



BEING ME[®]

Knowing Myself Valuing Myself Being Myself



A neuro-affirming online group
for Autistic young people

Supporting self-understanding, wellbeing, peer connection and a positive Autistic identity.



WELCOME!

Every Autistic young person
deserves to feel like they belong



WHO WE ARE

At GROVE, we believe that Autistic young people deserve spaces where they can be understood, accepted and supported to be themselves.

We are an Autistic-staffed organisation providing 1:1 mentoring and group support for Autistic young people, delivered by Autistic adults. Based in the UK and working entirely online, we support young people and families across the UK and internationally.

ABOUT 'BEING ME'

Being Me is GROVE's exclusive ten-session neuro-affirming group programme, created by Autistic professionals and delivered exclusively by GROVE.

Being Me supports young people to develop greater self-understanding, confidence, self-advocacy skills and a positive Autistic identity – not by teaching them to change who they are, but by helping them understand and value themselves.

WHO 'BEING ME' IS FOR

AUTISTIC, PDA & AUDHD YOUNG PEOPLE AGE 8-18

Being Me is designed for Autistic young people who would benefit from:

- Understanding themselves and their Autistic identity
- Meeting other Autistic young people who share similar experiences
- Developing confidence and self-acceptance
- Exploring communication, friendships and relationships
- Learning about their strengths, needs and preferences
- Building self-advocacy skills
- Feeling less alone and more connected

Being Me may be particularly helpful for young people who:

- Feel different or misunderstood
- Have experienced pressure to mask or change themselves
- Are beginning to explore what being Autistic means for them
- Would like to connect with Autistic peers and role models
- Have found environments such as schools challenging

Being Me is designed for Autistic, PDA and AuDHD young people aged 8–18 who would like to better understand themselves, connect with other young people like them, and explore what being Autistic (and otherwise neurodivergent) means for them.

Young people do not need a formal Autism diagnosis to take part. However, they should have an understanding that they are Autistic or might be Autistic, as the programme explores Autistic identity and experiences throughout.

Age groups (see website for available times/days):

- Ages 8–12
- Ages 12–16
- Ages 16–18



WHAT HAPPENS IN 'BEING ME'?

NEURO-AFFIRMING CONTENT

Being Me is a ten-week structured group programme delivered online by Autistic Mentors.

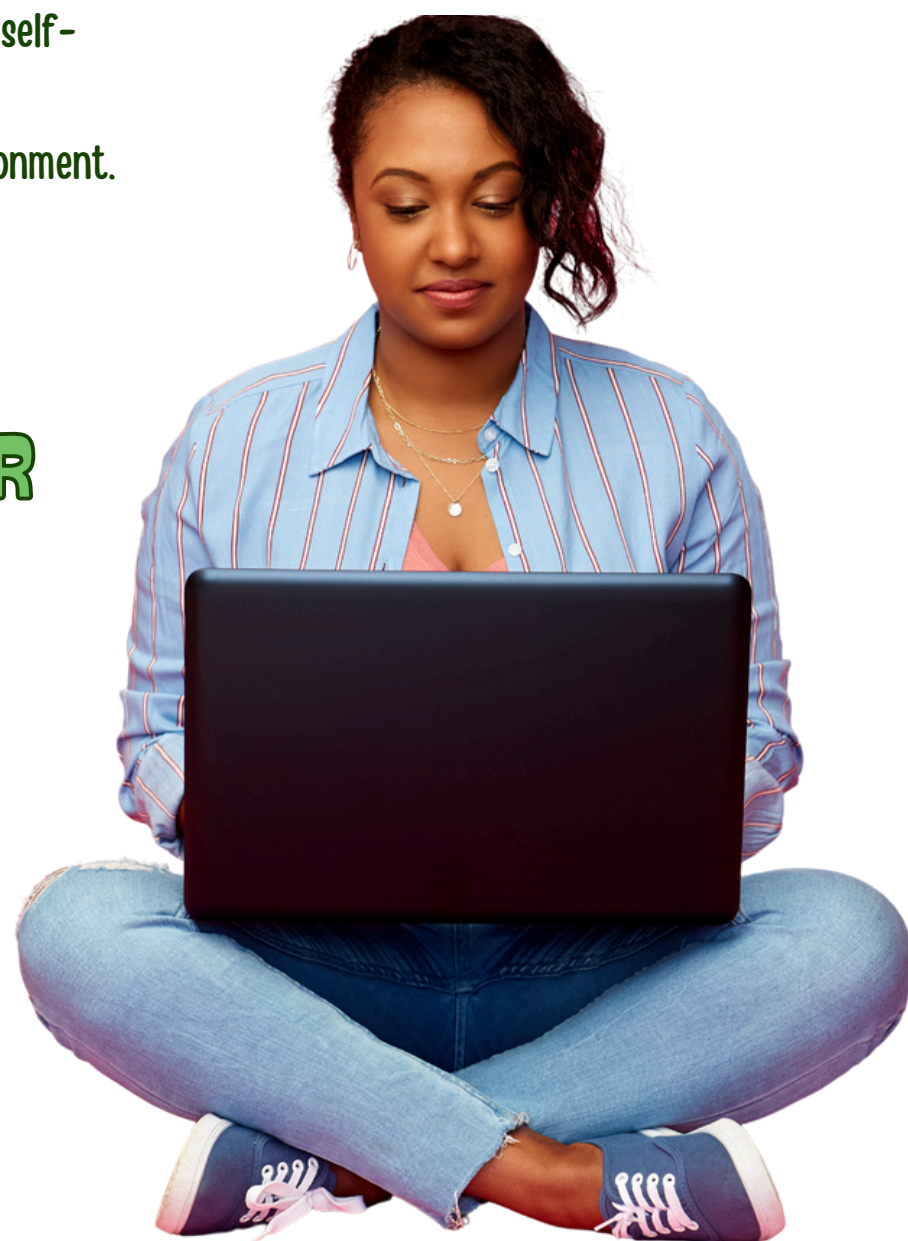
Each session combines:

