

My Autistic Journey: From Isolation to Connection

Written by a local autistic Newham resident

As a shy child, I remember feeling lonely. Like many lonely people, it wasn't by choice that I felt this way. I just didn't know what was 'wrong' with me.

Spoiler: There wasn't anything wrong.

Last year, my friends started attending a local friendship group for adults with Autism & other conditions. They informed me about it & at first, I was very hesitant due to past negative experiences in similar settings. However, & quite candidly, it has changed my life for the better.

I spent years attempting to run away from my condition. I'd pretend I was 'normal' (another spoiler: 'normal' doesn't exist). I can remember trying to force myself to go through things I struggle with, trying to fit in & getting absolutely nowhere in life. Making many connections that wouldn't last for the long term.

Being around people who are like me is a giant, giant improvement. I don't feel like I have to force myself to be like others anymore. I can be myself & that feeling is amazing.

I'm so grateful to people who organise & facilitate groups for neurodivergent people. I'm able to make friends I've made through them & we're always happy to have a safe space where we're not judged. I genuinely look forward to our monthly group as we not only laugh & joke, but we also listen & support each other tremendously too.

I strongly recommend attending a group for neurodivergent people if & when you can because I've seen the improvement in not only myself but others in the group too, which is always inspiring to be around.