



AutismTN Connect
Community Values & Meeting Norms & Expectations
Last modified: September 30, 2025

AutismTN Connect is a peer-led group that is dedicated to providing a welcoming space for Autistic adults in Middle Tennessee to come together to share our experiences, challenges and triumphs. The following Community Values and Meeting Norms and Expectations are intended to provide guidance on how we engage with each other and the responsibilities of our members. The Community Values apply to both Connect Online and In-Person events.

This is a living document that is updated as needed to add clarity and specificity around participation expectations and values.

Community Values

1. Connect provides a welcoming and accessible community for Autistic adults (18+) to come together and share our experiences, challenges, and triumphs.
2. Connect members respect each other. We collectively foster a supportive space for all members. We are respectful and considerate of everyone in the community, regardless of their background, identities, or beliefs.
3. Connect members include everyone. We value and celebrate the diversity of the Autistic community and recognize how our Autistic identity intersects with other parts of our identity. We recognize that in our society, some identities have privilege while others have been marginalized. Connect members strive to create a space where everyone feels like they belong. In doing so, we are mindful of our language and behavior to ensure that everyone feels welcome and included.
4. AutismTN does not tolerate hurtful language, hostility, discrimination, abuse, marginalization or insulting behavior on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, background, skin color, religious belief, cultural practice, gender identity, sexuality, socioeconomic class, language, disability, immigration status, veteran status, or age. AutismTN does not accept sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, body shaming (any body type), antisemitism, Islamophobia, fascism, age discrimination, ableism, and/or any other intersectional forms of discrimination. This policy applies to all AutismTN community groups, including Connect. Refusal to abide by this policy will result in immediate expulsion.

5. Connect members protect each other, and we care about each other's privacy. What happens at Connect, stays at Connect. We do not discuss members' personal information/situations to people outside of the group.
6. If we witness a violation of the Community Values at Connect Online or In-Person, we will report the violation to the Connect Facilitator either in person, via email, or in the Share a Concern form: <https://forms.gle/BLrSx9HTTu4CtkxGA>. All concerns will be handled by the Connect Facilitator confidentially.

Participation Agreement

This participation agreement applies to all AutismTN community spaces both online and in person. Participants are expected to:

- Come to AutismTN spaces being mindful of creating a space that is inclusive, respectful, welcoming and kind to all.
- Share their perspectives while being respectful when listening to others.
- Not judge or invalidate other people's experiences even when there is disagreement.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Own their impact as much as their intent.
- Be intentional about creating space for others.
- Give the benefit of the doubt and ask questions to clarify.
- Remember that everyone comes to AutismTN gatherings with different experiences and backgrounds.

Meeting Norms & Expectations

1. A parent/friend/caregiver is welcome to attend when their loved/chosen one has substantial support needs that require their attendance. If a parent/caregiver is a member's ride, we ask they sit in a corner/room away from the group, or drop the member off and come back to pick them up.
2. Members must be registered for the event on the AutismTN website.
3. Members must sign in to each meeting.
4. No cooking and no appliances (crock pot, griddle, etc.).
5. When finances permit, we ask members bring something to contribute to each meeting (napkins, food, games, etc.).
6. Members need to wait to enter the On the Avenue building until 6:15 p.m. CST unless given permission prior to the event.
7. Members will help clean up/put the room back together after the meeting is over.
8. No one should use the kitchen or enter the side rooms without permission.
9. Firearms and other weapons are not permitted at Connect events.

Conflict

When a conflict arises, Connect members should try to call people in instead of out. Get curious about their intentions and give each other the benefit of the doubt. If a member needs help navigating a conversation, they can contact a moderator and/or fill out the [Share a Concern form](#), and someone will be in touch ASAP.

If a member is not comfortable with a conversation, it needs to stop. If a member finds the request unfair, they are encouraged to fill out the [Share a Concern form](#) and to follow up with Colin Peterson, Connect Facilitator, in person or send an email to connect@autismtn.org to make sure the concern is addressed.

If a member does not honor another member's request, the following actions may be taken:

- 1st time: warning
- 2nd time: asked to sit out of next Connect meeting
- 3rd time: private Zoom meeting with Casey and either a 2-meeting suspension, final warning, or removal
- Four group member complaints = automatic suspension and private Zoom meeting with Casey.

Harassment or threatening other members will result in immediate suspension from Connect.

Addendum

Items below have been added to the Community Guidelines over time to clarify expectations of community members:

1. ***Pronouns:*** AutismTN welcomes participants to share their pronouns in our spaces, both online and in person, including verbally, in the chat box, or beside their name online, to recognize and honor our community's diverse identities. Sharing pronouns is voluntary. We expect everyone to respect individuals who choose to share their pronouns. If someone decides not to share their pronouns, they should refrain from explaining their reasons for not doing so. Please be aware that any comments about gender identity or another person's pronouns may be viewed as transphobic, which AutismTN does not tolerate per #4 of the Community Values. *(Added February 26, 2024)*