

To answer that question, we will need to go over a brief history of Autism Awareness Month, as it was originally called. The month was first established in 1970, when autism diagnoses were significantly less common. Back then, approximately 1 in every 2000 children was diagnosed with autism, whereas that number has now skyrocketed to 1 in every 68 children today. This does not necessarily mean that more people are autistic now; chances are it mostly reflects medical professionals' increased willingness to diagnose people with conditions such as autism. In 2007, the first Autism Awareness Day took place, and both have continued to be observed.

Since Autism Awareness Month was established, many people have used the opportunity to "talk about autistic people without autistic people", meaning some advocates, despite good intentions, have tried to tell autistic people how they should experience their autism, creating a very narrow idea of what autism looks like. Additionally, many "advocates" try to make autism seem like an illness or a thing that people are unfortunate to have.

Evidently, being aware of people with autism is never really quite enough.

Many autistic people now encourage others to recognize April as Autism Acceptance Month, not Autism Awareness Month. The name highlights the fact that autistic people all experience autism in their own unique ways, so we should not try to put them in a box.

Most importantly, autism needs to be accepted, and not "cured".

Happy Spring,
The Social Justice Club