

Autistic Motherhood:

An Invisible Identity



What is **ARGH**

- Inform service providers about what Autistic people really experience.
- Campaign for better services for Autistic people in the highlands and beyond.
- Challenge stigma and discrimination through education about Autistic strengths.

Inform

Educate

Campaign

Challenge

Inverness 2015



"A difficult thing has been the need to network with other mothers for my children's social lives. I am not good with NT women."

Kalen

Is there anything you want to say to people considering starting a family?

"Go for it!"

Sarah

"It will take up all of your reserves of energy, patience and resilience, but you can do it. You'll be fine."

Fiona

"Babies have all the rights, you have all the obligations - this can be very heavy but it's truly worth it."

Dinah

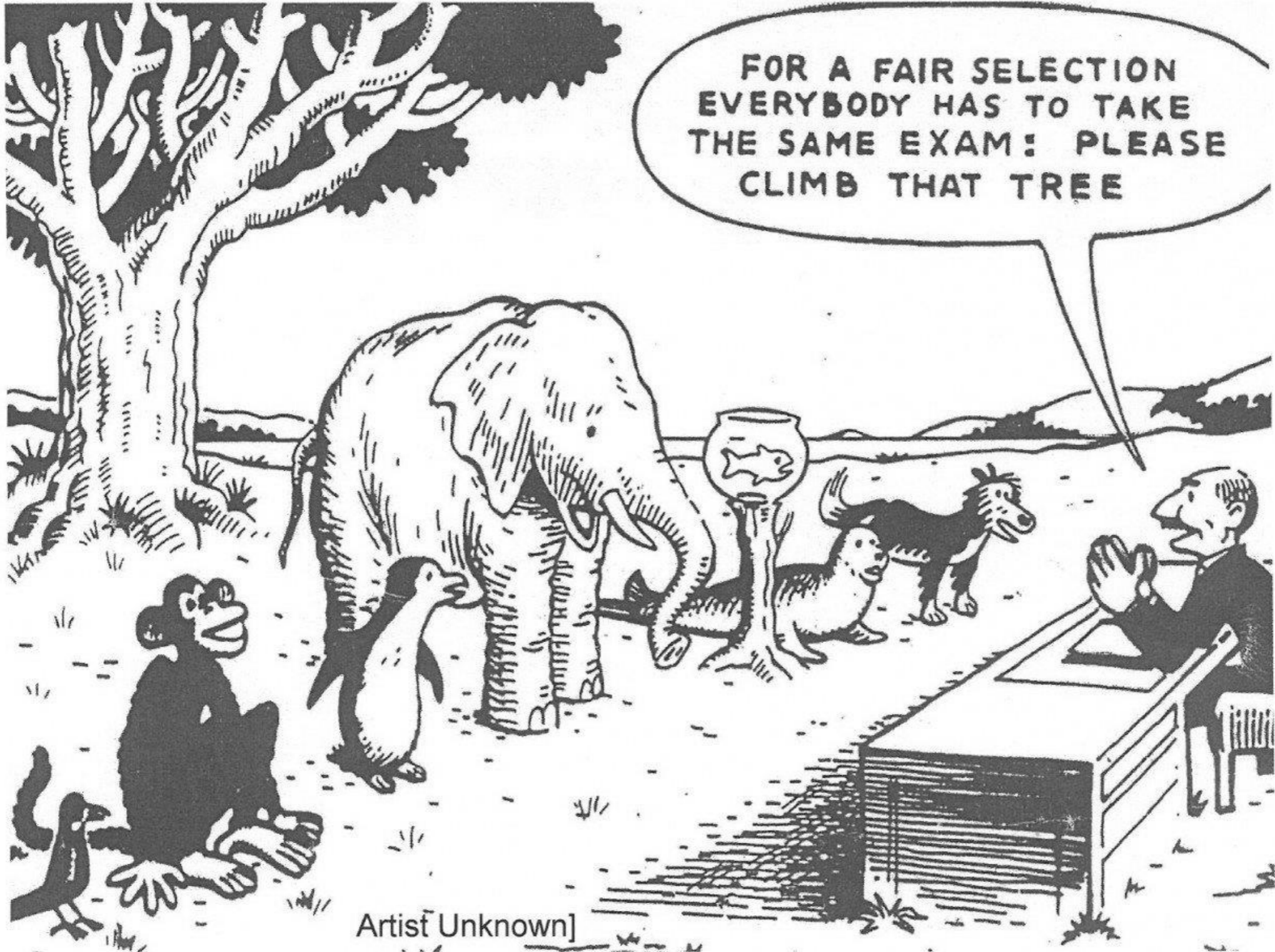
"Be cautious but not afraid. The perfect time to start a family rarely happens, but good enough times are frequent. Remember that your odds of non-autistic children are very high, but that you will know them from (before) birth. You can grow to understand and empathise with your own children very deeply no matter what their neurology."

