



What is wrong with the puzzle piece logo?

September 21, 2013 at 6:12pm

We've all seen the well known puzzle piece image that has come to represent "Autism Awareness".

Have you ever wondered why a puzzle piece? A quick Google search will give you the basic reason. Most agree that it represents the idea that Autism is a puzzle that people are trying to solve. The sentiment is packaged in various politically correct sounding versions, but it basically boils down to the belief that Autism is a complex mystery that needs to be pieced together for the benefit of Autistic people. Here at Parenting Autistic Children with Love and Acceptance we'd like to disagree. Here's why:

Autism Speaks uses a puzzle piece and the phrase "Piece by Piece" as part of their fundraising push. They then take the money they raise as a not for profit organisation and spend around 4% of it on actually supporting Autistic people and 44% of it on "research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism". (figures on AS financials sourced at http://autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Autism_Speaks_Flyer.pdf)

Autistic people and their Allies find this offensive.

Aside from the obvious objection to wanting AS to find a cure for Autism, here are what some people have said about the puzzle piece logo.

Tim from Both Hands and a Flashlight says,

"If someone thought a puzzle piece was an accurate representation of me, I'd be pretty ticked off to put it mildly....."

"Perhaps it's because I think the puzzle piece symbol is all about us (parents, family, friends, medical professionals, educators, researchers, etc.) and not at all about people who are autistic. I'm really starting to question whether this is not a symbol of autism but instead a symbol of our own fears and uncertainties. I wonder if we're the ones with the missing puzzle piece and whether we'll ever feel at peace with ourselves until we figure out where to look."

<http://www.bothhandsandaflashlight.com/2008/11/06/post-puzzle-piece-autism/>

CS Wyatt from The Autistic Me says,

"Autistic individuals are puzzles? They are distorted, psychedelic minds? Exactly what is the message? Not that all people aren't puzzles, but to think one group is any more puzzling is a curious claim. How does this promote understanding? The claim that we are all part of the greater puzzle... no, a puzzle is a mystery. The message to me that autism and autistic people are strange, mysterious."

I wish there were other symbols, less reductive symbols, for autism awareness. Puzzle pieces are simply offensive."

<http://theautisticme.blogspot.com.au/2008/04/logos-symbols-ribbons.html>

Rachel Cohen-Rottenberg says,

"A puzzle suggests the idea that there might be some pieces missing. Of course, such an idea is anathema to me, when applied to any person on the planet. The only way in which you could look at a person and see pieces missing is if you begin with a preconceived notion



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of what a person is supposed to look like. If the person doesn't fit that preconceived picture in your mind, then you see all kinds of gaps. But if you see the person for himself or herself, and accept the person as a given, without reference to an outside standard, then the picture becomes whole. The person is simply a person, on his or her own terms—nothing more and nothing less.

“A non-autistic person says that the world of an autistic person is a puzzle. That statement is taken as objective truth by most non-autistic people. In fact, it is irrefutable evidence that the person speaking is “normal” and that the person being spoken of has a “disorder.” All too often, family, friends, teachers, and professionals look at the autistic person, shake their heads, and say, “Yes, you’re right. Poor thing. He certainly is a puzzle!”

An autistic person says that the world of neurotypical people is a puzzle. That statement is taken as a purely subjective perception by most non-autistic people. In fact, it is irrefutable evidence that the person speaking has a “disorder” and that the people being spoken of are “normal.” All too often, family, friends, teachers, and professionals look at the autistic person, shake their heads, and say, “Poor thing. He’s so impaired. He just doesn’t understand us.”

