Autism and Friendship

Note for the host: This may be a difficult conversation for some, as many people with autism report having trouble making friends, which tends to raise anxiety and depression levels. Use extra supportive, validating answers and remember to put an emphasis on the person as being the most important thing (and not their autism).

Introduction:

Hi everyone! Welcome to our Autism and Friendship discussion! :)

I hope you'll participate in our session today, however, it is completely okay to step back if you feel uncomfortable answering a certain question. You have complete autonomy over when you choose to respond! There is no judgment here.

Our session consists of 10 questions and is approximately 1 hour long. Please show kindness and support to one another throughout our session :) Everyone is welcome to share and participate as they would like, but we kindly ask you to focus on our topic in this room for the time being so the discussion can take place.

If you need more support during this time, please connect 1-1 with a listener by going to https://www.7cups.com/BrowseListeners/

Icebreaker: Did you ever have an imaginary friend(s)? If so, what were they like?

Thank you all for your answers! Let's start with our first discussion question :)

1. What has your experience with making friends while having autism been like? If you don't have autism, how might being autistic make things different from your own experience making friends? If you're unsure that's alright, feel free to make a guess! We're all here to learn and support each other.
2. What benefits might someone with autism have when making new friends?

Note for host: Examples might include open, direct and honest communication, and prioritizing connection rather than social rituals.

3. What challenges might someone with autism face while making new friends?

Note for host: Examples might include expectations to maintain the friendship or lack of understanding small talk.

4. Why might a person with autism be afraid to tell their peers they're on the spectrum? Do you think telling someone about having autism can affect a friendship?

5. Some people with autism avoid social situations because of fear of being negatively evaluated. How might social anxiety play a role in navigating friendships while autistic?
6. How is a friendship between people with autism similar to friendships between neurotypical individuals? How is it different?
7. Describe a friendship you've been a part of. How did you meet and what is/was your relationship like?

Note for the host: If anyone says they don't have any friends or is unsure of how to respond, remind them that everyone on 7 Cups is here for them, and that they are deserving of friendship and support.

8. What difficulties have you experienced in your friendships? (Some examples include communication errors, clashing personalities, misunderstandings, etc.) How did they affect how you felt about that particular friendship?
9. What's something that could be helpful with making new friends while autisic? Feel free to share your tips! If you don't have autism, what are some of your go-to tips for making friends?

Note for the host: Ideas might include learning to manage anxiety, initiating conversation, and having friends who are also on the spectrum.

10. What is something people don't know or don't understand about autism that you wish they did?
11. What's something wonderful about you, autism related or not? Here's your ticket to brag, judgment free. 🎟️

Conclusion:

Thank you for coming and participating in today's Autism and Friendship session! I hope you had a positive experience. I loved hearing your thoughts and responses! Keep coming back! :)

If you're interested in becoming a discussion leader, you can apply here: https://forms.gle/sKsxvfs6gZZbZmHW8

Your feedback is appreciated! If you have feedback for this discussion, please fill out this form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScn1PcHDgrYIF2Wdgjy2suf2yFgnJAMYvkSnn3KXIlh6UIwOg/viewform