

## **Mental Health and Autism: Strategies and Self-care**

Jeanette Purkis

This presentation will look at some of the issues facing Autistic people who also experience mental illness symptoms. It will draw from the lived experience of the presenter, Jeanette Purkis, who has a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition and atypical schizophrenia. Jeanette has gone from a very difficult early life to being an author, Autism self-advocate, public speaker and career public servant.

The presentation will suggest strategies to help enable mental health clinicians to provide more effective and inclusive services to Autistic people with mental illness. It will also provide strategies that people on the Autism spectrum and those who love and care for them can use to address mental health issues and get the most out of clinical services.

The presentation will cover the sorts of mental health difficulties Autistic people experience and where there can be differences between Autistic and non-autistic people. Specific issues raised in the presentation include experiences of invalidation, assumptions and misinterpretations and not being 'heard' in clinical settings. The presentation provides a range of helpful strategies as well as 'what if?' statements which aim to help audience members reframe their thinking around how things can be improved in mental health care for Autistic people. It also includes a number of affirming memes around managing mental health challenges and promoting inclusion.