



AuSM's highly trained, certified therapists have committed their careers to helping individuals with autism understand their diagnosis and address both the challenges and gifts that it can bring. The AuSM Counseling and Consulting Services team sends out a monthly e-mail to answer questions submitted by the autism community. This is one of the past issues of the column. Visit [www.ausm.org](http://www.ausm.org) to sign up to receive the e-mails.

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**Dear Sara:**

I am both autistic and LGBTQIA+ but I don't think I'm ready to come out yet. This month is LGBTQIA+ Pride Month and June 18th is Autistic Pride Day. Can I still celebrate both? If so, how?

**Considering Coming Out, Wanting to Celebrate Pride**

**Dear Considering:**

You absolutely can celebrate both. Coming out is a very personal and important choice only you can make. Your identities are valid, whether you've come out or not. And you're definitely not alone, many autistic people identify as LGBTQIA+. We don't know why this overlap exists, but we do know acceptance and affirmation of both identities contribute to better mental health. Here are some facts about this overlap:

- 10% of autistic people identify as a gender different than the one they were assigned at birth.
- More autistic people tend to identify as asexual than the general population.
- Autistic men are 3.5 times more likely to identify as bisexual compared to neurotypical men.
- Autistic women are 3 times more likely than neurotypical women to identify as homosexual or lesbian.
- Many autistic people start romantic relationships in their 20s or 30s; they may also take more time to explore their gender and sexual identities.
- The majority of autistic adults are sexually active; 70% for cisgender autistic men and 76% for cisgender autistic women.
- Many autistic LGBTQIA+ people experience coming out twice, which can make the decision to come out as either or both more difficult if they don't have supportive people.

You can enjoy LGBTQIA+ Pride in ways that make the most sense to you. Some people enjoy going to the parade on Sunday morning, while some prefer to look at the different vendors. LGBTQIA+ Pride this year is June 25th-26th at Loring Park in Minneapolis. Generally, many people wear rainbows or flags specific to their identities. You certainly do not have to wear rainbows; you can wear what is most comfortable for you, including durable shoes.



I would recommend preparing as much as possible, such as how you are going to get there and what you want to see most. Giving yourself a time limit (e.g. an hour) can help with sensory overwhelm or burnout. You may want to bring fidgets or noise-cancelling earbuds. If you need to take a break from everything, AuSM is hosting a sensory-friendly tent near the middle of Loring Park. I strongly recommend bringing water with you since there tends to be very warm weather. You may want to consider if you want to go alone, with one other person, or as a group. Pride is about celebrating your identities, whether you are out or not.

Autistic pride is also about celebrating who you are, regardless of coming-out status. It is about living authentically and accepting who you are as an autistic person. Some celebrations are online, and some are in-person. Please check the COVID-19 guidelines before going to an event in-person. You can participate as much or as little as you want. Sometimes it is just helpful to know there is community out there for you and you do not have to be lonely. I would recommend checking out this website for more information or to find events near you: <https://www.autisticempire.com/autistic-pride/>

I hope this information helps. Your experiences and identities are valid. How you celebrate them is also valid. You get to decide when to come out and how. Happy Pride Month and happy Autistic Pride Day on June 18th!

**Sara Lahti, MA, LPCC**

If you would like to submit a question for the AuSM Counseling and Consulting Services team, please e-mail [autismcounseling@ausm.org](mailto:autismcounseling@ausm.org) or contact us at 651.647.1083.