

*Why autistic  
individuals need  
alone time*



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**Everyone enjoys some alone time every now and then, but for many autistic people it's an essential part of their day. Finding a quiet space for a short period is an opportunity to break away from the hustle and bustle, recharge their mental battery, and return to a calm and happy state.**

A recent study by a PhD student at the University of the West of England focused specifically on autistic adults who enjoy spending time alone, where they spend it, and its many benefits to their wellbeing. Of course, all these findings are relevant for autistic children too.



## **Reasons why autistic children might need time alone**

The story uncovered four key themes that help to explain why autistic children might need to spend some time alone. These were:

### ***1. Social and sensory overload***

Autistic people can find social interaction overwhelming. They may turn to masking to help navigate each situation, but doing this for extended periods of time is exhausting. Likewise, bright lights, loud sounds, and uncomfortable temperatures add to the stress, leaving them feeling irritable or frustrated. Without time to recover, there's a serious risk of meltdowns or shutdowns.

### ***2. Wanting a safe space***

What makes a safe space is different from person to person, but it's essential for autistic people to have somewhere they feel at peace. It could be a space with dim lighting, a space with interesting activities, or a

space that's cosy and relaxing. Sometimes it could just be waking up before everyone else and having somewhere familiar all to themselves.

### ***3. Entering a flow state***

Having time alone to immerse themselves in an activity is a fantastic way for autistic people to unwind and recharge. It can help them to process thoughts and emotions, or to forget about any anxieties they may be having. Many autistic people like to escape to fictional worlds through reading, writing, or watching. Whatever engages their mind and brings them joy.

### ***4. Feeling ready to reconnect***

After time alone, participants in the study felt more ready to socialise with others again. Because of this, they enjoyed group activities more, and felt under less pressure to mask. Some said they found it helpful to create a schedule around socialising and alone time so that they could find a better balance.

