



# Letter from the designer :Living a normal life

My younger brother has autism. Speaking and moving independently are herculean tasks for him. In a crowded space, he becomes excited and laughs and shouts uncontrollably. Sometimes he takes my hand and takes me to a place where only he knows with unfounded resoluteness.

I love my brother sincerely and treasure the moments we spend together, yet at times it is difficult to comprehend his behavior fully and thought patterns emphatically. It has been a lifetime's task for me to do so.

As his sister for over 20 years, his inexplicable behavior has taken me to the brink of anger several times. When I was still young I often thought and was disappointed, "Why can't he be like everyone else? Just normal." My attitude didn't improve even into adulthood. I avoided spending time together and altogether refused to bring up the subject of my brother to others.

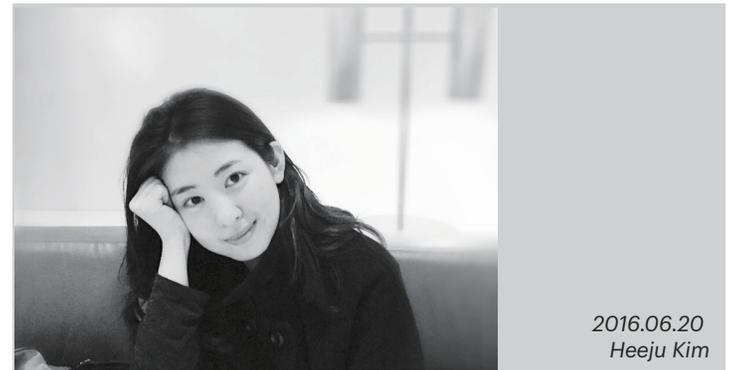
Only after being educated about autism, I began to understand that people with autism receive external stimulus in a completely unique way.

I realized that an autistic individual's sensory functions, mental processes, communication channels, and physical movements work in an entirely different way to mine: their interaction with the external environment, which is often constructed to suit the senses and the systems of normal people, may be painful and uncomfortable—a thought that had never crossed my mind. Would you be able to carry a normal conversation if you are placed in a room with painfully bright light, in which there is blaring sound, and if your tongue is glued to the ceiling of your mouth? These may be conditions under which people with autism are expected to act in accordance to social protocol.

Yet the message of this project does not undermine the importance of people with autism making equal contributions to understanding and endeavoring to get accustomed to “the world of others”. Rather, my project emphasizes the need for a bidirectional effort by both parties.

People with autism often have a deep-rooted scar from loneliness and from the alienating looks of others; thus, we must keep to each of our part to understand one another and to treat each other as we would like to be treated. To this end, I want to share my experience of how I learnt to be more empathetic with individuals with autism so that others can learn as I did to do the same.

We take it for granted that most of us, whether knowingly or unknowingly, exercise our right to be respected for our individuality on a daily basis. Yet, I feel that what we take for granted and expect as a right doesn't always apply to those with autism; people with autism are not always understood and, in some societies, are ostracized for their differences, and this by essence is an invasion of their individuality. Why have people resorted to believing autistic individuals as unapproachable? At its root, it may be because people cannot intrinsically understand them. This project aims to let people know that those with autism are normal people like you and I and to raise greater awareness of autism, so barriers to forming relationships with autistic individuals can be lowered.



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