- Exploring topics connected to Autistic experience, neurodiversity and self-understanding
- Invitations to share experiences and ideas in a supportive group environment.
- Optional creative activities, reflection and practical exercises
- Chances to build relationships with other Autistic young people

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE MAY DISCOVER

Young people explore topics including:

- What is autism and what does being Autistic mean?
- Neurodiversity and intersectionality
- Strengths, interests and identity
- Sensory experiences
- Energy, burnout and self-care
- Communication differences
- Friendships and connection
- Self-advocacy and boundaries
- Understanding regulation, dysregulation and distress
- Challenging stereotypes about autism
- Celebrating Autistic ways of thinking and being



INTENTIONALLY LOW-DEMAND

There is never pressure to participate in a particular way. Young people are supported to engage in ways that feel comfortable and authentic for them.

Cameras are optional. We have safeguarding procedures in place for this.

- Why everyday life can sometimes feel overwhelming.
- Why masking is exhausting.
- Why friendships may have felt difficult.
- Why their interests matter.
- How to recognise and communicate their needs.
- That there is no right or wrong way to be Autistic.
- That there are not alone.
- That they are valued as their authentic selves.

ALL FORMS OF COMMUNICATION SUPPORTED

We welcome all forms of communication - speech, typing in the chat, AAC.

THE 'BEING ME' APPROACH

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO SUPPORTING AUTISTIC YOUNG PEOPLE

Many traditional interventions for Autistic young people have focused on reducing Autistic behaviours or teaching young people to fit into neurotypical expectations.

