

Tutor time activities

World
Autism
Awareness
Week
2021

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- 4 April



Axcis
Education
Leaders in SEND Recruitment

Schools activity
for World Autism
Awareness Week,
kindly supported
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KS3-4 (England/Wales) S1-3 (Scotland)
Years 9-11 (Northern Ireland)

Tutor time activities



A young boy called Alex is the focus of the National Autistic Society's film for secondary schools. Alex is autistic and finds everyday activities such as going to a shopping centre extremely challenging. Especially when there are bright lights and loud noises – it can completely overwhelm him and leave him in a lot of discomfort.

The film is introduced by Talia Grant, star of Channel 4's *Hollyoaks* who, like Alex, is autistic. You can download a short Q&A where Talia describes school days and being in *Hollyoaks* from www.autism.org.uk/resources

Share the films in your tutor group to stimulate a discussion about autism, a lifelong disability that affects how people communicate and interact with the world. There are approximately 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.

Then choose one or more of the following activities to engage students in the challenges that autistic people face and the ways in which they can support them.

Learning objectives

- learn about autism and autistic people; and how autism can affect students' everyday life, including life at school
- appreciate diversity and respect similarities and differences
- learn how best to support autistic students at school
- use group discussions to express opinions and ideas

Please let any autistic students in your tutor group know that the group will be doing this activity.

You could ask them if they would like to talk about their autism as part of the tutor time.

Activities

1. Information overload

2. What is autism?

3. Same but different

4. Talia's journey

Resources

Film: [*Can you make it to the end?*](#)

Resource sheet: [What is autism? poster](#)

Resource sheets: [Meet Talia](#), [Personal profiles](#), [Pledge](#)

Film: [Q&A with Talia Grant](#)
Quiz: [Talia's Journey](#)

Activities

Choose one or more of the following activities to engage students in the challenges that autistic people face and the ways in which they can support them.

1. Information overload

Watch the film ***Can you make it to the end?*** with your tutor group. Explore and discuss the challenges that Alex faces and what they as individuals might do to support autistic people like Alex at school.

Ask them to consider the following questions:

- What can cause Alex to feel discomfort?
- What feelings might Alex be experiencing during the day, and what might have made him feel that way?
- How do people judge Alex's behaviour and how does that make him feel?
- What could we do in school to help people like Alex feel more comfortable?

2. What is autism?

Share the ***What is autism?*** infographic poster with your students, exploring key characteristics and significant statistics as a group. Working in pairs, ask students to research one of the well-known autistic people on the poster and present their findings to the class. As an extension activity, students could research and produce their own infographic poster to raise awareness of autism for students in other year groups or classes.

3. Same but different

Tell the students they're going to find out a bit more about Talia: how they are different, as everyone is different, but also how they are similar to people of their own age.

Hand out the ***Meet Talia*** resource sheet. Working in pairs, ask students to read the background information and complete a profile on Talia, looking out for interesting points of detail. Having completed a profile on Talia, ask them to do one for themselves and then to pick out two things they have in common with Talia and two things that make them different. Share these with the wider group.

As a class, discuss the steps that they could take as individuals and as a school community to support autistic people like Talia, then invite each student to make a pledge: choosing a change that they are going to make to help improve the lives of autistic people.

4. Talia's journey

Share the Q and A interview with Talia with your class. In this Q&A session, Talia talks about struggling at school, masking* discomfort and makes suggestion about what people can do to help support autistic students.

Working individually, or in pairs, ask students to complete the quiz: ***Talia's Journey***; then come back together as a group to discuss autism, masking and how they might support autistic students in their school. As a follow up, they could prepare a short presentation on supporting autistic students for other year groups.



*masking: often women and girls mask their autism to try and hide the fact that they feel different. They may copy behaviour from others around them, and can be exhausted by the constant effort to appear similar to other people, or might be unaware they are 'masking' in the first place.

3. Same but different: Meet Talia



Talia Grant is 19 and stars as Brooke Hathaway on Channel 4's *Hollyoaks*. Talia has found success in front of the camera but school days were tough and Talia experienced severe anxiety.

