

## Interview with Jane

This interview was conducted on March 4, 2022. Names have been changed for privacy. Jane is a woman in her late 20s, who is single (divorced) and lives alone with her pet. Jane is autistic.

### What is Autism spectrum disorder?

ASD includes conditions that were previously considered separate (autism, Asperger's syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder and an unspecified form of pervasive developmental disorder). ASD is related to brain development that impacts how a person perceives and socializes with others, causing problems in social interaction and communication. The disorder also includes limited and repetitive patterns of behaviour. ASD begins in early childhood and causes problems functioning in society (social settings, school, and work), and can impact how a person forms friendships and romantic relationships. ASD is a lifelong disorder which means it cannot be cured. Intensive, early treatment can make a big difference in people's lives. "Spectrum" is used to indicate the wide range of symptoms and their severity. [Learn more at Mayo Clinic.](#)

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1. Since one of the most googled questions about autism is, "Can someone with autism love?", I wondered if there is anything you would like to say about writing sex and romance for people with autism?

**Jane:** I am a woman with autism, so my experience will likely be different than that of a man with autism. Autism is often under-diagnosed in women. (That's not related to sex and romance, it's just a fact).

I am "high functioning autistic", which was also known as *Asperger's syndrome*, but that is considered an outdated term, but some autistic people still use it. It's on a case-by-case basis. Some people simply use "ASD" or "Autism Spectrum Disorder" to describe themselves without giving away if they're considered "high" or "low" functioning.

For sex and romance...I am very oblivious to a lot of social cues, so I might come off as aloof or rude. But I often don't intend to be. Sometimes, I might find myself stating things that may seem obvious to others but I do it because I find myself asking/answering questions a little presumptuously, and I'm trying to avoid confusing/follow-up questions.

So when it comes to sex and romance, I might not realize someone likes me, or I might state my intentions and feelings very bluntly rather than being coy toward someone I like. I also find myself clinging to "rules/routines" that many would consider strange or outdated. As a result, I might misconstrue things or misread certain signals.

I've been in many romantic/ sexual relationships, their commitment varying. I was even engaged and married. (Although I'm now divorced).

It's also a common misconception that autistic people can't feel emotions or love. We can, in fact, very intensely. We just might express it differently or appear stoic when doing so. And while we may not want hugs and physical affection from strangers (which is a common human thing, but **extremely common** with people on the spectrum), we can often let people in and show it.

As for sex, I guess I would say it's the same as "normal" people, although certain things I can't handle, like scents and tastes with lube, textures of toys, fabric with costumes (like some materials I cannot wear because I will not have a fun time). Sound is a big thing with me. I get overwhelmed with too many people talking, or too many noises.

Last thing: hyper-focus/fixation. Many autistic people have a "special interest" that many will consider them to be "obsessed with," the hobbies vary, but it's often in the form of collectibles and stuff like that. So sometimes you might see them with a bunch of figures or games or stuff like that.

## 2. Do you consider yourself disabled?

**Jane:** It's...complicated. On the one hand, I'm considered very functional and "normal" by society's standards. I have a job, I can pay my bills, I live on my own, and I don't require aid of any type. In fact, many would consider me more successful than a lot of "normal" people.

However, when I was younger my disability was a lot more pronounced. I'm in my late twenties now and I'm a lot different from ten years ago in terms of coping.

I do what's called "masking" which is basically pretending to be "normal". I know my limits, and have found different ways to try and make things easier on everyone else.

However, when it comes to basic things, like conversation or social situations, I can't do those kinds of things without wanting to cry or break down. I spent 98% of my time alone with just me and my pet. And I find myself very avoidant of social situations in general. I am drawn to jobs where my interaction with the public/people is limited. When I do go out, I have to wear some ear protection/headphones or else I'll get overwhelmed. I can't wear certain fabrics without wanting to tear them off. I can't eat certain foods.

But, society's view of disability and mental health has also changed a lot in the last decade. We're allowed to be a lot more open about it, and more people are understanding. (Obviously, it varies from place to place, and I've changed my social circles, but I've noticed it with my family a lot.)

I consider myself disabled, but not as bad as some who have the same disability. I don't know about joining communities, because I'm very avoidant of that kind of thing in general. (It's complicated, I'm the same way about joining communities based on my sexuality and gender.) I want people to notice me for *who I am*, not what I am.

3. What would you like to say to scriptwriters who might write scripts with characters with autism?

- Any specific things to include?
- Any pitfalls to avoid?
- Are there certain things you would like to see writers mention in scripts about people with autism?
- Any online resources you think are handy?
- What tags would you like to see, besides [autism]?

**Jane:** To keep sensitivity in mind. Try to not act like the autistic person is an idiot, or reduce them to their social problems/symptoms. And each person is different. It's called a spectrum for a reason. What might seem fine to me could be offensive to someone else and vice versa.

My biggest advice would be to talk to people about their experiences. There are a lot of resources, but a lot of them can be conflicting/have a tendency to talk over people with autism. For resources, try to look for those **who have an autistic person on the board**. There is [ASAN](#) (Autistic Self Advocacy Network).

**I do not** recommend “Autism speaks” and “Autism warrior blogs”.

I'm conflicted because I'm not the kind of person who seeks out that kind of content. I just know what *I wouldn't* like.

4. If you did look for autism-friendly content, do you think these would be useful? [autism] [autistic speaker] [autistic listener]?

**Jane:** I think they would be. It's complicated, I'll admit!

5. If you decided to look for content about characters with autism, would you prefer:

- Listener has autism
- Speaker has autism
- Both have autism
- You have no preference

**Jane:** I have no preference.

6. In a script where **the speaker has autism**, would that be weird *if the performer* does not have autism? Movie actors perform roles of disabled people when they are not disabled themselves but this seems...*different* from when the listener has autism because we don't know the listener's silent lines and their responses are up to our imagination. But if the speaker **is acting a role** of a character with autism, they are going to be representing people with autism. Do you think this makes a difference in audio porn?

**Jane:** I think any actor can play any role as long as they have sensitivity in mind and they did their research. I think voice actors can get away with a lot more than regular actors because they don't have to take physical acting or body language into account, just their voice.