



Understanding Your Autistic "Spins"

Deep interests are often called "spins" in Autistic culture, "hyperfixations" in ADHD culture, and "passions" in non-neurodivergent culture. They can be a particularly meaningful part of Autistic lives and are often a source of profound joy and meaning. You may develop advanced knowledge and skills in areas of interest through the extra focus you give them. Since feeling competent and capable is inherently satisfying, you may find yourself drawn to spending even more time on these interests. Your interests may define your career or leisure time, and over time, they can become part of your identity.

You may have learned to minimise or hide your interests because others have viewed them as "too much," "too childish," or "boring." You may also feel guilty about spending time immersed in them. However, when you are emotionally exhausted, distraught, or overwhelmed, spending time with your deep interests, even in small ways, can feel grounding and reconnect you with a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in a part of your life that still brings you joy. Connecting with others who share your interests can be a valuable way to build new friendships.

Common Autistic Spins

Listed below are just some common deep interests shared among members of the Autistic community. Place a check (✓) against any that apply to you, adding any others in the spaces provided.

Animals & Nature

- Animals: _____

- Birds, bird watching
- Botany, flowers, plants
- Insects

Arts & Literature

- Animation, anime, cartoons, comics, manga
- Art, e.g. painting, drawing

History, Philosophy & Politics

- Historical events, periods
- Mythology, folklore
- Philosophy
- Politics, political history

Social Sciences

- Criminology
- Linguistics
- Psychology
- Sociology

- Fashion
- Graphic design, fonts
- Languages
- Photography
- Writing, e.g. literature, poetry

Popular Culture

- Astrology, tarot, psychic
- Book series, e.g. Dune, Harry Potter
- Celebrities, actors
- Fantasy
- Movies, TV shows
- Music, musicians
- Science fiction
- Sports

Hobbies & Games

- Board games
- Cooking
- Cosplay
- Craft, e.g. knitting, crochet, sewing
- Gaming
- Lego
- Model-making
- Role-playing

Spirituality & Religion

- Abrahamic religion, e.g. Judaism, Islam
- Christian religion: _____
- Eastern/Asian religions & beliefs, e.g. Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Tantra
- New Age
- Paganism, witchcraft

Other Conceptual Themes

Social Justice & Activism

- Animal rights activism
- Environmental activism
- Human rights activism

Medicine & Human Biology

- Biomedicine
- Forensics
- Genetics
- Medical specialty: _____

- Neuroscience
- Physiology

Sciences

- Archaeology
- Astronomy
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Ecology
- Geography
- Geology
- Mathematics & logic
- Paleontology
- Physics

Technology & Engineering

- Artificial Intelligence
- Computing, technology
- Engineering
- Machinery
- Transport, e.g. trains, cars, buses
- Transport systems
- Robotics
- Space exploration

- Solving puzzles
- Use of language
- Solving complex problems
- Storytelling

Other:

- _____
- _____

Reflection

Briefly describe how you feel when you spend time engrossed in your interests. Consider a sense of joy, focus, calm, identity, connection or stimulation.

How much intentional time do you currently make for these interests in your life? Circle one option or place an X on the line:

○-----○

None Very little Just enough The perfect amount A little too much Way too much

What gets in the way? Briefly describe these barriers. Consider whether you have feelings of guilt, other responsibilities, not enough time, work demands, fear of others' judgments, or the sense that the interests are "too intense" to manage.

Briefly describe one small way you could create a little more space for your interests this week.

About Jennifer Kemp

Jennifer Kemp is a clinical psychologist based in Adelaide, Australia. Her neurodiversity-affirming approach is founded on her own experience of being late-diagnosed as Autistic and an ADHDer, listening deeply to the experiences of her neurodivergent clients and the latest research. Jennifer weaves together acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) with compassion-focused approaches to help her clients improve their mental health and develop greater self-acceptance, self-compassion, and pride in their neurodivergent identity.

Jennifer is the co-author of “[The Neurodivergence Skills Workbook for Autism and ADHD: Cultivate Self-Compassion, Live Authentically, and Be Your Own Advocate](#)” and author of “[The ACT Workbook for Perfectionism: Build Your Best \(Imperfect\) Life Using Powerful Acceptance & Commitment Therapy and Self-Compassion Skills.](#)”

For more free resources and e-books go to www.jenniferkemp.com.au.

