more shame-prone, or if your early experiences hardwired you into a full and complete understanding; the message is clear; you’ve been told “You aren’t good enough” way too many times.

With this message, you were told to change, change, change. In fact, you might have spent hours upon hours of your formidable years being told to change in various therapy sessions. With all that, it’s no wonder, you might struggle with a deep sense of inadequacy, a complex conflict between the self you enjoy and appreciate and the self you show others.



Perhaps, **you have self-diagnosed or received a later diagnosis**, then you missed the tally-counting gummy-bear routine, but you still may contend with a healthy dose of “not good enough.” So, these messages suggest that “you aren’t autistic enough” or perhaps “you don’t look autistic.” Messages such as these require that you explain yourself to others, defend yourself or even educate when you haven’t signed up to be a public service announcement. These sentiments expressed, sometimes by both family members and strangers, erodes our sense of personal identity. Each of us can engage in a practice where we examine these unhealthy internal and external expectations. **We each can fully embrace a life where we feel “good enough.”** Whether we are 2 or 22 or 52, being our authentic self matters.

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