Kalen

"Consider Autistic children (who may or may NOT be like you). Consider NT children. Consider the possibility of having a child with needs you've never thought of. How are you going to meet their needs? Think about what resources you will have to help - friends, family, formal support, financial resources."

anon





Artist Unknown]

A.R.S.E.D

Can professionals be arsed to support us?
(Fiona)

Affirmation

Autistic people will usually have a life- long and painful history of being made to feel less than valid. Affirmation is the key first step to every interaction, acknowledging and validating our emotions is vital.

Respect

Autistic mothers are hugely compassionate, resilient, insightful, courageous people and are more than worthy of your respect.

Support

Please offer us support without being asked. Don't wait until we break down completely. Autistic people are very good at hiding their distress and may find it very difficult to ask for help.

If you do offer support and it's turned down, please let us mull it over and come back to the question on another occasion. We may just need time to process and accept any sudden change of routine or schedule.

Extrême empathy.

Autistic people are often extreme empathisers but we often forget to include ourselves in that empathy. We will always put our children first, to an extent that can be damaging to us over time.

Diagnosis

Many Autistic mothers don't realise that they are Autistic and so have never sought a diagnosis.

Mothers who are quietly coping and getting on with things without complaint may fall through the cracks and be left without the emotional and practical support they need.

Messages for Autistic mothers.

"Trust your instinct, you know your child best and you're doing the very best you can and that's more than enough"

Fiona Ryalls

"It isn't possible to do parenting perfectly, work on learning to live with that and look after yourself well enough to ensure you can keep going".

Anon

Messages for professionals who work with Autistic mothers.

"Listen to mums more, take into account what we say".

Fiona Ryalls

"Stop assuming that I was diagnosed after/because of my children and therefore any difficulties I might have must be trivial".

anon

"Don't judge on superficial".

Dinah

"keep info clear, straight forward, practical and in context". (Sarah)

"Carrying the weight of responsibility totally alone."
Anon

"Not feeling attachment to either of my children in the same way as I witness with other mothers".

anon

"What do you feel you have gained as a mother?"

"Being a mother has given some real purpose to my life which otherwise would have been a very isolated affair. The children are my legacy"

Anon

"Everything, it's enriched my life beyond imagining, knowing you have grown and nurtured this baby into a child and eventually will into adulthood. It's the hardest and tiring but most rewarding thing I have ever done or will ever do".

Fiona Ryalls

"Wow - superabundance of love, both giving and receiving; perspective, flexibility, status; a stake in the future".

Dinah

"Confidence, sense of purpose, great joy, knowledge, acceptance".

Sarah

"Love, maturity, multi-tasking abilities, organisation, structure in my life, social contact, feeling competent and important. Sometimes, being a mother has been my only reason to get up in the morning".

Kalen

"A wonderful insight into autism, and an amazing person in my life. My daughter showed me what autism really is - not the official, usually misleading impression of it. And she showed me that autistic is what I am. Being a parent also gave me a wonderful structure to my life - a structure that was as sustaining and supportive as it was isolating and limiting - swings and roundabouts I guess".

Fiona

"Fulfilment, in some ways confidence, irreplaceable experiences. Being able to be the sort of parent to my children that I would have wanted to have".

anon

Thank you to everyone who contributed.

Sarah

Fiona

Kalen

Fiona Ryalls

Dinah

Caroline Hearst

And three anonymous contributors.

"We are not all that different from other mothers. We care for our children just the same. While we may express that differently or have difficulty doing everything we want for our children, both mother and child(ren) can grow and adapt in the relationship".

Kalen