<http://unpuzzled.net/2012/04/23/on-puzzles-privilege-and-missing-pronouns-from-journeys-with-autism/>

Hopefully you are starting to understand why Autistic people find the puzzle piece offensive. If you need to read more please visit “Unpuzzled” at <http://www.unpuzzled.net>

Many people will say that "I don't see the puzzle piece that way" and "historically it had nothing to do with Autism Speaks" or even "but I really like the puzzle piece!" - if that's how you feel, please read this post from Judy Endow:

<https://ollibean.com/2014/04/04/goodnight-autism-puzzle-pieces/>

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
Halldóra Jóhanna Hafsteinsdóttir, Jennifer Cortijo, Robert Gehrman and 55 others like this.

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41 of 78


 **Carine De Baets** This is what the symbol for autism is in Flanders:
<http://www.autismevlaanderen.be/pages/geefruimteaanautisme> with a myriad of meanings.



September 23, 2013 at 3:02pm · Edited · Like

 **Sanni Rosenberg** tu me the p[uzzl] is the NT s as ther soe hard tu ndrstand

September 23, 2013 at 3:27pm · Like · 1

 **Sanni Rosenberg** autisms nt the problim acceptin us tht ar dferent an not fittin into the puzzling world ov the nts world ps the issue an yese tu the nts autisms a bg dference an variable

September 23, 2013 at 3:29pm · Like · 1



Kathryn Hedges I just wanted to put my vote in as an autistic who finds the puzzle piece distasteful for pretty much the same complaints as others have written here.

1. Autistics are not "missing pieces" of what it takes to be human any more than any other human is ... [See More](#)

September 23, 2013 at 4:39pm · Like · 5



Kathryn Hedges CarolAnn Acorn: Are the rose, the giraffe, and the guitar your own personal logos or autistic logos? I'm a bit confused by the symbolism. A rose for "late bloomer" perhaps, but the others I don't get.

September 23, 2013 at 4:40pm · Like



Kathryn Hedges Tania Melnyczuk: I support you against claims of "Godwin's Law." That only applies when the reference to the Holocaust is completely irrelevant, i.e. a "Soup Nazi" who's picky about who gets to dine in his restaurant. In our case, it is a reasonable as... [See More](#)

September 23, 2013 at 4:53pm · Like



Cary Canavan I use the 'missing' puzzle piece idea to show the absence of knowledge of those people who work with people with ASCs.

September 23, 2013 at 7:47pm · Like · 2



Sandra Xh this is a great read, thank you!

September 23, 2013 at 7:58pm · Like



Suburp i think quite honestly that the 'take over' of the symbol by Autism Speaks, along with even the colour blue (not exactly 'owned' by someone, i believe) has done a lot to make people see the puzzle as a negative symbol. i understand the rejections from ... [See More](#)

September 23, 2013 at 9:20pm · Like · 2



Sarah Hansford <http://aspiesforfreedom.wordpress.com/about/>



Aspies for Freedom

Our aims are as follows: To prevent eugenic elimination of autistic people by opposing pre-natal testing for autism. With the right support services

ASPIESFORFREEDOM.WORDPRESS.COM

October 19, 2013 at 10:35pm · Like · 1



Immanuel Brändemo I totally agree. Though, when I first came across the puzzle symbol (11 years ago) I liked it. I read something about "missing pieces" and misunderstood it as something like:

"Autistic people are the missing pieces in society's puzzle. We're being exc... [See More](#)

April 3, 2014 at 11:38pm · Like · 3



Tatiana Michelle Alfano My son is six. He is aware of his high points and weaknesses that autism causes for him. while I do not agree with autism speaks and I won't liub, I hadn't thought of e puzzle piece as offending before. Autism is a complex disorder with no two autistic people alike.

April 2, 2015 at 11:44pm · Like · 2



Tatiana Michelle Alfano my son is proud of his puzzle piece identifier. He is proud of his autism, challenges and all. And he knows that by wearing the mutlicolored puzzle piece he is proudly displaying his identifying flag.

