

People-First Language

People who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder deserve our respect and acceptance, like any other human beings. Autism is just a part of who they are. Just like all people, they have challenges and strengths, likes and dislikes, hopes and dreams. We are all more alike than we are different.

The Autism Society of North Carolina believes that the way we speak about others is important. It can affect the way we view them, the way others view them, and the way they feel about themselves. Negative words can discount individuals' worth and create further barriers to their achievements.

Autism does not define who someone is; it is one of their characteristics. Using their diagnosis as a defining attribute reflects prejudice and robs them of the opportunity to define themselves.

Therefore, the Autism Society of North Carolina uses people-first language to emphasize the value and worth of people, rather than their diagnosis. As an organization, we use the phrases "individuals with autism" or "people with autism," as opposed to "autistic people."

However, many self-advocates and their allies prefer terminology such as "Autistic," "Autistic person," or "Autistic individual." They claim autism as an inherent part of their identity. The Autism Society of North Carolina believes that people's beliefs should be respected, and whenever possible, they should be described as they wish to be described.