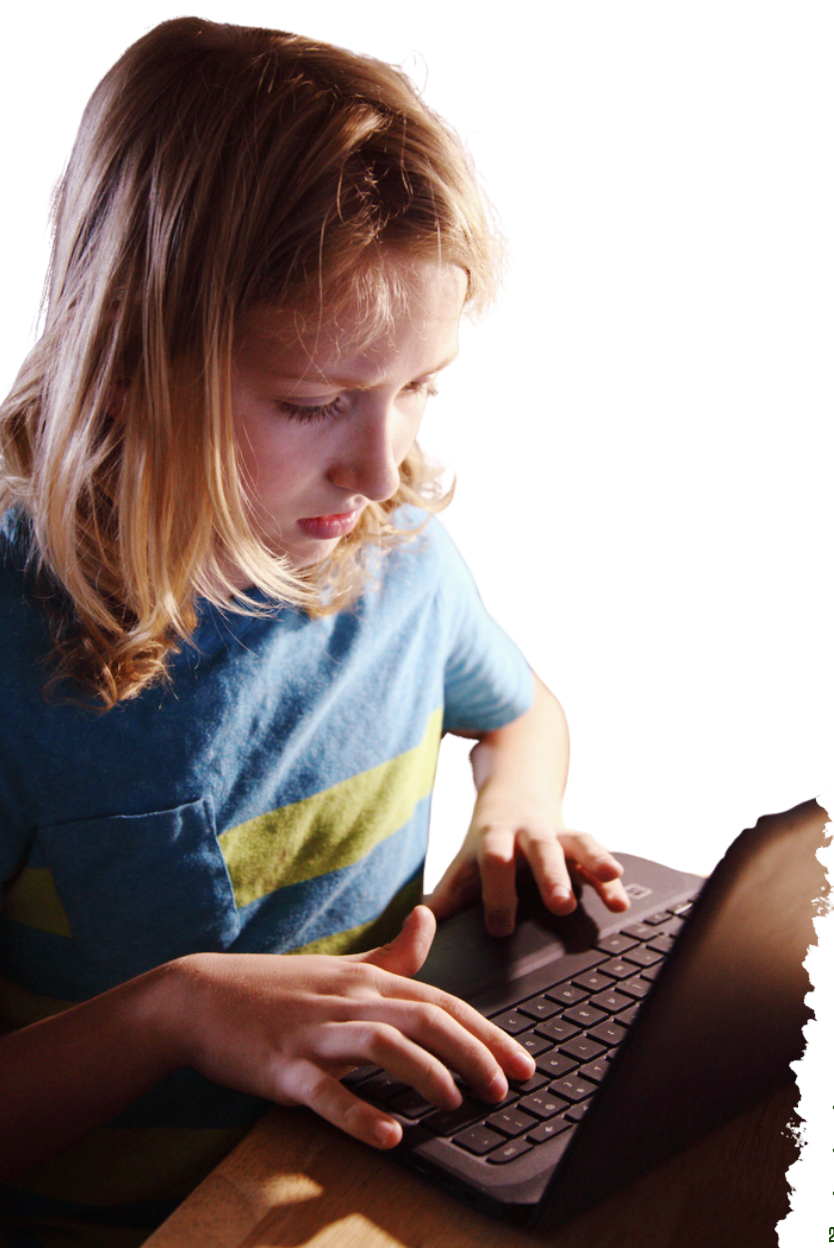
Through Being Me – and all our other supportive services – GROVE takes a different approach.

We believe that Autistic young people do not need to be changed to belong. They need opportunities to understand themselves, connect with others who share their experiences, and develop the confidence to advocate for what they need.

There is a growing body of evidence that how Autistic people feel about being Autistic matters for their mental health: a positive Autistic identity – identifying with other Autistic people and feeling good about being Autistic – is associated with higher self-esteem and better psychological wellbeing in Autistic adults (Cooper, Smith & Russell, 2017) and in Autistic young people specifically (Cooper, Russell, Lei & Smith, 2023). Acceptance of Autistic identity – by oneself and by others – is linked to better mental health outcomes (Cage, Di Monaco & Newell, 2018).

BEING ME IS

- Autistic-led: Created by Autistic professionals and delivered by Autistic mentors.
- Neurodiversity-affirming: Recognising being Autistic as a natural form of human diversity rather than something to be fixed.
- Identity-focused: Supporting young people to explore and develop a positive sense of who they are.
- Connection-based: Recognising the importance of Autistic-to-Autistic connection, shared understanding and belonging.
- Evidence-informed: Drawing on current research, Autistic community knowledge and lived experience.



• Cage, E., Di Monaco, J., & Newell, V. (2018). Experiences of autism acceptance and mental health in autistic adults. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 48(2), 473–484.

• Cooper, K., Smith, L. G. E., & Russell, A. (2017). Social identity, self-esteem, and mental health in autism. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 47(7), 844–854.

• Cooper, K., Russell, A. J., Lei, J., & Smith, L. G. E. (2023). The impact of a positive autism identity and autistic community solidarity on social anxiety and mental health in autistic young people. *Autism*, 27(3), 848–857.

WHY GROVE?

AUTISM IS OUR SPECIALITY

Being Me is not an off-the-shelf programme delivered by professionals who have only studied Autism. It has been created and delivered by Autistic professionals who combine expertise, research knowledge and lived experience.

