

‘Socially clueless robots’? Debunking the myth that autistic people aren’t good at friendship

A number of myths about autistic people abound. For one, it’s a great myth that autistic people lack empathy. This is how they were depicted for so many years in the clinical literature and in the media– as emotionless, socially clueless robots. However, the more you get to know an [autistic](#) person, the more you realize just how caring they can be, even though they may have some [difficulties reading social cues](#).

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In one [recent study](#), Clark and Adams asked 83 children on the [autism spectrum](#) (aged 8 to 15 years) various questions about themselves. When asked “What do you like most about yourself?”, the most common themes were “I am a good friend or person to be around” and “I am good at particular things.” When asked “What do you enjoy the most?”, one of the most endorsed themes was social interaction.

In other words, when asked to talk about their own lives, social interactions organically emerged as a prominent positive theme.

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Also, compared to typically developing participants, the researchers found that autistic participants reported feeling closer to their social partners. There are multiple possible explanations but one may be that autistic people value social interactions more, especially when given the chance to socialize.

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