

# Understanding autism together

## Where Growth Is Powered By Awareness, Compassion, And Acceptability

**Y**outh Power is an annual social leadership programme organised by The Global Times, where different teams from Amity schools engage in varied social causes in several stages. One of them is 'Panel Discussion' where experts from different walks of life discuss several aspects of the chosen social cause. Here's presenting **Part I** of this exclusive series, based on the panel discussions organised by YP teams for the year 2025-26, and a host of opinions as experts share their insights on '**Autism**', the cause chosen by YP team of AIS Noida.



The panellists share their views on autism awareness and inclusion

### Autism is not a disability, it is a difference

**Panellist: Dr Amit Batra**  
Consultant neurologist, expert in neurodevelopmental and behavioural neurology

"Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition that is influenced by both, genetics and environmental factors. It can be detected as young as three months, or much later, up to 15 years of age. Families often notice these behaviours but mask them due to societal pressures. Common signs include difficulties in social communication, speech delay, or limited vocabulary. Sensory issues may appear too – avoiding physical touch or feeling overwhelmed by certain sounds or textures. Many such children engage in repetitive



behaviours or activities which are the coping mechanisms that help regulate their environment. As they grow older, some symptoms may change or become less obvious, which is why age can sometimes mask autism. Autistic individuals are neurodivergent - they think and function differently; many develop exceptional abilities over time. It is important that autism is diagnosed clinically by a specialist using DSM-5 criteria. Early intervention is crucial for that is when the brain is most adaptable. Autism is not a disability; it is a difference, and with the right guidance, abilities can truly flourish."

### Support can transform challenges into strengths

**Panellist: Naman Misra**  
Developer associate, SAP Labs India, actor and model

"The people around me - especially my peers and my family - have made me the person I am today. My journey as a student had its ups and downs, but it also gave me an abundance of happy memories. My parents encouraged me to observe people carefully, and that simple habit helped me understand the world a lot better. My sister played an incredibly important role in my life. She was a chatterbox, full of energy, and during a difficult phase of my life, when I had lost my speech, her support



helped me find my way again. Acting became another medium for me to be able to express myself. While working on Sitaare Zameen Par, the director and their team told us to just be ourselves. That helped a great deal. I could resonate with my character, Hargobind - who was sometimes grouchy or blunt - so able to play that character felt quite natural. Still, the environment on set required certain preparation. Bright lights, loud sounds, and heat were challenging, and some scenes took up almost 150 takes. Through all of this, I have learned that embracing who you are, with the support of others, can transform challenges into strengths."

Part I



Expert Speak

### Understanding autism begins with acceptance

**Panellist: Shweta Muneshwar**  
Founder and CEO of Speaking Mindz, special educator, author parent counsellor

"The biggest myths around autism are - it is a mental illness, autistic children won't learn, or lack emotions. But these damaging beliefs can change once we understand how an autistic mind works. When my child struggled in public spaces - lying on the ground or feeling overwhelmed - people judged him. Stigma often begins at home. Hence, acceptance too must begin within the family before society can follow. I had never even



heard of the word 'autism' before my child's diagnosis. Occupational therapy helped with sensory overload and other troubles, which many can misunderstand. A fractured leg is treated with physiotherapy - and therapy for autism is no different. Autistic children think in patterns. My son excels at maths, coding, and memory, and he has won multiple Olympiad medals. With the right professional guidance, parents can become their child's strongest therapists. Through Speaking Mindz, my goal is simple: every mind that thinks differently deserves to be understood, accepted, and heard."

### Self-care is essential, not just an option

**Panellist: Geetika Singh**  
Counselling psychologist, parenting & mindfulness coach, founder of Samatva Wellbeing

"Autism is not a mental illness, and children should be accepted exactly as they are. Early support matters, but so does emotional safety. Parents must communicate and stay connected with their child, even when progress feels slow. Many autistic individuals have heightened sensory sensitivity. It's important to understand what triggers them. I work with restorative and trauma-informed yoga, which helps calm the nervous system



without forcing change. Restorative yoga uses cushions and quiet spaces to promote relaxation, while trauma-informed yoga focuses on autonomy and safety. Simple grounding activities - feeling the feet on the ground, focusing on breath, sensing posture - can help children regulate stress. These practices also support parents. Overwhelmed parents cannot fully support their child. Self-care then, is not optional; it is essential. Don't panic when you hear the word neurodivergent. Be supportive, loving, and open to learning. Work as a team and consult professionals when needed."