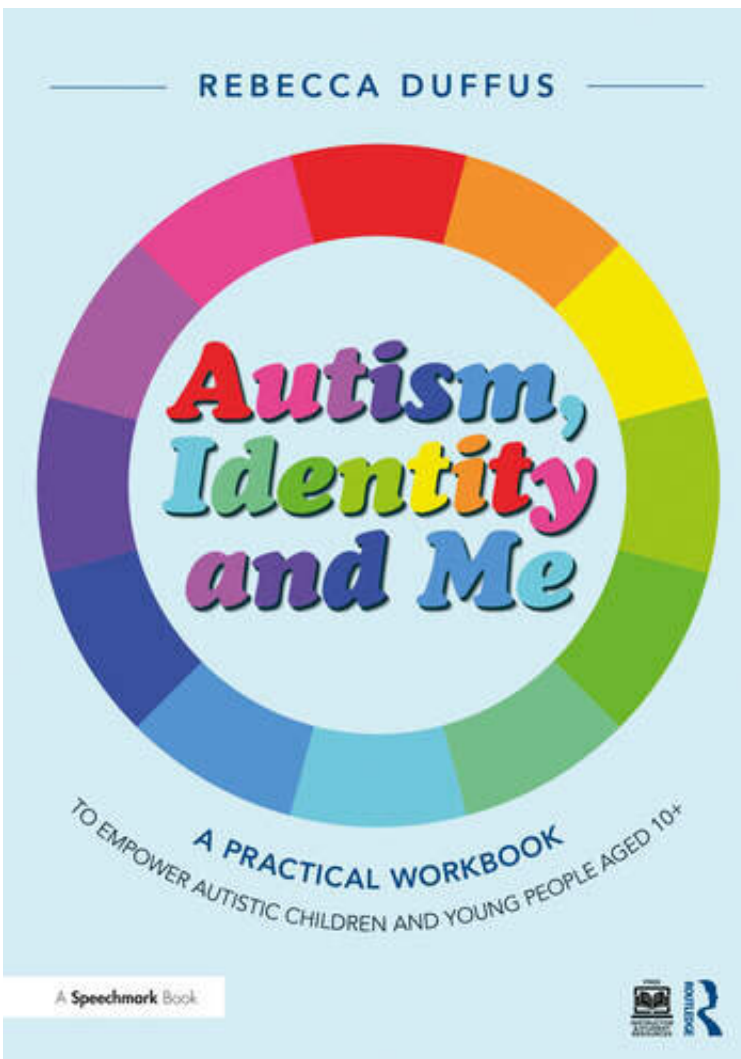


# Autistic children should be empowered to see their strengths, says autism specialist

February 1 2023

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Credit: Routledge

Autistic children need encouragement to have positive conversations about who they are, to understand what they are good at and where they can excel, according to an expert, who is calling for a change in how we approach neurodivergence in young people.

For many [parents](#) and caregivers, the struggle to get a child diagnosed with autism is long and difficult. When the day comes, it can be a great relief—but then what happens next?

The parent and the school may get support, but the young person is unlikely to get much guidance about what it means to them and how they feel about it.

A new parent guide, to be published later this month (February 21), aims to change that.

## **Giving your child the tools to succeed**

There can be a heavy focus placed on how to educate autistic children, but less support available for developing their sense of identity in a positive way.

An autism specialist has created a guidebook for parents, as well as professionals, with an easy-to-follow workbook for children to involve them in their own journey, work through what being autistic means to them and give them the tools to feel empowered by their autistic identity.

Rebecca Duffus M.Sc. has a Psychology Degree and a Masters in Autism and Education, alongside many years of experience working as an advisory teacher with students and educators, and with parents, to nurture a culture which celebrates neurodiversity.

She explains, "I want to see a society that celebrates the autistic identity, and I want children to have access to positive conversations about who they are.

"This will enable them to build their confidence and [self-esteem](#) and to be able to advocate for themselves.

"I hope these books help to foster a generation that is excited about differences and welcomes diverse voices for what they can bring to the table."

## **Autonomy for autistic children**

Duffus believes that by encouraging children to understand what they are good at and where they can excel, this will empower [young people](#) by giving them autonomy and control over their own journey.

The evidence-based guidebook helps parents to understand what [everyday life](#) is like for an autistic child. It also gives parents the tools to have conversations with their child based on their strengths and skills.

The workbook, designed and created specifically for autistic children and [young adults](#), aims to develop a sense of pride in the autistic identity and everything that makes each young person unique.

Eighteen-year-old Pavan Bhamidipati is a National Autistic Society Young Ambassador and advisor for the Council for Disabled Children. He provided input on the book while it was being developed.

He said, "The books are unique compared to others because they represent the perspectives of young autistic people, and they allow the autistic reader themselves to personalize the books.

"It's so important for autistic young people to understand their autistic identity as it will help both them and others to understand why they behave in the way they behave and why they perceive the world the way they perceive the world. For me, knowing about my own identity made me more accepting of myself."

## Eagerly awaited book

Consultant occupational therapist Moyna Talcer M.Sc., who has more than 20 years of experience working with [autistic children](#), says the book is "worth its weight in gold."

She continued, "This is so important not only for the young person, but also those supporting them to understand that [autism](#) is not a deficit but a difference.

"The world needs neurodivergent people. This workbook is an empowering way for the young person to develop a positive and affirming view of themselves as an autistic person and to recognize their strengths and to identify any areas that they may need support."

**More information:** Rebecca Duffus, "Autism, Identity and Me: A Practical Workbook and Professional Guide to Empower Autistic Children and Young People Aged 10+"

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<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-02-autistic-children-empowered-strengths-autism.html>

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