GROVE is an Autistic-staffed organisation, and every member of our team is Autistic. This means the young people we support learn alongside adults who understand being Autistic from both professional and personal perspectives.

GROVE is led by Jess Garner, Founder and Director of GROVE. Jess is a former secondary school teacher with 17 years experience in education and holds an MA in Autism (Distinction). Collectively, the wider team brings expertise across education, psychology, counselling, youth work, mentoring, research and neurodiversity-affirming practice. Our team includes professionals with qualifications in autism ranging from Postgraduate Certificate to PhD level, alongside crucial lived experience. Team members contribute to research, deliver training, advise organisations and support schools, families and professionals to better understand Autistic young people. Autism, neurodivergence and neurodiversity theory and practice is our specialism.

This combination of academic expertise, professional experience and lived experience is what makes GROVE and Being Me distinctive.



“Brilliant. The Mentors are so engaging, open, friendly and inclusive. Your ability to meet the needs of everyone in the group, create a truly safe, inclusive and affirming space is so valuable. My young person really appreciated hearing your own experiences too.” – Parent

OUTCOMES

WHAT CAN YOUNG PEOPLE GAIN FROM BEING ME?

Every Autistic young person is different, and their experience of Being Me will be unique. While every journey is individual, young people may develop:

- Greater self-understanding: A deeper understanding of their strengths, needs, preferences and experiences as an Autistic person.
- A stronger, more positive Autistic identity: Greater acceptance of who they are, increased confidence in being themselves, and pride in their Autistic identity.
- Increased self-advocacy: Greater confidence expressing their needs, asking for support, and making use of accommodations that help them thrive.
- Meaningful connection: Reduced feelings of isolation through building authentic relationships with other Autistic young people and positive Autistic role models.
- Practical strategies: A toolkit of strategies to support communication, boundaries, regulation, sensory needs, energy management and self-care.
- Improved wellbeing: Feeling more understood, accepted, confident and hopeful about the future.
- A sense of belonging: Knowing they are not alone, feeling accepted, and recognising that there are other people who think, feel and experience the world in similar ways.

Above all, Being Me supports young people to understand themselves with greater compassion, connect with others authentically, and move forward with confidence in who they are.

Honestly his willing participation is HUGE. I very much was not sure if he'd sit for the group, so the fact that he's staying engaged is pretty amazing. I credit it to the way you are incorporating all of the young people's interests so beautifully and making it clear that they can participate how and if they want to. I appreciate you!"

ACCESSING BEING ME

Being Me can be accessed through self-funding or funded placements.

We are committed to making Being Me as accessible as possible and so we offer a sliding scale for self-funding families. Please visit the website for full details.



INFORMATION FOR COMMISSIONERS' & REFERRERS

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Being Me provides a structured but low-demand, neuro-affirming group to support Autistic young people.

- Format: Online group programme
- Duration: Ten sessions of 1 hour each, once per week
- Delivered by: Autistic Mentors who have been through Safer Recruitment and hold an Enhanced DBS with children's barred list (full range of policies / insurance available for viewing upon request)
- Age groups: 8-12, 12-16 or 16-18
- Group size: Between 4-10

SUITABLE REFERRALS

Being Me may be suitable for Autistic young people experiencing:

- Low confidence or self-esteem
- Feelings of isolation
- Difficulty understanding their own needs
- Challenges around identity and belonging
- A need for Autistic peer connection

EVIDENCE BASE

Being Me is informed by research into:

- Positive Autistic identity
- Autistic acceptance
- Minority stress and stigma
- Autistic-to-Autistic communication
- Neurodiversity-affirming practice

WHAT'S INCLUDED

The programme fee of £500 per young person includes:

- Ten live online group sessions delivered by Autistic Mentors
- Access to session recordings for the duration of the programme
- A detailed Parent/Carer Guide with information and educational resources to support understanding beyond the sessions
- A choice of Being Me activity booklets to scaffold participation, support reflection and continued learning
- A Summary Booklet on completion, capturing key themes explored throughout the programme

REFERRAL PROCESS

We work with families, schools, local authorities, charities and organisations to improve access to high-quality, Autistic-led support.

Being Me can be accessed through:

- Parent/carer booking online
- School referral or recommendation
- Local authority or commissioned placements
- Charity or organisation-funded places
- Other agreed support pathways

To refer or commission please email hello@grOve.org



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GROVE



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