April 2, 2015 at 11:47pm · Like · 3



Patricia Passaro To Shannon LaChat

April 10, 2015 at 2:43pm · Like



Elizabeth Evans Bergeron My preferences are my own. I do not light it up blue, nor do I support Autism Speaks. At All. My life has been a puzzle to me. The puzzle piece, to me, represents answers. I love puzzles. I love solving mysteries. Discovering as an adult that I am auti... [See More](#)

April 20, 2015 at 11:12pm · Like · 10



Baba Jaga von Planeten The puzzle-piece was there before Autism Speaks! A puzzle piece is a part of the whole...It represent to me a part of all mankind and that autism belongs to it. All in all we are all just another piece in the puzzleand I won't let Autism Speak... [See More](#)

April 21, 2015 at 7:08am · Like · 4



Chris Smoudianis After writing a research paper on why autism rates have increased, and sifting through the possible causes, treatments, theories, and studies...I compared it to a puzzle. A bunch of pieces that must be connected in order to solve what causes it. I do... [See More](#)

July 15, 2015 at 3:10pm · Like · 5



Leslie Garner I seen a design the other day, I thought was pretty neat it was the puzzle pieces, 3 of them in the shape of a super hero emblem, batman. I think that is really neat, a super hero

July 29, 2015 at 1:22am · Like · 1



Nate Anderson Being a page about "love and acceptance" I don't think it's appropriate to ready the villagers with pitchforks and torches. Also; being mildly autistic, I find it far more offensive for a group to speak on our behalf as if we can't speak for ourselves ... [See More](#)

August 16, 2015 at 5:45am · Like · 3



Emanuela Caruso-James I don't think it's offensive, my son is autistic, I just found out the puzzle piece stands for his condition, i bought a necklace and 3 bracelets. When my child is old enough he can decide if he wants the puzzle piece to identify him, that's their cho... [See More](#)

August 18, 2015 at 2:05pm · Edited · Like · 5



Chrissy Kursawe I just found out my sweet, loving boy who just turned three is autistic and I like the logo. I think it's nice to have that and will get a charm for my bracelet and probably a tattooed heart with puzzle pieces with his name thru. I don't see anything w... [See More](#)

September 9, 2015 at 4:22pm · Like · 2



Doris Crain I disagree with this. When I see the puzzle pieces - I think of fun UNIQUE shapes. Not all pieces are the same. Not that there would be any pieces missing like this suggests - or of a person being any less. I love that Autism associated with puzzle pieces.

September 28, 2015 at 12:34pm · Edited · Like · 3



Vernelle Massey I'm with Doris and Ashley! I love the association with puzzle pieces and will work on the puzzle endlessly with my daughter putting pieces together that fit best for her journey and noone elses. If one piece is cut to fit but does not correspond wit... [See More](#)

September 28, 2015 at 4:16pm · Edited · Like · 2



Parenting Autistic Children with Love & Acceptance You all love the puzzle piece and will continue to use the puzzle piece in spite of the fact that it is a symbol of the oppression of Autistic people?

Wow.

September 28, 2015 at 7:31pm · Like



Parenting Autistic Children with Love & Acceptance When it is the actual people the symbol is meant to represent who are offended? It is disgusting to continue using it in the name of "awareness." Especially when it is not a symbol in any way chosen by the people it represents-- like the puzzle piece.

September 28, 2015 at 7:54pm · Like



Parenting Autistic Children with Love & Acceptance Well, there are about 11k people on the boycott autism speaks page...

What's the magic number? Why dont you conduct a poll amongst ACTUALLY autistic people-- not parents of autistic people-- and report back with the number that approve of its use?

September 28, 2015 at 8:06pm · Like · 1



Doris Crain When i see puzzle pieces i also think of complex structures, that when they come together they make a beautiful picture.

September 28, 2015 at 10:27pm · Like · 1



Parenting Autistic Children with Love & Acceptance That's fine. Frightening that you could read everything posted on the topic and still feel that way. But fine. Autistic people see oppression and inhumanity. I would think that decent people would allow the people that a symbol is meant to represent decide whether or not they are comfortable with it.

