

Autism Campaigns

By Katherine Gallagher

Every year in April, autism awareness/acceptance campaigns happen across the world. When I first found out that I was autistic, I was very involved with these kinds of movements. I have included acceptance because, for many years, they were known as awareness campaigns but are changing to acceptance campaigns, too. These days I don't involve myself with autism campaigns anymore and let me tell you why.

First of all, because there have been so many autism awareness campaigns, most people are aware by now what autism is if they have been paying attention. While it is probably helpful to see these campaigns annually, I feel they are not as crucial for me because I think that I have a reasonable level of acceptance in my own life from the community and my employer. My employer, who I have had for the last few months, knows I'm on the spectrum but is still very pleased with my work and organizational skills. I don't feel that I lack people's acceptance, so I don't feel I should engage in these campaigns as someone who needs more approval or as someone who needs to shine a light on acceptance anymore. If anything, people are more accepting of me now because they see how I've grown because of my disability and because I've not let it interfere with what I want to do.

On the other hand, if you are newly diagnosed, you may want to engage and become involved in a campaign like this. That is something I did a lot of in the beginning. I also feel campaigns are beneficial for those who don't have a voice or choose not to come out openly to the public as being autistic and who are not autism advocates. Most autism advocates, including myself, are on the higher functioning end, so we feel comfortable communicating our truths about autism to the public. Still, if you're non-verbal or not comfortable putting yourself out there in a public way, either online or in-person, then an autism awareness/ acceptance campaign may be a better match for you. You can still contribute online or engage any way you want and be included. Advocating by nature is an inclusive practice, but people's choices still matter in what they choose to do. Advocating is not an automatic process.

All in all, I think we need to look closely at autism campaigns and decide for ourselves if they match up with our beliefs. If you feel like you have some degree of acceptance from others in your community, you may not find a lot of value in contributing to a campaign such as this. As another advocate wrote, Santa Claus exists all the time, but we only pay attention to him one day a year - on Christmas. Is that what we want for ourselves? For people to only be aware of us once a year? When in reality, we are here all the time. It doesn't make a lot of sense if you want my opinion.

About the Author

I created this [Website](#) to express my unique autism perceptions. I share my insights and resources here as a person with lived experience. I encourage you to read my [About Me](#) and [Portfolio](#) pages. Or the [What is Autism](#) page for a more in-depth definition.

Autism is very unique and complex. Each person experiences autism differently. My opinions and information are expressions about myself and my experiences. Perception means the ability to see things. It is the ability to become aware of something through the senses. Autism has given me a unique reality and open mind. I believe it is important for others to have their own unique perceptions as individuals on the autism spectrum.

Visit Katherine's Website at <https://spectrumexpressions.news.blog/>