Talia doesn't like loud noises, crowds or strong smells. Talia loves drawing, dancing and meditating.

Talia has a younger sister who is autistic and has ADHD while their older sister and younger brother have ADHD. Talia's mother and father are Carrie (pictured) and David Grant.

"There has been so little representation of autistic girls but even more than this, autistic girls from a BAME background."

How does your autism affect you?

I feel like I experience the world more vividly and intensely than others. This can be a good and a bad thing. It means I can be super-passionate about something but then I can sometimes feel totally overwhelmed by everything. I think anxiety is probably the biggest hurdle for me.

What did you find hard, when you were younger?

School, friendships, old Victorian pictures, certain smells, loud noises, mean teachers. I felt like an alien and I didn't know why but now I just accept it. Deep down I've always known who I am, the only difference is I learned that I shouldn't hide it and I embrace my uniqueness.

I remember feeling really low and I think those feelings came from not fitting in and not being accepted.

What do you need from other people as an young autistic person? What should they understand about you?

Be patient with me, sometimes it takes me a little longer to understand what you are trying to communicate. I don't read faces very well. I pick up on people's energy and I can often read their inner feelings. If what someone says contradicts those feelings I am getting, I can sometimes get confused.

What's your advice to other autistic young people who are interested in acting?

Never let anyone tell you that you cannot do something. There is a whole world out there. Especially if, like me, you have had a terrible time at school. Honestly, it does get easier. I'm just about finding out. Find a good theatre group to be a part of and don't be afraid to shine or be yourself.

Personal Profile

Complete this profile of Talia after reading the 'Meet Talia' resource sheet. To get you started, we've filled out an interesting fact about Talia.

Then prepare a profile on yourself. How are you similar to Talia? Do you share any interests? Any likes or dislikes?



Name:

Age:

Family members:

Likes:

Dislikes:

Interesting fact: Talia is one of the first openly autistic actors in a UK soap.

Personal Profile

Put your
picture here

Name:

Age:

Family members:

Likes:

Dislikes:

Interesting fact:

A portrait of a young woman with a red bandana tied around her head, a nose ring, and a small hoop earring. She is wearing a dark green sweater over a white turtleneck. She is smiling and looking slightly to the side. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. A teal circular graphic element is visible on the left side of the image.

4. Quiz: Talia's Journey

"We're all individuals but when we stand together, we're so much stronger."



Watch the Talia Q and A film and have a go at this quiz.

1. What does Talia think young autistic people struggle most with? (Choose one.)

- a) fitting in
- b) not speaking
- c) feeling disliked

2. What did Talia struggle with at school? (Choose one.)

- a) panic attacks
- b) school dinners
- c) understanding teachers

3. What does Talia like about being autistic? (Choose one.)

- a) gathering knowledge quickly
- b) wearing the same clothes
- c) eating the same food

4. Read these statements about Talia. Decide whether they are TRUE or FALSE.

- a) Talia loves getting into a topic
- b) Talia is a massive Robbie Williams fan
- c) Talia found school easy
- d) Talia is a professional dancer
- e) Talia is a big Robin Williams fan
- f) Talia did a lot of masking at school

5. What is masking?

- a) putting on silly faces
- b) covering your emotions
- c) making a mask

6. Talia is one of the first openly autistic actors to

- a) star in a West End play
- b) swim the channel
- c) star in a UK soap
- d) be a newsreader

7. In what way has being autistic helped Talia?

8. Why is Talia celebrating World Autism Awareness Week?

- a) to help increase understanding
- b) to teach people about autism
- c) to show we are stronger united
- d) all of the above

9. Where could you go to find out more about autism and how you can help?

Answers

1.a), 2.a), 3.a), 4. a, e and f are true, the others are false. 5.b), 6.c), 7. It helps her be creative, 8.d), 9. There are lots of places, but the National Autistic Society website autism.org.uk is a good place to start!

The National Autistic Society is a charity registered in England and Wales (269425) and in Scotland (SC039427)