September 28, 2015 at 11:02pm · [Like](#)



Parenting Autistic Children with Love & Acceptance Did you read ANYTHING I the original post? I'm guessing no. Or you wouldn't be standing here saying that you can't see anything wrong with it.

I'm deleting your comment, Doris, because the image is disrespectful to autistic people. You may not post it here.

September 28, 2015 at 11:14pm · [Like](#)



Doris Crain I'm sorry you find it disrespectful. I don't think you can speak for everyone on that though.

September 28, 2015 at 11:16pm · [Like](#)



Parenting Autistic Children with Love & Acceptance Doris, I'm really tempted to ban you from the page. But since you said that your child was just diagnosed, I'm not going to-- in hopes that you will learn and grow here.

But you need to read our community standards. I suggest that you listen more and speak less as a new member of this community.

September 29, 2015 at 7:16am · [Like](#)



Don Crain "Frightening that you could read everything posted on the topic and still feel that way."

What's frightening is that someone could take something positive and supportive and, somehow, find negative in it. What's next? Offended by pink breast cancer ribbons? And I love how you have to try to stomp out opposing views by banning anyone who simply disagrees with you.

September 29, 2015 at 7:16pm · Edited · [Like](#) · 3



Parenting Autistic Children with Love & Acceptance This is an intentional community don. If you don't like that, there are plenty of other communities which cater to parents like you.

We value our Autistic community members. We keep this space safe for them-- posts which violate our guidelines are removed and the poster is subjected to being banned. Please familiarize yourself with our guidelines if you wish to participate here.

September 30, 2015 at 6:48am · [Like](#)



Parenting Autistic Children with Love & Acceptance Autism isn't a disease, so please stop right there Sean. Also, don't compare autism to a prolapsed anus. You obviously are just here to troll, so you can go now. You aren't autistic, so you get no say in how we are represented. End of story.

October 3, 2015 at 9:30pm · Edited · [Like](#)



Matt Kerchner Or how about this: Every puzzle and each of their pieces are different, with no 2 alike. And if/when you find all of the pieces and put them together for each individual "puzzle" (person with Autism) you will have completed the necessary puzzle which c... [See More](#)

October 14, 2015 at 1:59pm · [Like](#) · 1



Vanessa Rodriguez I love the puzzle piece....each individual is different as are every piece of a puzzle...autism is a mystery and no two individuals with autism are ever the same so i take it as piece by piece we can put the whole thing together and it takes time so ca... [See More](#)

October 20, 2015 at 11:12am · [Like](#)



Robert Gehrman To me, when I first learned I had Autism, the puzzle piece to me represented the Autism diagnosis which suddenly shed so much light on my entire life prior to knowing... It all suddenly made sense! The diagnosis was the missing piece of the puzzle that... [See More](#)

If you could choose any symbol for Autism Acceptance, what would it be? • /r/aspergers



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November 20, 2015 at 5:15am · Edited · [Like](#)



Amber Jenessa Gutierrez It's a person with autism not autistic person.

November 24, 2015 at 4:28pm · [Like](#)



Zander Rose Actually it's an autistic person, because autism is not a disease, it is a part of who we are. We don't call gay people "people with gayness."

December 6, 2015 at 9:35pm · [Like](#)



Mikael Ulibarri I was diagnosed with Aspergers syndrome or 'high functioning autism' and I have no problems with this logo. I believe it's supposed to represent inner workings of the autistic mind. The thinking process is very visual, we think in details or pictures. ... [See More](#)

December 28, 2015 at 2:05am · [Like](#) · [1](#)



Sijtske van Lambalgen I love this symbol, I see myself as a jigsaw puzzle, you can hardly solve him, but its fun to try. 😊 And solving dos not mean "make it better" solving means "understanding". If you have a lot of puzzle pieces with all a different part of the picture y... [See More](#)

February 7 at 9:53am · [Like](#)



Write a comment...

